INFLUENCE OF FASHION ON FURNITURE IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND

FROM 16th CENTURY THROUGH 19th CENTURY

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By

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PREFACE

This study was undertaken to reveal the relationship of fashion and furniture in France and England in the 16th through the 19th centuries. The term "fashion" is defined as including both custom and costume and is given this meaning throughout the text of the thesis. Webster's definition of fashion is that "fashion is a mode of action, method of conduct, manner, custom, sort, way; the prevailing mode or style, especially of dress; the mode or style usual among persons of good breeding."

It is the author's desire to relate fashion, as defined above, to the styles of furniture of the periods included in this study. To interpret this relationship it has been necessary to describe some of the character-istics of dress and furniture as well as the manners and customs of these centuries.

The fascinating study of fashion and furniture has long been of great interest to the author. When the correlation of the two seemed a possibility she determined to investigate and assemble the references concerning their possible kinship. "If there be sermons in stones, there are surely volumes of romances in old furniture."[1] There are many memories connected with old furniture and old costumes, and this study gives an insight into the social and economic manners of the times studied. For instance, a well-worn table stretcher recalls the time when the people seated at the "board" were glad of a place to rest their feet to keep them out of the marsh of the floors strewn with reeds and rushes. This marsh readily became unpleasant from the

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[1] Harold Eberlein and Abbot McClure, The Practical Book of Period Furniture, p. 15.

dampness, and the litter and scraps thrown to the dogs. This and many more examples provide a source of interesting research material.

This study may be helpful to others interested in these areas of our historical background. As far as could be determined there has not been a specific study undertaken on the aspect of harmony between the styles of dress, custom and furniture at any period of history. Only scattered references in varied publications refer to this relationship.

In considering this subject for investigation it became apparent that it must be limited in scope and held to certain periods of history and to certain countries. The sixteenth century through the nineteenth century in France and England was chosen because of the more abundant source material in its literature, history, and art. The American periods usually followed the examples of France and England in most of its styles down through these centuries so they will not be included.

The approach to the problem of establishing the kinship of fashion and furniture was necessarily that of an historic one. A great deal of reading was required to assemble bits of information. This included novels, letters, records, plays, histories of costume and furniture, and social and political histories. Paintings, cartoons, sketches, and sculptures were also contributory to this research.

Whenever possible sketches are used to illustrate the topics of the text to show the influence of certain articles of costume or the various customs on furniture. With this in mind one may easily understand the relationship of fashion and furniture as it is revealed in this text.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance contributed by the many persons cooperating in this study. She is particularly indebted to Mrs. Adaline Ledbetter, Head of the Household Arts Department, for her guidance in the research and organization of this entire work. The author is especially grateful to Miss Brenda Gould, Associate Professor; Miss Empo Henry, Associate Professor; and to Miss Martha Merrifield, Associate Professor, all of whom are members of the Household Arts Department of Oklahoma A. & M. College. The author also wishes to express her appreciation to Mrs. Carol Dwyer whose invaluable assistance and proofreading has made it possible to complete this study.

J. G. F. H.

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SIXTEENTH CENTURY

French Renaissance

In the Renaissance a new spirit of inquiry prevailed. All fields of knowledge saw a burst of activity. There was a new social life--art, commerce, letters, science; every human activity began to break away from ignorance and superstition.

Charles VIII of France laid the background of the French Renaissance style when he invaded Italy and brought back numerous examples of Renaissance furniture. He also induced Italian artists with taste and understanding of the arts to return with him to France. The reign of Francis I, 1515-1547, was the great period of the French Renaissance. The first part of this period was transitional between the dying Gothic and rising Renaissance in France.[1] The invention of the movable type and printing press made it possible to spread the results of the studies of science, philosophy, and travel to a larger number of people than could previously be informed.

It was a natural consequence that the art of a changing and restless time would be reflected in the moods of the people experiencing these changes. Taking this background into consideration, the relationship of house furnishings and the modes of dress and behavior will be revealed.

At this time the art of dress as well as the art of house furnishings was a reflection of the brighter and gayer life of the people of those days. In the early Renaissance the rooms of the houses which formed the background for this new social life were sparingly furnished. Oak was the preferred

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[1] Arthur De Bles, Genuine Antique Furniture, p. 109.

wood because of its unquestionable durability. When a great personage and his family moved from one of his castles to another for the sake of cleanliness, the carting about of the furniture over rough roads must have required great strength in both construction and material.

One finds that there is little evidence of the influence of the costume of the furniture of this period because most of the furniture then was built for the men. Most of the references found show the relationship of the customs and the furniture.

Chairs were rare in the early part of the Renaissance. These were usually devoted to the use of the owner and were carved with his or her initials or emblem. Only the noble, his wife, or a highly honored guest was allowed to occupy a chair so a considerable amount of authority and honor was connected with it. The principal seat was box-like in form with panelled back and arms, and it will be seen throughout the whole historical evolution of the chair that the shape was principally governed by the changes that took place in costume.

All early chairs had arms to support the weight of the heavy, hanging sleeves (Fig. 1, 2) of the costume then in vogue. Note in Figure 1 that the chair has a tall back which served to protect one from being stabbed from the back. This back also served to protect one from the chilly draughts which were common in those airy halls. The construction of these chairs was sturdy in order to support the weight of a man with heavy coat of mail and plate of armor.

Settles, benches, stools and the tops of chests were the most usual form of seats. Stools were more commonly used because of the lack of money and the absence of desire to possess more than two or three chairs in the day when everyone was at war with his brother and moving was often necessary
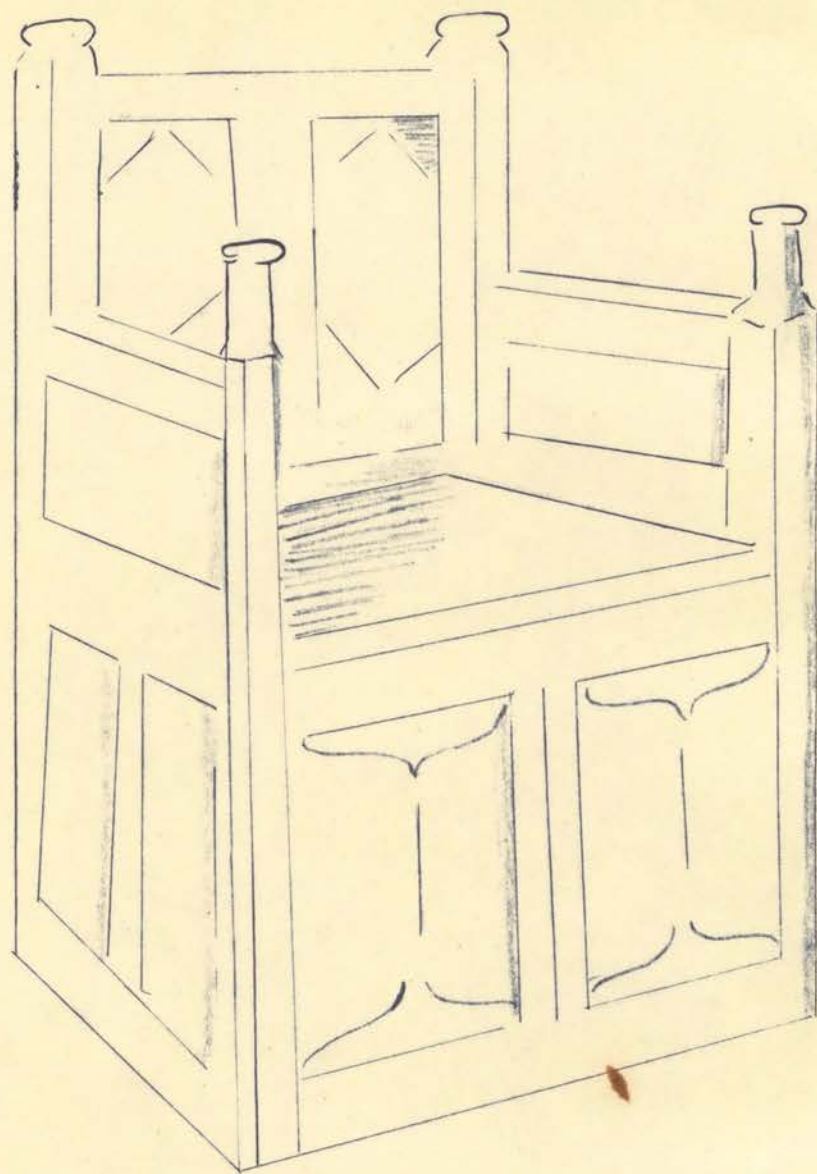
Figure 1. Box type oak chair

Figure 2   Costume showing heavy hanging sleeves

for safety. Stools were much more easily moved than were the ponderous chairs. The women preferred the stools as this small seat did not interfere with the large hooped skirt (Fig. 3) which became fashionable in this period. The large skirts were held out by that great innovation of costume--the vertugale.

The structure of the vertugale, also known as vertugadin, vertugade, and later farthingale, was hoop-shaped and made of whalebone or other light material. With the vertugale the skirts of petticoats and dresses could be extended to large and cumbersome proportions. Later when the farthingale was fashionable in other periods, the arms of the chairs had to be set back or entirely removed, and the legs of tables were changed to accomodate these voluminous skirts.

Beds were also important pieces of furniture. They were massive and four-postered. These heavily carved posts supported a cornice from which hung heavy velvets and tapestries to afford the occupants warmth and privacy in their draughty chambers. In these times it was customary to sleep naked, therefore adding to the necessity of the afore-mentioned bed-hangings along with numerous furs and other bed covers. Burnt places in the arcades of the headboard of some of these beds prove that it was the custom to burn a rush-light at night, probably to keep away evil spirits. One historian states in reference to these beds that a person retired into the bed alcove, drew the curtains and spent the night in a pleasant state of semi-asphyxiation.[2]

Chests were also important in the furnishings of the Renaissance home. Due to the manner in which these people lived the chests were invaluable in transporting the possessions which could be packed. Many and varied are the

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[2] Joseph Aronson, Furniture and Decoration, p. 42.

Figure 3. Marie de Medici in a large hooped skirt

stories connected with chests, but one is that chests were a usual place
of concealment and popular with lovers.[3]

English Renaissance

In England, the Renaissance was a little later in coming than it was
in Italy, Spain and France, yet the factors which brought this rebirth
were similar in all of these countries. Increased travel, new discoveries,
and greater distribution of knowledge with the invention of the printing
press and movable type, along with many other factors, brought forth the
Renaissance.

The Tudor style was the transitional type between the dying Gothic
and the budding Renaissance in England. There the Elizabethan was the
period of true Renaissance expression. With the Elizabethan style we find
for the first time the sturdiness of contour, the care of detail in finish,
and the love of oak for its own sake; all of these features continue to be
predominant in English furniture.

The fortified castles had begun to be replaced by social halls as
self-defense was no longer an immediate concern. Convenience began to be
an important consideration. Furniture became more permanent, and a greater
variety of pieces was available.

The rise of the middle classes marked the beginning of an increased
sale of house furnishings. Heretofore only the nobility could afford any-
thing of value, but now the influence of another class of people is felt
on the arts or fashions of the day. Social activities were becoming more
important, and the furnishings of the homes were influenced as the background
for the increasing social activities of this period.

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[3] Percy MacQuoid, Age of Oak, p. 161.

The social life of these restless times seemed to call for a fashionable garment of extreme style. The answer came in the form of the farthingale in which Queen Elizabeth appears in Fig. 4. It was during the Elizabethan days that there appeared the "Farthingale chair" (Fig. 5) which was a small chair without any arms so that the wearer of the farthingale could sit comfortably. The farthingale was made of a structure of steel or bone so rigid that although the lady wearing it might faint it would keep her from falling. It was a common occurrence for ladies to faint due to the tight corsets and amount of clothing that they wore. The following quotation will explain further the costume of the Elizabethan period and why it was reflected in the style of furniture, particularly the chair.

> Costume was not without its effect on the form of furniture. Dion Clayton Calthrop in his work on English Costume describes in some detail the attiring of Queen Elizabeth, and after the great farthingale has been adjusted, and when she has chosen an undergown, "she then puts on several linen petticoats, one over another, to give the required fullness to her figure; and then comes the stiffly embroidered undergown... With great care she seats herself on a broad chair ..." And these last words are very clearly the influence of the dress designer and tailor on the work of the furniture maker. At the close of the period the "Farthingale chair" has appeared, the first single chair for the spread and volume of the extravagantly ridiculous garment the farthingale cannot be disturbed by the arms, so the arms go, and the chair becomes a mere perch for the imitator of the bird of paradise.[4]

The influence of a custom is seen in the style of the tables most popular at this time. The tables (Fig. 6) were long and were set on massive pillared legs. The stretchers served not only to strengthen the table but also to make a resting place for the feet as carpets were still relatively unknown in the early part of this period. It was necessary to place one's feet upon the stretchers of the table to keep them out of the draughts and

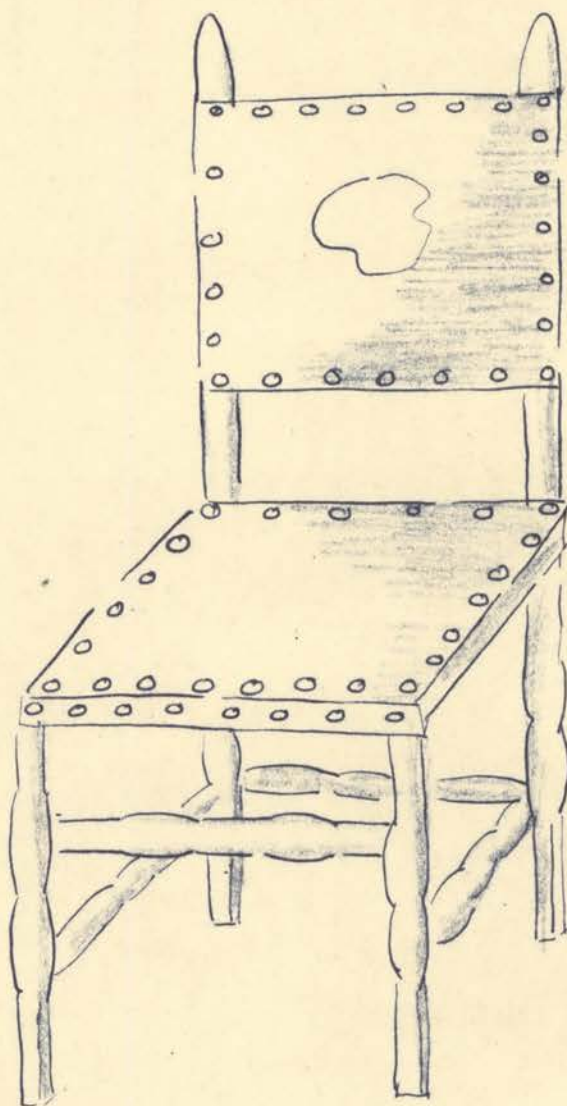[4] John Gloag, Time, Taste and Furniture, pp. 45-46.

Figure 5. Farthingale Chair

Figure 4.   Queen Elizabeth in a Farthingale

off the dirty floors. The straw that was used on the floors was sometimes removed when dirty and smelly, but often clean straw was placed on top of the old straw which was left for months without changing. The ring on the table leg (Fig. 6) is related to the custom of keeping the dogs in the house. The dogs were tied to the ring to prevent their jumping on the table.

At these tables the seats were usually only on one side as the food was served from the other as in classical times. It was easy for those eating to select the food with their fingers from the dishes handed them, as the width of these early tables was seldom more than two feet. A wooden trencher or a thick slice of bread served as a plate. The important personages had deep silver saucers and also wooden bowls called "voyders" for the portions they did not require. Those inferior in station who were seated at the low tables, threw what they did not want on the floor.[5]

Gambling was a fashionable pastime in those days and this popular activity brought forth the small gaming tables (Fig. 6) which were made primarily for the ladies of the house. Some of these tables were found with the tops marked for chess and some were made with holes in the tops to place money in if betting. Mary Tudor, during the time of her semi-captivity, spent much of her time and small allowance of funds in various games of chance.[6]

As it was the custom for every man of consequence to frequently receive his morning visitors in bed, the furnishings of the bedroom and the bed were important possessions of the Elizabethan home. Therefore, a splendid bedstead

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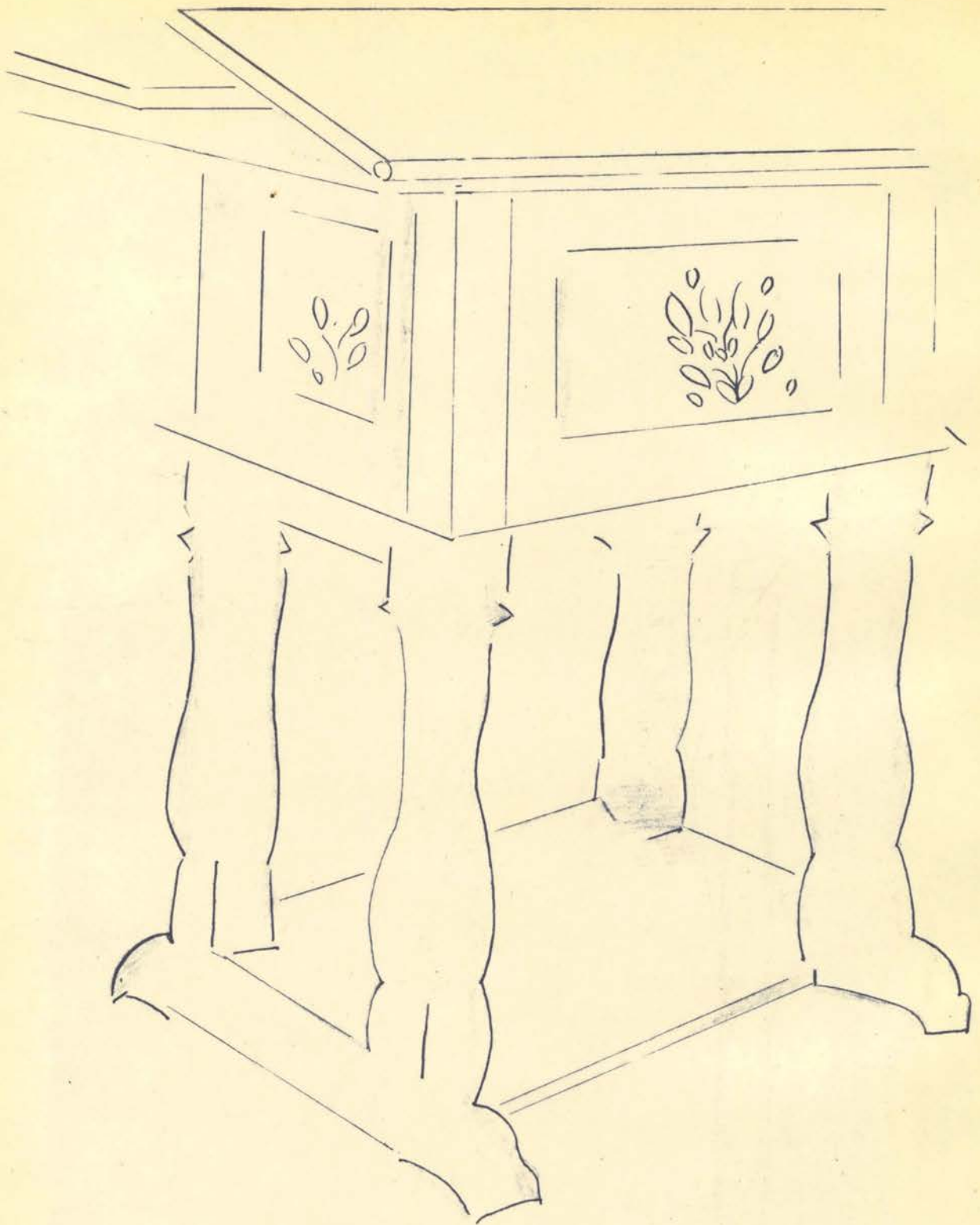
[5] MacQuoid, Op. Cit., p. 165.
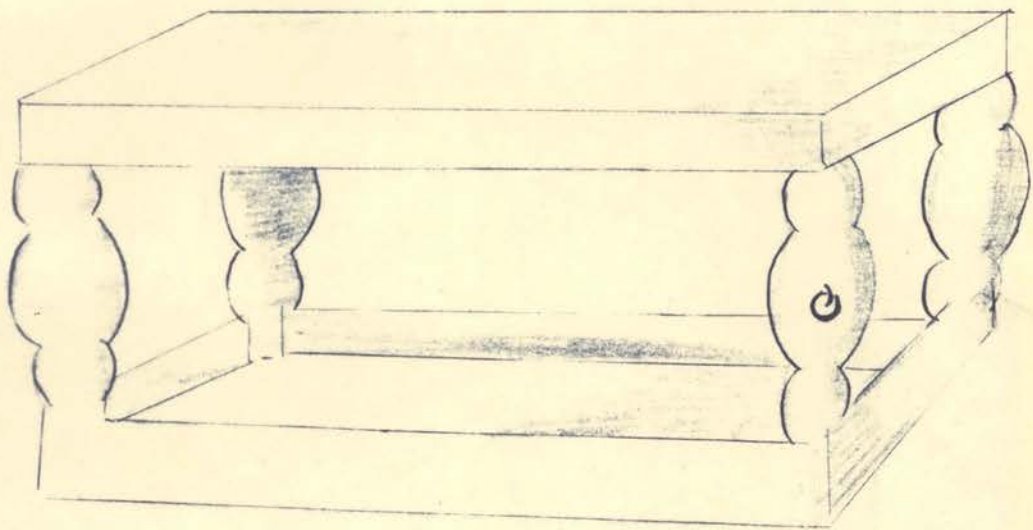
[6] Ibid., p. 47.

Figure 7. Small gaming table

Figure 6. Long table in Elizabethan times

was just as much one of the distinctions of greatness as were gentlemen-in-waiting and plenty of grooms in livery.[7] These beds were often eight feet high and as large as eleven feet square. Some were large enough to accomodate ten people at one time. Privacy was rare, and the custom of many people sleeping in one bed was a common occurrence. In the homes of the nobility or well-to-do, these gigantic beds had rich silken canopies and curtains with embroidery and linen to match. These furnishings were deemed necessary accessories in creating a luxurious atmosphere when guests were received at the bedside.

In this century there was the re-birth of interest and appreciation of the arts. Now in the next century the changes which followed were a natural consequence of the Renaissance.

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[7] M. St. Clare Byrne, Elizabethan Life in Town and Country, p. 45.

CHAPTER II

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

France

The seventeenth century saw the reign of Louis XIV in France. Louis XIV, or Louis Quatorze, decided early in his reign to make his court the most magnificent in all Europe. No one period represents one man in house furnishings to the extent of the period of Louis XIV. There were many lovely ladies who ruled over his court and their influence was felt on many of the arts.

Attention is drawn to the fact that during the first half of his reign the king followed his armies, and during this time the arts of the court had an air that was stiff and pompously warlike. As the boudoir became more important than the camp, a more gentle style was used, but still the king determined the style and was the sun of everything.[1]

The great palace at Versailles was intended to house the large retinue of the king. Colbert, the able minister, gathered many great artists together for the construction and decoration of this palace. Enormous rooms of great height were designed for entertaining vast assemblages in a regal manner. Great formality of design, produced by large scale detail and extravagance of workmanship and material, was the most characteristic decorative feature. As yet there was little change in the arrangement of the rooms. The movable objects and furniture were regarded as secondary features. The furniture was placed against the walls, leaving the center of the room clear for the accommodation of the customary large groups that assembled in the

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[1] Joseph Aronson, _Furniture and Decoration_, p. 48.

court life of these times.[2] These large groups required a great deal of room not only because of the number of people but also because of the elaborate and exaggerated size of the costumes that were then worn. The costume played an important part as it was reflected in the style of furniture of this period. The elaborate and formal costumes (Fig. 8) and furniture were indeed a fitting background for the extravagance and magnificence of the court of Louis XIV. "The imposing Louis XIV armchairs (Fig. 9) seemed to accommodate the peruke and ribboned costumes of the nobles and high rayed headdress of the ladies of the court."[3]

This peruke or periwig was characterized by two high peaks into which it was arranged upon the head of the fashionable men of the court. And as the quotation described the costumes as being "ribboned costumes" so they were, ornate with ribbons and laces. The men's costume also consisted of petticoat breeches which were a full skirt-like garment trimmed with lace and ribbons which reached to the knees and a short doublet revealing the embroidered linen shirt trimmed in lace. Later this costume was replaced by close velvet or satin knee breeches and long silk stockings which were held in place above the knee with ribboned garters. To this was added a wide skirted coat which when left open showed the rich embroidery of the doublet and the lace-trimmed, embroidered shirt. The costumes of the women were those of full skirts with trains, deep, pointed small waists, low neck-lines, sleeves with row on row of ruffles, dog muffs (pillowmuffs were carried by the men), and a hair arrangement that was composed of lace, ribbons, and flowers with the hair wired to a great height.

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[2] Sherrill Whiton, Elements of Interior Decoration, p. 152.
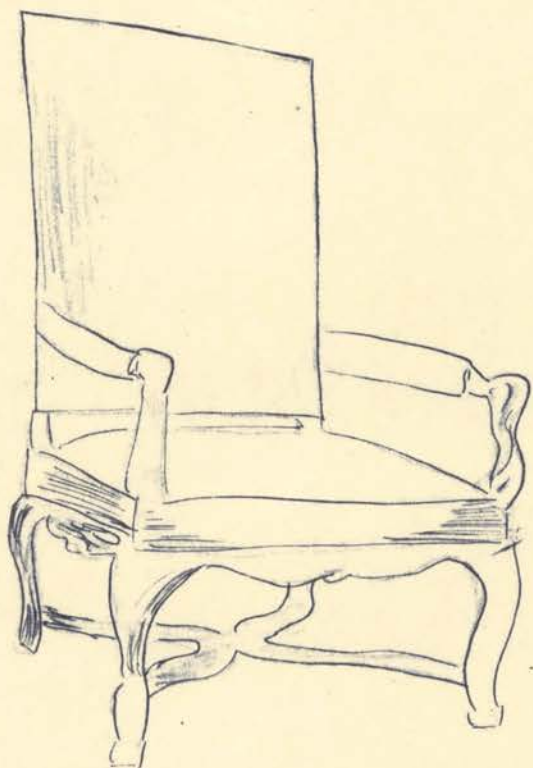
[3] Aronson, Op. Cit., p. 53.

Figure 9.   Seventeenth Century Chair

Figure 8. Seventeenth Century Costume

According to the etiquette of the day a duchess was permitted to sit in an armchair until the king entered the room; whereupon she had to move to a stool; and in like manner ladies below the rank of duchess had to move from the stools to hassocks.[4] This custom made it necessary to have numerous stools and hassocks as there were still few chairs. The dresses of the women were so cumbersome that they were probably more at ease sitting on the stools or hassocks.

Bergeres, which were originated in this century, became very popular in the 18th century. These were large, wide-seated, comfortable chairs with the back and sides enclosed.

> Confessional chairs, later called bergeres, came in during this reign, at first for priests to sit at ease in, while listening to confessions. Low-backed chairs, including those called "gossips," came in toward the end of this reign.[5]

It was during this time that the reception bed was introduced. These beds were very large and completely covered with costly embroideries, fringes, cords, gold tassels, plumes and draperies. There were thirty-three textile parts to one of these magnificent high four-postered beds. It was the custom for the lady of fashion to receive guests while reclining in such a bed.

> The reception bed was introduced. Ladies received their guests "en dishabille" a fashion that prevailed in the reign of Louis XIV. The fashion of covering furniture with drapery can be traced back to the Fourteenth Century in Italy.[6]

The custom of using Chinese articles and ornamentations was influenced by the contact that had been reestablished with China. Louis XIV was very

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4 Ibid., p. 53.

5 Ibid., p. 55.

6 Clifford R. Clifford, Period Furnishings, pp. 124-125.

proud of his Chinese ornaments including a Chinese cabinet with ten silver plaques representing the labors of Hercules. Chinese porcelain and decorative chinaware were displayed in cupboards designed especially for them.

By this time life had become more settled and furniture had become more stationary so that the coffer, a chest for transporting goods, lost all its importance. The distribution of printed books and the increase of reading brought forth the bookcase cupboard, soon called the bookcase. Toward the end of this reign toilet-tables appeared due to the increased emphasis on sanitary customs. Numerous small writing tables (Fig. 10) became popular at this time in response to the fashionable practice of writing love letters and notes, or one's memoirs.

England

This period in England saw the reign of James I, Charles I, Cromwell, and the Protectorate. This was a transitional period. There was now more thought of comfort in styles than there had been in the previous period.

The furniture was becoming light enough to be moved around. In the first years of this period the furniture was the elaborate Elizabethan furnishings scaled down, but when Cromwell ruled, the styles had to be very severe and uncomfortable. The Cromwellians believed that anything beautiful or comfortable was sinful. Then during the Restoration there was a return to richness of form and style in the arts of furnishings and in the style of costumes.

The Jacobean period, which was the first part of the 17th century, had a contour and style of furniture which somewhat reflected the social, intellectual and religious temperament of the people as did the furniture in other periods of history. This furniture was stout, staunch, and over-
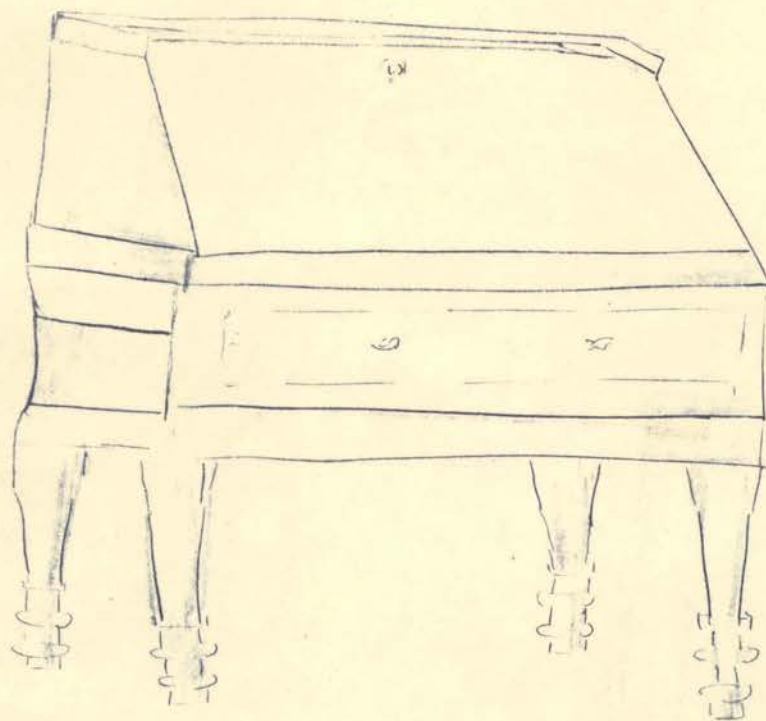
Figure 10. Small writing table

ornamented, but it matched the coarse manners, abrupt morals, and vigourous theology of the day. Both the contour and style of furniture were in keeping with the attitudes of the people.[7]

The customs and costumes as they influenced the furniture or furnishings of this century afford an interesting and instructive view of this era. Hardly anything so faithfully and fully reflects the manners and customs of an age and the changes taking place therein as the furniture. The chair is by far the best mirror for new and old influences of changing styles. The chair has reflected not only the rise and fall of many fashions but also has accurately registered changes in political and social customs.

The farthingale which obscured the form of Queen Elizabeth of the previous century continued to be popular in this century. About 1612 when the proportions of this dress became outrageous, it was realized that a chair without arms was better suited to this extreme style so chairs similar to the Farthingale chair of the previous century continued to be popular. In consequence of the growth of this eccentric fashion, an edict was issued by the King in 1613 forbidding ladies to come to the masque in "those monstrous gowns," (Fig. 11) owing to the seat-room they occupied.

The tables used at this time were either the refectory or the gate-leg form. The Jacobean refectory table was in the early days a "poor cousin" of the beautifully decorated Elizabethan table. At first the four corner legs of the Elizabethan style remained popular, but as these tables were very narrow their makers soon set one leg at each end and connected them with a long stretcher (Fig. 12). Probably the most important factor in the

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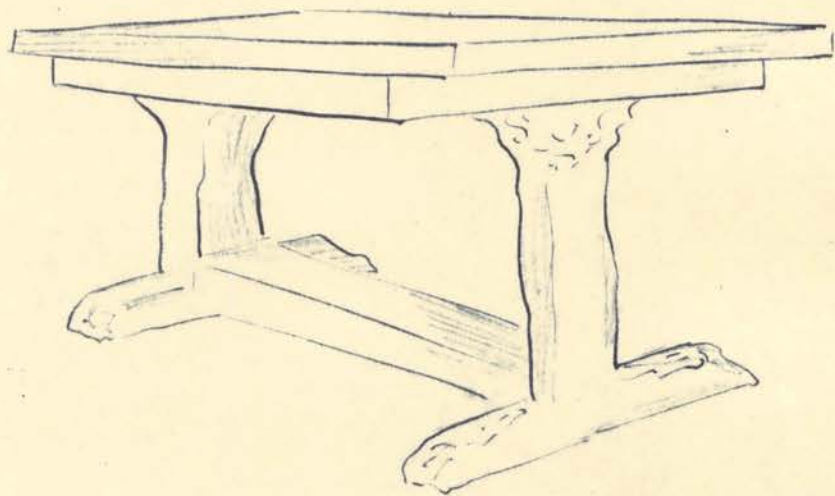[7] Harold D. Eberlein and Abbot McClure, The Practical Book of Period Furniture, pp. 32-33.

Figure 12. Table with two legs

Figure 11.   English costume in 17th Century

change was that ladies were quite uncomfortable trying to sit at the four-legged table which interfered with their wide spreading skirts.[8]

There was a common use of footstools as it became less and less the custom to rest the feet on the bottom rails or stretchers of the tables, or to hang the heels on the rounds of chairs to escape draughts or dirt on the floors. They became most common when the larger and more stately chairs with high seats became popular.

Decorated tables which were probably used for cards and tea were much in use due to the afternoon and evening amusements of ladies of fashion. The folding card-table with its wells for counters and money had not yet been introduced, and cards were played on small tables of marqueterie, oak or walnut, as in the previous century. Cards were much played in the Tudor and Jacobean times and during the reign of James I. The fashion had become so great that the audiences used to amuse themselves with cards at the play-house while waiting for the entertainment to begin. During the Commonwealth the practice declined but the passion returned with the Restoration years.[9]

The beds were elaborate and very expensive and were looked upon as evidence of wealth and position. Their possessors were very proud of their bed furnishings and lavished what seems an altogether unreasonable amount of expense in making them sufficiently magnificent to satisfy their ideas of stateliness.

The children and servants had truckle or trundle beds (Fig. 13) that could be readily pushed out of the way. These were low and scarcely raised

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[8] Arthur DeBles, Genuine Antique Furniture, p. 161.
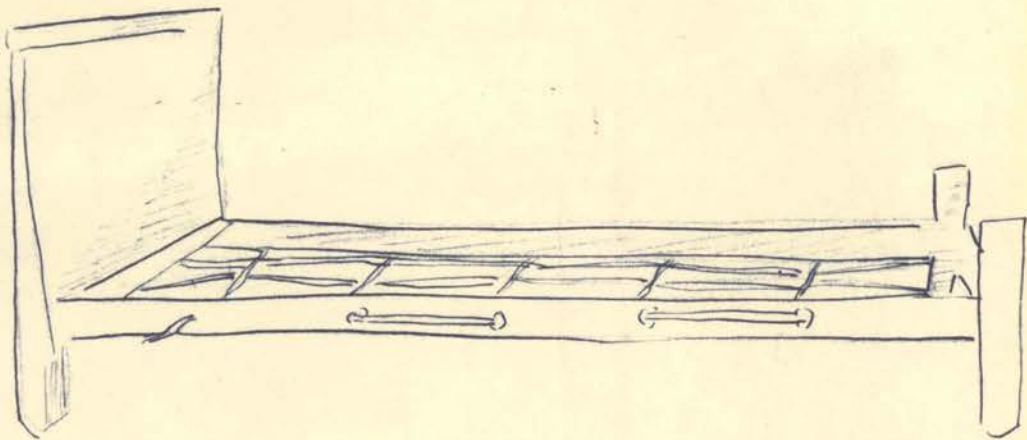
[9] Percy MacQuoid, Age of Walnut, p. 122.

Figure 13. Trundle bed

from the floor.   This bed was a descendant from a bed in the Middle Ages. In those days an important warrior, to insure being alive in the morning, had his most trusted retainer sleep at his feet in a bed that was the original of the trundle bed.

The 17th century is one in which life has become more settled and styles of dress and furnishings of the house are of more importance than they were in the 16th century.   There is a beginning of extravagance in the royal court in the 17th century and the next period shows a continuance of these excesses.

CHAPTER III

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

France

This period of history is a revolt from the severe classicism of
the Louis XIV reign. Both the Regency and the Louis XV eras are a marked
contrast to the previous period. Since Louis XV was only a boy of five
years when his great grandfather died, his uncle, the Duke of Orleans,
guided the affairs of state until the boy was of age to rule. This period
known as the Regency in France saw much corruption and over-emphasis of
all the arts.

With the reign of Louis XV proper there was a greater appreciation of
the arts and by the early years of the 18th century the decorative arts
were popular. Nobles as well as the wealthy bourgeoisie purchased the
products of art and procured the services of artists. It was becoming
fashionable to construct smaller dwellings with greater economy in the
construction costs. The custom of a more intimate type of entertaining
caused the rooms to be furnished more informally than had been stylish
before this time.

Emphasis will be given the fashions and customs as they affected
the furniture styles in this century. Only the most interesting and con-
sequential relationships will be used. With women taking greater part
in politics, in literature, and in society, French art became light and
graceful; yet it was still somewhat pagan.

The custom of leading a more intimate type of life led the furniture
to be at last restored to convenient size. Comfort and intimacy replaced
cold formality by the use of little rooms for conversation. Play and music

became very fashionable and each called for appropriate furniture. It

was obviously easy to live in this kind of a house. All of the decorations

became more warm and less cold and forbidding. Indeed France became one

huge boudoir.[1]

The unyielding wall thrones were replaced by light chairs and cabriolet

seats with sofas, ottomans, easy-chairs and chaise longues to give more

comfort. Tea-tables, toilet-tables and countless other tables appeared

as were to be expected in a period such as this.

There was a close relationship between the prevailing style of

costume and the style of the furniture at this time. With the innovation

of a new style in costume or the abandonment of a style, there often appears

a change in the corresponding furniture design. Certainly there is proof

that the paniers and farthingales worn by the fashions leaders of the court

influenced the setting of the arms of the chairs. These stiff linen paniers

attained the diameter of six feet so that the arms of the chair (Fig. 14)

had to be partly cut away to enable the women wearing paniers to sit down.

> The leading characteristics of the eighteenth century seem to
> have been the pannier (sic) and the return of the vertugadin. About
> 1711, panniers made of stiffened linen made their appearance. These
> increased in size until in 1730 they measured six feet in diameter.
> They extended on the hips and at the back, and a certain type of dress
> was designed to cover them. In order to allow a woman to sit down, the
> arms of the Louis XV chairs were cut partly away. Edicts were passed
> forbidding the princesses to draw their chairs near that of the queen
> as their panniers would interfere.[2]

Another reference is made to the fashion leading panier and the chair

that accommodated it in the following quotation:

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[1] Sherrill Whiton, Elements of Interior Decoration, p. 159.

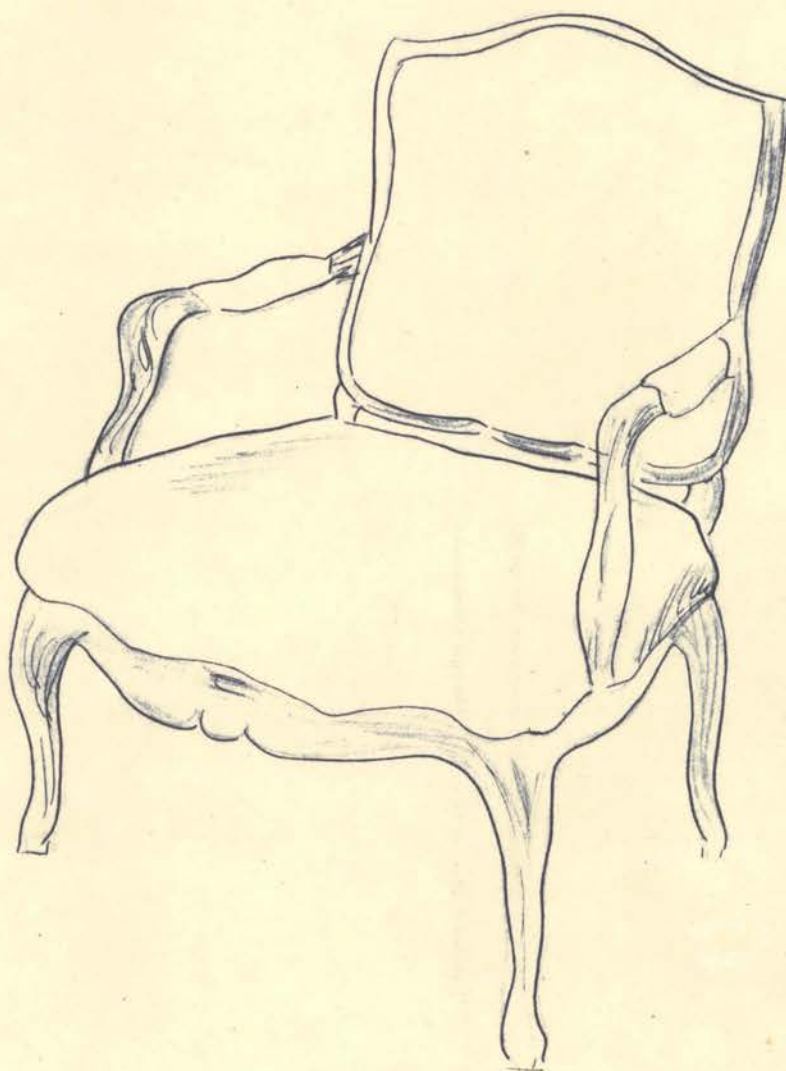[2] Elizabeth Sage, A Study of Costume, pp. 135-136.

Figure 14.　Louis XV chair

The arm of the Louis Quatorze chair showed a tendency to twist toward the point where they met the front legs; this curve, as time went on, became more marked. It must be noted that in order to allow ladies wearing paniers to sit on these seats the supports to the lower part of the arms were set back.[3]

This panier continued in style in the reign of Louis XVI. When Louis XVI came to the throne of France the nobility were financially exhausted and fatigued by many years of shallow pleasures. Mobs had already begun to protest the extravagant policies of the royal court.

As a background for these people, the furniture continued to be light, delicate and small in scale. The lines of the furniture were predominantly straight and the free curve of the period of Louis XV was completely eliminated. When curves were used they were usually circles, ellipses or segments of circles.

In the Louis XVI period the costumes worn required special accommodation in the furniture, as they did in the preceding era. Costumes of the ladies of the court over which Marie Antoinette (Fig. 15) presided included tall headdresses with ostrich plumes, ribbons, gauze and artificial flowers which came into vogue about 1760. These were in marked contrast to the simple pompadours favored by the ladies of the Louis XV court. So tall were these structures that their fashionable wearers were seriously inconvenienced when carried about in their sedan chairs or while they were attending the theater.[4] These fashionable ladies also wore the immense paniers which measured fully six feet from side to side. These necessitated wearing wide-skirted mantles or large capes.

The chair designs were affected by the voluminous panier while it was

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3 Eliza Maillard, Old French Furniture, p. 62.

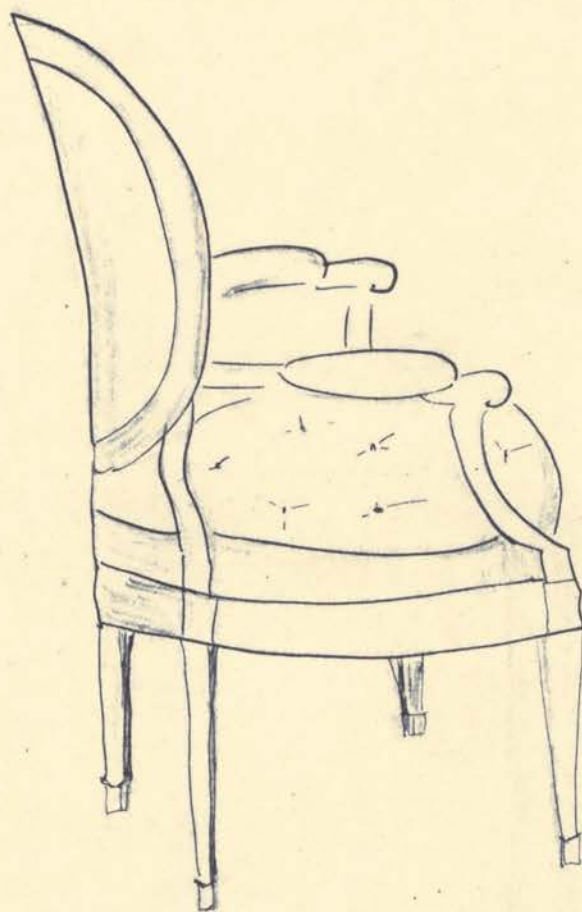4 Katherine M. Lester, Historic Costume, p. 151.

Figure 15. Louis XVI chair

Figure 16. Marie Antoinette

in vogue; then when it went out of style the chair design again included arms. These arms were upholstered in order that their angular construction should cause neither discomfort to the users nor damage to their delicate satin garments.

England

In England the styles of the late William and Mary, Queen Anne and the Early Georgian period that followed are interlocked as are the Louis XIV, XV, and XVI and the Empire period that followed in France. In reality the style brought to popularity by William and Mary continued with only a few changes until the time of Chippendale-styled furniture.

The reign of Queen Anne, daughter of the Stuart king James II and wife of Prince George of Denmark, saw the continued influence of the Dutch designs introduced by William and Mary. The arts in this century were more influenced by the popular taste of the people than by the favor of the royal court.

The furniture of this period was influenced by the customs and the extreme costumes of the day. Draughts were apparently still a common cause of discomfort as there were chairs called "draught-chairs" (Fig. 17). These were designed with wings on the sides which extended high enough to prevent unfriendly draughts from reaching the occupant of the chair. Sofas and love seats (Fig. 18) were also designed with these wing extensions.

Skirts were still wide and the seats of the chairs were large to accommodate them. The high backed chairs and settles were very suitable to the voluminous periwigs and tall headdresses. Mr. Calthrop writes of the Queen Anne period, "the general tendency was to look Dutch, stiff, prim, but very prosperous."

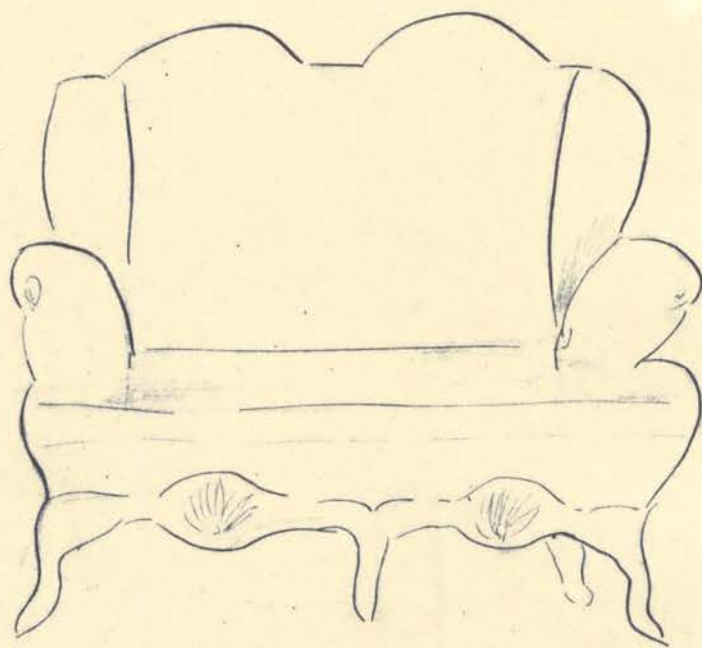The sociable custom of tea-drinking, which was mainly a domestic habit,
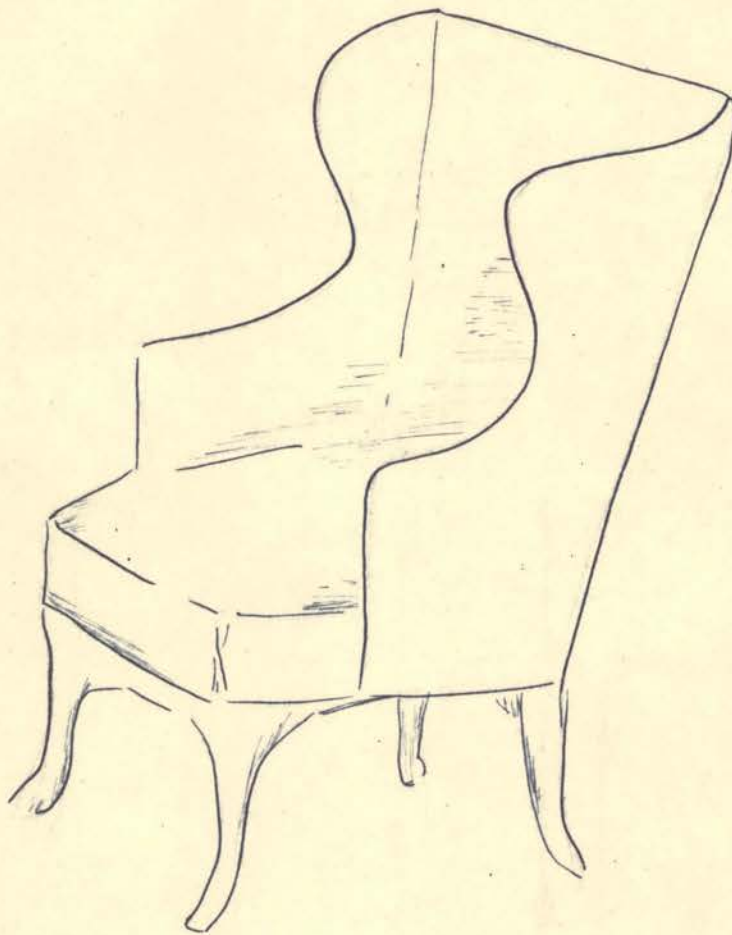
Figure 18. Loveseat with wing back

Figure 17. Wing chair

was responsible for the popularity of a good number of small light tables ...
tea tables, tea stands, dumb waiters, and even chairs designed for the tea
hour.

Furniture was also designed for the custom of drinking hard liquors.
There were "drunkard's chairs" (Fig. 19) with a seat nearly a yard across
in which the drunkard could comfortably fall.

> ... these were armchairs for respectable people, but there were also
> broad-seated armchairs at this time known as "drunkard's chairs."
> The width of the seat in front was nearly three feet, which gave
> ample room for a man to comfortably collapse.[5]

During the reign of George I there was little change in the styles
or the arts. When he was called from Germany to rule England in 1714,
with his two plump German mistresses and his ignorance of England and its
language and customs, he was content to reign but did not demand to rule.
The Georges were not concerned with the arts and so the court had no
leadership in this direction. The French and other continental modes
lost favor in England so British designs were revived. Furniture was now
designed to fit the house in which it was to be used; therefore it became
more architectural in size and shape.

It was during the reign of George I that Thomas Chippendale withdrew
from his father's furniture making business and set up a business for
himself.

Fashions were changing after the end of the reign of Queen Anne, and
included in these changes was the absence of the hoopskirt. The ladies of
fashion were dressed quite gaily, and the gentlemen were quite elegant
(Fig. 20) with three cornered hats, wigs and patches, embroidered waist

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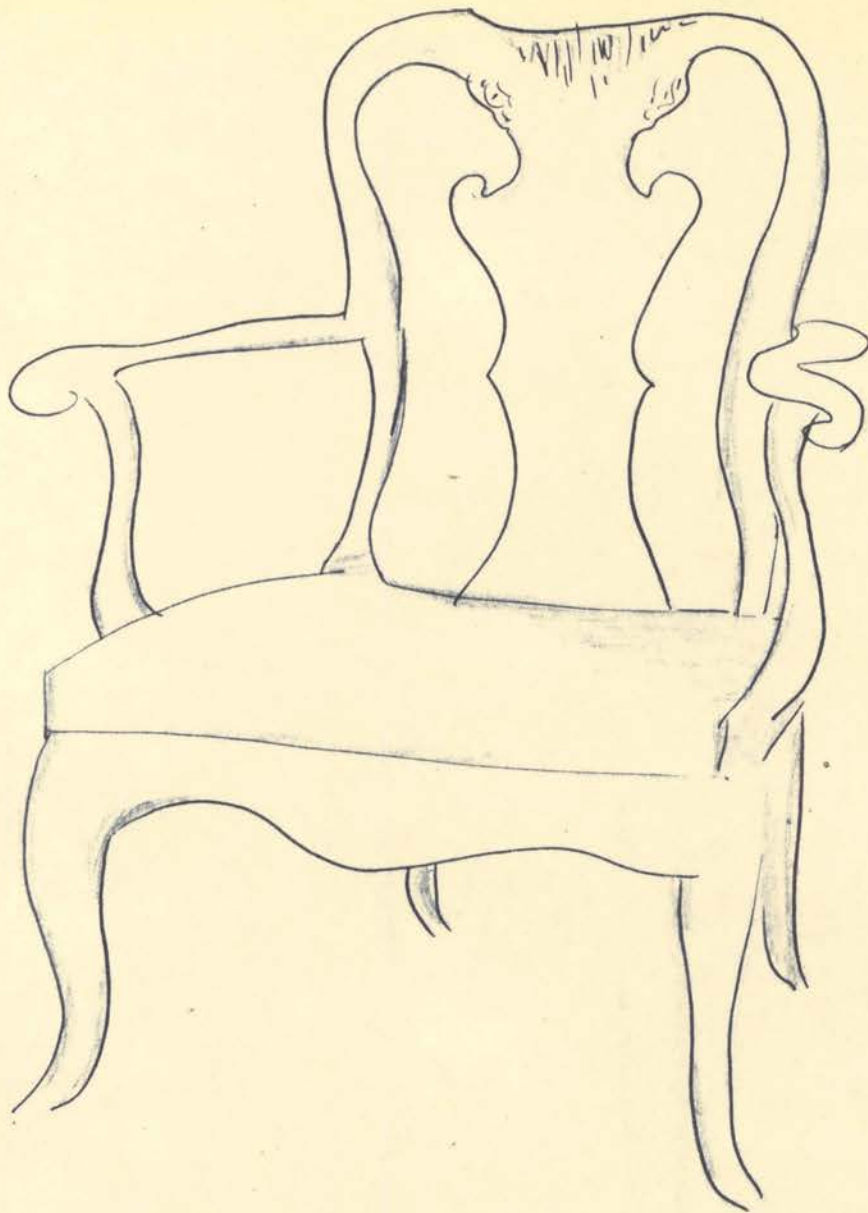[5] John F. Blake, The Period of Queen Anne, p. 57.

Figure 19.   Drunkard's chair

Figure 20.   English costume in 18th Century

coats, stiffened skirts to their coats, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and snuff boxes.

Chippendale designed his furniture for his fashionable patrons, and such modish people could not bestow themselves comfortably in chairs with arms, so chairs without arms (tabourets) were considered quite necessary for comfort.

The best pieces of this period are those in which the originality of the designer had full play and when his designs were not influenced by the French or the Oriental feeling. The furniture made by Chippendale was well adapted to the fashions and mode of life of the people for whom it was made. He retained the roominess of the Dutch furniture which was needed for the bulky costumes of dress affected by both sexes.

The fashion of wearing wigs called for a wig stand (Fig. 21) which Chippendale designed. This stand was simply a tripod stand with a basin fitted into the top of it. These stands were usually kept in the dressing room where the gentleman could stop, remove his hat, powder his fashionable wig and wash the powder from his hands. In the little drawers below the basin were kept the powder and other accessories of the toilet, and there was even a place for the gentleman to place his hat while he was powdering his wig.

It was in this period, as in other periods up to this time, that considerable attention was paid to the secret hiding places such as hidden drawers or secret panels concealing a receptacle for valuables. As it was fashionable to wear many jewels, Chippendale designed secret drawers in chests, and in other pieces of furniture.

Chippendale was responsible for many beautifully constructed and decorated little tables that were used for various purposes. Many of
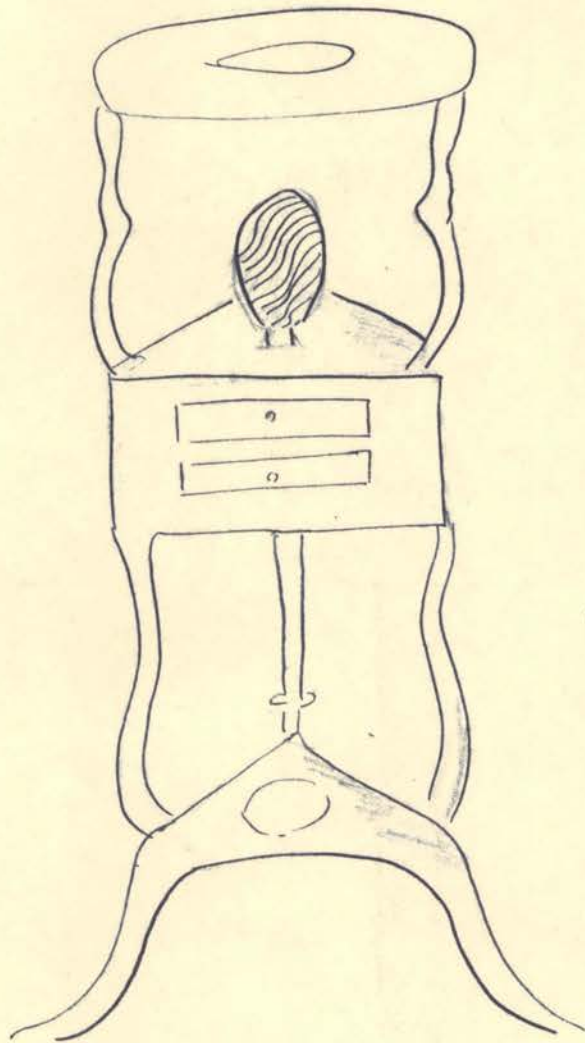
Figure 21. Chippendale wig-stand

these tables (Fig. 22) were designed with a small gallery or railing surrounding the top. This was to protect the ornaments placed upon them from the danger of being knocked off by the full skirts of the men's coats and the women's full-skirted dresses.[6]

Another furniture designer, George Hepplewhite, was designing furniture during this period. Naturally his furniture was subject to the influences of costume and custom of the 18th century as were the designs of his contemporaries.

In those times the people were going through a phase of wanting to camouflage everything. This reluctance to face realities is mirrored in the furniture and fashions. Hepplewhite designed various pieces of furniture which were used to conceal such things as press-beds, washstands and toilets. Bureaus were made which concealed a mattress and bed. The rooms were smaller and there was less room for all the furniture that was required for stylishness, so most rooms were over-crowded.

Along with other fashions of dress, furniture and customs, there was even a stylish ailment. Reminders of the port wine and good living are the wing chair and a "gouty-stool," which was designed by Hepplewhite. The gouty-stool was constructed with an adjustable top that could be raised and lowered to the most suitable level for the sufferer. The sketch (Fig. 23) of the chair and the stool represents the acme of comfort. "This draught excluding seat, restful to the head, back, and arms, in conjunction with the stool, would reduce gout to something in the nature of a luxury."[7]

At the dinner-hour in 1780 in good country families cock-fighting formed

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[6] Percy MacQuoid, *Age of Mahogany*, p. 239.

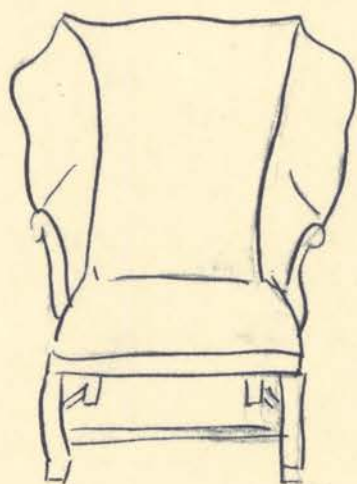[7] John P. Blake, *Sheraton Furniture*, pp. 29-30.

Figure 23. Gouty-chair and stool
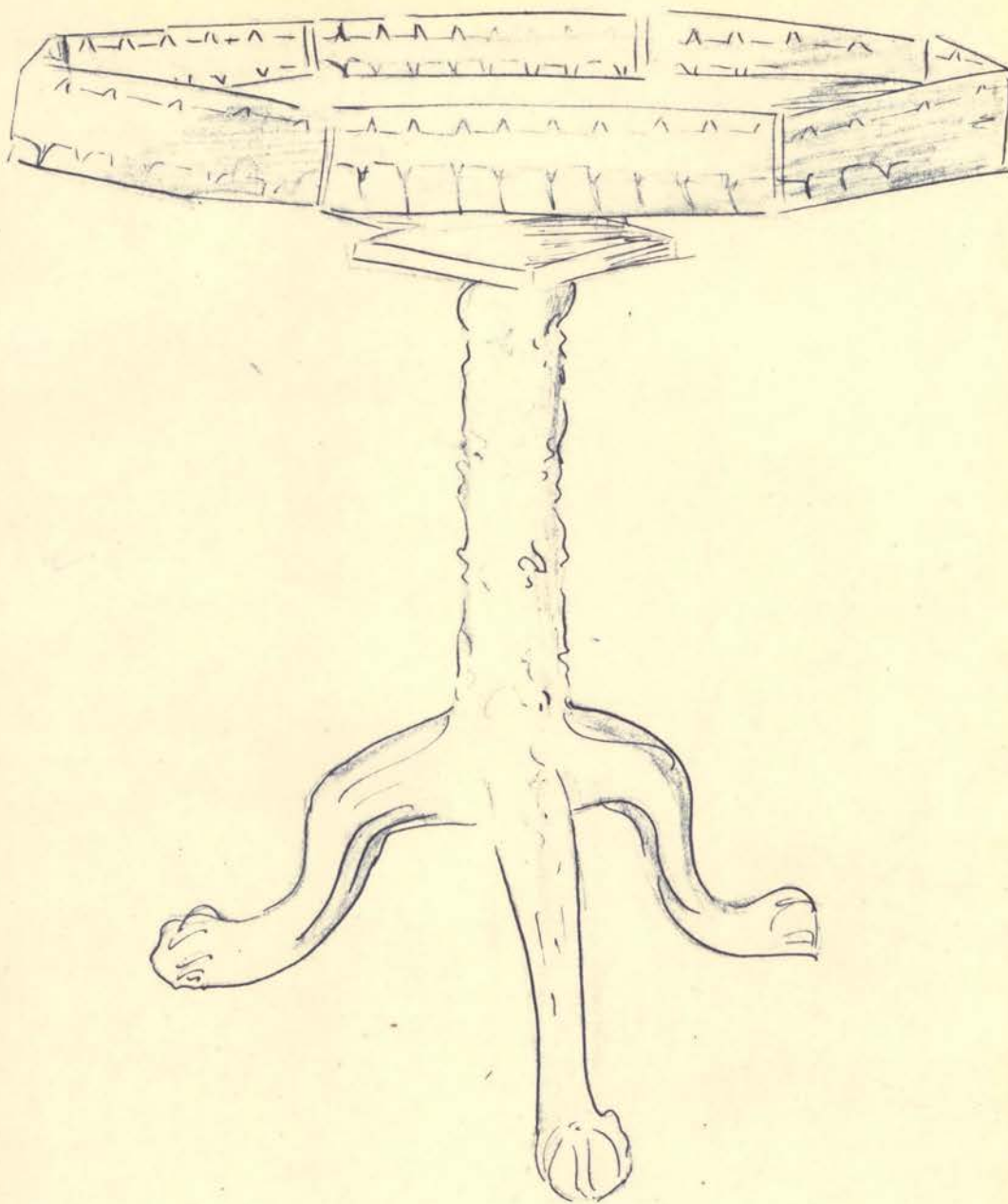
Figure 22.   Chippendale table with gallery

a very general subject for conversation among country gentlemen. When
dinner was over the birds were sent for and placed upon the dinner-table
and a cock-fight would take place. Even a special cock-fight chair (Fig. 24)
was designed for this customary after-dinner sport.

In the 18th century there is a climax of the extravagances which
began in the preceding century. In the next century there is a return
to classicism in the art of dress and the art of home furnishings.

Figure 24. Cock-fight chair

CHAPTER IV

NINETEENTH CENTURY
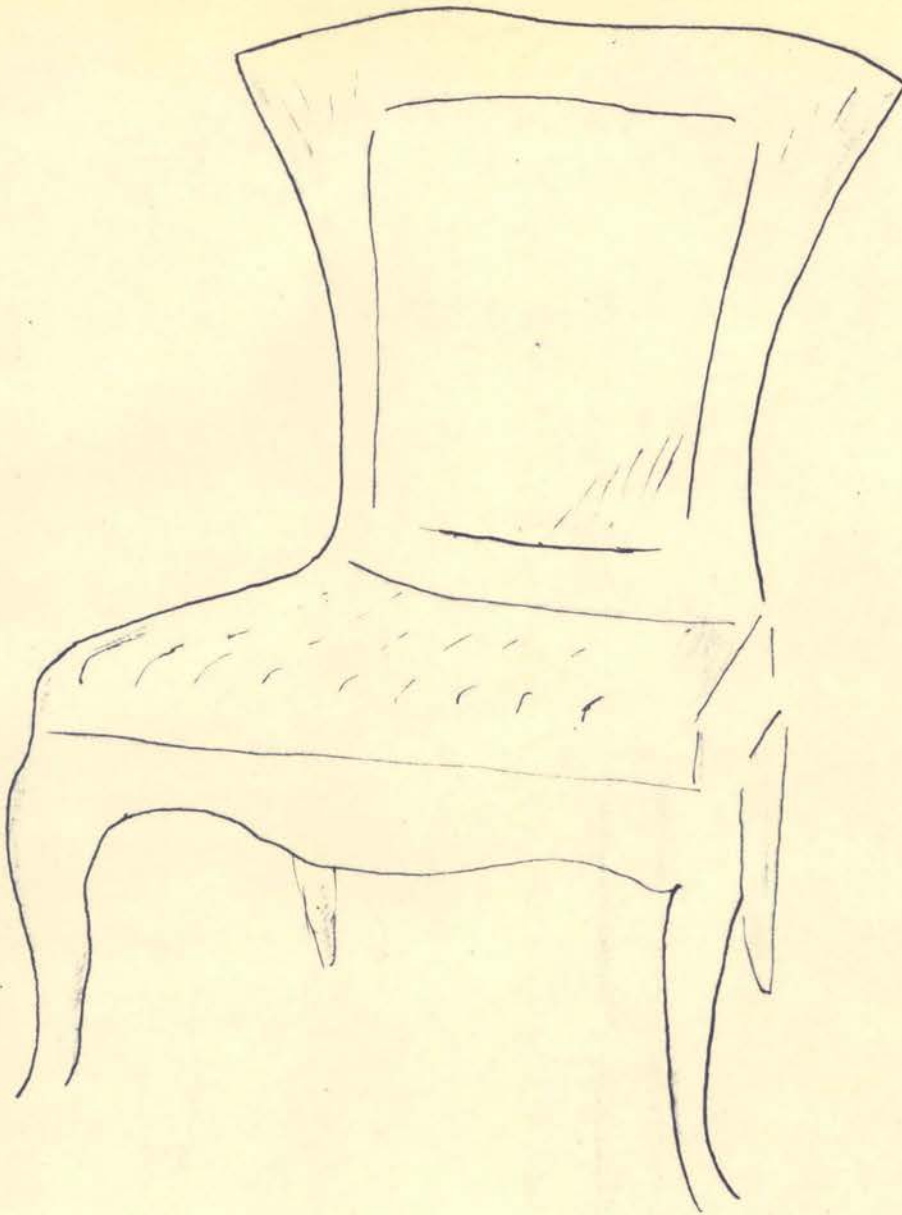
France

The French Revolution lasted until the year 1804 of this century; therefore there was no progress in the arts until after this year. Then in the Directoire period (which only lasted for four years) there were transitional forms of art that filled the gap between the period of Louis XVI and Napoleon. The Empire period was marked at the beginning by the coronation of Napoleon in 1804 and this continues until the year 1814, but the styles remained generally the same until 1830. The reign of Louis Phillipe (1830-1840) was a revival of the styles of the 18th century and a general decline of good taste. The Empire and Directoire years are more concerned with the influences of fashion than the other periods in this century.

One usually thinks of Napoleon when he thinks of the Empire style. This was the first style completely created by an individual, and it dramatically reflected both the fine and common sides of his great personality. The critics have called it ugly, grandiose, self-conscious, and even vulgar, but its virility made it live for thirty years.[1]

Charles Percier, a prominent architect during Napoleon's governing, attended to every detail of the furnishings of Napoleon's buildings. He designed the painted wall-papers, hangings, carpets, and bronzes, as well as the furniture. A single idea runs through the rooms he decorated for Madame Recamier, as through those for Napoleon, which set the fashion for France. Percier's own style was an elegant but simple, severe imitation of Roman models.

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[1] Sherrill Whiton, Elements of Interior Decoration, p. 178.

This was a period of sudden wealth and influence for thousands of persons who did not have the taste, knowledge, or sophistication of their predecessors. They followed blindly the styles set by the persons of state and did little to improve any of the arts. These styles were characterized by motifs and forms of classical styles of the Greeks and the Romans, even to the fashions of their costume, and the furniture and furnishings of their dwellings. There was a feeling that anything Grecian or Roman was so perfect that it should not be modified even to meet the much more modern requirements of the 19th century. Indeed comfort, convenience, and beauty were all sacrificed to create a classical effect.

This return to classicism in the manner of clothing and customs had a considerable influence upon the furniture and furnishings. There were increased facilities for travel, commerce, and for the spread of fashion news by means of magazines and books. These means of spreading fashion news did much to foster a natural desire for change in styles. There were innumerable changes taking place in women's dress as machine-made materials caused the dress of the society woman to be copied by those of less fortune, so that the woman of society was constantly desiring a change of the fashions. In contrast to this the dress of the men began to be standardized during this century.

The fashion of wearing the costume of the ancient Greeks was very popular at this time and many women went so far as to go around barefooted or shod only in open sandals as did the Greeks (Fig. 25) they were copying. The well-known painting of Madame Recamier serves to reveal that the women of this era did dress very scantily. The classical couch upon which she is draped is designed with the idea of making a fitting background for the adherents to the return to Greek costume, furniture and philosophy.

Figure 25. Classical costume in
19th Century

In France the woman of fashion, clothed in Ideas--and very little
else, loved to recline on classical couches and prattle philosophy;
a costume of transparent muslin served to reveal her intellect. It
seems a custom, at such disturbing times, for men to discard their
religion, and women their underclothing.[2]

Note in Fig. 26 the background of this sketch of Madame Recamier is formed

by the Empire style of couch for the loose, flowing gown she is wearing.

England

In England the corresponding years of the French Empire style were

but an echo, and often an awkward echo of the Empire style in France. In

spite of all the fear, hatred and suspicion England had for France, the

English still followed the lead of Paris in the matters of style.

Sheraton, an English furniture designer, designed or copied the French

Empire style to please his patrons who demanded things in the French taste.

Many of these were badly proportioned and ugly in shape.

The period of Regency continued until the rule of Victoria, who ascended

the throne while still a young girl. Queen Victoria had been very strictly

educated and was a very strait-laced person. She was not interested in the

arts and this reflected the dormant spirit of her people concerning the

arts. Without direction the furniture producers turned out many grotesque

styles to meet the demand of fashion for novelty. There was little accuracy

in the copying of the detail of the original pieces of the past that the

furniture makers copied; therefore, many incongruous styles were produced.

Although Queen Victoria and her daughters were among the first to

wear a certain style of costume, they were never responsible for setting

a style. The "crinoline" was very popular in the costume of the fashionably

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[2] Cecil W. Cunnington, Feminine Attitudes of the Nineteenth Century,
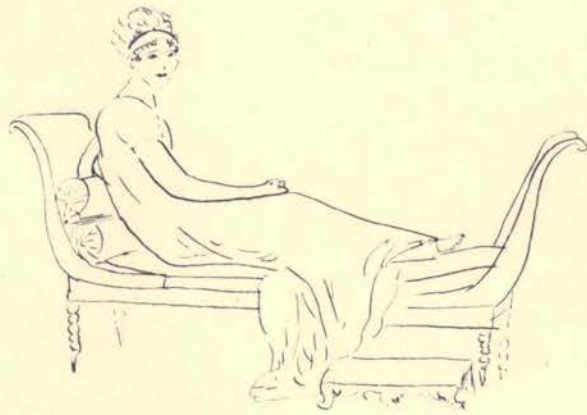p. 26.

Figure 26. Madame Recamier

correct. Originally it was a petticoat stiffened with horsehair, several
of which were worn to give the desired width to the skirts of a dress.
In 1856 an artificial crinoline (Fig. 27) was put on the market which was
a frame of flexible steel bands. This substituted for the cumbersome and
uncomfortable, stiffened padded petticoats and enabled the skirts to be of
great width. Walking arm in arm with a lady wearing crinoline (Fig. 28)
required considerable skill and agility. When etiquette required the
gentleman to walk arm in arm with a lady, he had to go through almost
acrobatic contortions. Even then they lived in the constant fear of
making a false step and treading on the beautifully decorated but cumber-
some crinoline. These unwieldy masses of material over the crinoline were
often highly inflammable, therefore it was not an uncommon occurrence for
women to lose their lives by coming into too close contact with a lighted
candle.

The furniture of this period was often awkward and heavily draped
as were the women's costumes. There was a sense of false modesty which
even lead to the draping of tables and other pieces of furniture so completely
that the legs would not show.

The fashion of "drizzling" was popular in France in the 18th century
but continued to be popular in England in the 19th century. The fashionable
ladies of the court did not mind asking gentlemen of their acquaintance for
cast-off gold and silver epaulettes, hilt bands, galloons, and tassels.
This practice of drizzling took place when the ladies took the tassels
and gold threaded articles with them to every entertainment, and picked
out the gold and silver threads. Eventually they sold the gold and silver
threads. Probably the tortoise-shell and other small cylindrical boxes
found during this period were to contain the tools necessary for this

Figure 27. Artificial Crinoline structure

Figure 28. Lady wearing huge crinoline

pursuit of drizzling.

The custom of drinking after dinner was still a polite and recognized custom, and drunkenness was aided by the adoption of port wine in the place of claret wine. The following paragraph taken from the Morning Post in the 19th century shows that intemperance was not confined to the layman: "At a village in Cheshire, last year, three clergymen, after dinner, ate fourteen quarts of nuts, and, during their sitting, drank six bottles of port wine, and no other liquor."[3]

Some tables were especially designed to suit those who had no compunctions against drinking. One style of table (Fig. 29) was made in a narrow horseshoe shape, the open end to be placed opposite the fire, where a bag or network kept the biscuits crisp. Note that (Fig. 29) shows the biscuit net and the two trays that radiate from the center on which the wine was placed. The ridge on the surface of the table is to insure the comparative safety of the glasses during the drinking. The fans and curtain are to prevent apoplexy.

In this century there was a return to classicism in the arts. Eighteenth century styles were revived in the latter half of the nineteenth century although the Empire style which began with Napoleon's reign was the most predominant style.
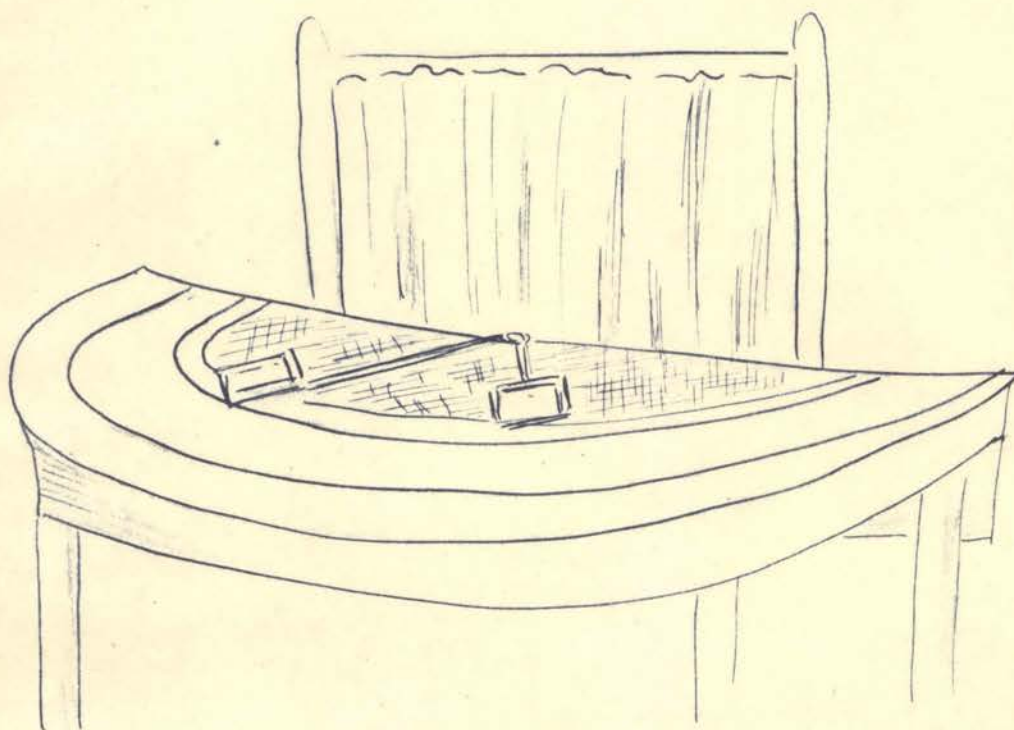
[3] Percy MacQuoid, Age of Satinwood, p. 222.

Figure 29. Drinking table

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

In the histories of these four centuries in France and England there have been many outstanding changes recorded in the annals of fashion and furniture styles. There is a distinct relationship between the summaries of these two styles.

In the first of these centuries (16th) houses were sparsely furnished with only the most essential articles. As frequent moving was common it was desirable to possess only a few sturdily constructed pieces of furniture.

The vertugale, later known as the farthingale, originated in this century. From this beginning it continued one of the most important factors that had to be considered in the designs of furniture in the three following centuries.

In this period the stretchers on tables and chairs served as a resting place to keep one's feet out of the dirty and damp straw which covered the floors of most houses. Later furniture continued to be designed with stretchers but they served to strengthen and to decorate--a different purpose from this original one.

As life became more settled in the 17th century an increased emphasis was placed upon house furnishings. In this period there begins an extravagance in the styles of furniture and costume. The formal costumes affected by both sexes of this era influenced the arms and the seats of chairs and sofas. The furniture had to be designed to accommodate the wide-spreading skirts held out by the farthingale which had its start in the fashions of the preceding century.

Also in this century the custom of receiving guests at the bedside brought forth the reception bed, an elaborate highly ornamented article of

house furnishings. In the following century this bed was replaced by another ornately designed bed.

In the 18th century a more intimate type of life prevailed, and there was an abundance of superficiality. Extravagance of court life was expressed by the immense paniers worn by the ladies of fashion. This fashion required special consideration in furniture designs.

The use of smaller rooms and the custom of trying to camouflage everything were responsible for folding furniture. Beds were concealed in bureaus and washstands were concealed in other pieces of furniture.

The last of the centuries (19th) included in this study showed a return to classicism. The classical costume of the ancient Greeks was adopted although it did not meet the modern requirements of the 19th century. A fitting background for these costumes was formed by the classical couches and other pieces designed in classic manner.

In the second half of this period there was a revival of the 18th century styles, but they were not in good taste. Dress skirts again became cumbersome and wide, this time by the use of crinoline. Costumes and furniture were both heavily draped because of the false sense of modesty of the people.

One of the conclusions which may be drawn from this investigation is that furniture designs were greatly influenced by the fashions of dress and social behavior or customs. Another conclusion is that the study of the period styles of furniture or fashion of any country would be enriched by the correlation of these two styles.

Present day furniture designers may gain inspiration from an investigation such as this one. The modification of historic designs may be made to serve the modern requirements of today.

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