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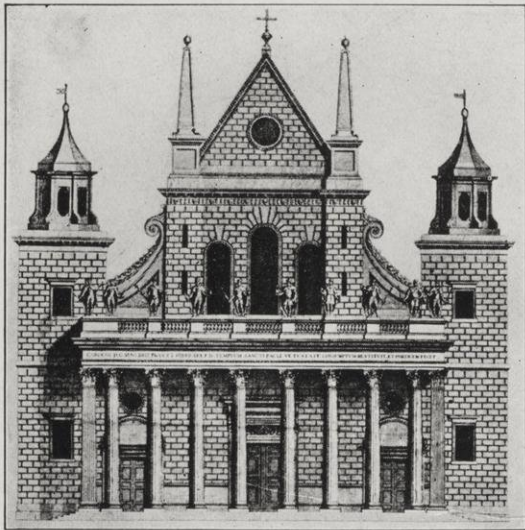
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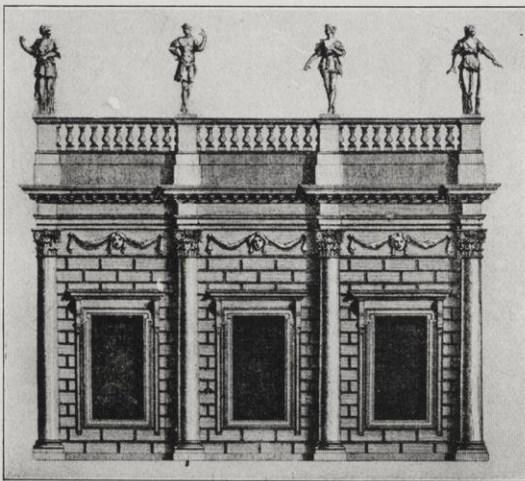


INIGO JONES

After the original painting by Van Dyke



Design for the portico of old St. Paul's by Inigo Jones



Design for the central portion of the upper story of the banquet hall, Whitehall, by Inigo Jones

# CREATORS OF DECORATIVE STYLES

*Being a Survey of the Decorative Periods in  
England from 1600 to 1800, with Special  
Reference to the Masters of Applied Art  
Who Developed the Dominant Styles*

By WALTER A. DYER

AUTHOR OF

"THE LURE OF THE ANTIQUE,"  
"EARLY AMERICAN CRAFTSMEN,"  
ETC.



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W. A. D.



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CREATORS OF DECORATIVE STYLES



# CREATORS OF DECORATIVE STYLES

## CHAPTER I

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPLIED ART IN ENGLAND

**L**EARNING for its own sake, pure culture and erudition, are not held in as high esteem in America as in some of the European countries. The American mind, as a rule, is utilitarian in type. It desires to know why it learns what it learns, to what use it may put its learning. The average American reader demands some practical *raison d'être* for any work which purports to be a study or analysis or investigation in a field that does not obviously touch the manifold interests of his daily life. Hence these introductory remarks.

Of late years Americans have been taking a more general and studious interest in that branch of decorative and applied art which is chiefly exemplified in the decoration and furnishing of their homes. Popular taste has been improving. The American householder has begun to demand something better than the builder's architecture of a generation ago

and the ready-made hodge-podge which filled the homes of that period. And in looking for that better thing, we have begun to appreciate the fact that there are things worth knowing about the styles that have stood the test of time, the merits of which have been recognized by those qualified to judge.

The first step in this movement, for it is a movement, was the vogue for so-called American Colonial furniture and its accompaniments which spread over the country a few years ago and which has not yet spent its force. Collecting of the antique became a fad, and manufacturers responded to the demand by the production of more or less accurate adaptations and reproductions.

That vogue served a good end. It started popular taste in the right direction, and we have now begun to look farther and deeper for something still better. Gradually we have been getting better educated. We have begun to question whether even Chippendale is the last word in all that is fine and desirable in furniture style. Some of us have even begun to discard our highly coloured mahogany for the softer walnut, and to-day the shop windows are displaying quite as many adaptations of Jacobean and Queen Anne styles as Colonial or Georgian.

The thing has come upon us rather rapidly, and

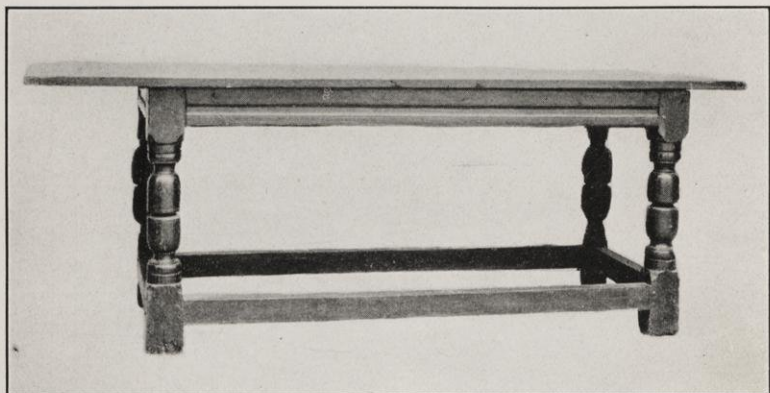


Press cupboard of oak, with typical Jacobean ornament.  
1650-1675. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Oak wainscot chair, about 1650. In the Metro-  
politan Museum of Art





Dining table of the plainer Jacobean type. 1650-1675. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Small table of oak and walnut, showing the popular spiral turning. 1660-1685. Metropolitan Museum of Art

Oak gate-leg table, with carved legs and supports. Restoration period, about 1685. Metropolitan Museum of Art

the time seems to have arrived to give a little more thought to the fundamental truths involved. The furnishing of a home is too important and permanent a matter to be hurried through lightly. We need something more than the hasty advice of a sales clerk. And since the American pocketbook is involved, the average American will not fail to see the value of a sound basis for discrimination.

What is style? What is its significance? What are the distinguishing features of various styles and periods? By what standards shall we judge of excellence? Is all this talk of styles and periods the mere chatter of a pseudo-artistic cult, or does it in some way vitally concern us?

It is not because the average American is greatly interested in so highly specialized a branch of history that the following pages have been written, but in order to give him a comprehensive survey of the subject of style development and the more important and fundamental facts that he needs to know in order to distinguish and appreciate what is going on about him in the realm of home furnishing and decoration.

Style, according to Webster, is a mode of presentation in any of the fine arts. It is the expression of an instinct, a feeling, an appreciation of the beautiful which has changed and developed with the alter-

ing tastes of mankind. In the field of the decorative and applied arts this feeling finds its expression in form, colour, and ornamental details, based chiefly on what has gone before, showing improvement or decadence with the variation of popular taste, its direction changed by many influences, but developing naturally and steadily through the action of explanatory causes. To understand this development, one must inquire into the influences which affected it before one can fully comprehend its significance or become familiar with its manifestations.

I shall confine myself to the development of style in England, because therein lies our American heritage. Our importations of style from France and other countries have usually proved to be exotic and transitory; the English styles are the ones that have always found the surest welcome in English-speaking America. Whether we recognize them or not, we are living constantly amid reminders of England's artistic past, and a full appreciation of the styles that we are reviving to-day depends upon a knowledge of that past.

There are leaders of artistic thought in America, particularly in the Middle West, who deride all this harking back to a dead past, who consider all tradition as trammeling, who seek rapid progress. But

I do not believe their influence to be firmly grounded or permanent. There have always been men with the itch for novelty, but it has not been their work that has survived, but that of masters who based their creations on established principles, on the experience of their predecessors.

Of architecture I shall speak in passing for the reason that the styles of interiors and their furnishings often followed or were influenced by the changing styles in architecture, or rather, the same influences affected both. They are parallel and cognate arts, and some of the leaders in English style development in all lines were architects.

Now it seems to me that the development of architectural and decorative style through succeeding periods of history becomes more interesting and more easily understood when we turn our attention to the personalities of the leaders of artistic thought, their lives and purposes, their education, ideals, and traditions. Thus may we reincarnate the decorative periods, giving them a human significance instead of classifying them entirely by names of monarchs or dynasties or design types or mere dates.

Yet it is not entirely easy to follow this plan through the history of period decoration in England, for the lives of the masters overlapped or left gaps in

the continuity, and some of them were architects, while others were craftsmen, connoisseurs, or designers. Still, a fairly continuous line of artistic descent may be traced from the period of the late Renaissance to the nineteenth century, and the lives of the men involved are not without elements of human interest.

It is not likely that we shall ever go back to the Gothic or early Renaissance periods for material for our modern homes. Those periods, while Classic from one point of view, were in a measure unformed, and their conditions were so different from those of modern life that they hold little of interest for any but the student and the connoisseur.

And our study of personalities must begin at a later date. In the days of the Tudor period or early Renaissance no such artistic leader appeared. Henry VIII was the patron of the Renaissance, largely because of his anti-Papist and hence anti-Gothic sympathies. He brought several artists, architects, and artisans from Italy, including John of Padua; but of John we know little, and his personality was submerged in the composite personality of Henry's court.

During the wonderfully creative period of Elizabeth's reign, when genius in literature, statecraft,

and commerce flourished, the art impulse was further quickened, but it found its expression in the work of no single man of power. Elizabethan architecture, furniture, interior decoration, and landscape design are worthy of our study as a starting-point, but not through the personality of a master.

It was not, in fact, until the Jacobean period that the real spirit of the Renaissance—a genuine revival of Classicism—took form in England, and the first great exponent of English style, Inigo Jones, lived and wrought his work. This Renaissance spirit, further developed by Sir Christopher Wren, followed by the architects, craftsmen, and designers of the Georgian era, continued alive in England until the dawn of the last century, and produced its men of genius.

The history of the decorative styles teaches us clearly that every lasting and deserving development has not been a sudden mushroom growth, responding to the demand for novelty, but has been solidly built upon what went before. The Italian Renaissance was but a revival of the ancient Greek and Roman Classic at the hands of men of originality and creative power. If, as Mr. Frank Alvah Parsons and other authorities appear to believe, we are witnessing the birth of a new Renaissance in this

twentieth century, it behooves us to become familiar with the work of the worthiest of our predecessors and the styles upon which our modern revivals and development are based.

A study of the lives of those masters of applied art who created and developed the historic styles of England, their artistic creeds, traditions, and training, should form, it seems to me, the soundest basis for a discriminating understanding of the true significance of those styles upon which we are building an art for the beautification of our modern homes.

Beginning, therefore, with Inigo Jones, it is my purpose to consider the lives and personalities of eleven of these leaders of artistic thought in England, tracing, at the same time, the contemporary development of styles in the cognate arts.

## CHAPTER II

INIGO JONES

(1573-1652)

**I**T IS with Inigo Jones, and not with the unknown artists of the Gothic and Tudor periods, that our present consideration must have its beginning. He was the first English architect whose name stands out above the others, the first to reflect the spirit of the Renaissance in its classic purity, though living after what is commonly known as the period of the Renaissance. He has been called "the English Vetruius" and "the English Palladio." He was the father of the Classic revival in English architecture, the first to discard Gothic elements entirely, and when his background and traditions are taken into consideration, the magnitude of his achievement becomes apparent. He was an artistic prophet who led a people into new paths of thought and appreciation. For though his own work was that of an architect, his influence was felt throughout the entire field of decorative and industrial art. He was, indeed, a dictator of style during the reign of Charles I.

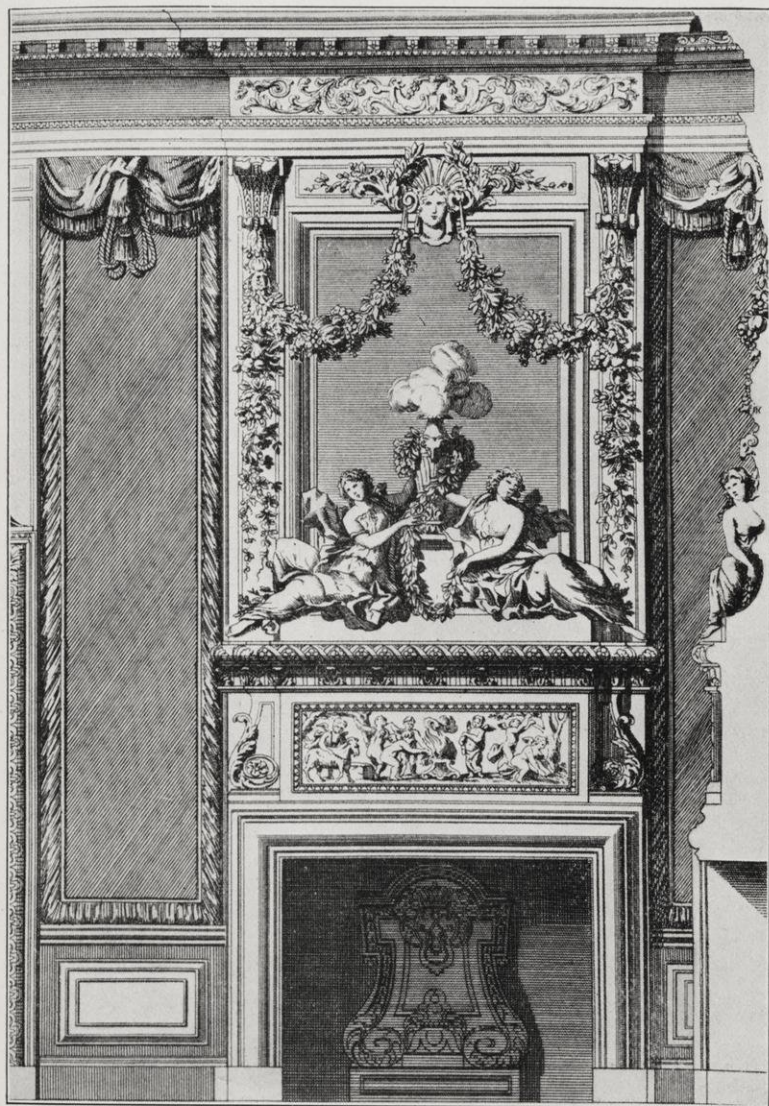


Before sketching his career in detail, it may be well to glance briefly at the background and traditions to which I have referred.

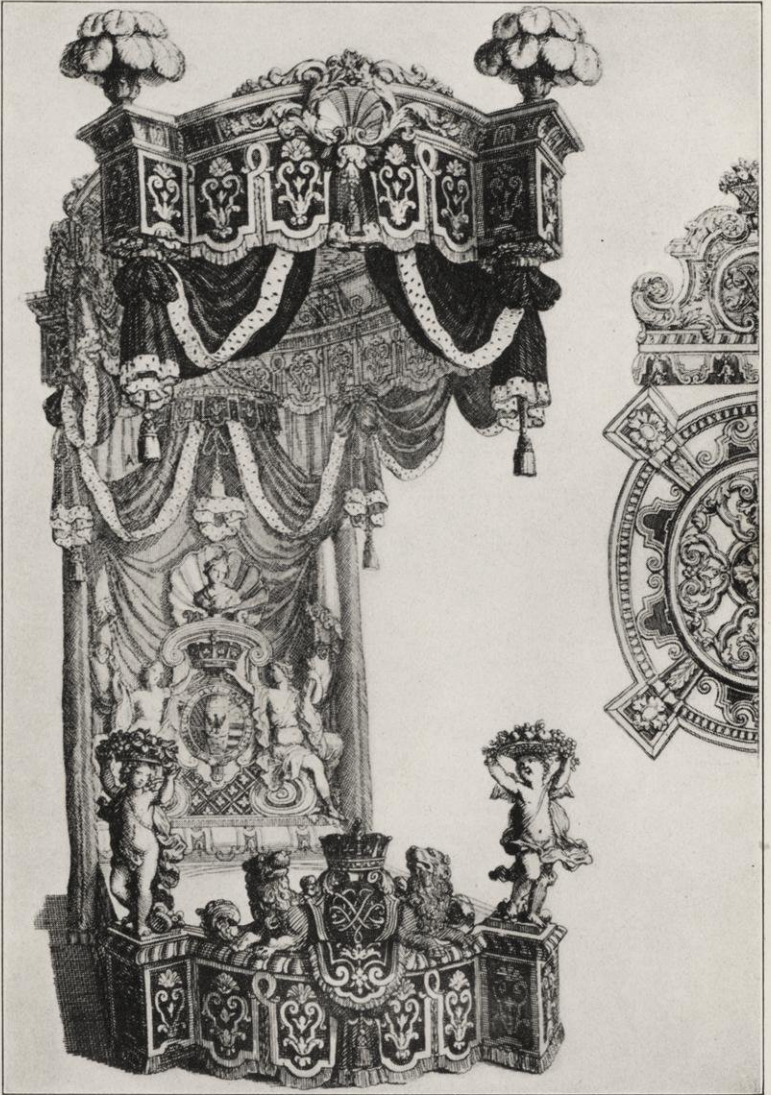
Gothic architecture, the only style that received serious consideration, had passed through the perpendicular and florid stage and had become rather confused by the beginning of the sixteenth century, so that architects were at a loss which way to turn for leadership. As has been said, Henry VIII encouraged the adoption of Italian Renaissance ideas, though his influence was as much negative as positive, rather anti-Gothic than pro-Renaissance. Gothic architecture had long been associated with the Roman Catholic Church, and the Protestant Henry was eager for anything worth while that would supplant it. And undoubtedly he did have considerable artistic appreciation and enthusiasm.

It was during Henry's reign, or about 1524, that Holbein settled in England, but his influence on architecture and decoration was not as powerful as that of John of Padua, who brought the Renaissance principles direct from Italy. John arrived in England about 1544.

By the middle of the century the restless, up-reaching spirit of the Elizabethan era began to make itself felt in architecture, home furnishings,



Chimneypiece and wall decorations designed by Daniel Marot



State bed designed by Daniel Marot

and gardens, as well as in the more active walks of life. It became an age of poetic appreciation and creation, with an increased taste for luxury, comfort, and beauty in living conditions, and this spirit was seeking for a master mind to direct it.

During the reign of Elizabeth, which covered the last half of the sixteenth century, the Gothic traditions persisted, but the spirit of the Renaissance grew ever stronger. More and more attention was paid to the suitable designing of houses and furniture. As early as 1575 strict rules of proportion, lost sight of in the elaboration of Gothic details, had become a principle of architecture, and the Greek orders were occasionally employed. More or less Classic porticoes, cornices, columns, and pilasters were introduced, and a new system of fenestration. Doors, walls, and ceilings were richly paneled in oak, fireplaces were improved and became a decorative feature of the interior, and tapestries and upholstery came into more general use. All of this was paving the way toward the Palladian style of architecture and the work of Inigo Jones.

Andrea Palladio, of Vicenza, Italy, was born in 1518, in the midst of the Italian Renaissance movement. He studied Roman architecture and published a book on the subject in 1570. He died in

1580. To him may be traced the influences which gave direction to the work of Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren, and even to the Adam brothers and our American McIntire in the eighteenth century. Jones got his inspiration direct from Palladio and was the chief exponent of the Palladian style, which wrought a complete change in English architecture and sounded the knell of Gothic supremacy.

Inigo Jones was born July 15, 1573, in the midst of the Golden Age of Elizabeth. His father was a cloth maker of West Smithfield, London, and Inigo was probably apprenticed at an early age to a joiner. The father died in 1597, leaving no fortune, and the boy had to make his own way in the world.

He early showed an aptitude for drawing and design and later for landscape painting. It is not known where or how he acquired his technique, but his work attracted the attention of the Earl of Pembroke, who sent him to Italy to study landscape painting. While at Venice he became interested in architecture and he visited Rome, where the ruins fascinated him.

In 1604 King Christianus of Denmark sent for him and it is said that he designed the Danish pal-

aces of Rosenborg and Fredericksborg, though he appears to have remained in Denmark less than a year. He then accompanied Anne of Denmark to the English Court, where he became the protégé of the Queen and of Prince Henry.

In 1605 King James gave a court masque—Ben Jonson's "The Masque of Blackness." This was the poet's first royal employment, and Jones was appointed to design the scenery and costumes and to stage the masque. In the course of the next few years he served in a similar capacity in London and Oxford. In 1610 he became a sort of stage manager for the Queen and her court at Whitehall and was appointed Surveyor of the Works to the Prince of Wales.

Upon the death of Prince Henry in 1613, Jones went again to Italy, where he made a special study of the works of Palladio. He returned to England in 1615 under the patronage of the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke and was made Surveyor of the Works to the King. His duties included the repairing of the royal palaces, the purchasing of art objects, and the production of masques, though this last activity ceased when he quarreled with Jonson.

One of his first commissions was the preparation of designs for the remodeling of Westminster,

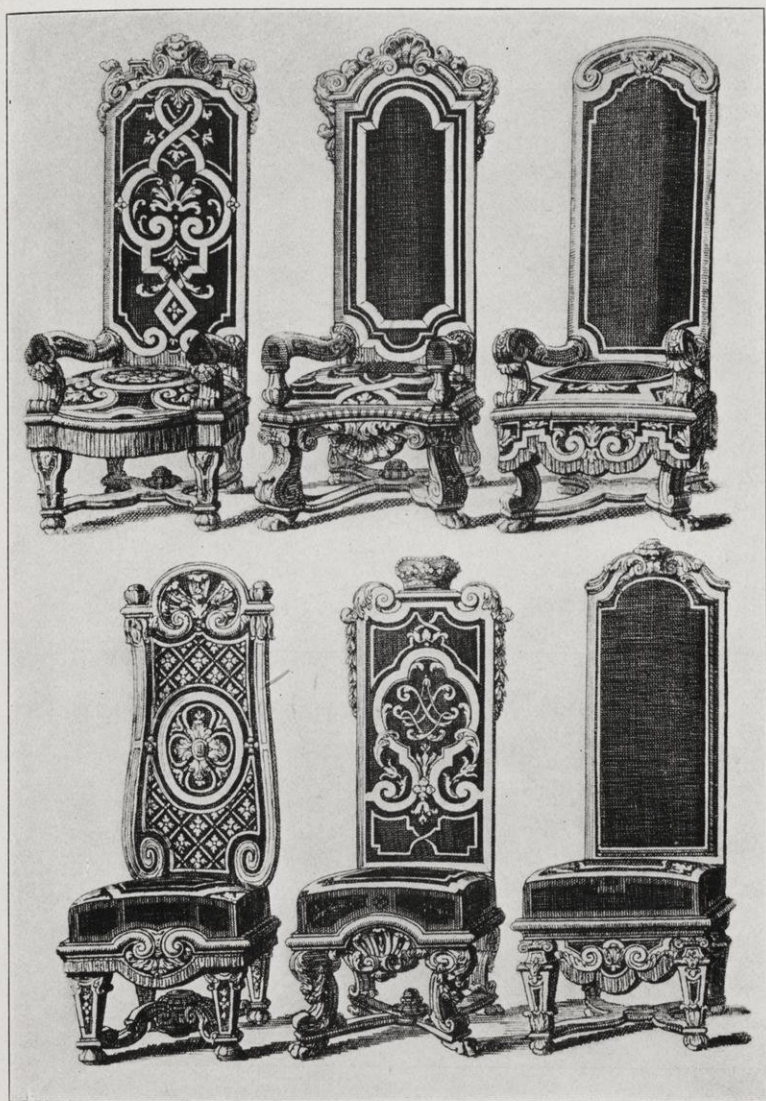
but these were never carried out, though he did superintend the alterations in the Star Chamber.

On January 12, 1619, the Banqueting House at Whitehall burned down and Jones was ordered to rebuild it. He rose to the emergency, and by June first the new plans had been approved, the ground was cleared, and the corner stone laid. The new building, in the Palladian style, was completed in 1622.

In 1620 he was commissioned to make a study of the mysterious ruins at Stonehenge, which he decided had been a temple of the Tuscan order, built by the Romans and consecrated to the worship of the god Caelus. In this theory he had but few followers even then.

In 1618 he commenced work on the chapel at Lincoln's Inn, which was completed in 1623. It was a well proportioned structure, bastard Gothic in style. The Doric pilasters in the crypt illustrate the architect's fondness for everything Roman, and yet the edifice was truer to Gothic traditions than any other of that day.

Other works of this period were the Chapel for the Infanta at Somerset House in the Strand, the water gate to the town house of the Duke of Buckingham, and the Queen's House at Greenwich, be-



Six chairs designed by Daniel Marot





Typical Charles II or Restoration chair of walnut and cane, with the Flemish foot. From the Bolles Collection



English chair of carved walnut of the William and Mary period, showing Marot's influence.

gun for Anne, queen of James I, and completed in 1635 for Henrietta Maria, queen of Charles I. Then he started on the restoration of St. Paul's, completing the plans and the west portico.

Jones continued in office under Charles I and became even more powerful as an arbiter of taste. He built the theatre of the Hall of Barber-Surgeons in Monkwell Street, London; Somerset House, York House, and Ashburnham House, Westminster, and designed the western side of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Finally he planned the square or piazza of Covent Garden for the Earl of Bedford, and a chapel for the square, which was begun in 1631 and finished in 1638.

This was his last great work, for though he lived fourteen years longer and made designs for both palaces and private residences, the Civil War practically put an end to building, and most of his greatest tasks were never completed. The fall of royalty was a severe blow to him, and he died, an unhappy man, on June 21, 1652.

Inigo Jones took up his residence at Scotland Yard in 1615, and lived there quietly the rest of his life. He was a Roman Catholic and he never married. He was never in perfect health, which perhaps accounts for his occasional tendency to quarrel and for the despondency of his latter years.

Besides houses, he designed cabinets, grottoes, gates, garden fronts, church towers, bridges, and interiors. In his portfolio were numerous designs for ceilings, walls, wainscot panels and moldings, wall fountains, etc.

Largely on account of the war he left no school of design, though one loyal follower, John Webb, kept the Palladian traditions alive until Sir Christopher Wren took up the work where Jones had left it.

The Palladian style of Inigo Jones was a form of Italian Renaissance based on the Roman and Greek, as opposed to the Gothic. He wrought the emancipation of English ideas from Gothic traditions and turned the attention of architects and designers to the fundamental principles of proportion. His style was perhaps weighed down too much by Roman heaviness, especially his mantels and doors, but he led the way to better things. He introduced Greek columns, pediments, and capitals, and his interiors abounded in fluted columns and pilasters and the lavish use of oak.

Inigo Jones was undoubtedly born with an eye for proportion, as, I think, was Stanford White, and that means genius in architecture. He was more careful than any of his predecessors of measured

working drawings, and for the first time everything, including details, was drawn to scale.

Inigo Jones was a pioneer in English decorative art, but the work of those who followed him was required to complete the artistic revolution which he began.

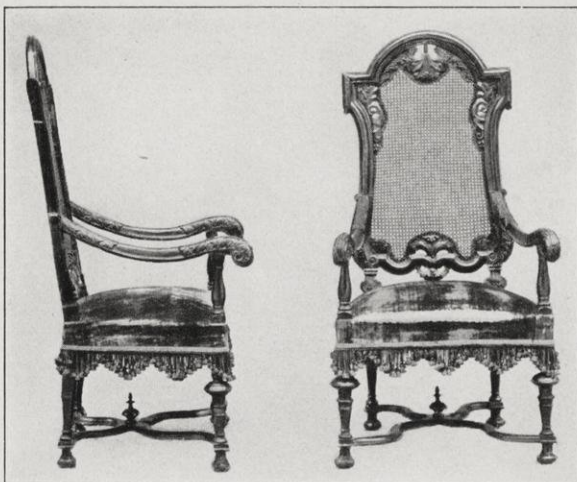
In furniture design it is not altogether easy to trace the influence of Inigo Jones, for there was no equivalent to the Palladian style in Jacobean furniture. Still, there was a constant improvement in taste in all the artistic development of the period, with a cordial reception of foreign influences, and Jones undoubtedly was largely responsible for this.

The tapestry manufactory at Mortlake, founded in 1619 in imitation of the Gobelin works in France, was one of the most important decorative enterprises of the early Jacobean period, and the general demand was for better home furnishings. Sir Henry Wotton, British ambassador to Venice in 1604, sent home some specimens of Italian wood carving and published his "Elements of Architecture." Sir Walter Raleigh sent for Flemish workmen to carve an elaborate oak chimneypiece in Youghal, Ireland. These and similar instances were indications of a popular trend toward something different and better.

Jacobean furniture design and architecture were

correlated, though the furniture remained more completely native in type and was affected less by Italian Classic influences. Rather faintly it echoed Italian furniture design. And, strangely enough, while the architects were progressing along the line of better proportion, the Jacobean cabinet-makers were devoting their attention to decoration rather than to form. Elizabethan forms were modified but not yet abandoned, and though Jacobean furniture has won the admiration of connoisseurs, the real Renaissance in furniture design did not take place until after the Restoration.

But since our interest is in the entire field of the development of applied art in England, it may be well to review briefly the furniture styles of the period. To go back to the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603), we find furniture styles in a stage of transition, a mixture of Italian Renaissance and English Gothic. Existing examples of Elizabethan furniture are comparatively rare. They include a few armchairs, heavy and square, with flat, carved backs; many stools; several large, rectangular tables on richly carved trestle supports, which were often mortised into the floor; numerous small tables, chiefly planks on movable horses; high folding screens, painted or covered with tapestry; chests, often richly



English armchair of the period of William and Mary, showing Marot's influence. Metropolitan Museum



English cabinet of the period of William and Mary, embellished with marquetry of the Dutch-Italian type. Metropolitan Museum of Art



*Cr. Wren*

Sir Christopher Wren, after the portrait painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller.  
Owned by the Royal Society

carved, and cupboards, the ancestors of the modern sideboard.

The term Jacobean or Stuart is rather loosely given to the greater part of the century, from the beginning of the reign of James I in 1603 to the end of James II's reign in 1689. But since this interval included two distinct periods of style development, it seems logical to divide it into the Jacobean period, comprising the reigns of James I and Charles I (1603-1649), and the Restoration period, including the reigns of Charles II and James II (1660-1689), with the unproductive Commonwealth or Cromwellian period intervening between the two.

Gradually furniture design emerged from the crudities and limitations of the Gothic, though retaining some of the Gothic traditions of sturdiness and virility. Eventually the Jacobean period saw the triumph of those foreign influences which began to be felt as early as the reign of Henry VIII.

At first, under James I, the styles continued in a transition state, Tudor in feeling, reflecting the influence of the preceding century. Renaissance details were added, producing furniture rather more formal and less original. Designs became flatter and the treatment of floral ornament more stiff and conventional, the ornaments being often applied.



The Tudor style died hard, but at length the Renaissance influence became dominant. Growing political and commercial intercourse with the Low Countries had its effect. Dutch and Flemish arts were introduced, and also the styles of France under Louis XIII and Louis XIV.

Most of the Jacobean furniture was rectangular in form and heavily underbraced, the legs of chairs and tables perpendicular, chair backs straight and seats flat. But though the forms were severe, the decoration was noteworthy, chiefly flat surface ornament and carving in low relief. The most prominent details were strap-work; half balusters, spindles, and drops; a running pattern of contiguous or overlapping circles or figure eights; semi-circles filled with petals; carved jewels and bosses; geometrical arrangements of panels, such as the lozenge within a square or rectangle; the rounded arch, and more or less elaborate double scrolls. Mouldings and panels were much employed. The spiral form was often used in chair legs, cupboards, and chests of drawers, not turned on a lathe, but laboriously carved out by hand. A favourite ornament for table legs, posts of bedsteads, and the supports of cupboards and cabinets, was the swelling bulb, usually carved, a survival of the Tudor period.

As the period progressed, the strap-work became more and more intricate, and some of the finer pieces of furniture were inlaid with holly and other light woods. Carved figures were gradually supplanted by turned supports and uprights, and flat surfaces were more completely covered with geometrical panels and decorated with applied ornament in real or imitation ebony.

Oak was the universal furniture material of the Jacobean period, but toward the end exotic woods began to be imported into England and the Low Countries. Where marquetry had hitherto been chiefly in ebony and ivory, Brazilian kingwood and other highly coloured woods began to be used for inlay, and furniture was made occasionally in walnut, cedar, pear wood, etc., as well as in oak.

The most prominent pieces of furniture of the period were chairs, tables, chests, and cupboards, heavy in form and carpenter-made, but beautifully carved in sharp, low relief on their broad surfaces.

Chairs were less common at first than joint-stools, forms, and benches. The chairs were of the wainscot type, more or less carved, or else plain turned chairs with three or four legs. Then more elaborate turning was introduced and lighter forms of the

wainscot chair. One type had no solid panel in the back, but two or three open arches. During the reign of Charles I twisted, spiral, and turned work became more common on the chairs, indicating Dutch influence, and a French chair was introduced, lighter than the wainscot, with turned legs and back and seat of leather or embroidered fabric.

The typical table was a heavy, rectangular affair of oak, though not so cumbersome as the Elizabethan table, with bulb-turned supports and often rails carved in arabesques or lunette patterns. Less common was a lighter, smaller table, with a single hinged leaf and a swinging leg to support it—the forerunner of the gate-leg table which was not fully developed until the period of the Restoration.

Oak chests and cupboards were common, the latter, prototype of the sideboard, being perhaps the most truly typical piece of furniture of the period. The earlier ones were chest-like, but they soon took the form of a raised dresser. Two types were developed—the press cupboard and the court cupboard. The former was closed in front, and the latter open below—a sort of chest on spiral, turned, or carved supports. Most of these cupboards were richly carved and paneled. Toward the close of the period the chest of drawers appeared.

Such, then, was the furniture of the period of Inigo Jones—still heavy in form, but showing a vitality in style that we have lately begun to appreciate, and leading up to the more elegant creations of the period of the Restoration.

## CHAPTER III

DANIEL MAROT

(*Circa* 1661-1720)

**W**HILE Sir Christopher Wren was the immediate successor of Inigo Jones, and the mantle of the master of English architecture fell upon him, his ripest work was not done until the reign of Queen Anne, and meanwhile the period of the Restoration and the Dutch invasion had added their part to the development of English style. And since the Anglo-Dutch period had its own man of genius, a contemporary of Wren and Gibbons, it seems logical to introduce him at this stage in our history, though he was not an Englishman, nor, strictly speaking, in the direct line of English artistic succession. I refer to that remarkable French designer, Daniel Marot.

Marot himself produced less effect, perhaps, on English styles than did some of the other masters whom we shall discuss, though a clever designer of notable work; he was rather the most prominent figure in a period of style development which had a profound influence on subsequent periods. He

typified the swing of British taste away from provincialism and toward greater luxury and ornateness.

As Inigo Jones was rounding out an honourable career, the revolution took place which resulted in the establishment of the Commonwealth under Cromwell. For ten years artistic development in England was at a standstill. We sometimes hear of the Cromwellian style, but it was rather an austere lack of style. The period of the Commonwealth was a passing phase of restriction.

With the accession of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, a decided reaction took place. The traditions of both the Jacobean period and the Cromwellian era were largely forgotten so far as furniture and decoration were concerned, though in architecture Wren soon took up the work of the Palladians where Jones left off. Levity and gaiety became a marked characteristic of the life of the English court, and this was reflected in the homes of the people. Walnut replaced English oak as the popular furniture wood, and a much greater ornateness and freedom of line became the rule in furniture design, with much carved scroll work, luxurious upholstery, and the increasing popularity of inlay.

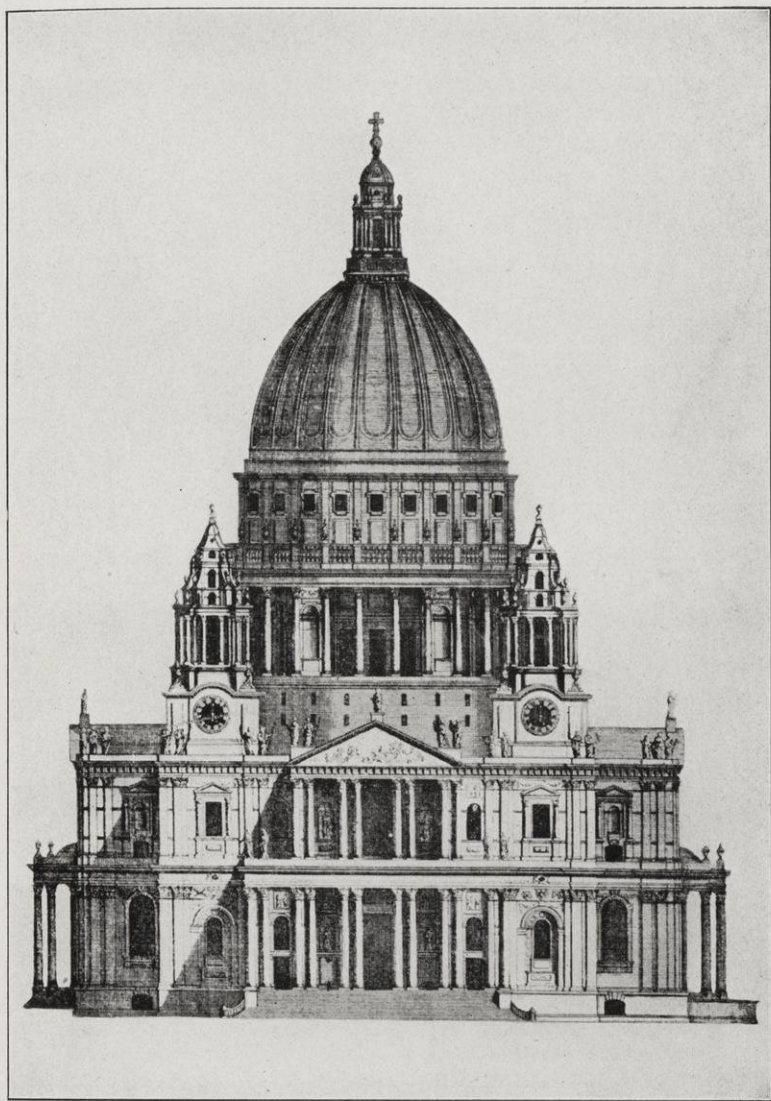
The interregnum of the Commonwealth was bar-

ren of artistic production. A severe, undecorative type of furniture, including a development of the wainscot chair with leather seat and back, was in favour with the Roundheads, and has been undeservedly dignified with the name of Cromwellian style.

With the return of Charles II to the throne in 1660, a reaction became immediately evident, and a taste for greater comfort, refinement of ornament, and elegance of form. Louis XIV was King of France from 1643 to 1715, covering the reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, and Anne. Charles II brought back with him the manners and tastes of France, Dutch and French importations became the vogue, and the Louis XIV influence was dominant in England for years. Dutch and Flemish workmen were introduced and the Continental spirit prevailed.

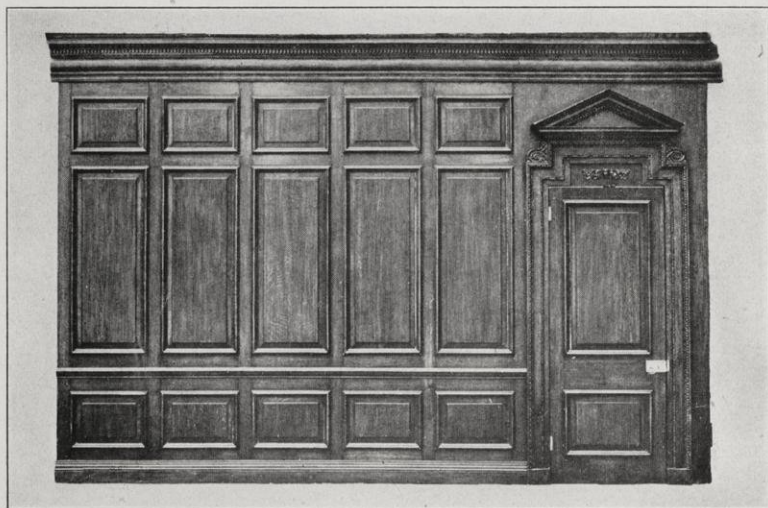
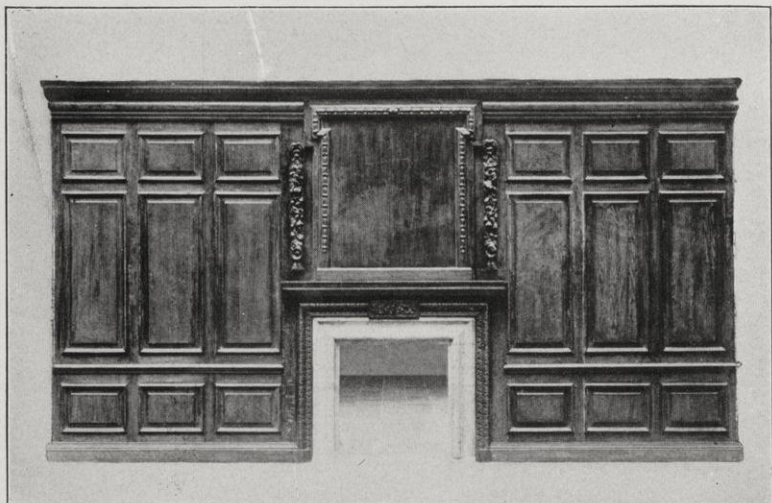
In the form and ornament of furniture of the period we can trace the French influence, with a tendency toward lighter, more graceful effects. The architectural note in furniture disappeared almost entirely. Italian, Spanish, and Flemish details are to be discovered in the English style.

Turned work and spirals were used on chair and table legs. A higher relief ornament of Baroque curves, twisted and reversed, supplanted the straight



The west prospect of St. Paul's Cathedral as designed by Wren. Begun in 1672, finished in 1710. From an old print





Wall panels, door, and chimneypiece from a mansion of the period of Sir Christopher Wren, with carving showing the influence of Grinling Gibbons. Now in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

lines, simple curves, and low relief ornament of the Jacobean period. Inlay was indulged in more freely, and pierced carving and cut work of scrolls and double scrolls, etc., on the backs, legs, and underbraces of chairs. The tulip and other foreign design details appeared in the carving, and a peculiar hook-like Flemish double scroll on the legs of chairs and tables, the forerunner of the cabriole leg.

Walnut at once began to be more popular than oak, and by the end of Charles II's reign was the fashionable cabinet wood. Oak, however, was still used for wainscoting and cedar for doors, and pine occasionally for purposes of painting or gilding.

About 1675 clocks and small tables began to be decorated with marquetry, and inlay of *lignum vitae*, amboyna, rosewood, sycamore, ebony, ivory, mother-of-pearl, and other materials increased in popularity. At first the designs were largely the acanthus, foliage, scroll-work, etc., of Italian inspiration, used in the Dutch method.

Cane panels and insets became popular for the seats and backs of chairs, as well as upholstery. Cane furniture was received by Holland from Spain and Italy, and was introduced into England. Expensive textiles and embroideries became more common in upholstery.

The typical chairs of the period were a distinct innovation. They were of beech or walnut, with high, narrow backs. Seats and backs were of cane, upholstery, or tooled leather. They were often surmounted with a crown or Tudor rose, and the carved and pierced scroll-work of the cresting, sides of the back, and underbraces showed unmistakable evidences of foreign influence. In general, there were two types, Flemish and Spanish. The former had a cane panel in the back with a carved border of scroll-work, supported by turned or twisted uprights. The legs were usually roughly S-shaped, with the Flemish scroll foot and a broad scroll-work underbrace in front. The Spanish type had a solid back of cane or tooled leather, turned legs, and the flaring Spanish foot.

Table legs became slenderer and more elaborately turned. Long oak dining-tables, with turned legs and carved aprons, gave place to walnut dining-tables with two leaves. The most noteworthy innovation of the period, however, was the gate-leg table, which had just begun to make its appearance during the reign of Charles I and which owed its introduction largely to the need for a small, light table to serve the growing vogue of tea, coffee, and cocoa drinking and card playing. It had a round,

oval, square, or oblong top, with two hinged leaves supported on legs which pulled forward like gates. Eight or more turned legs and supports were its noticeable feature, and when closed it was narrow and occupied small space.

Ordinary chests gradually gave place to chests of drawers and cupboards with drawers. These, together with cabinets, clock cases, etc., were often elaborately inlaid. The beds, however, continued to be large and heavy, with clumsy testers and stuffy hangings.

In 1685 the persecution of Protestants in France and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV sent many refugees into England. Among them were skilled designers and workmen who brought their styles with them, so that the English furniture of the time of James II was noticeably Louis XIV in character.

When James departed in 1689, leaving the English throne to Mary and her royal consort, styles underwent a subtle change. The Dutch William imported Dutch workmen who added to the style of the previous reign a touch of what had been the Dutch development of the Italian Renaissance and the later French styles. The chairs, for example, while still showing a general similarity of line to

those of Charles II, became somewhat heavier. The predominating type had turned or carved legs, with curved, crossed stretchers, and carved, upholstered, or cane backs. The Spanish and Flemish feet vanished.

It was at this time that Daniel Marot came to do his work in England.

To begin with, Marot had every advantage of training and tradition. He lived and learned during the progressive artistic period of Louis XIV and was associated with the artistic leaders of his day.

He came from a family of craftsmen and designers. His grandfather, Girard Marot, was a skillful and successful cabinet-maker. His father, Jean Marot, who was born about 1620, became an architect of considerable importance in Paris, and also a clever engraver.

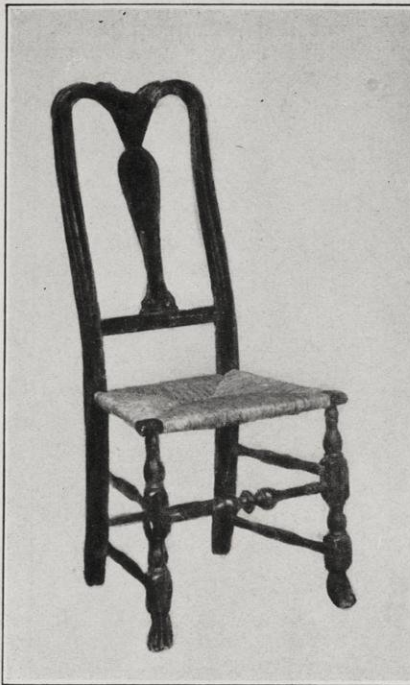
Daniel was born in Paris in 1661. (The date is doubtful; some biographers have placed it as early as 1650). He probably worked for his father for some years, and learned from him the arts of designing and engraving. But Daniel had a more fertile and versatile mind than his father, and it was not long before he was seeking greater scope for his activities. He caught the spirit of the Louis XIV



High chest of drawers of the William and Mary period, with Flemish paneling. Note the typical form of the turned legs and the shaped stretchers. Metropolitan Museum of Art



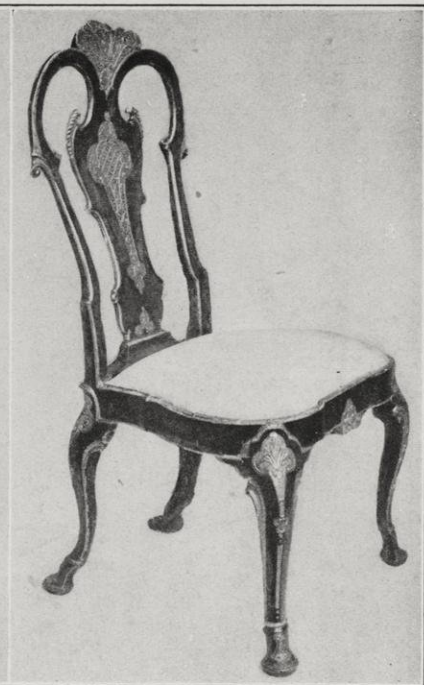
Late Queen Anne or Early Georgian highboy, beautifully finished, in walnut veneer. Note the Dutch legs, broken arch pediment, and brass fittings



Early Queen Anne chair, with Dutch back, rush bottom, and Spanish foot. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Secretary or bookcase desk with the double-arch top introduced during the time of Queen Anne



A later Queen Anne chair of the more ornate type, made of walnut decorated with carving and gilding. Metropolitan Museum of Art

style, with all its baroque luxuriance, and by 1680 he had become one of the leading designers of the day.

Le Brun was at this time engaged in his tapestry works and was drawing on the best artistic talent in the land. He made use of Marot's skill, as well as that of Jean de Pautre, André Charles Boulle, and others of less prominence. From these two masters particularly young Daniel learned much. He is known to have done considerable work for Boulle, especially the designing of bracket clocks in a style which we find echoed by Chippendale later.

But the Marots were Huguenots, and in 1685 they fled from France with their fellow Protestants. Daniel, like many others, went first to Holland, and there he found a ready welcome. For his fame had spread across the border, and William, the Stadtholder of Orange, with all his peculiarities, was a man with a ripe appreciation for artistic excellence. William commanded his services at once, and Marot designed and installed new decorations for the palace at Loo, near Zutphen. Later he designed the interiors in the Château de Voorst.

This work was all in the French manner of the period, but the Dutch environment no doubt had



an influence on Marot and his style was modified thereby.

When the Stadtholder became William III of England, in 1689, he sent for Marot. The records are not very clear or uniform on this point, but it is believed that Marot went to England in 1689, and became royal architect and Master of the Works. This position must have given him greater power over the trend of artistic taste in England than he has generally been credited with. Of his architectural achievements, little is known; no English building of note has been attributed to him. His work was chiefly in the designing of interiors and furniture, and though little remains to which his name can with certainty be attached, he left his mark on the styles of the period.

His principal known work was the adornment of Hampton Court Palace. No doubt he worked with Wren in the construction of the new wing, and he designed most of the new furniture which William caused to be placed in Hampton Court and Windsor Castle. He probably designed the great bed of state, and other beds, chairs, mirrors, etc., were built to his design for the royal palaces. It is likely, too, that he designed decorations and furniture for other mansions and palaces in the realm.

In 1698 he redesigned some of the gardens at Hampton Court.

The date of Marot's death is not definitely known. He was still alive in 1718, and it is thought that he died in England shortly after that. No portrait of him has been left to us, and we do not know what sort of man he was. But we do know something of his style. If he was not a man of genius, he was at least highly gifted.

Fortunately, Marot was an engraver as well as a designer, and many of his designs, in France and later, were engraved on copper and printed for the use of cabinet-makers and manufacturers. A number of these plates were brought together in 1712 at Amsterdam and printed in a book called "*Oeuvre du Sieur D. Marot, Architecte de Guillaume III, Roy de la Grand Bretagne.*" Later another book of engravings appeared, entitled "*Nouveau Livre d'Ornaments pour L'Utilité des Sculptures, etc. D. Marot, Architecte de Guillaume III, Roy d'Angleterre, etc.*" While in Holland he published six plates of ironwork designs. "*Das Ornamentwerk des Daniel Marot*" was published in Berlin in 1892, from old plates.

These designs show a large, powerful, if elaborate style, bearing the earmarks of Louis XIV.

Marot's work, like Boulle's, was sumptuous, even extravagant. His scope was broad, his pencil facile and clever.

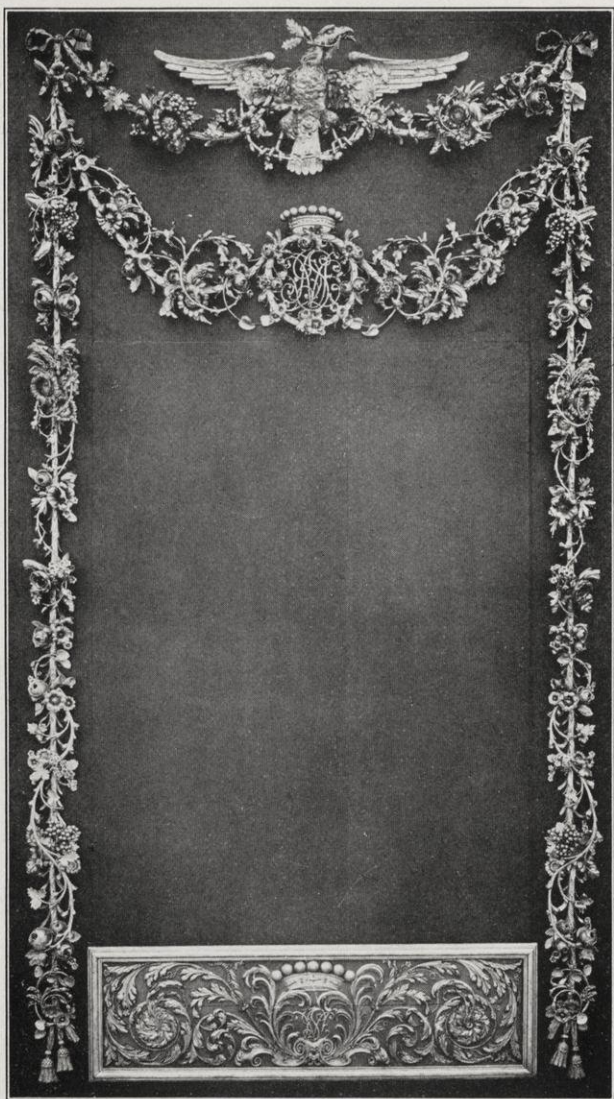
His interiors were often rich and harmonious, if somewhat over-elaborate. He designed fireplaces, chimneypieces, and panels for walls and ceilings. His designs for carvings included mouldings, cupids, and swags or festoons that suggest Gibbons's later work. He designed all sorts of furniture, girandoles, wall brackets, decorative sculpture, fountains, monuments, picture and mirror frames, garden vases, garden plans, ironwork, and state coaches. His textile designs were also noteworthy, and included embroidery, petit point, velours patterns, etc. He was, moreover, a prolific designer of gold and silver plate, including tea urns and cream jugs.

His chairs were heavy, elaborate affairs, suggesting at once Charles II, Louis XIV, and Dutch influences. His state beds were huge, with magnificent carved headboards, often capped with plumes and with voluminous draperies of silk or velvet. He also designed the remarkable silver-plated furniture for which the monarch showed a strange preference.

Finally, he was a designer of clocks and watches, the tall-case or grandfather clock owing its development in a large measure to him.



Grinling Gibbons, after the portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller



Overmantel from Holme Lacy, carved in oak by Grinling Gibbons, now in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

One of Marot's design motifs, which he did not learn from Boulle, was a head or pictorial subject, often carved, inserted in medallion form in a heavy framework of ornament. In some of his pieces inlay took the form of geometrical, floral, and animal patterns, combined with marquetry in warmly tinted exotic woods, all marked by an unsurpassed degree of excellence in workmanship.

The furniture styles of the William and Mary period deserve to be better known. They have commonly been confused with the styles of the Restoration on the one hand and of Queen Anne on the other, though they are distinct from either. The confusion of William and Mary furniture with that of Louis XIV is more natural, since the resemblance is greater. However, there is already to be observed a tendency among modern designers of reproductions to popularize the William and Mary style, and we are likely soon to value it more highly.

The furniture of this period was perhaps better suited to domestic uses than any that preceded it, though the Queen Anne furniture surpassed it in this respect. The demand for greater comfort continued, as well as the demand for tasteful ornament.

William's nationality, the close commercial relations with Holland, the importation of Dutch work-

men, and the influence of Daniel Marot were all factors in the style development of the period. The popularity of Flemish features gave way presently to the Dutch and Huguenot influence, and William and Mary furniture is, at bottom, Louis XIV in style. And the Louis XIV style, it should be remembered, was based on the Italian.

Marot's designs, though somewhat more elaborate and florid than most others, were fairly typical of the period. They show considerable carving, but this gradually gave place to inlay, especially on the flat surfaces of cabinets, chests of drawers, etc. Turning continued in vogue, and japanning became popular.

During the reign of William and Mary the age of walnut was at its height, though walnut continued to be the fashionable cabinet wood until it was superseded by mahogany in the eighteenth century. Marquetry of the Dutch type was most popular from about 1675 to 1700, and elaborate inlay work was done on oak, walnut, chestnut, and beech in various exotic woods and other materials. The designs were largely realistic foliage and flowers in the Dutch style, giving place later to intricate scrolls.

One of the most noteworthy developments of the period was the high chest of drawers, which became

known in Queen Anne's day as the highboy (French *haut-bois*). At first this was comparatively small and stood on short bracket or ball feet. Later the drawers were mounted on six legs, usually ornamented with a bulbous or cup-shaped form in the turning, fixed to a shallow plinth, or joined near the floor by a curving underframe. It was capped by a straight cornice and was frequently embellished with marquetry of the Italian or Dutch type. It was usually made in two sections, an upper and a lower, for ease in moving. There was also a Dutch type of desk, similar to the later secretary.

The chairs followed the Continental lead in form and ornament. The transition was gradual from the Spanish-Flemish type to the Dutch adaptation of Louis XIV. The legs of chairs and tables often showed the cup-shaped turning, with the waving line in the underbracing. Cane and upholstery continued in use in the chairs, but solid backs of cane took the place of the narrow panels of the Restoration.

In the following reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) furniture styles underwent a further change, and Marot's influence appears to have waned. A discussion of the styles of this period will be reserved for another chapter.

Marot's style was marked by an elaboration of



detail which was also noticeable in a few other decorative lines during the last decade of the seventeenth century. Jean Tijou's book of designs for wrought ironwork, published in 1693, shows something of this. So do the wood carvings of Grinling Gibbons. There was a noticeable artistic kinship among these men.

Meanwhile, architecture had been following a development of its own, strongly influenced by the French, but nevertheless a true development of the Palladian treatment of Inigo Jones. Sir Christopher Wren had been doing his earlier work in this period, and the achievements of that remarkable man will be made the subject for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

(1632-1723)

**T**HE work of Sir Christopher Wren, mathematician, scientist, and architect, a man of extraordinary powers, marks, in many respects, the climax of Classic style development in England. As I have before pointed out, the period of the so-called English Renaissance fell in the first half of the sixteenth century, when the influence of Henry VIII and John of Padua were paramount. But the real Renaissance, slow to mature, came to its own in England nearly two hundred years later, when Sir Christopher Wren, following the pioneer work of Inigo Jones, developed that form of Classicism which is largely Renaissance in spirit, but which is usually termed Early Georgian to distinguish it from the later Classic renderings of Adam and Chambers. The term is somewhat of a misnomer, however, since Wren was at the height of his power before the reign of George I.

Wren was England's greatest architect. That was partly because of his genius, partly because of the

unusual opportunities that fell to his lot. He was, moreover, the chief conservator of England's highest artistic traditions. Of all the masters of architecture and applied art in England, his achievements were the most noteworthy, his influence the most lasting, his figure looms largest.

Christopher Wren was born in Knowle, Wiltshire, October 20, 1632. He was a son of Dr. Christopher Wren, a noted mathematician and fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, and a nephew of the Bishop of Ely.

He was an uncommonly precocious boy, and as early as 1644 he was described by Evelyn as "that miracle of a youth." He entered Oxford University when about fourteen years of age and promptly distinguished himself for his unusual ability in mathematics. Incidentally, he dabbled a bit in poetry. In 1652 he received the Master of Arts degree for his work in mathematics and was made a fellow of All Soul's College.

He then became interested in astronomy, and in 1657 was made Professor of Astronomy at Gresham. In 1661 he became Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. In 1663 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and contributed many learned treatises. He also produced, about this time, a num-

ber of important inventions and discoveries in the field of mechanics.

Architecture, however, was to become Wren's great work in life, and all this time he had been studying that subject and gaining skill in drawing. Even during the period of the Commonwealth, when building and architectural development were at a standstill, and furniture reverted to a styleless type, Wren had been studying both current tastes and historic architecture.

His first architectural work of significance was the chapel of Pembroke College, Cambridge, a commission which he obtained through the influence of his uncle, Bishop Matthew Wren. This was completed and dedicated in 1665. This and other work attracted attention. Following the tradition of Inigo Jones, Wren sought to produce beauty through proportion rather than ornament. In this he was so successful that in 1661 he was introduced to Charles II, probably by Evelyn.

Jones and Webb were dead and Sir John Denham, Surveyor of the Works, was not their equal in ability. The king, therefore, engaged Wren to assist Denham in the completion of the palace at Greenwich. Working under Denham, Wren had an opportunity to study the work of Inigo Jones. The Puritans had

made a hodge-podge of St. Paul's Cathedral, and Wren made plans to restore it on Palladian lines. Fire, however, destroyed the building, and these particular plans were never carried out. At about this time, also, the Archbishop of Canterbury engaged Wren to build the University Theatre at Oxford, an auditorium 70 x 80 feet without columns.

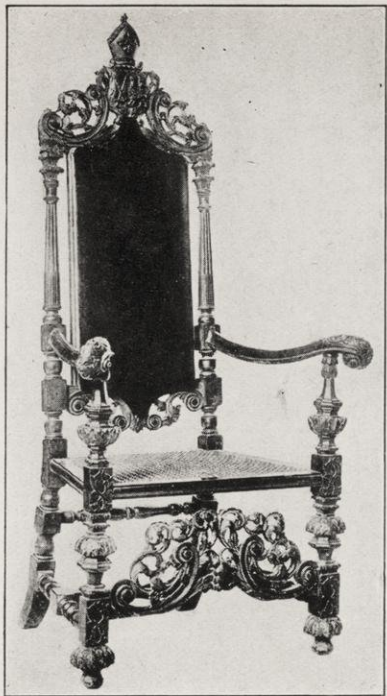
These activities fired the young man's ambition and imagination to such an extent that he set about acquiring a more thorough knowledge of architecture. In 1665 he went to France and for a year he studied the architecture of the French Renaissance and of Louis XIV.

Returning in the spring of 1666 he completed his plans for the remodeling of St. Paul's, but in September of that year the great fire wiped out many of the most important buildings of London, including St. Paul's with its beautiful portico by Inigo Jones.

This disaster proved to be Wren's great opportunity and accounts for the extraordinary number of public buildings designed by him. London had to be rebuilt, and Wren set about making a model for the new city. In this idea of city planning, however, he was ahead of his time, and his plan was never carried out in its entirety.



The Stoning of St. Stephen, the famous composition carved in wood by Grinling Gibbons, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum



*Copyright by Tyrants*

The Bishop's Chair, St. Paul's Cathedral, period of James II. A Restoration type with carving in the style of Gibbons



The coat of arms of George I, with a graceful mantling of acanthus leaves. Carved in lime wood by Grinling Gibbons, deeply undercut and unpainted. This is one of the best examples of his work in America. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

To give a list of Wren's London buildings in their chronological order is impossible, for their number was great and work on the various ones overlapped. Between 1668 and 1718 he designed or built at least fifty-five churches and a dozen important public buildings. There were theatres, palaces, hospitals, public halls, and private mansions too numerous to mention in detail. One of his biographers, James Elmes, gives a list of 132 notable works.

Unfortunately, a number of Wren's churches have since been destroyed or have been hopelessly altered, but enough of his work remains to give a fairly clear idea of the volume and dignity of it. Perhaps the most famous of his London buildings were the Church of St. Stephen in Walbrooke, St. Mary-le-Bow, the Monument, and the Cathedral of St. Paul.

St. Stephen's was built between 1671 and 1677, with huge Doric pillars 202 feet high. For taste and proportion it has been considered the equal of anything in Italy. St. Paul's, however, was Wren's most monumental work. It was built between 1675 and 1710 and included a wonderful amount of detail work, the most notable of which were the carvings of Grinling Gibbons, of which more anon.



Outside of London, one of the first of the more notable buildings of this period was the theatre at Oxford, completed in 1669. The Seaman's Hospital at Greenwich is considered, in many respects, the finest of Wren's work and the most noteworthy building of its kind in England. Wren's alterations in Hampton Court Palace, which were begun in 1689 and finished in 1718, are also famous.

In 1673 Wren resigned his professorship at Oxford to devote his entire attention to architecture. In 1674 he was knighted for his services. In 1675 he was appointed chief advisor in the establishment of the royal observatory at Greenwich.

About this time Wren married the daughter of Sir Thomas Coghill, by whom he had one son, Christopher. She died, and he married an Irish lady, a daughter of the Baron of Lifford.

In 1680 he was elected president of the Royal Society and was appointed architect of Chelsea College. In 1684 he became Comptroller of Works of Windsor Castle, and in 1688, on the death of Denham, he became Surveyor-General. He was twice a member of Parliament, in 1685 and 1700.

In 1718 Wren, through a court intrigue, was ousted from his position and retired from active life. Up to this time he had lived in Scotland Yard,

near the former home of Inigo Jones. In 1718 he moved to St. James Street, Westminster.

Wren died on February 25, 1723, at the age of ninety-one, and was interred with honour in St. Paul's. The cathedral had been completed, and Wren, unlike Inigo Jones, lived to see the crowning of his work. He was a small, slight man, naturally frail, but he managed to retain good health and enjoy an unusually long life of activity, largely because of his exemplary habits and his practical knowledge of physiology. He was modest, devout, virtuous, companionable.

He left St. Paul's, England's noblest temple; Hampton Court, England's largest and finest palace; Greenwich, England's most beautiful hospital, not to mention a dozen other buildings that stand pre-eminent.

Wren was twenty years old when Inigo Jones died, and he followed the Palladian, anti-Gothic traditions of his predecessor. He was an even greater stickler for pure proportion than Jones, many of his buildings being almost devoid of added ornament. In his domestic work he created the best of what has come to be known as the Queen Anne style.

Unlike Jones, Wren never visited Italy, and owing to his studies in France he was chiefly influenced by

the style of Louis XIV. Mary-le-Bow Church, the hospitals at Greenwich and Chelsea, and the additions to Hampton Court Palace are all evidences of this. The Fountain Court at Hampton is a direct imitation of the gardens of Versailles. Nevertheless, Wren's inspiration came, if indirectly, from Rome. He loved the Greek orders; he was essentially a Classicist. Louis XIV built no churches worthy of Wren's study.

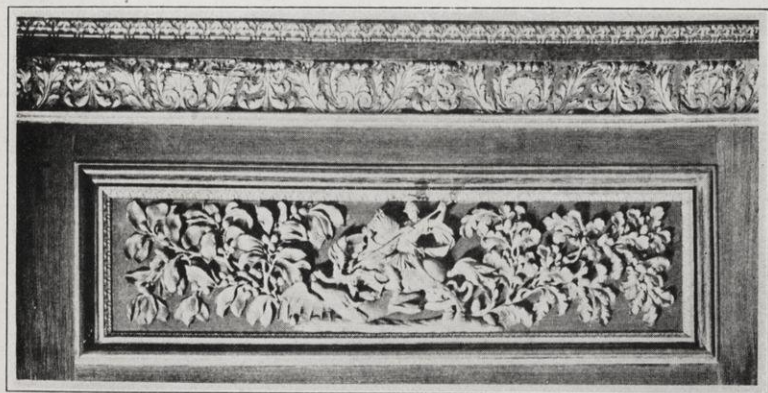
Wren's influence on style has been widespread and lasting. Modern architects continue in his debt. During his life and for some time after, his influence was paramount in this country; witness the dignified interiors of the Palladian type in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, and in the Colonial houses of Portsmouth and elsewhere. Our Capitol at Washington, many of our state capitols, court houses, and similar buildings, as well as some of our older churches all echo the taste of Sir Christopher Wren.

It is not too much to say, I think, that England owes more to Wren than to any other single man for her artistic heritage. He, more than any other, raised and crystallized public taste and fostered a desire among a people not essentially artistic for better, more beautiful surroundings, based upon a

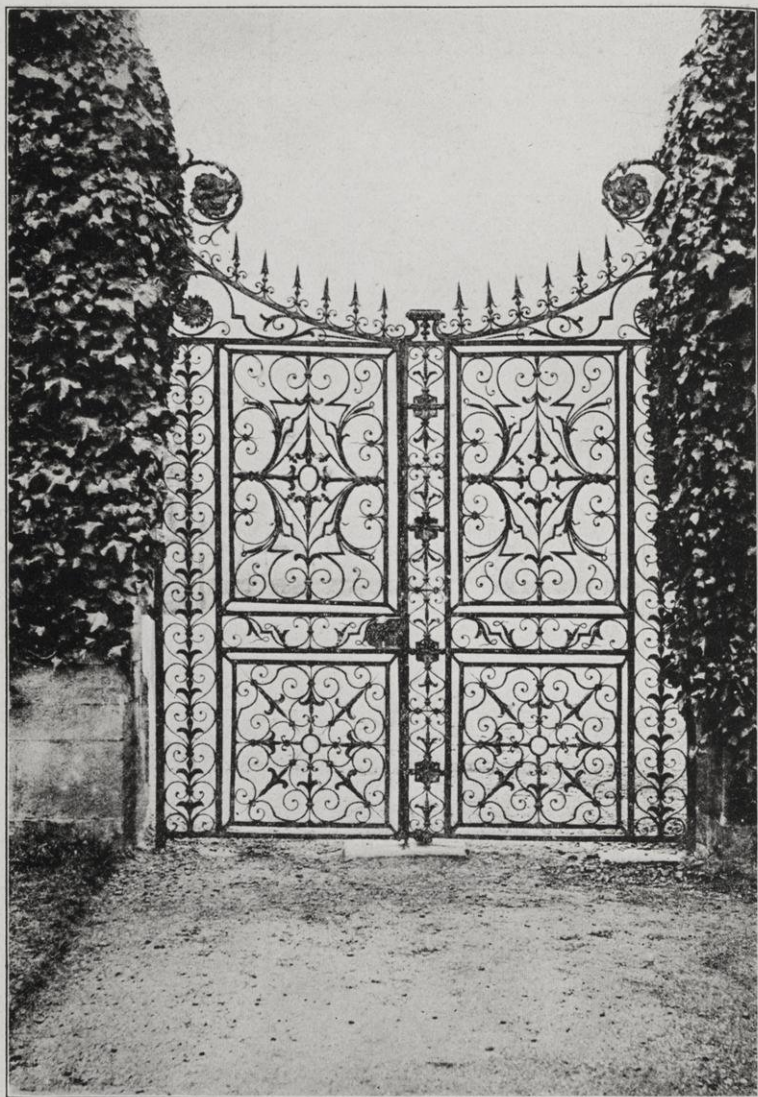


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The Last Supper, the reredos painting in St. James's Church, with a carved frame by Grinling Gibbons



Carving now over the east door of the Throne Room at Windsor Castle, by Grinling Gibbons



Wrought iron gates at Eaton Hall, Chester, designed by Jean Tijou and perhaps brought from Hampton Court

sound understanding of the principles of decorative art—a desire that survived him for nearly a century.

He founded a school and lived to see it flourish. His work was carried on more or less consistently by Burlington, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor, Gibbs, Archer, James, Kent, Campbell, and other architects of less distinction, and later Sir William Chambers and Robert Adam fell heir to the Classic inheritance.

Through the influence of Jones and Wren the Palladian tradition found expression in the interiors of the Queen Anne period in spite of the popularity of furniture of the Dutch type. On the actual designing of furniture, however, it does not appear that Wren attempted to exert any appreciable influence. It was following an evolution of its own.

I have already spoken of the furniture styles of the William and Mary period in the chapter on Daniel Marot. Toward the end of that period and at the beginning of Queen Anne's reign (1702-1714) Dutch elements continued to dominate, Dutch lines becoming more marked in the form of the furniture, while the French elements of Louis XIV were largely abandoned, to remain in the background until Chippendale and his contemporaries introduced the Louis XV style. The flamboyance of the Restoration and Marot types of ornament gave place to a

decorative style in furniture which, if less elegant, possessed more inherent grace and virility.

As the period advanced, foreign elements were largely assimilated and something approaching a distinctly English style was developed. For this reason, if for no other, the Queen Anne styles deserve a higher rating than they have sometimes received. The forms were better adapted to use than any that had preceded them. They tended toward greater comfort, lightness, and simplicity.

Curves appeared more abundantly, especially in the legs and backs of chairs. Rectangular forms were modified. The straight turned leg gave place to the cabriole and underbracing largely disappeared. The cyma curve was generally adopted in chair backs, the legs of chairs, tables, highboys, lowboys, etc.; on the scroll tops of highboys and secretaries, and on the aprons of highboys, lowboys, etc. The mirror frames of the period showed the same motif. Carving became more restrained and simpler in design. In general, more attention was paid to form than to ornament.

Walnut continued to be the popular wood, and veneering was more generally employed. The fashion for marquetry gradually declined. Incidentally, there grew up a craze for lacquered furniture, and

this, with the attendant vogue for Chinese ornament, carried further at a later date by Chambers and Chippendale, presented the one confusing and discordant decorative element of the period.

The typical chair of the period was relatively large, with simpler, more graceful lines than those of the previous period, and was, in general, the forerunner of the Chippendale chair. The seat was broad and deep, with curved outlines. The back was still comparatively high and narrow shouldered, shaped for comfort, and tilted back from the perpendicular. The outline was a continuous curve, and in place of the rectangular panel of the Restoration there was a broad, vase-shaped or fiddle-shaped splat. The typical leg was the cabriole or bandy-leg, with the round Dutch foot; the ball-and-claw foot was of later date. Often the front legs only were cabriole, the back legs being straight or slightly curved. Carving was reduced to a few details, such as a shell on the knee of the leg and in the middle of the top of the back. Most of the chairs were of plain or veneered walnut, though a few were more elaborately decorated with carving and gilding or lacquer.

The roundabout or corner chair was an introduction of this period, and also the banister-back, slat-back, and Windsor chairs of the cottages, though



these were not in the direct line of style development.

Styles in tables followed a development similar to that of the Queen Anne chair. Various sorts of small, light tables and stands were a feature of the period. The tripod stand was introduced and tray-top tables, small leaf tables, and a variety of tea, card, and side tables were popular.

The high chest of drawers was developed into the highboy, in which the six turned legs gave place to four cabrioles, and brass drawer pulls and escutcheons became common. A double round arch was used at the tops of highboys, bookcases, etc., and later the broken arch or swan-neck pediment was introduced. The lowboy, or dresser, was similar to the lower part of the highboy, without the upper chest of drawers. Bureaus, cabinets, corner cupboards and double chests of drawers were all representative of the period.

The slant-top desk or scrutoire, with brass fittings and short cabriole or bracket legs, came into vogue, and the tall clock case was improved and often provided with the broken arch pediment at the top. For the first time the bedstead underwent a genuine improvement, becoming lighter, with slenderer posts, cabriole legs, and the broken arch on the headboard. The typical Queen Anne mirror frame was a flat

piece of walnut, shaped with a jigsaw and ornamented with a moderate amount of gilding.

During the reign of George I (1714-1727) and the early part of George II's reign, furniture styles underwent a gradual transition from Queen Anne to Chippendale. The ball-and-claw foot on the cabriole leg came into vogue about 1715. The French influence again began to make itself felt. An increasing fondness for lacquered furniture and Chinese types of ornament and form became manifest and various other elements entered in, so that the way was prepared for the versatility and occasional extravagances of the Chippendale period which followed. The introduction of mahogany, too, made a vast difference. In fact, there were so many influences at work that no genuine Classic revival in furniture is noticeable, in spite of Wren's predominance in the field of architecture, until the time of Robert Adam. For the moment the development of style in architecture and furniture, though each undoubtedly felt the influence of the other, was traveling along separate lines, which did not converge for fifty years.

Meanwhile, we will turn back to the days of Sir Christopher Wren for a consideration of the special contributions of Grinling Gibbons and Jean Tijou to the decorative styles of that period.

## CHAPTER V

GRINLING GIBBONS

(1648-1721)

**I**T IS possible that Grinling Gibbons, in spite of his genius as a craftsman, might have lived and died in comparative obscurity if it had not been for the fact that the spirit of the times in which he lived demanded just the sort of work he could do so marvelously well. Sir John Evelyn discovered him and Sir Christopher Wren took him in hand and made the most of his talents, for Wren's work demanded interior embellishment and that was just what Gibbons could supply.

Grinling Gibbons was a wood carver who did most of his work under Wren in the latter part of the seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. In some way he acquired the spirit of the Italian Renaissance in his work, and this fitted in admirably with the work Wren was doing in architecture.

Wainscoting of wood had been in vogue since Tudor days. Oak persisted, even after walnut had become popular for furniture. Inigo Jones, who founded the school of Classicism to which Wren

belonged, introduced the use of painted soft woods in interiors, and Wren followed his example. To this fact was due much of Gibbons's success, for he possessed hardly the patience to conquer the tough-grained oak.

It was customary to have the wainscot panels set by joiners and finished by carvers. Jones was handicapped by a paucity of good workmen, and would doubtless have left more noteworthy examples of interior carving if he could have found craftsmen skilful enough to execute it. But he stimulated the development of good workmanship, so that Wren found himself born under a luckier star. Both Wren and Gibbons owed much to their predecessor for breaking the road they were to travel. Wren was a broader man than Jones, and his opportunities were far greater, and Gibbons, his employee and collaborator, was swept up to fame with him.

Gibbons was the greatest carver before Chippendale, though not the first. Nicholas Stone, a sculptor, achieved prominence during the reign of James I. He was followed by his son, John Stone, who was followed, in turn, by Caius Gabriel Cibber. Gibbons, who came next, struck a new note in carving, and his fame outshone that of his predecessors.

Details of the private life of Grinling Gibbons are somewhat meagre. The date and place of his birth have long been a matter of controversy. The most persistent account has it that his father was Simon Gibbon, an English carpenter, who had worked under Inigo Jones and who migrated to Holland during the slack times of the Commonwealth. Grinling, according to this story, was born in Rotterdam on April 4, 1648 (the date is possibly a matter of conjecture), and returned to England with his father in 1667, when he was nineteen years old. Other chroniclers state that his parents were Dutch and that he was one of many Dutch craftsmen to settle in England at that time. The family located in Yorkshire where, it is said, Grinling served an apprenticeship to ETTY, the architect. Later they moved to Deptford, and here, it is supposed, Grinling learned and worked at the trade of ship carver.

Another account makes the elder Gibbon a Dutchman who had migrated to England early in life, and states that Grinling was born in Spur Alley, the Strand, London, and afterward moved to Ludgate Hill.

The name was undoubtedly spelled without the final "s" originally, and some biographers cling to

that spelling, but as Grinling himself adopted the additional "s," Gibbons has become the generally accepted spelling.

Wherever Grinling was born, and whether his father was a carver or not, it is difficult to understand where he gained his superb technique and his comprehension of the Renaissance spirit. Perhaps Etty was his teacher, or possibly some obscure master in the shipyards of Deptford deserves the credit for developing a genius.

At all events, he appears to have migrated to London, and in 1671 he was working in a little shop, unknown and unappreciated, when Sir John Evelyn, the diarist, chanced upon him and was amazed by the extraordinary strength and finish of his workmanship. Evelyn thus records the meeting:

"This day I first acquainted His Majesty with that incomparable young man Gibbon, whom I had lately met with in an obscure place by accident as I was walking near a poor solitary thatched house in a field in our parish near Sayes Court. I found him shut in; but looking through the window I perceived him carving that large cartoon or crucifix of Tintoretto." In this seclusion he worked so that he might, according to Evelyn, "apply himself to his profession without interruption." On asking

the price of the carving Evelyn was told that £100 would purchase it. Evelyn continues: "In good earnest the very frame was worth the money, there being nothing in Nature so tender and delicate as the flowers and festoons about it, and yet the work was very strong."

The object which chiefly engrossed Evelyn's attention was a representation of the stoning of St. Stephen, wrought in marvelous detail. It was made of pieces of limewood and lancewood, glued together to make a block 4 ft. 4½ in. x 6 ft. ½ in., with the carving some 12 inches deep. This work of art was eventually purchased by Charles II, on Evelyn's recommendation, and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Gibbons was introduced by Evelyn to the King, who gave him a place on the Board of Public Works. Sir Christopher Wren had recently been made Surveyor of His Majesty's Works, and was already at work on his plans for the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral, but it was Hugh May, Comptroller of the Works, who first took Gibbons in hand and set him at work on Windsor Castle. This carving made him famous. In 1678 he carved two great chimney-pieces for the Queen's privy chamber and the King's drawing room, with festoons of fishes, shells, and

other marine objects. A remarkable composition of the star and garter, pelicans, doves, and palms, carved in the wood of the lime tree, showed a wonderful perfection of finish. At Windsor, too, he did carvings for the chapel and halls, and carved a pedestal for the equestrian statue of the King, with exquisite details of fruit, fish, and marine symbols. All this so pleased the King that Gibbons was appointed Master Carver, a post which he retained under several succeeding sovereigns.

After his success at Windsor, Gibbons found no lack of work to do for private and public buildings. One of his first commissions was for the seat of the Earl of Sussex at Cassiobury, Hertfordshire, where he carved a noteworthy staircase and decorated most of the rooms. This commission was followed by many others.

Wren, who had naturally taken notice of Gibbons's work, and who had probably employed him occasionally, now became his chief patron. St. Paul's had been building for several years when, about 1693, Gibbons was employed to do the carving. His work here extended over four years, 1694-7. All of the best artisans of the day were employed in the cathedral, including Jean Tijou who did the ironwork. Gibbons carved the choir stalls,



organ cases, screens, and other portions, including the library. Wren designed the general scheme, but Gibbons drew the details and he and his workmen did the carving, for by this time he had skilled workmen under him. His own chisel, however, was much in use on the finer work. The St. Paul's carving is partly in oak, partly in Gibbons's favourite limewood.

When this work was completed, Gibbons continued under Wren at St. James's, Westminster; Trinity College chapel and Queen's College, Oxford; Trinity and Pembroke Colleges, Cambridge, and many other notable buildings. In 1714 Gibbons was appointed Master Carver to George I, but the post proved to be an empty honour. A more conventional and architectural mode of decoration had come into vogue, and though Gibbons lived and doubtless worked several years longer, his chief activities belong in the late seventeenth century. His last known work was at Hampton Court Palace in 1710.

For many years Gibbons lived in Bow Street, Covent Garden, and he died there on August 3, 1721. He was buried with honour in St. Paul's. In 1722 many of his treasures were sold at auction.

The list of his works is long and varied. Wren

employed him on the palace and chapel at Whitehall for James II, on Kensington Palace for William III, and on Hampton Court Palace. A number of Wren's London churches contain carvings in Gibbons's manner, though not all are authentic. He did, however, do the work in St. James's Church, Piccadilly. One of his most remarkable carvings is here—the reredos carved in cedar within a curved marble pediment over the picture of the Last Supper. The baptismal font at the west end of the church is one of the few known examples of his work in stone sculpture.

Gibbons executed carvings in various halls and semi-public buildings in London and at Chelsea Hospital. In addition to the private mansions and country houses already mentioned, his work was to be found at Petworth, Burleigh, Chatsworth, Belton, Hackwood, Badminton, Holme Lacy, Sudbury Hall, Blenheim, and several others. The carvings in Petworth House in Sussex and at Holme Lacy are perhaps the most famous of these.

Holme Lacy was the seat of the Scudamores, and was famous for the splendid carved decorations in all the principal rooms, for which Gibbons was employed. It is only at Petworth that he exceeded, on domestic interiors, the fineness of his work at

Holme Lacy. One of the most superb examples of his skill is a large chamber at Petworth, enriched from floor to ceiling with swags, festoons and medallions. He is also credited with the base of the statue of Charles I at Charing Cross and of that of Charles II at the Royal Exchange, and probably executed the bronze statue of James II in the privy gardens at Whitehall. He carved the wooden throne at Canterbury and a magnificent tomb for the Viscount Camden in Exton Church, 22 feet high and 14 feet wide, bearing many bas-reliefs including figures of members of the family. Picture frames, chimneypieces, doorways, etc., were his delight. Some of his panels are so like lace or embroidery that the beholder is impelled to feel of them to make sure they are of wood.

Gibbons, indeed, could make fruit and flowers, carved in wood, look positively real. His work is characterized by a wonderful lightness, grace, and lack of conventionality. His compositions are balanced, but his details are the last word in realism. He worked with an infinite variety of forms, his favourite details being vine leaves and grapes, wheat ears, hop blossoms, pea pods, poppy heads, sunflowers, guelder roses, pomegranates, crabs, sea shells, cherubs' heads, lace work, birds, and wonder-

ful combinations of fruits, flowers, and foliage. For delicacy and elaboration of detail, his work has never been surpassed.

He made use of various woods, preferring the softer, more closely grained sorts. He worked in lime, pear, cedar, and box, usually; rarely in oak, sycamore, walnut, olive, ebony, and elm. Probably he would never have used the tough oak and walnut at all but for the fact that they were the woods most in demand at that time for wall panels. The choir stalls at St. Paul's, perhaps his most famous work, are in oak. But his favourite medium was the wood of the lime tree, which his sharp tools could carve so surely and rapidly. This wood is light coloured, not unlike satinwood when polished—perhaps even lighter in hue—without the sheen in the grain which distinguishes satinwood. The grain is very even and not marked, and the wood is in texture somewhat like box, though much softer. This wood Gibbons could finish so smoothly with his tool that no sandpapering was necessary or desirable. He never painted it when he could avoid doing so.

Undoubtedly, Gibbons derived direct inspiration from Inigo Jones, for it is possible to trace in some of the work produced or influenced by Jones the

beginnings of the style developed by Gibbons. A room at Wilton, for example, which was executed by Jones, contains carvings of fruit and flowers and cherubs' heads which strongly suggest Gibbons.

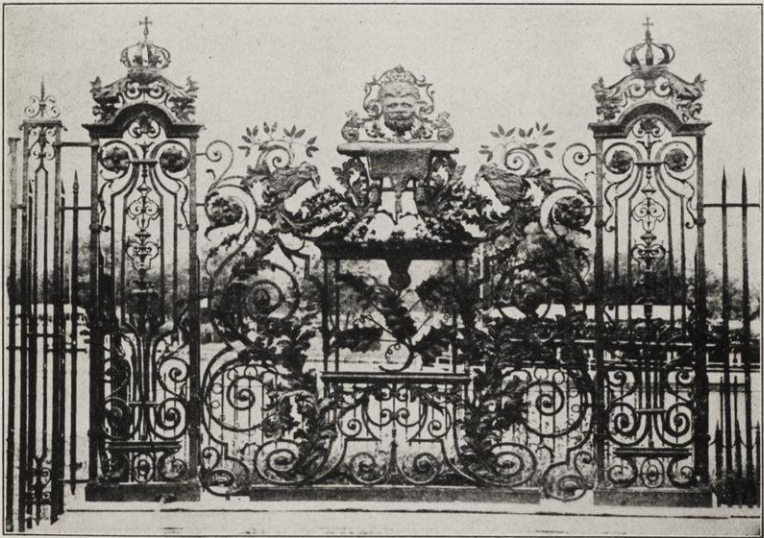
This style of carving, however, was nobody's exclusive property. It was an Italian Renaissance style, or, more specifically, Florentine. A study of both Italian and Dutch carving of the period suggests the possible source of Gibbons's inspiration, though it cannot fully explain it. It is not supposed that Gibbons studied on the Continent, yet he introduced a foreign style into England and developed it to its highest point of perfection.

Gibbons was in the highest sense a craftsman, possessing at once skill of the hands, imagination, and artistic ideals. He was a clever draftsman and with the carver's tools was marvelously swift and sure. His natural aptitude for design in some way became an educated taste, though culture never robbed it of its freshness. His details showed an almost barbaric realism, while his main schemes of grouping displayed a thorough understanding of the basic principles of decorative design.

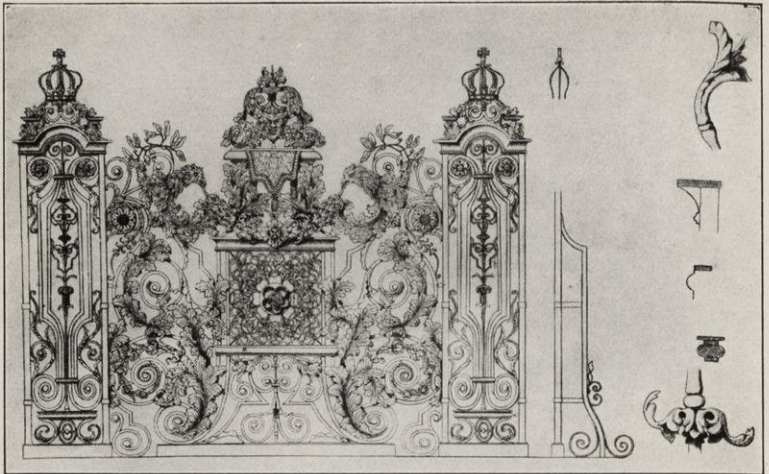
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, possesses two excellent examples of the work of Grinling Gibbons. One is from the overmantel of



Detail of the lock rail of the centre gate, east front, Hampton Court Palace, designed by Jean Tijou. The six-inch rule shows the scale



One of the twelve panels in the screen about the Fountain Garden at Hampton Court, designed by Tijou



Tijou's design for one of the twelve panels in the wrought iron screen about the Fountain Garden at Hampton Court



Tijou's design for the gates and wickets in the fence of the Long Walk, Hampton Court

the saloon or drawing-room at Holme Lacy. It measures 16 feet 5 inches high by 8 feet 10 inches wide. The carving is in the form of a frame for a Van Dyke portrait. It consists of a double swag and two long, pendent garlands, with a rectangular panel at the bottom. The central ornaments of the two swags are a spread eagle and an intricately twined monogram. Unlike most of the carvings at Holme Lacy, this one is of oak, gilded.

The other example is a smaller panel in Gibbons's later style, probably from some church. It is of limewood, deeply undercut, unpainted, and shows the royal arms of George I supported by the lion and the unicorn, and surrounded by a graceful mantling of acanthus leaves.

Gibbons was versatile within the limits of his craft. He carved all sorts of things, from an imitation point cravat in limewood to the interior of England's greatest cathedral. He was at his best, perhaps, in mirror frames, wall panels, and medallions, and in chimneypieces. He probably designed some furniture to fit special requirements, but his work in this field was limited. His style of carving is to be seen sometimes on chairs and on the stands of lacquer cabinets, but his influence on furniture design, like Wren's, was rather general than par-



ticular. Nevertheless, his genius and example came to be felt in carving of every kind of movable furniture. As one writer puts it, Gibbons made carving popular and Chippendale possible.

It was rather as an interior decorator in wood that he excelled, and his real mission in the development of English styles was the creating of a more refined popular taste in this field. He became popular and hence much imitated at one time, and he left several pupils or apprentices who may be said to have formed a school of wood carving, but he was really not a teacher, and to a large extent his art died with him. He left no equals and the vogue of Italian gesso, followed by the fashion for *compo*, introduced by the Adams, drove out his imitators. Indeed, his work appears as a sort of isolated episode in the history of English decorative art, which nevertheless left permanent impress on popular taste.

In its sumptuous effect, combining richness of ornament with vivacious lightness of line and detail, the carving of Grinling Gibbons is typical of a period when the Classic dignities of Sir Christopher Wren's architectural style were beginning to feel the softening influence in details of decoration which, a generation later, was to develop into the fantastic gaiety of French rococo, of which Thomas Chippendale was

the foremost exponent. As Wren was the outstanding artistic mind of the period, Gibbons was its master technician, and his remarkable work left its imprint on all the arts of the time, and on much succeeding work of the next hundred years.

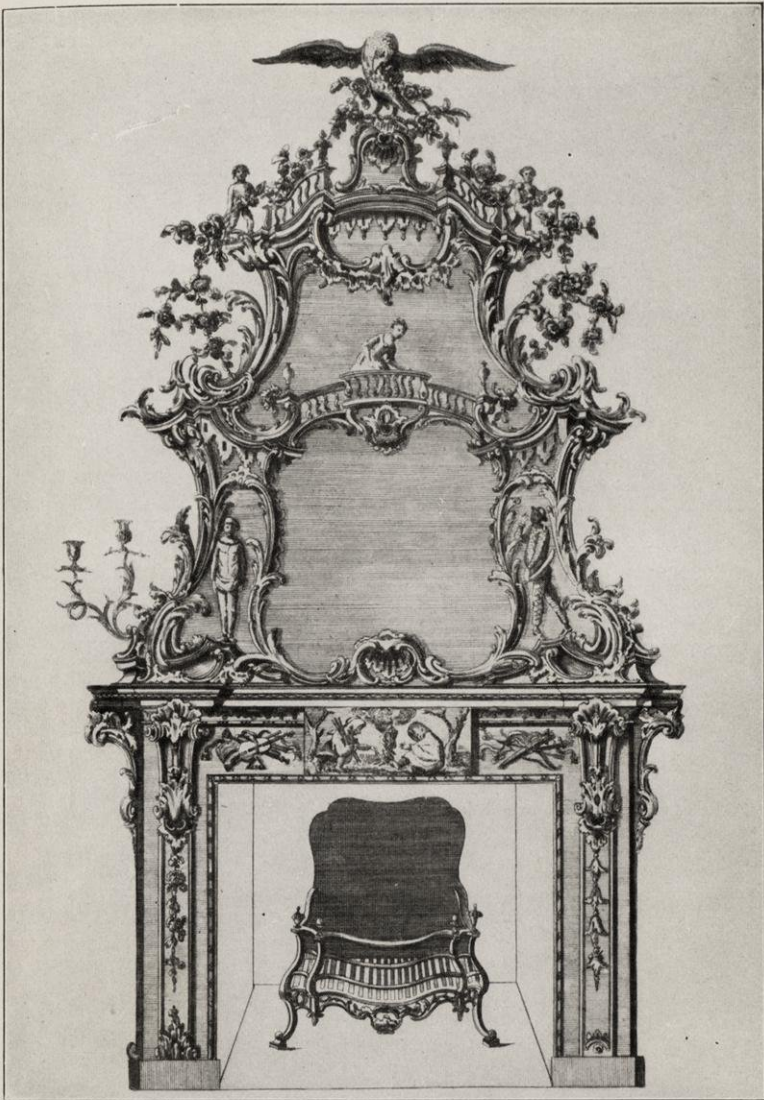
Certainly his contemporaries thought well of him. Evelyn, who was perhaps prejudiced in favour of the man he had discovered, called him "the greatest master, both for invention and rareness of work, that the world ever had in any age."

## CHAPTER VI

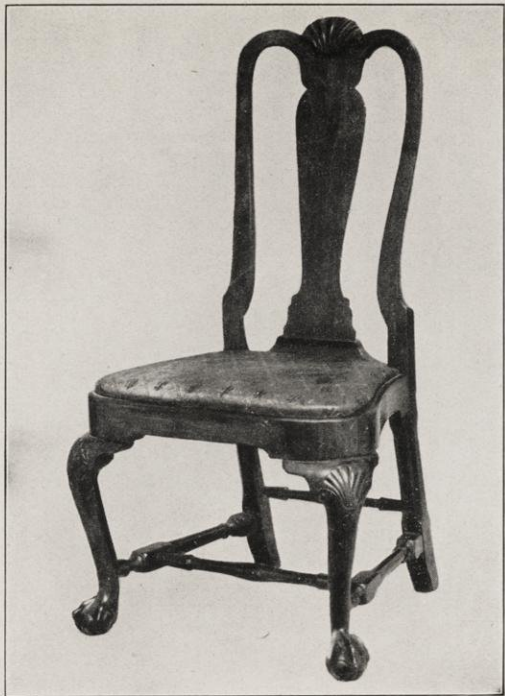
JEAN TIJOU

**B**EFORE leaving the period in which Sir Christopher Wren was the dominant personality, there remains one other master of design to consider, a contemporary of Grinling Gibbons, his fellow worker, and in many respects his artistic equal. I refer to Jean Tijou, who designed the ornamental ironwork, as Gibbons executed the wood carving, at Hampton Court, St. Paul's, and numerous private mansions.

Living as we do in an age in which applied art of a reasonably high order is a common matter, when sculpture, mural decoration, ornamental metal work, and other forms of decoration of considerable merit are to be seen in every public building of importance, and well-designed furniture and decorations are available for every home, we are likely to lose sight of the fact that these things are but the heritage of a bygone age, when master craftsmen, with meagre traditions and education, and with more primitive tools than ours, created works of art and originated types of design which we so blithely borrow. For this is,



A Louis XV chimneypiece showing Chinese influence. From "The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director," by Thomas Chippendale



A walnut veneer chair of the Early Georgian or pre-Chippendale period, when the ball and claw foot came into vogue, after 1715



An American-made chair after a Chippendale pattern of the ladder-back type. Metropolitan Museum of Art

after all, a machine-made age in which we live, and objects of art are so easily obtained that we are prone to lose our reverence for the sources of genius from which they sprung. It is difficult for us to visualize the painful processes by which a Benvenuto Cellini wrought his masterpieces. When we look upon the wonderful wrought ironwork of the seventeenth century we forget that these elaborate gates and balconies had all to be wearily forged by hand, with a doubt as to whether so new a thing would be successful.

It is perhaps not strange, therefore, that the name of Jean Tijou has long remained unfamiliar to most of us, and that we have failed to know or appreciate the wonderful ironwork which he designed in England at the close of the seventeenth century.

Ironwork had not been one of England's great arts. It never reached a high point of merit until the period of revival beginning with the reign of Charles II—the Restoration. The vogue for it, however, increased during the reign of William and Mary and continued through the Queen Anne and early Georgian periods. It was largely in the spirit of the French art of Louis XIV. Following the lead of Hampton Court, every important country seat and mansion in England was adorned with magnificent forecourt and garden gates, screens, and balustrades

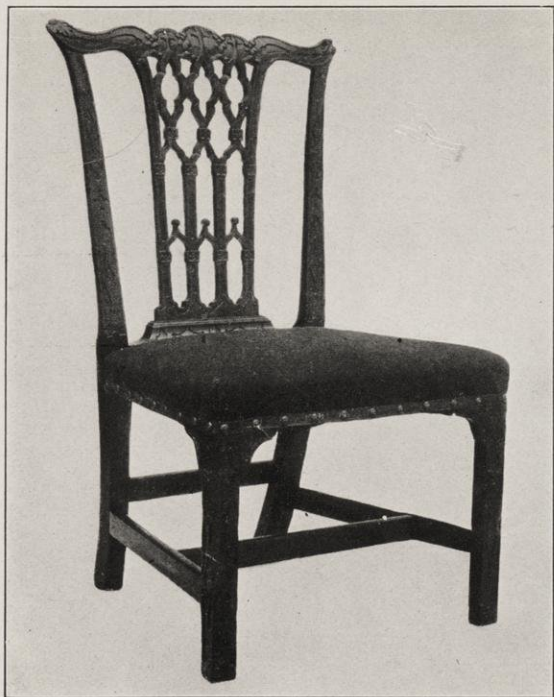
of hand-wrought iron, often painted blue or green and gilded. An unfettered expression of craftsmanship marked the period. It resulted, naturally, in a remarkable development in the art and skill of designers and smiths of whose personalities we know extraordinarily little.

During the reign of James I the art of gardening and landscape architecture received attention which had hitherto been largely lacking in England, in spite of the early interest of Elizabeth's time. During the period of the Restoration there was a further revival of interest in gardening, with a demand for ornamental gates and fences and a consequent impulse given to the ironworker's craft.

Daniel Marot had designed the garden gates at the Château des Maisons near Paris and his designs were published. English designers followed his lead.

Charles II caused gardens to be laid out at St. James's, Greenwich, and Hampton Court, and many private gardens followed. In 1670 Sir Christopher Wren was called upon to repair the fences and make new gates for the royal parks, but his work in this field was of only moderate merit. However, as the demand for more elaborate work continued, taste improved.

As a matter of fact, neither Inigo Jones nor Wren had made use of much ironwork prior to Tijou's



A Chippendale chair of the Gothic type. Metropolitan Museum of Art



A Chippendale chair with a back of the French type. Bolles Collection





A ribbon-back Chippendale chair in the more elaborate manner of Louis XV. Courtesy of Duveen Brothers

time. Apparently they did not foster the taste for it. What little work Wren did was very simple. The grilles for the cloisters of Trinity College, Cambridge, built by Wren in 1878, were his most noteworthy designs. They were executed by one Partridge, who is known merely as a London smith.

But fine work had been done in France for Louis XIV, at the Palais Royal and a number of churches, and the desire in England for decorative work in the French manner became too strong to be resisted. Then came Jean Tijou, a Frenchman, to add a new expression to the rapidly developing art instinct of England.

Most of the masters of applied art in England were native born, but two of them, Marot and Tijou, were Frenchmen who did their work under foreign auspices. Of Tijou we know amazingly little, considering his prominence at court. For some unknown reason Sir John Evelyn, the diarist, who had not a little to say about Grinling Gibbons, does not mention Tijou. For the little data that has been gathered we are indebted largely to Mr. J. Starkie Gardner, Tijou's chief, almost his only, biographer.

We do not know the date or place of Tijou's birth, save that it was in France, his residence in England, nor the date of his death or his place of burial. Noth-

ing is known of his previous work in France or Holland, nor of the sources of his training. Nothing has been recorded regarding his family beyond the fact that he had a daughter who was married to a successful French artist in England, Louis Laguerre, at the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

It has been stated that Tijou was, like Marot, probably a French Protestant refugee to the Netherlands, who came to England in the train of William of Orange, but Mr. Gardner is inclined to doubt this. Laguerre was a Catholic who had been educated for the priesthood, and it is more likely that both men came from French Catholic families of the better class. Tijou may merely have migrated to England in search of broader opportunities.

In any event, he was no novice when he reached London. This was at the beginning of the reign of William and Mary, by whom Wren was retained in the office of Surveyor. Almost immediately we find Tijou at work on some of Wren's buildings.

Rumour has it that Tijou made his home somewhere in Soho, but he must have lived much of the time at Hampton Court. Part of the work for St. Paul's Cathedral was executed at Hampton Court and brought to London by water, though by 1699 the forging was evidently done at Piccadilly.

William of Orange ascended the English throne in 1689, and he and Queen Mary were Tijou's lifelong patrons. Under their patronage he became England's greatest designer of richly wrought iron.

As has been stated, nothing is known of Tijou's death. He seems to have disappeared from England about 1712. The last documentary evidence of his existence in the St. Paul's records is dated 1711. He is thought to have returned to France, but his name appears nowhere among the French designers or ironworkers, and no trace of death, burial, or will has been found. Such are the meagre details of the life of one who left a lasting impress on the art life of England.

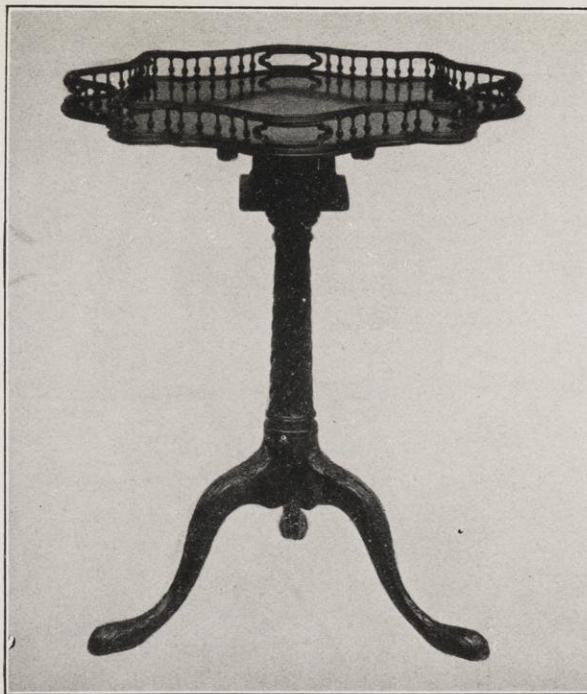
Tijou was not himself a smith, but a designer and contractor for ironwork. The ironwork at Hampton Court Palace is, with few exceptions, the most famous in the world, and the best of it was designed by and executed for Tijou under the supervision of Sir Christopher Wren.

Wren, soon after the coming of William III, began his additions to Hampton Court, and within a year Tijou rendered a bill for six iron vanes, "finely wrought in Leaves and Scroll worke," amounting to £80, and also for an iron balcony for the Water Gallery, which was taken down in 1701. In 1690 he rendered his

second bill of £755 7s., for gates, pillars, and panels for a screen encircling the Fountain Garden at Hampton Court, which was completed about 1692.

Tijou was, indeed, responsible for most of the exquisitely wrought iron gates and fences surrounding the private gardens of Hampton Court. In 1698 the Fountain Garden was redesigned and enlarged by Daniel Marot, and in 1699 this work was pushed. Tijou took the contract for a large amount of metal work, but it is probable that some of these later bills were never paid.

The screen around the Fountain Garden was one of Tijou's most noteworthy achievements. It eclipsed everything that had previously been done in this line in England. Nothing so extensive had been done anywhere in Europe, and nothing in wrought iron so rich and florid has been produced for any garden since. The screen or fence was ten feet high, and included twelve strikingly bold, richly designed panels, all different in details but harmonious in general effect, separated by stately pilasters surmounted by royal crowns and buttressed by scroll-work supports. In the centre of each panel was displayed a square built about a rose, thistle, garter, or some badge, emblem, or cypher of the British royalty or nobility, supported by elaborate acanthus and scroll-work designs, in-



Mahogany tea stand by Chippendale with pierced gallery. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Mahogany card table with straight legs and carved edges, by Chippendale. Metropolitan Museum



One of Chippendale's more extravagant designs. A Louis XV sofa, from "The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director"

tricate but perfectly balanced and harmoniously arranged. The acanthus designs and arabesques were in the most florid taste of Louis XIV, but the pilasters were dignified and English in spirit, expressing, perhaps, Wren's influence.

Other examples of Tijou's richest work were the three fine gates in the east or garden front of the palace, a pair of magnificent gates and wickets which separated the Long Walk from the Home Park, and a pair of gates, made in 1694-6, which still close the arched entrance to the Queen's side of the palace. The famous Lion Gates of Hampton Court are of the later period of George I, and are inferior copies of Tijou's gates at the Long Walk.

A plainer railing, nearly 500 yards long, separating the gardens and the Park, was set up by Tijou in 1700. The picturesque railing of the garden terrace, with its simple but finely proportioned pilasters and panels, the balustrade with ovals at the head of the water features of the Park, and the railing of the Orangery were all in Tijou's style and were probably designed by him.

He was also responsible for the variously designed stair rails in the palace which ornamented the back stairs to the royal apartments, now used as private apartments. They were built about 1696. The King's



staircase, painted by Verrio, and with a balustrade by Tijou, was completed in 1699.

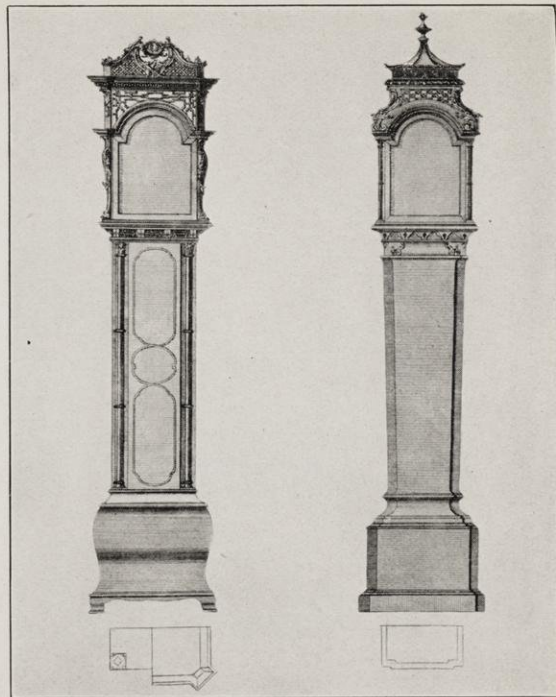
The Hampton Court gardens were remodelled by George III, and much of the ironwork was scattered. Some of it, fortunately, found its way to South Kensington and other museums, and some of it has since been restored.

The ironwork at Hampton Court used to be attributed to Huntington Shaw of Nottingham, but that injustice has been rectified, though Shaw has a monument to his memory and Tijou has none. Probably Shaw was associated with Wren and Tijou as an executing smith on the work at Hampton Court, St. Paul's, and elsewhere.

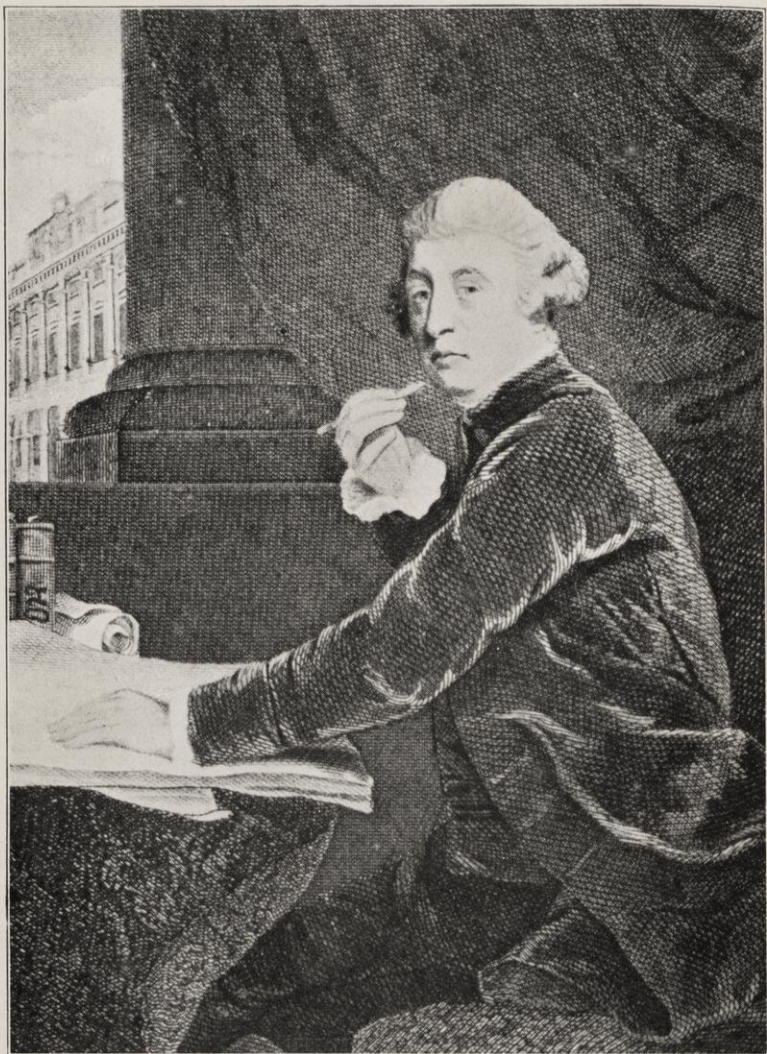
Tijou designed iron gates for a number of private mansions in and about London and also for country estates, notably Carshalton in Surrey, Burleigh House near Stamford, Wimpole, the Earl of Radnor's seat in Cambridgeshire, and Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland. The pair of gates at Eaton Hall, Chester, designed by Tijou, may have been brought thither from Hampton Court. The gates of the chapel at Bridewell, of the Clarendon Printing House, and others have been attributed to him. About 1694 he designed a stair balustrade and balconies for Chatsworth, seat of the Duke of Devonshire.



A china cabinet by Chippendale, in modified Chinese style. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Two of Chippendale's designs for clock-cases, combining Louis XV and Chinese details



W<sup>m</sup> Chambers

Sir William Chambers, after the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

At Drayton House in Northamptonshire there is a quantity of fine ironwork that is supposed to have been designed by Tijou, though its authenticity is not certain. It was made to the order of the Baroness Mordaunt, later Duchess of Norfolk, who married Sir John Germain and set up an elaborate establishment in 1700.

Next to Hampton Court, Tijou's most important work was done at St. Paul's. He was employed here for twenty years and he never worked to better purpose. For sheer beauty, some of the ironwork at St. Paul's has never been surpassed. In discussing this work it must be borne in mind that Tijou was not a practical smith, but a designer. It is not known that he ever wielded the hammer. But he was also a contractor or directing master, with skilled artisans working under him.

Wren had charge of the work at St. Paul's, and doubtless he was Tijou's superior, with power to approve or reject any of Tijou's work. For some reason, however, perhaps connected with court influence, Wren appears to have disturbed Tijou very little, so that one gains the impression that he worked almost independently. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that Tijou's work at St. Paul's was more restrained than at Hampton Court, indicating that

Wren found some way in which to make his influence felt.

The progress of Tijou's work at St. Paul's can be traced in the official accounts, in which he is usually referred to as "John Tijoue, smith." The first mention of his name in these documents appeared in 1691. In that year and in 1692 he executed some windows. These were not particularly ornamental. By 1696 he had done considerable fine work in the choir, including an iron screen under the organ case, now incorporated in the sanctuary screen.

In 1699 he was paid £160 for a pair of gates, with wickets, at the west side of the south portico, which are still in existence; and £265 for a range of desks for the choristers, which have since been destroyed. Particularly remarkable for their fine workmanship and graceful artistry were the gates at the ends of the choir aisles and the altar rails, for which we find him credited with £540 and £260 respectively in 1705. Critics have pronounced this the finest ironwork, all things considered, in England.

In 1706 he completed the ironwork of the round staircase in the southwest tower and various other work in and about the cathedral. The entries for his work continue up to 1711.

Tijou had numerous apprentices and helpers, and,

indeed, founded a sort of school of ironwork design. Robert Bakewell of Derby, Roberts Brothers, William Edney of Bristol, and other disciples of Tijou outside of London continued his style of work till after 1720. Among the smiths in London who worked on St. Paul's and who were undoubtedly men of rare skill, were Partridge, Thomas Robinson, Thomas Coalburn, Warren, and George Buncker. Robinson is known to have done some especially fine work, but on the whole we know very little about these men.

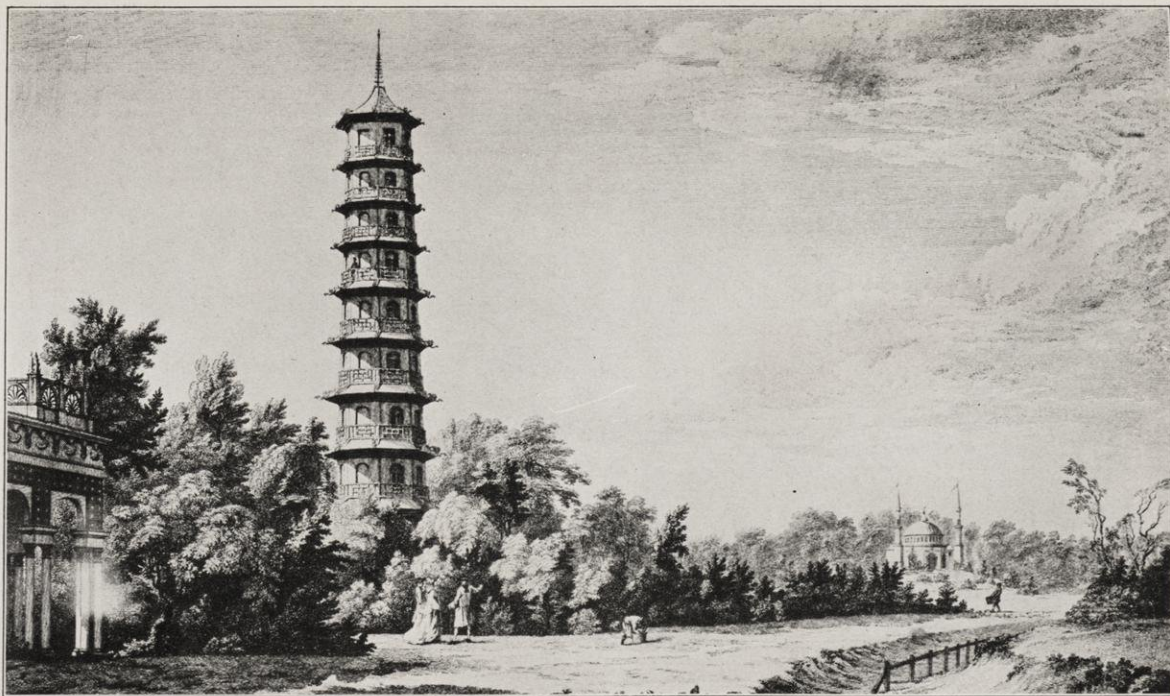
Like Marot and other architects and designers of the period, Tijou prepared and published for sale a book of designs. It was entitled "A New Book of Drawings, Invented and Desined by John Tijou," and it was published in London in 1693. It contained twenty plates, including designs of work planned for Hampton Court, Trinity College Library, Burleigh, Chatsworth, and elsewhere. Some of these designs were modified more or less before being executed, and there were other designs in the book which probably were never executed. In fact, some of them do not appear to be practicable.

The designs are decidedly French in feeling, with the spirit of Louis XIV predominant. Marot's influence is evident. Tijou was naturally in sympathy

with Marot's artistic creeds, and the latter was practically an arbiter of taste during the reign of William and Mary. At some time between 1686 and 1689 Marot had published in Holland a book containing six plates of ironwork designs, and Tijou's appear to have been based on these. Marot, however, only gave direction to a style which Tijou developed much farther. Tijou's book is now rare and very valuable.

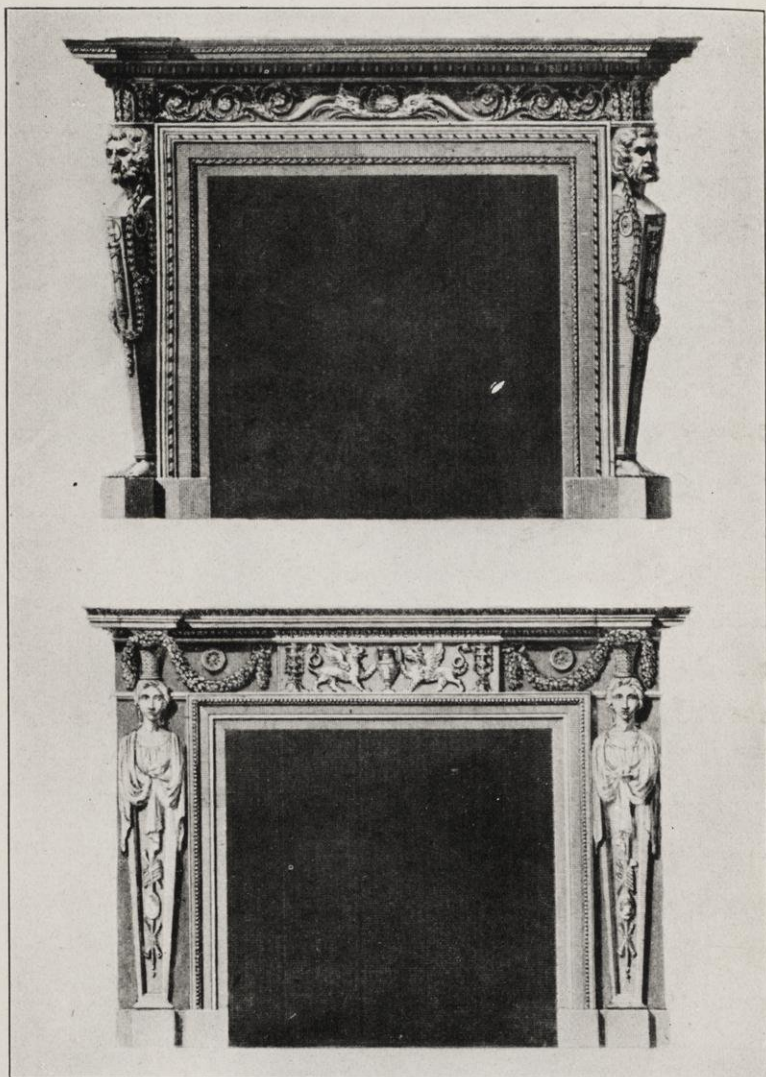
Tijou's designs were beautiful as a whole and in detail. They were well balanced, symmetrical in every part, sectionally harmonious, minutely studied. They covered broad expanses with remarkable consistency; weak spots were avoided. In technique and plan they should be an inspiration to modern decorative designers.

Tijou's style, like that of Daniel Marot and Grinling Gibbons, was of Italian derivation, filtered through Spanish, French, Flemish, and Dutch media. It showed the same tendency toward the elaborate and florid, with a wealth of acanthus leaves, scroll work, draperies, rosettes, masks, eagles' and cocks' heads, heraldic emblems, figure work, etc. Like Gibbons, he loved a lace-like pattern as well as a bold sweep of curve. He followed Marot in the use of monograms and cyphers of delicately interlaced openwork in place of heavy, solid shields.



An engraving by Marlow and Rooker, showing three of the buildings in Kew Gardens designed by Sir William Chambers





Fireplaces designed by Sir William Chambers. From "The Decorative Part of Civil Architecture"

If Tijou lacked anything, it was that sense of proportion and fitness, of restraint and Classic feeling, that guided Sir Christopher Wren. Had it not been for the steadying influence of Wren, the exuberance of Marot, Gibbons, and Tijou might have swept England into such artistic extravagances and absurdities as marred the French style of Louis XV. However, Tijou's later designs showed more restraint, perhaps due to Wren's constant editing at St. Paul's, though he was never held back by the practical limitations of smithcraft. Though some of his designs were impossible of execution, in the main he forced the smiths to rise to meet his requirements.

It is strange how little fame has been accorded Tijou and his work. It was Shaw and not Tijou whose statue was selected to represent English smithcraft on the façade of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and in other ways he has suffered injustice due to errors. But that hardly explains why Tijou's name should not be as well known as that of Grinling Gibbons, his contemporary and fellow worker under Wren, with whom he may be favorably compared as an artist. Mr. Gardner appears inclined to attribute the fact to a deliberate attempt on the part of Tijou's contemporaries to ignore him. Wren never mentioned Tijou once in his memoirs or else-

where, while he was not at all niggardly in his praise of Gibbons. Evelyn and other writers of the period frequently mention Gibbons and others; they pass over Tijou's name in silence. Tijou retained the favour of William and Mary and Queen Anne, and he obtained plenty of private commissions for work; he was apparently no social outlaw. The matter is inexplicable, but the fact remains that history has slighted him, and it is high time to make amends.

For Tijou stands at the head of his craft among the creators of English styles. His designs for balustrades, balconies, screens, gates, staircases, railings, panels, and smaller objects are conceded to be the finest examples of decorative ironwork in England. He exerted an immense and immediate effect on the craft, and it is not too much to say that his influence extended to other fields as well.

Undoubtedly he shared with Gibbons an opportunity such as is given to few men, but he made the most of it. A clever draughtsman, a consummate artist in a difficult medium, with an extraordinary feeling for perfection of ornament, his name deserves a place among those of the masters.

The Classic creed of Sir Christopher Wren and the foreign influences introduced by Marot, Gibbons, and Tijou, produced an almost equal effect on the

furniture design of the period. During the reigns of Queen Anne and George I these elements were largely assimilated and Anglicized, but there remained a freedom from trammelling restraint which Sir William Chambers and Thomas Chippendale took advantage of, for they, too, borrowed from foreign sources, until Robert Adam and the later Georgians introduced a revival of the Classic spirit that was more nearly akin to that of Wren.

## CHAPTER VII

THOMAS CHIPPENDALE

(*Circa 1710-1779*)

THE Georgian Period, comprising roughly the last three-quarters of the eighteenth century, was a golden age in the development of English style, and the names of the masters are many. Architecture and the various crafts and industrial arts received a strong forward impetus. Sir William Chambers, Thomas Chippendale, Robert and James Adam, George Hepplewhite, Josiah Wedgwood, and other contemporary designers, craftsmen, architects, and connoisseurs all added their personalities to the styles of the period, and from a chronological point of view it matters little which of them is given first consideration. But since of all the applied arts of the time furniture-making seems to have left the most lasting impression, it may be most logical to give primary consideration to Thomas Chippendale, the first and most famous of the Georgian cabinet-makers, and the first English craftsman to rob the reigning sovereign of the prerogative of giving his name to a period.

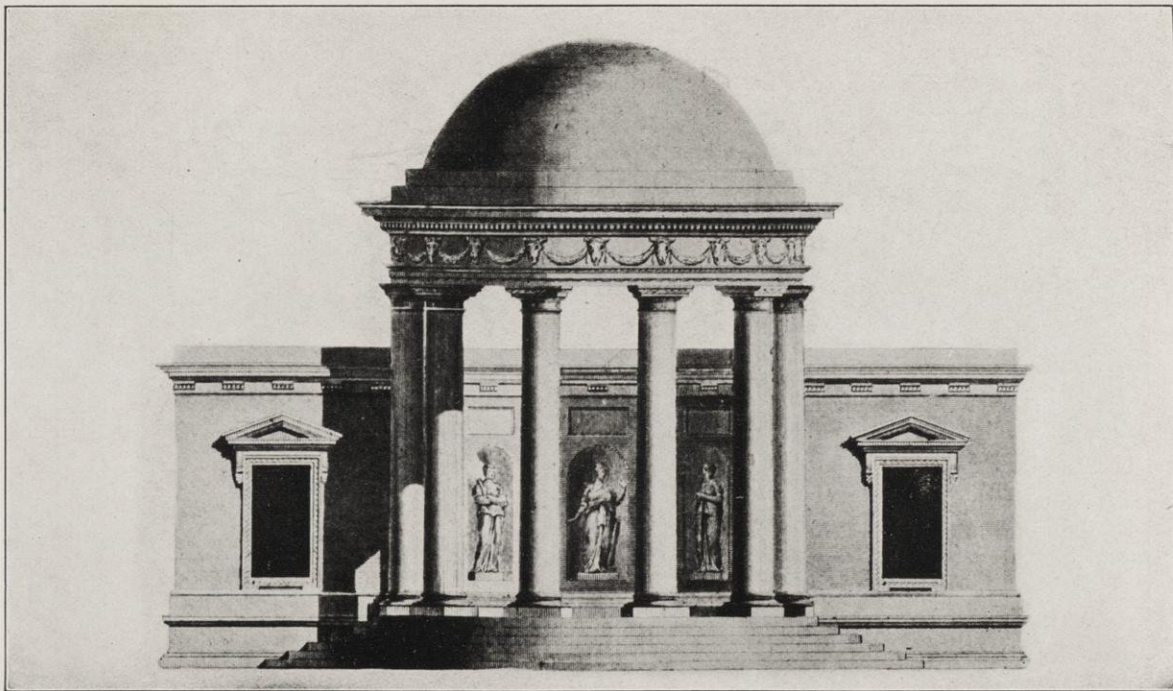
The transition from the Queen Anne to the Georgian styles was gradual and Chippendale's early work was done in this early Georgian or transition manner, before the Chippendale period actually began. The furniture of this time showed a tendency to drop the Dutch characteristics of the Queen Anne period. Chair backs became somewhat shorter and more varied in outline. The cabriole leg persisted, to be sure, but the ball-and-claw superseded the Dutch splay foot.

This transition period, too, was marked by the gradual substitution of mahogany for walnut as the fashionable cabinet wood. Mahogany furniture was probably made in England as early as 1715, but did not reach the zenith of its popularity until about 1745. It is too much to say that Chippendale made mahogany popular; perhaps it was the mahogany that made Chippendale popular. At any rate, the new taste found its highest expression at his hands in the new wood. He began working obscurely in walnut and other woods in the transition styles about 1730, and did not emerge with a real style of his own until about 1745, when he adapted mahogany to the uses of French rococo carving. His greatest influence as a creator of style extended from 1750 to 1770.

The date of Thomas Chippendale's birth is not known. He is said to have been born in Worcestershire about 1710, and to have been the son of Thomas Chippendale, a cabinet-maker, wood carver, and maker of mirror frames. Thomas the younger very likely learned his trade from his father, and it is quite possible that the father originated some of the styles that were later developed by the son into a Chippendale type.

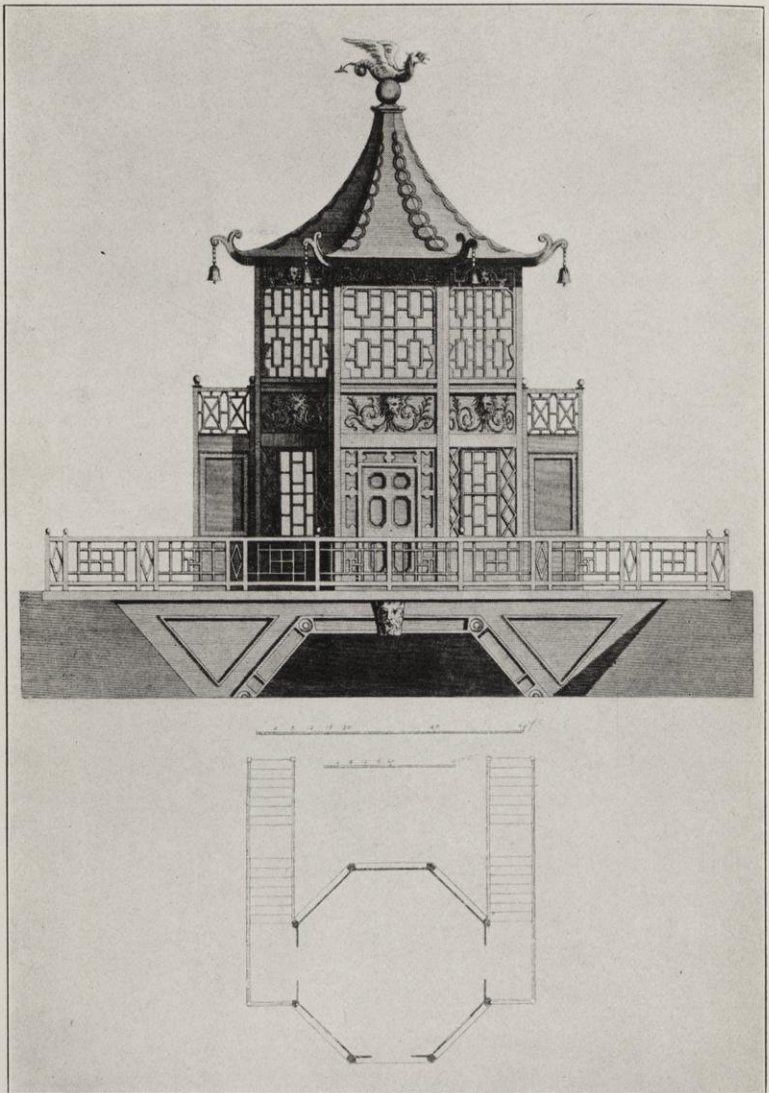
Information regarding his early life is scanty. Father and son moved to London about 1727. Thomas married Catherine Redshaw, of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, on May 19, 1748. In 1749 we find him established in a shop in Conduit Street, Long Acre, London. In 1753 he moved to 60 St. Martin's Lane, where he took three houses adjacent to his own and established a large cabinet-making and upholstery business.

In 1755 he was burned out, but rebuilt at once. At that time he was employing twenty-two workmen; later his employees are said to have numbered a hundred. Here he lived during the rest of his life. In 1760 he was elected a member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. For a time he was in partnership with James Rannil, who died in 1766.



Design for a Greek (Doric) casino by Sir William Chambers. From "The Decorative Part of Civil Architecture"





One of the Chinese buildings in Kew Gardens designed by Chambers

Chippendale started in business as a cabinet-maker. Later he became also an interior decorator and general furnisher, executing his own designs and also those of Adam and others. In 1752 he had some of his designs printed, and issued the first edition of his book, "The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director," in 1754. The second edition appeared in folios during 1759, 1760, and 1761, and these were brought together in book form in 1762 as a third edition. Of these books, which became very popular and which had much to do with his fame, I will speak again later.

Thomas Chippendale died on November 13, 1779, and was buried at the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. He left a widow, Elizabeth, apparently his second wife, besides three sons and a daughter. His eldest son, Thomas, carried on the business successfully until 1796 in partnership with Thomas Haig, a former bookkeeper of Chippendale's.

Of the private life and character of Thomas Chippendale we know surprisingly little, considering his prominence in his craft and the influence which he exerted on the fashions of his time. He was evidently no aspirant for social distinction, though in the course of his life he mingled with the nobility and with families of wealth. He was a quiet man, attending strictly to business, and ever industrious.

He possessed a combination of business ability and the ideals of craftsmanship to a greater degree than any of his contemporaries, and was the most successful of them all. He was, first of all, a born and trained artisan, and, second, a progressive business man capable of managing affairs on a large scale. As an artist, in the strict sense of the word, he perhaps fell short of the highest distinction, for he lacked something of the touch of original inspiration, though he possessed a remarkable feeling for line and proportion.

It was a noteworthy fact regarding the cabinet-makers of the period that they were able to publish their trade catalogues at a profit, which indicates the popular demand for better things in household furnishings. Chippendale was not the first to publish such a book, nor was he the first in the field with the type of designs that made him famous. As early as 1719 William Halfpenny began publishing his designs, and the following published books prior to Chippendale's: William Jones in 1739, Batty & Langley in 1740, Abraham Swain in 1745, Edwards & Darley in 1750, Thomas Johnson in 1750, Mattheas Lock in 1752, William Halfpenny the younger in 1750-52. Many of these, notably Johnson, Lock, Halfpenny, and later Ince & Mayhew, published de-

signs in the same French, Gothic, and Chinese styles that Chippendale used.

Chippendale's "Director" sold for £3 13s 6d. Copies are worth to-day from \$50 to \$100. It was the most extensive and important of the books of the sort published up to that time. The full title was "The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director, being a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of household furniture in the most fashionable taste." It contained upward of 200 plates in the 1762 edition, and was signed "Thomas Chippendale, cabinet-maker and upholsterer, London." The designs included chairs, sofas, beds and couches, tables and stands, dressing tables and commodes, library tables and desks, chamber organs, library bookcases, cabinets, candle stands, lanterns and chandeliers, fire screens, brackets, tall and bracket clock cases, pier glasses, picture and mirror frames, girandoles, chimneypieces, stove grates, and various ornaments.

Chippendale was less an originator of styles than an adapter and a close observer of the trend of the times. He developed, improved, and beautified the styles which the popular taste demanded to a greater extent than any of his contemporaries except Adam and Hepplewhite, who followed somewhat different

lines. The designs of his contemporaries show the same tendencies of taste—French, Gothic, and Chinese.

He began first with late Queen Anne types, making bandy-legged, fiddle-back chairs, among other things, very broad in the seat and with ball-and-claw feet. As the style of the transition period advanced, Chippendale improved this style, piercing the splat, enriching his work with rococo carving after the French manner, beautifying the cabriole leg, and adopting a squarer form of chair back with rounded corners, to be followed soon by the bow-shaped or slightly curved top rail which became an essential characteristic of many of his chairs. Thus, gradually, his style became more and more French in type.

Up to this time Chippendale had worked largely in walnut, but the demand for mahogany and finer carving became irresistible, and Chippendale cut his cloth to fit his patrons.

The attempts that are often made to divide Chippendale's work into three distinct periods—Anglo-Dutch, French, and Chinese-Gothic—are somewhat misleading, for, though fashions changed, there were no such sharp divisions as these. He began to design furniture in the Louis XV manner about

1745, and he continued to produce French designs up to the day of his death. He was wise in his selection of French motifs. In some cases he actually copied French designs. He used rococo carving freely, though it was always well executed. His best work is found in the fairly unmixed French designs of 1750-60. After that the combination of rococo and Chinese, with a dash of Gothic, proved too much for him.

During his best period, when he made his famous ribbon-back chairs, mahogany rose to the height of its popularity. He still made his ladder-back chairs and other pieces in walnut occasionally, but his more fashionable customers demanded mahogany, and this was the material he used in his more elaborate and expensive work. It proved to be the best possible medium for the pierced backs of his French chairs with their somewhat intricate carving, and for the even more involved work of his Chinese mirror frames and other pieces. He preferred a rich, dark mahogany of uniform colour and grain. Even after the popularity of walnut waned he continued to use it to some extent, as well as maple, cherry, and birch. But it was Chippendale who discovered and developed the wonderful qualities of mahogany and first learned how to use it to its

greatest advantage. Many of his chairs in the Chinese style, made to suit a popular taste, were of beech, perhaps for cheapness. It may have been for this purpose, too, that straight, square legs began to appear more and more frequently on his chairs and tables.

Some of the best of Chippendale's designs appeared in the first edition of his book. The last edition shows a decided deterioration and a leaning toward grotesque mixtures of style—Chinese ugliness and rococo extravagance. It is only fair to say, however, that Chippendale's cabinet work was better than his books of designs. It is doubtful if he ever executed half of these himself, while it is known that he made a good deal of furniture to order, drawing exclusive designs not to be found in his books at all, and that in such furniture we find him at his best.

It is rather surprising that in an age when good taste was so noticeable in England, the Chinese and Gothic fads should have taken so strong a hold, and that Chippendale should have allowed himself to be so completely swayed by the popular vogue. It shows that he was a follower rather than a leader. Both these styles, if they may be dignified by the name, were ephemeral, but they made a strong

impression while they lasted. Neither the Chinese nor the Gothic designs in vogue were true to authentic originals, but Chippendale's clientèle evidently did not include many sticklers for purity of style, and he failed to rise above them.

In the Chinese introductions, it matters little whether Chippendale followed the lead of Sir William Chambers or vice versa. The taste for Chinese effects had been popular for some time, due to the growth of England's trade with the Orient. Chinese lacquer and imitations of it, as well as Chinese porcelains and other objects, had been in vogue since the previous century. Chippendale's Chinese designs were in great variety, and were characterized by pagoda tops, latticework, straight legs, fretwork carving, and elaborate ornamentation. The patterns in Gothic feeling were in response to a sort of Gothic revival about 1750, due largely to the influence of Sir Horace Walpole and his vagaries at Strawberry Hill.

Chippendale's shop turned out in considerable quantities chairs, card tables, sofas and settees, desks, bureaus, cabinets, bookcases, tea stands mirror cases, and some beds and long clock cases. He was at his best in his chairs, and their designs display a wonderful variety of detail. In most cases



they satisfy the artistic sense. In his early ones the backs were more open and the lines better suited to the human anatomy than those of the Queen Anne period. His splats were always joined to the seats and not to crosspieces. Most characteristic were his French types, the ladder-back, and those with Chinese fretwork and Gothic patterns in the backs. His typical chair legs included the cabriole, with rococo carving and the ball-in-claw foot, the straight, square leg, and the carved Chinese leg, also straight. Many of his settees were made like two or three of his chairs joined side by side.

His card tables usually had cabriole legs, intricately carved, with ball-and-claw feet, or the straight Chinese legs. He made long serving tables, but no sideboards, the sideboard being a later introduction of Hepplewhite and Shearer. His beds were as elaborate as those of Daniel Marot in their way, often having pagoda tops and showing mixed styles, mostly bad. His mirror frames, in French rococo and Chinese carving and pierced work, were very elaborate, and were often made of pine and gilded. He made a few walnut and mahogany clock cases, though most of the clock cases attributed to him were undoubtedly made by his imitators. He is known to have executed a few elaborately carved overmantels.

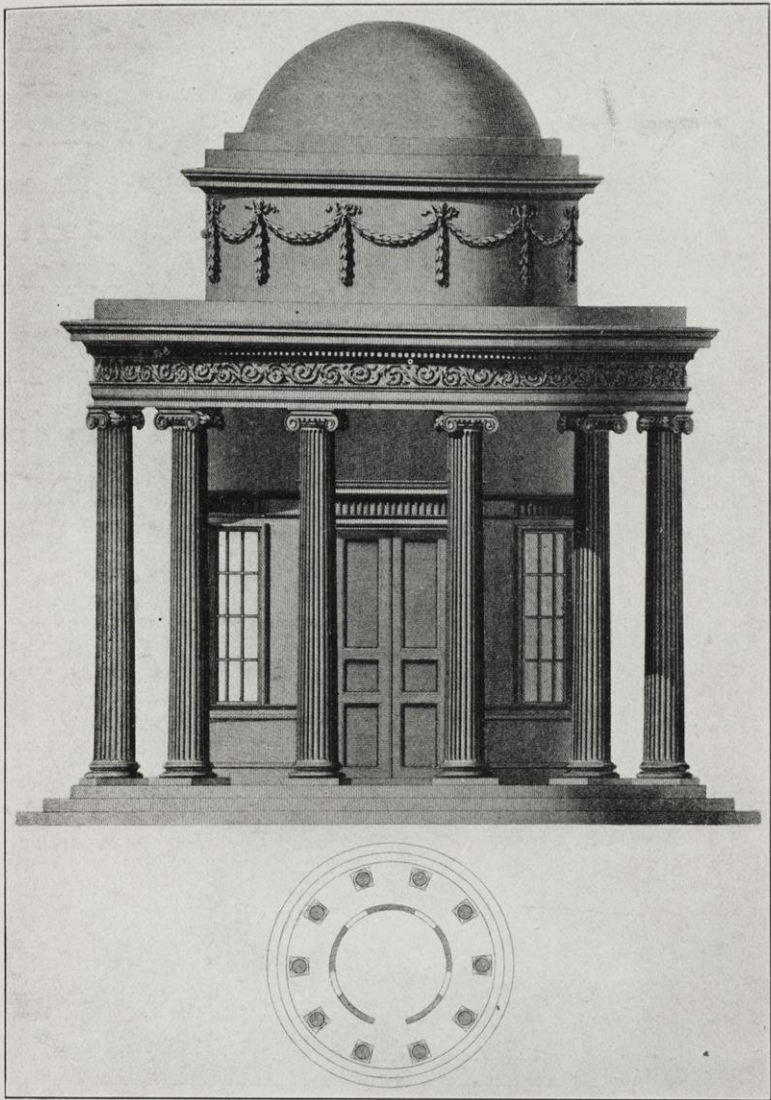
So many of his designs were used by others that it is almost impossible to identify Chippendale's own work. Some pieces in his style were even executed in America. A few chairs, small fretted tables, book-cases, and screens are about all that we can surely assert were turned out by the master. Known work of his is to be found in England in Claydon House, the seat of the Verneys in Buckinghamshire, which contains chambers by him executed in the Chinese style; in Harewood House, Yorkshire, which also contains some of Adam's work; at Stourhead in Wiltshire, and Rowton Castle in Shropshire. Some of this made-to-order work was very fine, while some was elaborately upholstered, gilded, painted, lacquered, and mounted with metal—often in very bad taste and very expensive. But here again we must blame the client as much as the craftsman.

In his regular trade work, Chippendale used gilding on his mirror frames, chimneypieces, girandoles, etc., but he usually avoided paint, gilding, japan, or inlay except on specially ordered work. For his ornamentation he depended almost entirely on carving. His construction was generally solid, strong, and honest, his materials the best obtainable.

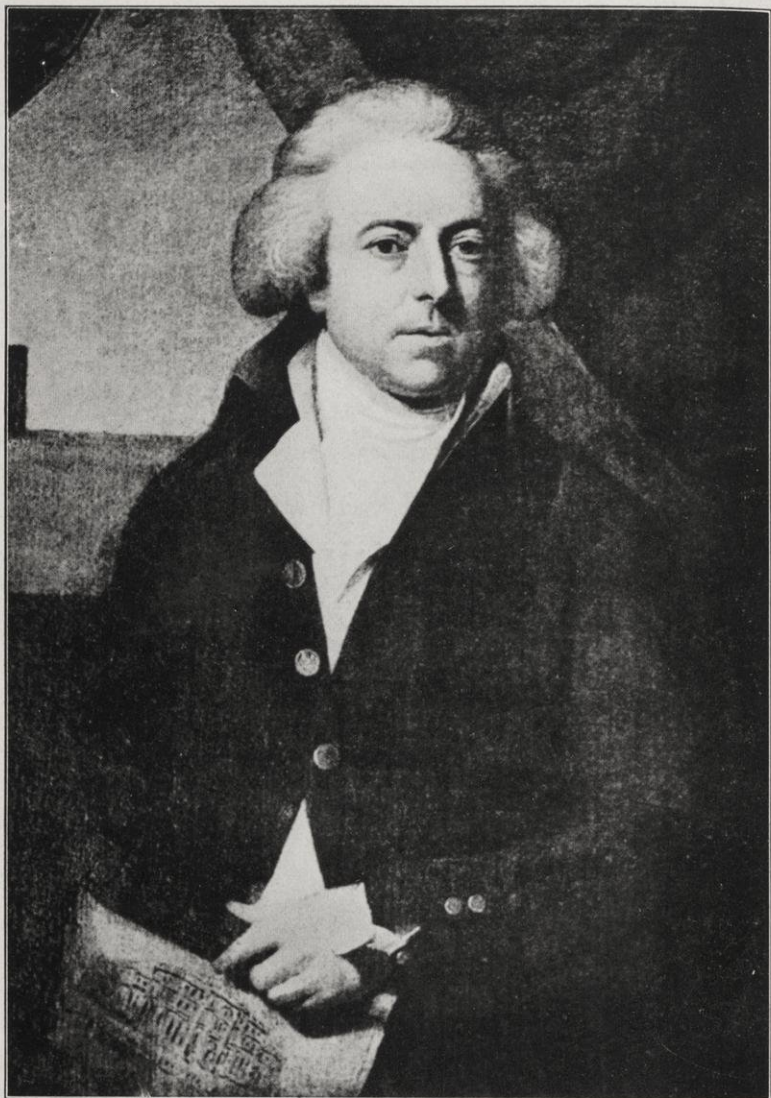
To endeavour to form a comparative estimate of Chippendale's place among the creators of English

style is a thankless task. His work has been both praised inordinately and abused unjustly. It is largely a matter of taste. But he has been generally considered to be England's greatest cabinet-maker, and the judgment of the years must count for much. For my own part, I fail to gain the same thrill of satisfaction from a contemplation of his work as from the more restrained and chaste productions of Sheraton, Hepplewhite, and our own Duncan Phyfe. No man who dealt with such a perfect chaos of style deserves, it seems to me, the very highest rank, and I cannot help feeling that he has been generally over-estimated. He was the great borrower, the great adapter, and, as a rule, he improved upon what he borrowed. He was the chief figure of a remarkable school of craftsmen. Let him retain his laurels.

One critic calls attention to these facts: Chippendale's style was generally heavier and less severe in ornamentation than the slender and tasteful designs of Hepplewhite and Sheraton. Though elaborate and often delicate, his designs were overwrought and lacking in architectural feeling. Though usually considered the master of them all, he does not survive the most searching tests. In general, he reflected the culture of his day with more virility than his French and English contemporaries.



An Ionic temple in Kew Gardens as designed by Chambers



Robert Adam, after a painting in the Royal Institute of British Architects

It was Thomas Sheraton who, in 1793, said of his work: "As for the designs themselves, they are now wholly antiquated and laid aside, though possessed of great merit according to the times in which they were executed." *Sic transit gloria mundi.* For Chippendale's fame did fade rather abruptly, not to be revived for a century, and other styles superseded his. Those who immediately followed him—Ince & Mayhew, Robert Manwaring, and others—did little more than copy him, but about 1765 a reaction to the Classic set in and Robert Adam came into his own, with Hepplewhite, Shearer, and Sheraton, following the trend of the times into paths of greater restraint and delicacy of feeling.

## CHAPTER VIII

SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS

(1726-1796)

**O**F THE English architects of the Georgian Period, the two greatest were undoubtedly Robert Adam, who popularized a revival of Classic forms, and Sir William Chambers, who typified the ultra-fashionable taste of his time. In many respects Chambers's life and personality are more interesting than his work, though he exercised, by reason of his talents and social position, a strong influence on the styles of that day.

His grandfather was a Scotchman who had supplied Charles XII, King of Sweden, with military stores and money. Sweden repudiated this debt, with others, and Chambers's father went to Sweden to recover what he could of the lost fortune. William was born in Stockholm in 1726.

The family returned to England in 1728 and settled in Ripon, in Yorkshire, where William received his school education. At the age of sixteen the boy, who had a taste for travel and adventure, shipped as super-cargo in a ship of the Swedish

East India Company, and made at least one trip to China. He had a natural interest in design and some skill in drawing even at this age, and while at Canton he made numerous sketches of Chinese buildings, gardens, costumes, etc. It is probable that he made one other voyage to the Orient, and in some way he acquired a working knowledge of architecture.

William's brother, John, also went to sea and subsequently acquired a large fortune in the East India trade, but William decided against a commercial career. At the age of eighteen he quitted the sea to devote his attention to the study of architecture. Two or three years later he went to Italy, where he made a study of Roman ruins and also the work of Palladio and other Italian architects of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, making a large number of measured drawings. From Italy he went to Paris, where he studied French architecture under Clérisseau, from whom he gained also great skill with the pencil.

Chambers returned to England in 1755, in the company of Cipriani and Joseph Wilton, the sculptor, whose beautiful daughter he soon after married. He started his career as a practising architect in Russell Street, London, near Covent Garden,



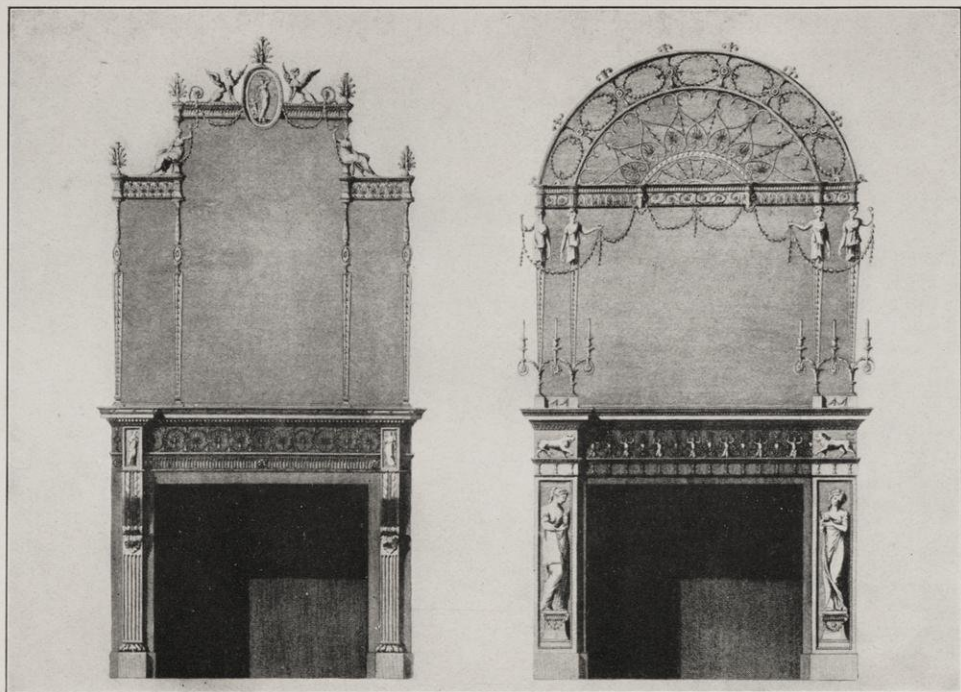
later taking a house in Poland Street. He possessed but a small fortune, but the merit of his work, his facility in making influential acquaintances, and the good luck which attended him through life, secured for him the patronage of Lord Bute and Mr. John Carr of York, who introduced him to the royal family and secured for him the position of drawing master to the heir apparent.

Chambers's first work of importance was a villa for Lord Bessborough at Roehampton in Surrey, the portico of which was particularly admired. In 1757 he published his first book. It consisted of engravings made from the sketches he had executed in Canton, and was called "Designs for Chinese Buildings, etc." His taste in this was much criticized at the time, but the book at least served to bring him into greater prominence. The designs apparently appealed to the Princess Dowager Augusta of Wales, for she engaged him as architect for the gardens of her new villa or palace at Kew. This work occupied him from 1757 to 1762, and made his reputation as the most fashionable architect of his time.

In 1759 he published his "Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture," which was enthusiastically received and which, in many respects,



Design for a bridge from "The Works in Architecture of R. & J. Adam"



Designs for marble chimneypieces with mirrors, from "The Works in Architecture of R. & J. Adam"

was his most notable work. It contains an appreciation of Greek architecture which has become a classic, and the book, which has been republished many times, is still one of the standards. "A Treatise on the Five Orders of Architecture," by Fred T. Hodgson, a valuable and practical work of reference published as recently as 1910, is based upon Chambers and is illustrated with Chambers's drawings. Though the work at Kew Gardens had brought him into prominence, it was this book, the most useful volume on the science of architecture which had appeared up to that time, that firmly established his reputation both as an author and as an architect of judgment, scholarship, and taste.

In 1761 he became a member of the Society of Artists and began to exhibit with them at Spring Gardens.

The work at Kew Gardens so pleased the royal family that in 1763 Chambers published a book containing his designs and descriptions of them. This aroused considerable controversy among the critics. The complete title of the work was "Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective Views of the Gardens and Buildings at Kew in Surrey, the Seat of Her Royal Highness, the Princess Dowager of Wales."

In 1768 Chambers was largely instrumental in founding the Royal Academy of Arts. Sir Joshua Reynolds became its first president and Chambers its first treasurer.

In 1771 Chambers sent a set of finished drawings of his Kew designs to the King of Sweden, who made him a Knight of the Pole Star. George III of England, who had been the architect's pupil when Prince of Wales, and who undoubtedly had become much attached to his tutor, allowed him to assume the title of knight in England, and he became Sir William. The king also appointed Chambers chief architect. Under Burke's régime he was also appointed Comptroller of His Majesty's Works, and later, Surveyor-General.

In 1772 he published "A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening," and as before, when he ventured into the realm of Chinese design, he aroused much adverse criticism. Undoubtedly he went too far, some of his statements being quite absurd, but his official position saved him from serious loss of reputation.

In 1774 Chambers revisited Paris and in 1775 he was appointed architect of Somerset House, his greatest monument, at a salary of £2,000 a year. The present structure is his design, the Strand

front being an enlarged and improved copy of an old palace built by Inigo Jones.

Chambers lived for many years in Poland Street and then built himself a house in Berners Street. Later he moved to Norton Street, where he died. He also had an official residence at Hampton Court Palace and a country house near Hounslow called Whitton Place.

He gradually retired from active life and business and spent his latter years in the enjoyment of his many friendships. He was a sufferer from asthma, and after a long and severe illness he died on March 8, 1796, in the seventy-first year of his age. He was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. He left a considerable fortune to one son and four daughters.

Chambers was a man of marked social gifts, which helped to make his career successful. He was a man of taste and culture, and he exerted a considerable influence on cabinet-making and interior decoration as well as architecture. He had a host of distinguished friends, including Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burney, and Garrick, and spent much of his leisure time at the Architects' Society, which met at Thatched House Tavern.

Chambers's fame as an architect rests chiefly on

his work at Somerset House and the summer houses in Kew Gardens. These latter, following the doubtful taste of the Princess, included both Classic and Oriental designs—Roman temples and Chinese and Turkish treatments. The most important of them was the famous pagoda which is still standing, a tall structure not without grace of line and detail. These buildings have been so widely criticized, both favourably and unfavourably, that his really able and clever work in landscaping at Kew has been often lost sight of.

At Somerset House, which Chambers reconstructed, he worked in a more serious and permanent style. There were some incongruities in it, and he felt it necessary to remove the famous façade of Inigo Jones at the water front, for which he was obliged to undergo much adverse criticism. Nevertheless, it was a great work in which he kept alive the Classic tradition.

Robert Adam, whose life and work will be discussed in the next chapter, was a more popular architect than Chambers, but the latter managed to secure a goodly portion of the fashionable work of the day. He built a number of town and country houses of distinction for men of wealth and title. Among these was the villa of the Earl of Bessborough at

Roehampton, the Earl of Pembroke's seat at Wilton, and the Duke of Bedford's house at Bloomsbury. He designed and built mansions for Earl Gower at Whitehall, for Lord Milbourne in Piccadilly, for Lord Abercorn and Viscount Midleton. He was also employed by the Duke of Marlborough at Blenheim. He built Duddingston House near Edinburgh, and in Ireland a fine casino for Lord Charlemont at Marino, near Dublin. He also designed the market house at Worcester.

Among his recognized masterpieces were the staircases in the houses of Lord Bessborough and Lord Gower and at the Royal Antiquarian Society. The terrace behind Somerset House was a bold and successful composition.

In his interior work Chambers introduced more graceful lines and less formal ornament, and in this field doubtless deserves greater credit than has been generally accorded him. It was Chambers who introduced the often-misused marble mantel. He also designed furniture in Chinese and other styles. His most elaborate piece was a combined bureau, dressing-case, jewel cabinet, and chamber organ, made for Charles IV of Spain in 1793. He also designed the state coach for George III of England, which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.



Chambers's name has inevitably been associated most often with the whimsical vogue of Chinese design in the eighteenth century, and there has been considerable useless controversy as to whether Chambers or Chippendale was chiefly responsible for this. As a matter of fact, neither of them was, but both merely sought to satisfy an insistent demand. The fondness in England for things Chinese dates back well into the previous century, when Oriental importations became common in the London and Liverpool markets. English imitations of Oriental lacquer were popular in Queen Anne's time, and intermittently up to 1780. The fashion was merely revived by Chambers when his book appeared in 1757.

Edwards & Darley, Thomas Johnson, William Halfpenny, and others had manufactured furniture in the so-called Chinese style before either Chippendale or Chambers published his book. Halfpenny also published an architectural volume, "New Designs for Chinese Temples," etc., in 1750. Chippendale's work marked rather the culmination of the Chinese style in furniture, and Chambers's in architecture. The aim of the latter was to correct popular misapprehensions, though in this he did not greatly succeed. The Chinese in vogue consisted largely of poor copies of the decorations on Oriental

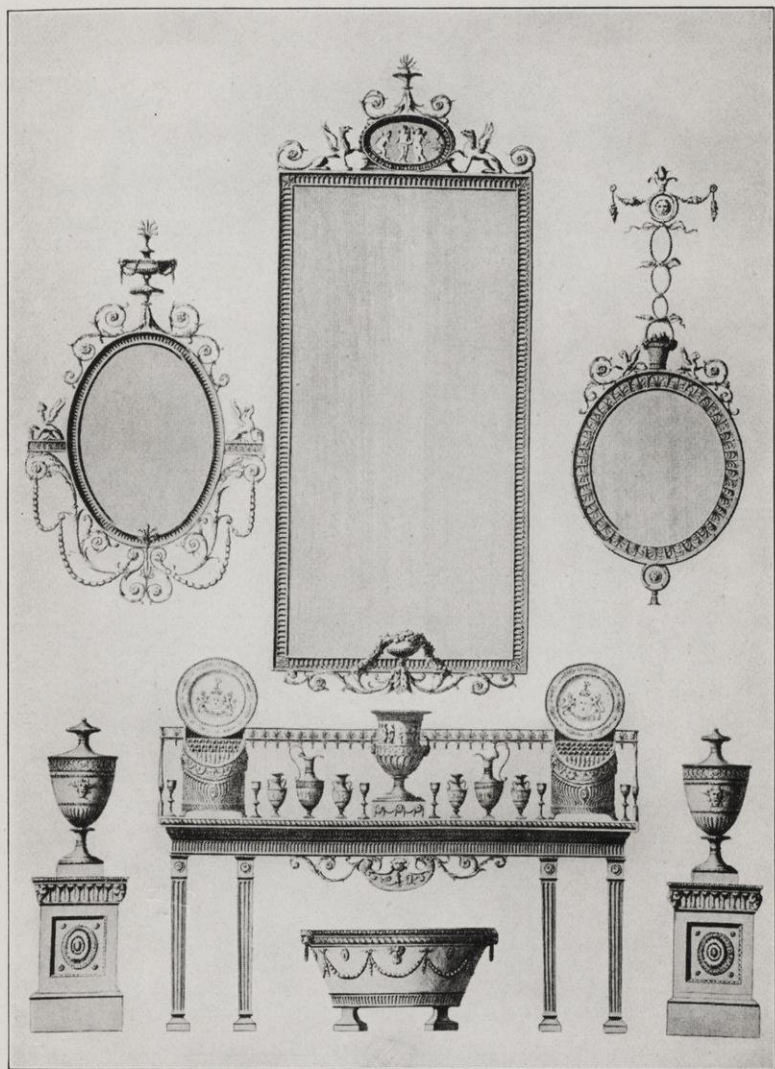
paper hangings and porcelain and slipshod adaptations of Chinese styles in furniture. Chambers had measured drawings to help him, though he never came very close to the true spirit of the Chinese.

But though Chambers was undoubtedly fascinated by the Chinese style, he nevertheless gained a place among those masters who perpetuated the Classic traditions. In this the work of Robert Adam overshadowed his, but in his more chaste and conventional work he adhered to the manner of Jones and Wren. His exteriors were bold, uniting the grandeur and luxuriance of the Roman, Florentine, and Genoese schools with the severe correctness of the Venetian. He exhibited no startling mannerisms, his style ranging somewhere between the ponderous, imposing style of Vanbrugh and the lighter, more chaste style of Adam. His only known work in the Gothic style is to be found in the additions and alterations at Milton Abbey in Dorset.

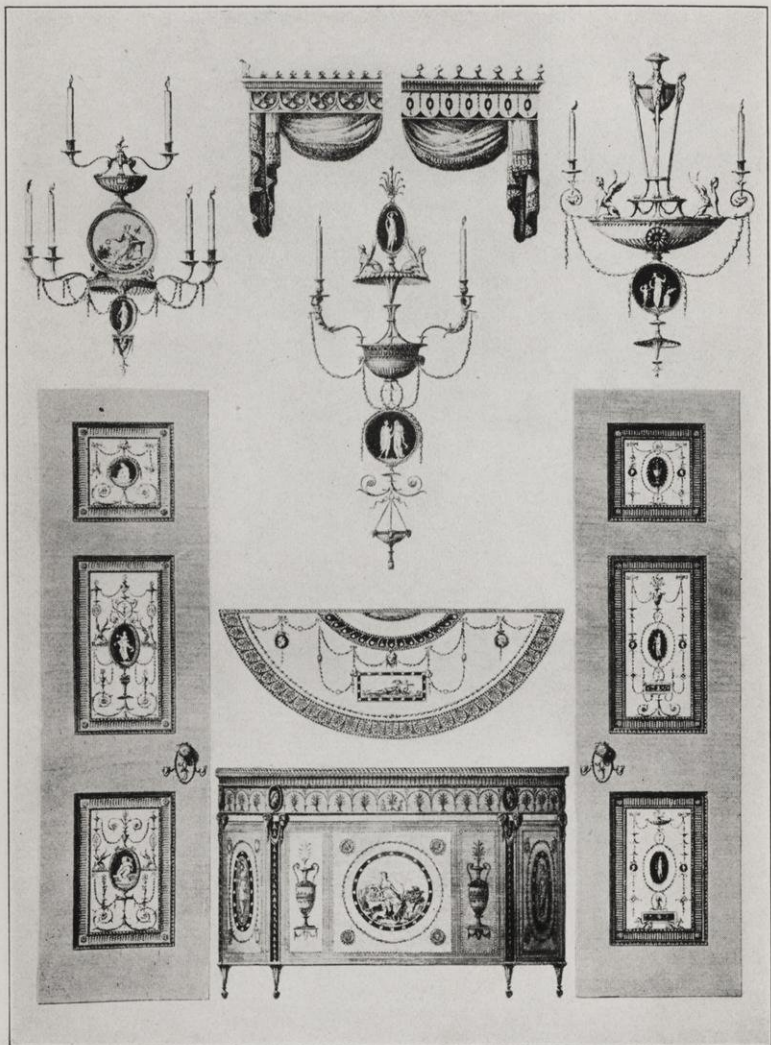
At a time when good architecture was the rule, Chambers stood with Adam in the first rank, in spite of his mistakes and extravagances. Though not an artist of great originality or imagination, he was, except for his Chinese vagaries, a conservator of the best traditions, a thorough student of the science of architecture, a careful designer, and a clever adapter.

He stood always just a little in advance of the fashions of the day.

Thomas Hardwick, his most sympathetic biographer, speaks of Chambers as genial and socially inclined, and says of him: "The natural endowments of his mind, accompanied by industry and perseverance, and above all by integrity and honourable conduct through life, raised him to the head of his profession and gained him the esteem and veneration of the scholar, the admiration of the artist, and the love and respect of those who looked up to him for protection and support." Of the "Treatise" Hardwick says: "The truths it inculcates and the proportion and forms it recommends, the result of long experience and repeated observation of structures which have stood the test of centuries, cannot fail to impress upon every mind that there is a criterion of taste in architecture as well as in the other liberal arts—that genius is consistent with rules—and that novelty is not necessarily an improvement."



Designs for mirrors and sideboard in "The Works in Architecture of R. & J. Adam"



Designs for furniture and decorations for the Countess of Derby. From  
"The Works in Architecture of R. & J. Adam"

## CHAPTER IX

ROBERT ADAM

(1728-1792)

**T**HE work of Robert Adam in England marks a distinct change in public taste—the overthrow of most of what Chippendale stood for, and a return to Classic restraint and a greater delicacy and chastity of ornament. It is not difficult to account for this. Both France and England were becoming weary of rococo and baroque extravagance, and the eyes of designers were turned upon Italy. The public had become familiar with the results of the excavations at Herculaneum after 1738, with those at Pompeii after 1748, and with the engravings of Roman designs by Giovanni Piranesi after 1748. People were becoming more familiar with the Classic styles.

As a result, we have in France the revolt from the florid style of Louis XV to the greater severity and restraint of Louis XVI. In England, which largely followed France at this time, we find a corresponding change, which was formulated and organized into current style by the Adam brothers.

Many English architects, decorators, and cabinet-makers followed their lead, and a Classic revival ensued. Chinese, Dutch, and rococo were banished together, and a new style in furniture and decoration caught the popular fancy. In this movement Robert Adam was the leader, and his influence, paramount from 1764 to 1784, persisted for half a century, strongly affecting the work of Hepplewhite, Sheraton, and all their contemporaries.

Robert Adam, the most prominent of a gifted family, was the second of six children of William Adam, a Scotchman, of Maryburgh, the two youngest being daughters. The father was an architect of distinction, who designed Hopetoun House, the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh, and other noteworthy buildings, and who held the appointment of King's Mason at Edinburgh. Robert was born July 3, 1728, at Kirkcaldy, County of Fife, Scotland. He was educated at the University of Edinburgh and later studied architecture in England.

About 1754 he started for a tour of the Continent. Historians differ as to the dates of his itinerary. It is generally supposed that he studied in France for a year or two under the French architect, Clérisseau, or at least became his friend, and he may have made several trips into Italy. Dated

drawings now in London would indicate that he was at Nîmes, France, in December, 1754, near Genoa in January, 1755, and at Rome in 1756. At any rate, in 1757 he visited Italy with Clérisseau and two draughtsmen, and made a number of drawings of Roman ruins. From Venice he went to Spalatro in Dalmatia to study the ruins of the Palace of Diocletian there. Hitherto, most of the travelling architects had studied the ruins of public buildings; Adam desired a correct idea of a Classic building of a residential character. His credentials proving defective, he was arrested as a spy, but was released and visited the ruins. These he found in rather bad condition, but he made complete drawings of the fragments in five weeks. His journal of this trip was published in the "Library of Fine Arts."

He continued on his travels a few months longer and then, in 1758, returned to England. In London he established himself with his brother James as an architect, and was soon widely employed by the gentry and nobility, becoming a more popular architect than Sir William Chambers. He became a fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, and on December 2, 1761, at the age of thirty-five, he was appointed joint architect to the King and Queen with Chambers.



In 1764 he published a folio volume of engravings by Bartolozzi of his Dalmatian drawings, entitled "Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro." In 1768 he resigned his royal office to become a member of Parliament for Kinross.

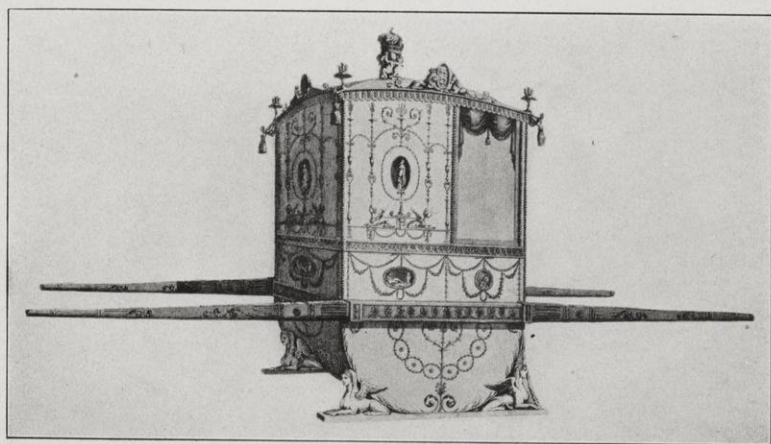
In 1769 the four brothers started the building of the Adelphi, a huge collection of wharves, arches, and viaducts on the Thames, with access from the Strand—the first great office building in London. They overcame serious opposition, but the building was never a commercial success. In the end it was disposed of by lottery, and the brothers are supposed to have realized a substantial profit.

In 1773 R. & J. Adam began the publication of their "Works in Architecture" in folio parts. Volume I, brought together in 1778, contained The Seat of the Duke of Northumberland at Sion, The Villa of Earl Mansfield at Kenwood, The Seat of the Earl of Bute at Luton Park, Public Buildings, and Designs for the King and Queen and Princess Dowager of Wales. Volume II, published in 1779, contained The House of the Earl of Derby in Grosvenor Square, The House of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart., in St. James's Square, The House of the Earl of Shelburne in Berkeley Square, The Seat of the Duke of Northumberland at Sion (continued),

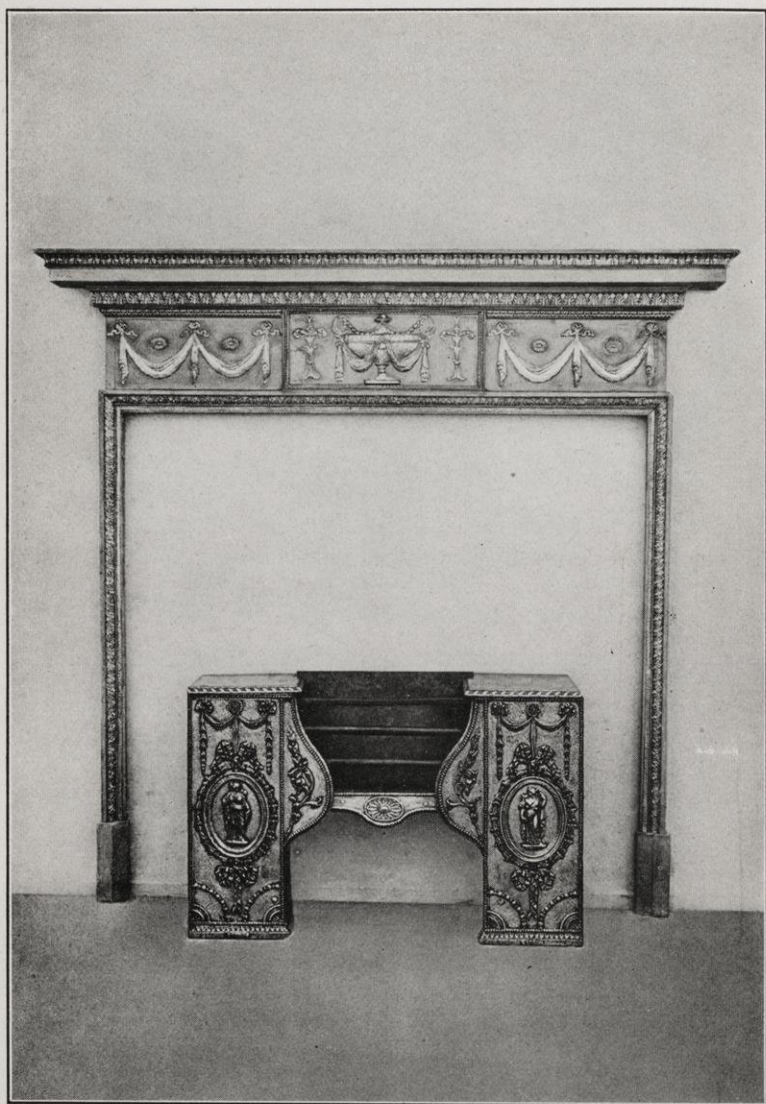


Mirror frame designed  
by Adam

Urn-shaped knife-boxes of satinwood, Adam  
style. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Sedan chair for Queen Charlotte, from "The Works in Architecture of  
R. & J. Adam"



Chimneypiece with pewter mountings and steel grate, designed by Adam.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

and Various Designs of Public and Private Buildings. The balance of the firm's more important drawings were brought out in a posthumous volume in 1822. The original designs of the firm are preserved in the Sloane Museum. There are thirty volumes of them, three of which are devoted to furniture. Miscellaneous drawings have been collected and published from time to time since.

On March 3rd, 1792, Robert Adam burst a blood vessel in his stomach and died at his home in Albemarle Street, London. He was buried with high honours in Westminster Abbey.

Robert's brothers all achieved distinction. John, the oldest, remained in Scotland, where he succeeded his father as King's Mason in Edinburgh. The others all went to London. Robert was always the dominant figure, William, the youngest, being little more than his assistant.

James, however, would have been an architect of note in any event, and his name is often associated with Robert's in giving credit for the Classic revival. The two worked together on almost all the important works, and any discussion of the style must refer to their joint product. James studied abroad shortly after Robert's return to England. In company with Clérisseau and Zucchi, he visited, in 1760-1, Verona,

Padua, Vicenza (where he studied the works of Palladio), Venice, Florence, Pisa, Rome, Pompeii, and Naples, taking notes and measurements, and making drawings. He was appointed Master Mason of the Board of Ordnance for North Britain, and on Robert's death succeeded him as royal architect. He was the author of "Practical Essays on Agriculture" and was writing a history of architecture when he died of apoplexy at the house in Albemarle Street on October 20, 1794.

The brothers were always active in their profession, and during the year preceding Robert's death they designed no less than eight public and twenty-five private buildings. Their work included the restoration of part of Whitehall, the building for the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce in John Street, work on the royal palaces, the parish church at Mistley, Essex, the Hall of Records or Registry Office in Edinburgh, the British Coffee House, London, the alteration and redecoration of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, new buildings for the University of Edinburgh, White's Club, Caenwood near Hampstead, Osterley near Brentford, Lansdowne House in Berkeley Square, Luton House in Bedfordshire, the Infirmary at Glasgow, and numerous town

houses in Portland Place, Stratford Place, and Fitzroy Square. The house at 25 Portland Place was built and fitted up for Robert Adam's own use. Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, in spite of a peculiar arrangement, possesses unusual merit, being an adaptation from Palladio. Perhaps the firm's most celebrated designs are those of the college buildings and Registry Office at Edinburgh. They are well balanced and true to the best Classic traditions.

Robert Adam's name is known as much for his work in interior decoration and furniture design as for his architecture. His room arrangements, his ornamental ceilings and chimneypieces, and his furniture represent a greater unity and architectonic quality in the ensemble than is to be found in the work of his predecessors or contemporaries. Nevertheless, he was an architect of the first rank and a creator of the Georgian style. His exteriors followed Palladio in effect, being rather formal in their classicism and lacking the grace that distinguished the work of Sir Christopher Wren. He patented a stucco for covering brick walls, which he used with greater success than did the architects of a later period.

His decorative work was rich, refined, chaste, and probably of more lasting value than his architec-

ture. The Pompeian influence is strongly apparent in his interiors, which are generally delicate and satisfying, though some critics call them attenuated, copying the delicacy rather than the richness of the antique. Certain it is that he had a rare feeling for perfection of detail and balance of ornament, as well as for the value of open spaces.

Adam's name must be considered along with the names of Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton in the development of English furniture styles, though he was not a cabinet-maker. He was one of the first to consider furniture fully worthy of an architect's attention, and finding nothing to fit in with his Classic interiors, he designed it to suit his walls and panels. In fact, he designed the entire equipment of many houses, down to counterpanes and work-bags.

These furniture designs were executed for the firm by cabinet-makers of the period and go, quite properly, by the name of "Adam furniture." The quantity of it being relatively small, it is seldom to be found in this country. For the most part it is Louis XVI in type, though with less rectangularity. In 1769 Adam made a few designs with Chinese details; in 1772 he used a lyre back, probably borrowed from France, and later employed by

Sheraton and Phyfe; in 1777 he introduced an oval chair back with a touch of the Empire feeling, suggestive of Hepplewhite. In general, however, his designs were Classic and somewhat formal. As a furniture designer, in fact, he was not the equal of Hepplewhite, Sheraton, or our Duncan Phyfe, but he paved the way for them and they owed him the greatest possible debt.

Adam's chairs were simple and chaste, lacking something of the grace that distinguished Sheraton's. They were generally small and fine, with backs low and narrow, and with arms but slightly upholstered, if at all. The legs for the most part were straight, the cabriole leg being entirely abandoned by Adam. Often they showed a Classic, sweeping curve. His sofas were delicate in appearance, with an inclination to Classic effects, and he designed a graceful but frail and comfortless couch with straight arms and no back.

For his dining-rooms Adam designed a serving table flanked by urns on pedestals, which was later developed into the sideboard by Shearer and Hepplewhite. He designed also bookcases, commodes, brackets, clock-cases, candelabra, mirror frames, console tables, and numerous other pieces, generally adapting Classical forms to modern uses more suc-



cessfully than any previous English designer. He designed also carriages, plate, and other household fittings, and a famous sedan chair for Queen Charlotte.

Adam followed the fashion of his day in the use of mahogany, but he was most fond of using satinwood, a new material which he did much to introduce to popular favour, and which was well adapted to his style. As a distinct departure from Chippendale's work, Adam used but little carving and that fine and in low relief. He used but little inlay until about 1770, when he began to employ colour, gilding, marquetry, and even ormolu ornaments. His favourite form of decoration, however, was painting, and he may be said to have introduced a new idea in furniture—colour value. He borrowed his idea for painted furniture from France, and he had his work done by the best talent available. In this he owed much to the imported artists, Pergolesi, Antonio Zucchi, Cipriani, and Angelica Kauffmann.

While James Adam should not be deprived of the credit due him for his part in the work of the firm and the development of the Adam style, nevertheless the interest of biographer and critic finds itself fixed inevitably on the life and achievements of Robert. He was not as scholarly as Chambers, not

as deep a student of architecture, but his touch was more graceful and the tendencies of his original creations were better directed. The defects of his architectural style were many and obvious, but he possessed in a marked degree a fine sense of proportion, symmetry, balance, and distribution of ornament, and he formed a style notable for its Classic restraint and elegant taste. Like Chippendale, he was a wide borrower, borrowing, indeed, from Chippendale himself, and, like Chippendale, he was a clever adapter, with a greater sense of artistic propriety than Chippendale possessed.

Adam's critics differ somewhat widely in their appraisal of his work, but all agree as to the importance of his introductions in the development of English style. As one critic says, he turned the tide of style single-handed, postponing for half a century the decline and fall of good taste. His estimate of his own work, as expressed in the preface to his book, was to the effect that his style had "brought about, in this country, a kind of revolution in the whole system of this elegant and useful art"—an ambitious statement but literally true.

Another critic asserts that Adam rang the changes on a few motives, and that his style, though full of lightness and elegance, was un-English and lacking in

familiar charm. There is something in this undoubtedly, and it may be further admitted that much of Adam's ornamental work was over-refined and lacking in the sturdiness and virility that we look for in an artistic contribution of permanent value. But the fact remains that Adam's influence on the designers, architects, decorators, and cabinet-makers of his day, even to the greatest of them, was of the highest potency, and we are always in deep debt to any master whose leadership is in the direction of restraint and away from extravagance.

Still another critic, referring to Adam as the most celebrated architect of his day, points out the defects and inequalities in his style. Many of Adam's designs, he says, were tawdry and flimsy, but they had also many excellencies. He possessed genuine inventive genius. His exterior architecture was often petty and commonplace, his real forte being interior decoration. England is indebted to him, this critic concludes, for much of the comfort combined with elegance which characterizes her homes to-day.

A writer in the "Dictionary of National Biography," speaking of the brothers Robert and James, sums up their merits as follows: "Of their decorative work generally, it may be said that it was rich but neat, refined but not effeminate, chaste but not

severe, and that it will probably have quite as lasting and beneficial effect upon English taste as their architectural structures.”

Finally, to quote a contemporary, the *Gentlemen's Magazine* for March, 1792, said: “Mr. Adam produced a total change in the architecture of this country; and his fertile genius in elegant ornament was not confined to the decoration of buildings, but has been diffused into almost every branch of manufacture.”

From John Swarbrick and Adam's other biographers, we are able to gain a fairly vivid idea of his personality. In the first place he was a man of natural good taste and with a decided talent for design. Incidentally he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a landscape painter. His canvases showed a rich appreciation of composition, and of light and shadow. In the second place, he was well educated and enjoyed greater opportunities for travel and study than most of his contemporaries. Intellectually he was a broader man than Chambers.

Withal he was practical—an artist but no dreamer. The material and artistic sides of his nature seem to have been equally developed, and he was a successful business man. Even his Spalatro book was published at a profit. And he achieved his success in

spite of his Scottish parentage, at that time not a popular asset in London. He was undoubtedly lucky and presented his ideas at an opportune moment, but he had the enterprise, force, and vision to make the most of the situation.

He attracted notable friends from the first and must have had a magnetic personality as well as a dynamic character. He is said to have had pleasing manners and a reputation for moral integrity. He was self confident and pushing—doubtless conceited—all of which contributed to his remarkable success.

He was not a pioneer like Inigo Jones; I hardly think his genius could be rated in the same class as that of Sir Christopher Wren; but, considering the whole of his character and achievements, I am inclined to consider him the foremost figure of the Georgian Period in the development of style and in artistic leadership.

## CHAPTER X

JOSIAH WEDGWOOD

(1730-1795)

**O**F THE dozens of clever and successful English potters of the eighteenth century, most were borrowers in the field of design; few may be said to have been creators of style. To Josiah Wedgwood alone may rightly be given the title of master. More than this, he takes a place alongside of Robert Adam in the refinement of English taste, the revival of Classical forms, and the stemming of the tide of vulgarity. A contemporary of Adam, his work ran parallel to that of the architect-decorator, and his artistic creed was much the same.

Wedgwood's pottery was unquestionably the finest that England ever produced, in workmanship, design, material, and colour. When he started in the potter's trade, most of the tables of the middle classes in England bore only crude clay dishes, pewter, and woodenware. Salt-glaze and imported porcelains were too costly, and it remained for Wedgwood to provide those tables with good ware, perfect in form and materials, at low cost. But he

did more than this: in his finer ware he created works of art that are still the envy of sincere craftsmen and that rivalled the best work from the Continent.

The story of this greatest of English potters is inspiring. Starting with a poor education and an entailed estate, he had to make his own fortune, and he became successful commercially as well as artistically. His was a rare combination of ability. He discovered and invented new kinds of earthenware and introduced new and better styles. He acquired considerable scientific knowledge and his life was one of great civic value in his community. And above all, his life and work were guided by the purest ideals of craftsmanship.

Josiah Wedgwood has been fortunate in his biographers. A. H. Church, Samuel Smiles, Eliza Meteyard, Frederick Rathbone, Llewellyn Jewett, and others have contributed to a fairly voluminous Wedgwood literature which well repays the reading. I shall attempt only the briefest outline of Wedgwood's life and work, leaving it to these authors to satisfy a desire for a more complete and detailed account.

Josiah Wedgwood came from a family of potters which, through three generations, had been prom-



Part of a dinner service of queen's ware made by Wedgwood at Etruria. Metropolitan Museum of Art





Decorative jasper plaque probably designed by Flaxman and made at Etruria by Wedgwood. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Part of a blue and white tea set of jasper ware. Metropolitan Museum

inent in Staffordshire in the development of the industry through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. His grandfather, Dr. Thomas W. Wedgwood of Burslem, was one of the best of the early salt-glaze potters. Josiah was the youngest of thirteen children of Thomas and Mary Wedgwood, and was born in Burslem in 1730, being baptized in the parish church on July 12th of that year. The father, who owned a small but thriving pottery there, died when Josiah was nine years old.

Josiah went to school at Newcastle until he was ten years old, and then, on account of the family's reduced circumstances, he was obliged to leave school and go to work. He was set to learning the art of "throwing" clay, and became extraordinarily skilful with the potter's wheel.

When about twelve years old, Josiah was stricken with smallpox, which left him with a diseased knee from which he never recovered and which for many years caused him great pain and inconvenience.

His eldest brother, Thomas, had succeeded to the father's business, and in 1744 Josiah was apprenticed to him. For two years he continued his work as "thrower," but at last his lameness compelled him to give it up. His misfortune, however, brought its compensation, for he was now enabled to devote

more of his attention to the ornamental side of the business and to experimentation in the production of agate and tortoise-shell wares. He rapidly developed an intense interest in the curious and the beautiful.

At the end of the apprenticeship, Thomas, not in sympathy with his brother's progressive views, refused to take him into partnership, and in 1752 Josiah left Burslem and went into partnership with Thomas Alders and John Harrison at the Cliff Bank Pottery, near Stoke, who made mottled and marbled wares, some salt-glaze, and tea sets of black Egyptian. Young Wedgwood was instrumental in greatly improving these wares, but the partnership failed to prove satisfactory, and he left after a year or two.

The young potter, in fact, had been sadly hampered in his career until, in 1754, he was taken into partnership by Thomas Whieldon of Fenton Low, one of the most eminent potters of his day and a man of progressive ideas. This was the turning point in Josiah's fortunes. With Whieldon, he produced several new wares, including a highly glazed green ware in the form of leaves, fruits, and flowers.

In 1758 this partnership came to an end, and early in 1759 he returned to Burslem and leased the Church-

yard works, which he operated in a small way. Within a few months he had formed a new association with his cousin Thomas, which later grew into a partnership. From relatives they rented for £10 a year a cottage, with two kilns, some work sheds, etc., known as the Ivy House works. Here Wedgwood began to put into operation the results of his studies in ceramic chemistry. The cousins had but small capital, and at first made popular wares—salt-glaze, and green and yellow glaze—working gradually into tortoise-shell and marbled plates and flower vases, white stoneware, and green-glazed earthenware. Josiah invented a secret process for firing the glaze, and at first made most of his own models and moulds, mixed his own clay, superintended the firing, and ran the business end. This early work was not marked. The factory turned out small wares in considerable quantity, but all were distinguished by perfection of workmanship.

In a year or two the cousins enlarged the works, engaged more workmen, introduced a system of division of labour, and improved the kilns and mechanical appliances. In 1762 they leased the Brick House and works, known also as the Bell works. Here they remained until their final removal to Etruria in 1773. It was at about this time

that Wedgwood improved his white earthenware and cream-coloured ware which first brought him into prominence.

This cream-coloured ware, made of the finest clays of Devon and Dorset, was better than anything of the kind before produced in Staffordshire. In 1762 Wedgwood presented a service of this ware to Queen Charlotte and in 1763 he had it patented. In this year he was appointed potter to the queen, and later to the king. He gave the name queen's ware to the new pottery.

The royal patronage doubtless helped him, for his business began to thrive. Gradually he turned his attention more and more to artistic productions. The revival of Classic forms, such as Robert Adam introduced, interested him deeply, especially the discovery at Pompeii and elsewhere in Italy of old Greek and Tuscan vases. This interest was widespread throughout Europe. In England Adam and Wedgwood were its most successful and faithful exponents. Wedgwood began to study also the later phases of Greek art. He adhered throughout to his ideals of mechanical accuracy and perfection and exerted a great influence on the taste of his time. He became, in fact, the world's most successful and original potter, and his work influenced all that followed.



A group of jasper pieces made at Etruria. Metropolitan Museum



A basalt tea set made by Wedgwood at Etruria. Metropolitan Museum



Jasper vase in Classic form made at Etruria. Metropolitan Museum of Art



A copy of Wedgwood's famous Portland Vase made at Etruria after his death



A vase of black basalt made by Wedgwood & Bentley. Metropolitan Museum of Art

On January 25, 1764, Wedgwood was married to a distant cousin, Sarah Wedgwood, in the parish church at Astbury, Cheshire, and brought her home to Brick House. It was a happy marriage; Sarah became a model wife and mother and took a great interest in all her husband's ambitions. She was the mother of a considerable family of sons and daughters, one of the latter becoming the mother of Charles Darwin. Not long after his marriage Wedgwood, unable to endure longer the agony caused by his lame knee, had his leg amputated.

About 1766 Wedgwood began making his black basalt ware. This had been made in a crude form in Staffordshire and had been called Egyptian black, a ware owing its colour to the introduction of iron. Wedgwood greatly improved this, making it richer in line, finer in grain, and smoother in surface, and calling it black porcelain.

During the following two years Wedgwood was very busy and felt the need of a special outlet for his goods in London and also of a partner to share his business responsibilities. As early as 1766 he began talking of plans of expansion with his friend Thomas Bentley, whom he had met in Liverpool in 1762. Bentley was a widely travelled man of taste and education, as well as an experienced merchant



and a born salesman. He is described as handsome and courtly. He and Wedgwood acquired a great mutual esteem for each other, and in 1767 they agreed upon a partnership which was completed in the following year. From that time the Wedgwood ware began to be marked with the names Wedgwood & Bentley, or the initials W. & B. A shop was opened in St. Martin's Lane, London, in 1768, and Bentley settled there to look after the sales. This arrangement proved most profitable for all concerned.

The business continued to grow until finally the firm built a new factory at Etruria, near Hanley. Here also Wedgwood built a fine mansion for himself. The new works were formally opened June 13, 1769. The scope of the business was greatly enlarged and included the manufacture of cameos, medallions, miniature sculptures, painted vases, etc. It was at Etruria that the finest of the Wedgwood wares were made, many special orders being executed for European royal families and other eminent persons. The firm employed the most able and talented artists available, including John Flaxman, an artist and sculptor of rare Classic taste, whose work is now highly prized by connoisseurs. All of which helped greatly in raising the standard of the national taste.

In 1774 new quarters were fitted up in London for Mr. Bentley, in Greek Street, Soho, and were called Portland House.

In 1773 Wedgwood began making a tinted terra cotta which he perfected until in 1776 he was producing his famous jasper ware, perhaps the best known and most highly prized of all his inventions.

Thomas Bentley died November 26, 1780, and Wedgwood, nearly overwhelmed by his loss, carried on the ornamental end of the business alone. In 1788 his cousin Thomas, who had been in charge of the so-called useful wares, also died. The burden of responsibility was too much for Wedgwood, and in 1790 he took into partnership his three sons, John, Josiah, and Thomas. In 1793 his nephew, Thomas Byerley, was also taken in, and the firm became Wedgwood, Sons & Byerley.

Josiah Wedgwood the elder partially retired from business in 1790, and during the last five years of his life he was afflicted with ill health. He died at Etruria on January 3, 1795, at the age of sixty-five, rich in honours and friends, and leaving an estate of over £500,000. He was buried in the churchyard in Stoke. Though the works were carried on after his death, his personal supervision and inspiration could never be replaced.

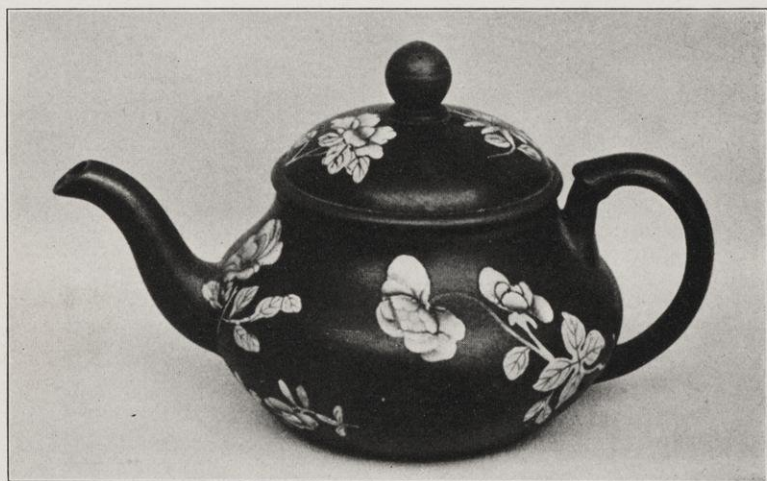
Josiah Wedgwood was a man of genius in art, an earnest man of interesting personality and sterling character, a man of intellect, patience, perseverance, courage, and high ideals. He was socially inclined, entertained much, and drew about him many warm friends, including some of the most eminent men of his time. He was a collector of books, engravings, and objects of natural history, and took great delight in the improvement of his garden and grounds. His sympathies were all with the patriots of the American Revolution, and he was an advocate of the abolition of slavery.

Lacking the opportunities of an early education, his mind was ever vigorous and he acquired considerable scientific knowledge. He was accustomed to send the results of his experiments and investigations to the Royal Society, and his scientific writings were always sound and sane. He invented a pyrometer for recording the higher degrees of heat. He was a fellow of the Royal and Antiquarian Societies, and in 1786 he was the promoter and founder of an association in London called The General Chamber of the Manufacturers of Great Britain.

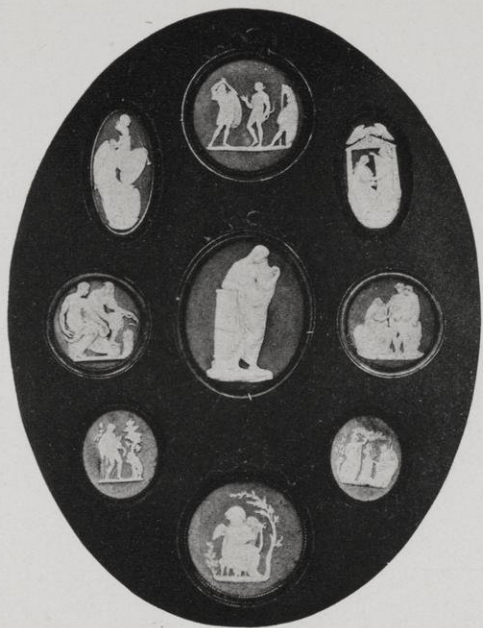
Wedgwood's activities, in fact, were many and varied outside of his business. He always took a great interest in the welfare of his workmen and



Pebble-ware vases made by Wedgwood & Bentley. Metropolitan Museum of Art



A tov teapot in black basalt with encaustic enamel decorations. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Decorative medallions—Classic figures—  
in blue and white jasper, by Wedgwood &  
Bentley



A typical Wedgwood portrait medallion—  
the head of Linnaeus. Metropolitan Mu-  
seum of Art

built a model village for them at Etruria. He recognized the need for better transportation facilities in Staffordshire if business was to expand, and proposed a canal to be built connecting the Trent and Mersey rivers. He was the chief agent in obtaining an act of Parliament authorizing the building of this canal, and in spite of the opposition of landed interests, he saw it through. The first turf was cut on July 17, 1766, and the Grand Trunk Canal, ninety miles long, was completed in 1770. Wedgwood also planned and carried into execution ten miles of turnpike roads, and he assisted in the improvement of Burslem by the building of schools, chapels, a town hall, and a public market.

In connection with the production of Wedgwood's finer wares, and the designing of those Classical forms which helped to make him famous and to raise the artistic taste of England, a word of credit should be given to John Flaxman. Flaxman, whose father was a seller of plaster casts, was the second son and was born July 6, 1755. While a boy he amused himself with drawing and modelling and reading Classic fables. When twelve years old he won first prize for a model from the Society of Arts, and again when he was fifteen. From 1767 on he was an important contributor to exhibitions. He became a

sculptor of ability and designed and executed a number of public monuments. Bentley discovered him before 1775, and Wedgwood took a great interest in his career, sending him to Rome to study, and helping him in other ways. He was the designer of some of the most exquisite of the relief decorations used on the jasper ware.

A volume might be written—in fact, volumes have been written—describing the various Wedgwood wares. Only the briefest possible résumé can be given in a chapter of this scope. The chief wares were the cream-coloured or queen's ware; variegated or terra cotta ware, resembling porphyry, granite, Egyptian pebble, etc.; basalt, or black porcelain; a white porcelain biscuit, smooth and wax-like, with properties like the basalt; jasper ware; bamboo, or cane-coloured biscuit porcelain, similar to the white; and a porcelain biscuit hard as agate, impenetrable by acid or liquid, and used for mortars and pestles, chemical vessels, etc.

Briefly, the queen's ware was light and durable, clear in tone, and offered a good background for decoration. It was made in dinner sets, basket-work dishes, vases, and various odd pieces.

The black basalt was perhaps the most solid pottery ever produced. It was as hard as natural stone,

capable of receiving a high polish, resistant to acids and fire, fine in grain and texture. It was made in tea sets, vases, placques, busts, and medallion portraits in plain black, and was also used to receive encaustic painting.

The jasper ware Wedgwood himself described as "a white porcelain bisque of exquisite beauty and delicacy, possessing the quality of receiving colour throughout its whole substance. This renders it particularly fit for cameos, portraits, and all subjects in bas-relief, as the ground may be made of any colour throughout and the raised figures in pure white." Many colours were employed, including at least five tones and hues of blue derived from cobalt, six tones of green, three tones of red from orange to terra cotta, lilac, rose, plum, chocolate, buff, brown, canary-yellow, black, and four distinct whites. Previous to 1781 the jasper ware was used almost exclusively for placques and cameos. Then Wedgwood turned his attention to vases, adapting the forms largely from the antique. After 1780 all sorts of articles were made in this ware.

The incident of the Portland vase is worthy of mention. The original Portland or Barberini vase was a famous antique glass amphora which was discovered about 1625 and was acquired by the Duchess



of Portland in 1785 after a troubled history. This vase was copied wonderfully by Wedgwood in blue-black jasper with white relief figures. He is supposed to have made fifty copies, though others were made later. For the best of them he charged £50 each. It is said that about twenty of the original fifty copies are extant in museums and private collections, chiefly in England, but the authenticity of some of them is disputed. They are very valuable, one having been sold in 1890 at Christie's in London for £200.

Some of Wedgwood's most decorative and most minutely perfect work is to be found in his cameos and medallions. They were made chiefly in black basalt and jasper ware, and included reliefs and intaglios. Among the subjects most prized by collectors are the classical and historical subjects, and the "heads of illustrious moderns." The commonest size was 2 by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches, in oval form.

Most of the genuine Wedgwood ware bears the potter's mark. Prior to 1768, on the queen's ware, the single name Wedgwood appeared in fairly large capitals. About 1768 the name was used in four different sizes of type. From 1769 to 1780 the firm name Wedgwood & Bentley appeared. The two names, one above the other, were used in four

sizes. The names were also used in raised letters in a circular impressed mark, usually a little over an inch in diameter, the word Etruria being added on the later basalt, Etruscan, and variegated vases. On the small basalt intaglios the initials W. & B. were sometimes used. After Bentley's death the single name Wedgwood was again used in six different sizes.

This brief outline is hardly sufficient to guide the novice in a study of Wedgwood wares, but it may suggest a course of more thorough investigation. The artistic beauty and variety of these objects will well repay the study. For Wedgwood was more than a successful potter. Like Adam he introduced Classic forms in pottery following the vogue of Chinese, as Adam superseded Chippendale. Wedgwood's life and work are fairly well known, but he has seldom been credited with the influence he exerted on the general trend of artistic taste and appreciation in England.

## CHAPTER XI

GEORGE HEPPLEWHITE

(*Circa* 1720-1786)

**G**EORGE HEPPLEWHITE comes very near to being a myth. His personality is elusive; the very proof of his existence depends largely on circumstantial evidence. He was, however, an individual to be reckoned with in any study of the development of style in furniture. He is not to be explained away as a mere name given to a school. There was a personality there which impressed itself on the taste of his period, and for years Hepplewhite has shared with Chippendale and Sheraton the honour of creating or fostering that national taste for artistic beauty in furniture which reached its zenith in England between 1780 and 1800.

Of biographical data very little exists. Even the dates of his birth and death are not certainly known, and the spelling of his name has been a matter of controversy. In the first edition of his book it was spelled "Heppelwhite," and this spelling has appeared occasionally elsewhere. In the later editions, however, the name appears as "Hepplewhite."

George Hepplewhite was born—no one knows just where—at some time during the first half of the eighteenth century, and was apprenticed to the Gillows at Lancaster. Later he carried on a cabinet-making business in Redcross street, Parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate. He must have died in 1786, for the records show that on June 27th of that year the administration of his estate was granted to his widow, Alice Hepplewhite. He left a profitable business and property of considerable value.

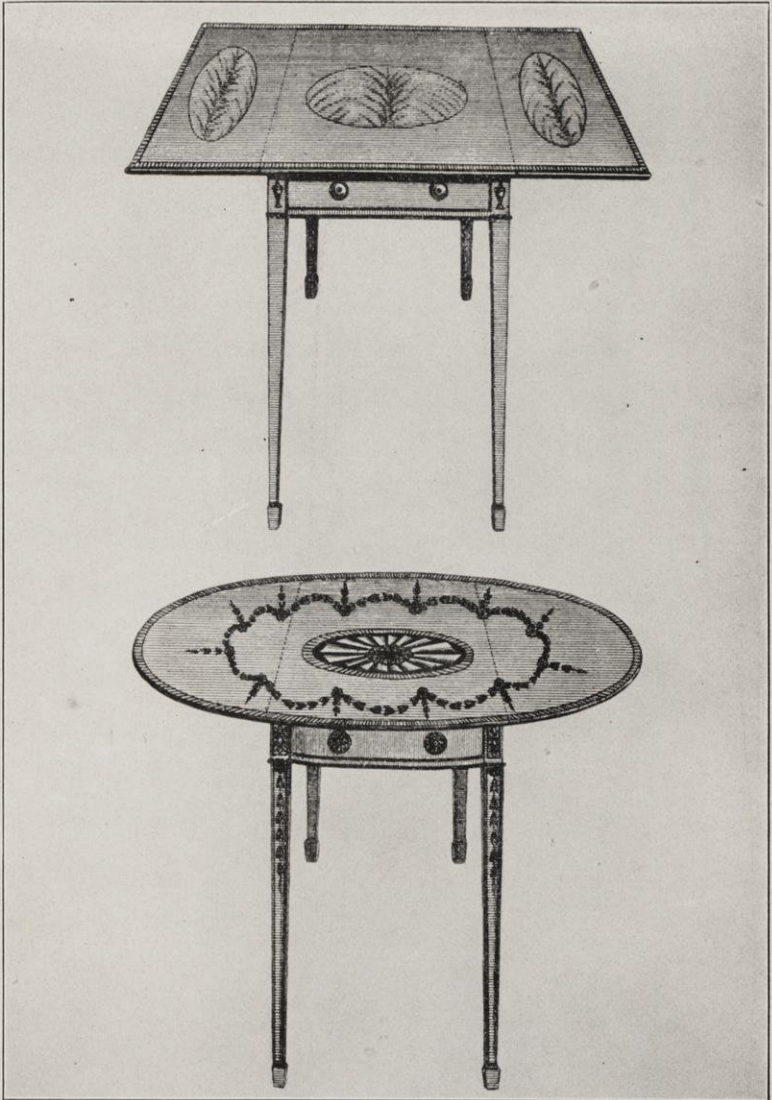
After his death the business was carried on by his widow and partners, trading as A. Hepplewhite & Co., and it is their name which appears on the catalogue of his designs which was published two years after his death.

No record has been left as to the sort of man Hepplewhite was. We can only argue from his work and success that he was a man of taste and skill, educated at least in his art, and possessed of business ability second only to that of Chippendale. He was the most prominent cabinet-maker and furniture designer in England at a time when this was a prosperous and populous industry.

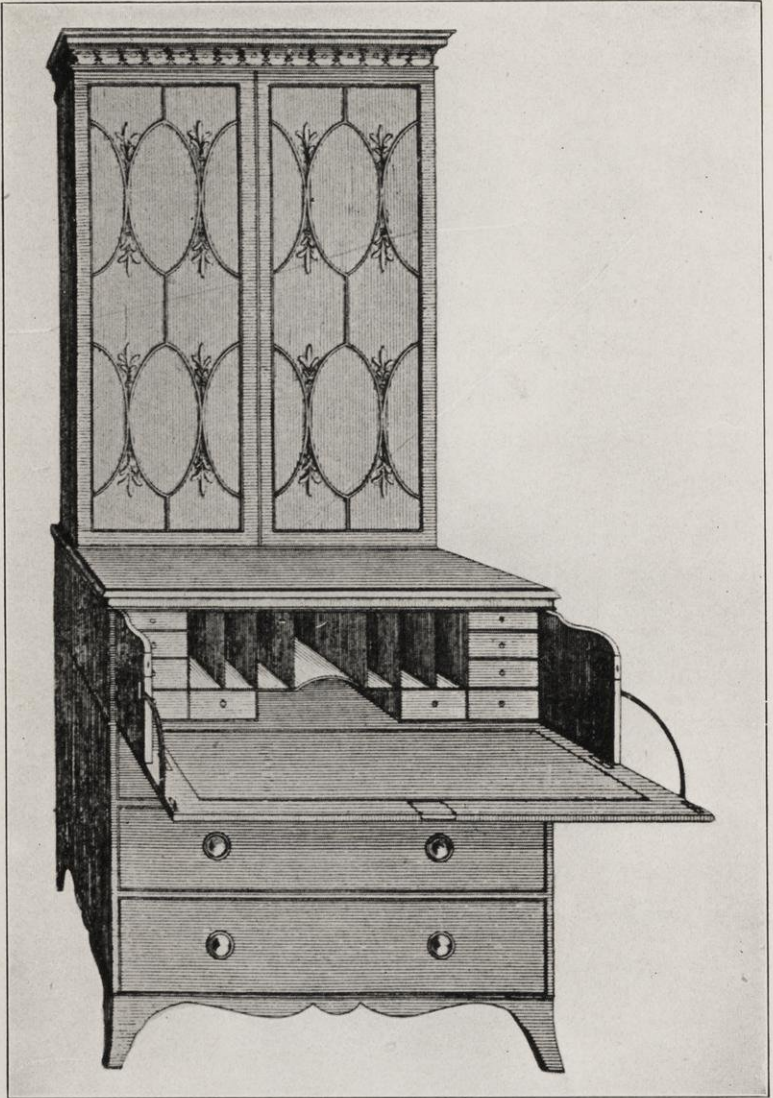
The only visible evidence we have of his work is in his posthumous book. It is known that he made

furniture after his own designs, but many others made use of them also, so that to-day we have but slight means of identification.

The full title of the book, which is descriptive of its contents, is as follows (taken from the third edition): "The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide, or, Repository of Designs for Every Article of Household Furniture, in the Newest and Most Approved Taste, Displaying a Great Variety of Patterns for Chairs, Stools, Sofas, Confidante, Duchesse, Side Boards, Pedestals and Vases, Cellerets, Knife-Cases, Desk and Book-Cases, Secretary and Book-Cases, Library Cases, Library Tables, Reading Desks, Chests of Drawers, Urn Stands, Tea Caddies, Tea Trays, Card Tables, Pier Tables, Pembroke Tables, Tambour Tables, Dressing Glasses, Dressing Tables and Drawers, Commodes, Rudd's Table, Bidets, Night Stands, Bason Stands, Wardrobes, Pot Cupboards, Brackets, Hanging Shelves, Fire Screens, Beds, Field Beds, Sweep Tops for Ditto, Bed Pillars, Candle Stands, Lamps, Pier Glasses, Terms for Busts, Cornices for Library Cases, Wardrobes, etc., at large. Ornamented tops for pier tables, Pembroke tables, commodes, etc. In the Plainest and Most Enriched Styles, with a Scale to each, and an Explanation in Letter Press.



Designs for Pembroke tables from "The Cabinet-Maker's and Upholsterer's Guide," by A. Hepplewhite & Co.



Design for a secretary, from "The Cabinet-Maker's and Upholsterer's Guide," by A. Hepplewhite & Co.

Also the Plan of a Room showing the Proper Distribution of the Furniture. The Whole Exhibiting near three hundred different designs, engraved on one hundred and twenty-eight plates. From Drawings by A. Hepplewhite & Co., Cabinet-Makers."

The first edition of this book was published in 1788, the second in 1789, and the third in 1794. It was a businesslike book for the trade, and the most notable of several similar works published by others at about the same time. In the preface Hepplewhite states his creed as follows: "To unite elegance and utility, and blend the useful with the agreeable, has ever been considered a difficult but an honourable task." It is the simple statement of a true craftsman, and might have come from the pen of John Ruskin or William Morris.

Postponing for the moment a general criticism of Hepplewhite's work, the impression one receives from looking through his book is of a lack of uniformity. Some of the designs are fine and graceful, some heavy and bordering on ugliness, which adds some colour to the theory that not all the designs in the books were by Hepplewhite himself. It is perhaps not too much to assume that his pencil was responsible for the best of them. Some of the rectangular-backed chairs strongly suggest Sheraton;



the sofas are hardly compelling in the main; the girandoles, pier glasses, etc., are very fine and delicate and are decidedly of the Adam type; the sideboards show no drawers, but are equipped with vases and pedestals at the ends and with knife-boxes on top; the chairs and small tables make decidedly the best showing; stools and other pieces are strongly Louis XVI in style; the beds somehow fail to satisfy; something seems to be wrong with their proportions, though the pillars are in most cases very graceful. So much of an impression may be gained through a hasty study of this book.

Though the "Guide" was published after Hepplewhite's death and was doubtless prepared toward the close of his life, many of the designs may have been drawn some time before. He had undoubtedly been in business for several years and had probably been making furniture of this type. He was almost certainly a competitor of Chippendale, and his best work probably antedates the publication of his book by upward of ten years.

To return to Hepplewhite's place among the Georgian designers and craftsmen, his detractors are inclined to point out that his name has been given to a school or a fashion which he did not create. They assert that he did not originate the

so-called Hepplewhite style, but was merely one of many exponents. They point out that others were working in this style, and that the Gillows preceded him, while Adam was the real source of its principles. But every school and movement has its leader, and Hepplewhite was undoubtedly the superior of his contemporaries. He was constructive, and he did more than any other to crystallize the new taste.

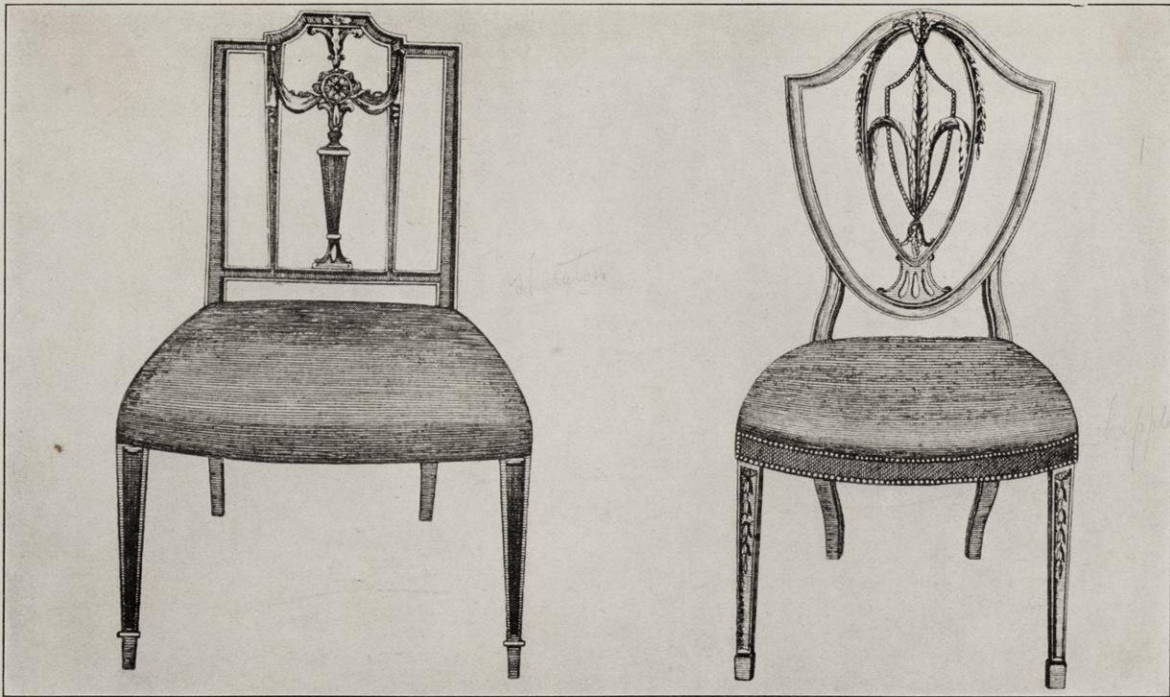
It is also true that most of the so-called Hepplewhite furniture was not made by Hepplewhite, but only controversialists need attempt to distinguish between the actual work of his shop, the designs shown in his book, and the work of his contemporaries working along parallel lines. Call it the work of a school and not of an individual if you will, or the normally developing fashion of an hour, it exhibits too many excellences not to confess to the parentage of a master, and Hepplewhite must have been that master.

And what one of the masters was entirely original? The great master always knows how to apply and adapt the work of others. Like Chippendale, Hepplewhite borrowed freely, from both France and England. He and Sheraton were fortunate in coming after furniture making had been established

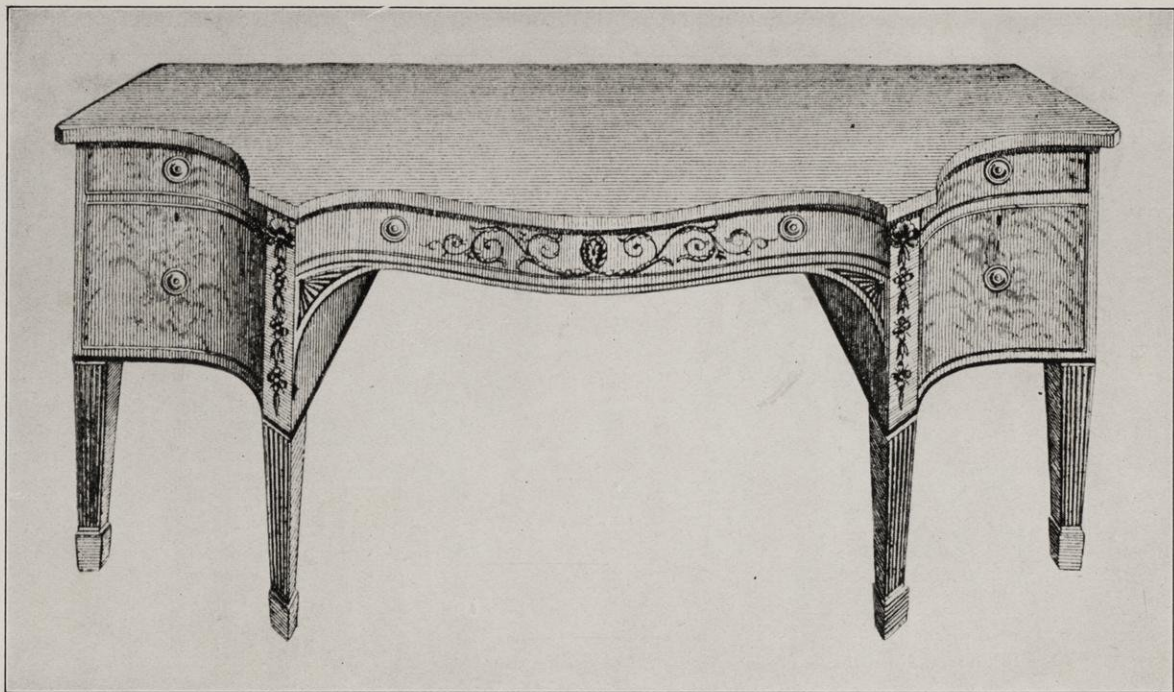
as one of the fine arts, and there was a mass of material for them to draw from. It was to Adam that Hepplewhite owed his greatest debt. It was Hepplewhite's aim to break away from the Chippendale style and to combine elegance with lightness, and in the Adam introductions he found the most available material for this. From Adam he took the tapering leg which he did most to popularize, the oval chair back, and painted ornament. In fact, there is such a merging of styles from Adam to Hepplewhite and Sheraton that it is often impossible to draw sharp lines of distinction.

Granting all this indefiniteness, it is still possible to make some sort of critical study of what is generally considered as Hepplewhite's contribution to the style of his day. He was, first of all, an exponent of elegance. That was the keynote of his style. He pared away all clumsiness from his designs. Their extreme fineness, in some cases, produces almost the effect of weakness, but he was a thorough enough craftsman to offset this with excellence of construction in the work which he actually executed himself.

Hepplewhite's style lies somewhere between the rococo and the Classic. He broke away from Chippendale, though he was not a thorough Classicist



Chair designs from the "Guide." The right-hand style is the typical Hepplewhite shield-back; the left-hand one is an instance of overlapping with the style usually credited to Sheraton



Design for a sideboard, from "The Cabinet-Maker's and Upholsterer's Guide," by A. Hepplewhite & Co.

like Adam, nor did he ever achieve quite the perfection of delicacy reached by Sheraton. On the other hand, he possessed balance and restraint and common sense, and he avoided the ultra-fantastic which neither Chippendale nor Sheraton was guiltless of. On the whole, his style was more distinctly English than Chippendale's, and if he was not a student of the Classic like Adam, he at least absorbed much of the Classic feeling.

The Hepplewhite designs show an absorption rather than an adoption of foreign styles, though they were strongly influenced by the style of Louis XVI, as Chippendale's were by that of Louis XV. They are characterized by comfort rather than artificiality of ornament. Hepplewhite was a mechanical rather than a free-hand designer like Chippendale, and his designs show technical excellences that were undoubtedly the result of his practical training.

The popular taste at this time was veering away from solid mahogany, and lighter woods, such as satinwood, chestnut, sycamore, and stained woods, were coming into vogue, beech being used to a considerable extent for painted furniture. Hepplewhite, however, clung largely to mahogany, using satinwood and rosewood moderately to meet special demands. His chairs were mostly solid mahogany,

his sideboards sometimes veneered. He occasionally painted or japanned his furniture after the Adam manner, some of this being fine, though much of it lacked durability.

Hepplewhite, though not a master carver like Chippendale, used carving with greater restraint and most effectively. It was mostly in low relief. It was in inlay, however, that he excelled, and he produced some of the most refined and tasteful inlay to be found on English furniture. On the doors of wardrobes and the fronts of drawers he used a veneer of the beautiful curl mahogany that came into favour about 1760, while on the fronts of his solid mahogany tables, sideboards, and bookcases he substituted for carving an inlay of low-toned contrasting woods in simple patterns. The legs of his tables and sideboards were frequently ornamented with delicate vertical patterns in sycamore and tulip wood. He was fond of using narrow lines and bands, herring-bone patterns, the meander pattern, and the Greek fret, while the wheat ear appears constantly in his inlay and carving.

Hepplewhite introduced the tapering, square leg—often tapered on the inside faces only—usually ending in the spade foot, which added a needed look of strength. He also began the use of turned legs,

not to be found in Chippendale's work. The cabriole leg he discarded altogether. On some of his larger pieces he used the short, hollowed-out bracket or French foot. He was fond of inserting small ovals in his chair backs, and he often used the Prince of Wales feathers in delicate carving, combined with inlay in coloured woods. The urn-shaped finials and Classic pediments found in his designs were borrowed from Adam. His finest and most elaborate inlaid work, perhaps, is to be found on his table tops.

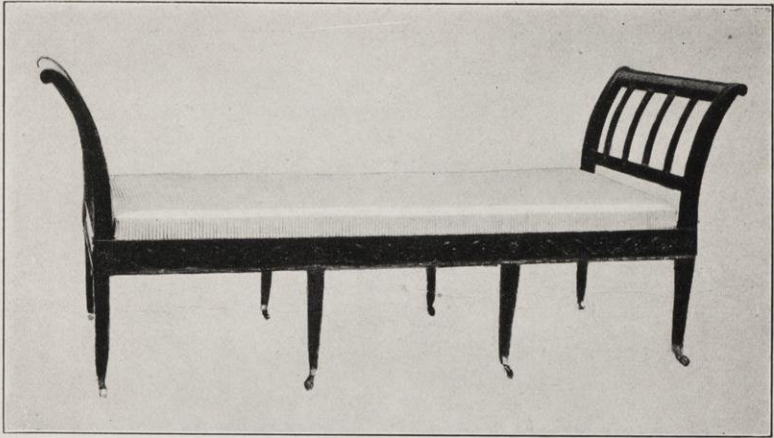
Hepplewhite's furniture was unequal in quality. His chairs, sofas, and sideboards were among the best ever made in England, and he is chiefly remembered for them. His shield-back chair is perhaps his best known and most highly appreciated design.

Moden designers of chairs probably owe more to Hepplewhite than to any other. Like Chippendale, he devoted his best efforts to the chair. Hepplewhite chairs are refined and elegant in proportions, and are almost always stronger than they appear. The designs are structurally sound. They were generally smaller than those of Chippendale, partly because hoops had gone temporarily out of fashion.



They are best known for their oval, heart-shaped, and shield-shaped backs, and their straight, square, tapering legs, often ending in the spade foot. The typical Hepplewhite chair back is a thing of rare beauty of curve and proportion. It was rarely upholstered, but formed an open or pierced frame within which there appeared an infinite variety of patterns. These were sometimes curving upright slats, sometimes a single pierced central splat, nearly always exquisitely carved in low relief. The designs include simple flutings, Classic details, representations of urns with drapery or festoons, the husks and ears of wheat, and the three feathers of the Prince of Wales. This last was used more often in the oval-backed chairs, the back of which usually enclosed a fan-shaped splat. He also designed a square-backed chair with four or five upright slats.

The shape of the shield-back varies from round to pointed, but the top is nearly always a graceful, swelling curve, sometimes called camel-back. The shield rests on upright supports at the sides, which blend gently with the curve of the back. It is said that the Gillows may have originated the shield-back, but Hepplewhite was at least its most consistent and successful user, and most of its details were certainly original with him.



A Hepplewhite settee or window seat, showing the Adam influence.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art



Sideboard attributed to Thomas Shearer. Metropolitan Museum



An early Hepplewhite chair showing the Chippendale influence. Metropolitan Museum of Art

A Hepplewhite mahogany pier table inlaid with satinwood. Metropolitan Museum of Art

Hepplewhite's armchairs were, for the most part, similar to his side chairs—perhaps a trifle broader—with arms attached about half way up the back and curving throughout their length, with all harsh angles avoided. Hepplewhite chair seats were most often upholstered in coloured and figured haircloth, held in place by straight or waving rows of brass-headed nails.

Most of Hepplewhite's chairs were of solid mahogany, depending for their ornament on line and carving. Occasionally, however, he used a fine satinwood inlay, and a few of his later chairs were japanned or painted with musical trophies, floral motifs, etc.—elegant and pleasing but not permanent.

Hepplewhite did much to develop the sideboard for both use and beauty, and introduced many articles for tea service, such as urn stands, tea trays, chests, and caddies. Adam and others had designed serving-tables, flanked by pedestals used as cellerettes and plate warmers and surmounted by hot-water urns. Knife-boxes were used on the tables and a girandole suspended above. Hepplewhite (or Shearer, of whom I shall speak presently) combined these into one piece. Cupboards and drawers were first built into the ends of the table to contain silver, and the knife-boxes were

abandoned. Then the table and pedestals were united into a single piece.

Hepplewhite's sideboards are distinguished by their beautiful serpentine fronts. These differ from Sheraton's in that the end curves are concave, while Sheraton's are convex. There are four legs in front and two or four in back. These sideboards were often embellished with fine inlay of satinwood, tulip wood, sycamore, ebony, rosewood, maple, yew, holly, etc., with little or no carving. They were perhaps the most admired of all his designs, with the possible exception of his chairs.

As a matter of fact, however, credit for the introduction of this piece of furniture is not due to Hepplewhite, but to his friend and collaborator, Thomas Shearer. Less is known about Shearer, even, than Hepplewhite. He may have been employed by the latter. At all events, his fame was overshadowed by that of Hepplewhite. He was the author of most of the designs in "The Cabinet-Maker's London Book of Prices and Designs," a book published for the trade in 1788. In this appears the Shearer sideboard which Hepplewhite is thought to have adapted. The book is also strong in bookcase designs and contains screen writing-cases, library bookcases, wardrobes, bureau book-

cases, writing and dressing-tables, ladies' work tables, etc. We have no evidence that Shearer designed chairs, apparently leaving that field to Hepplewhite.

Shearer had a keen eye for simplicity of design and delicacy of proportion. Some of his pieces are unsurpassed for dainty and slender elegance. His use of inlay was graceful and restrained, and no one ever used the curve to better purpose. Both Hepplewhite and Sheraton owed much to this obscure craftsman.

Of other pieces Hepplewhite designed and probably constructed a wide variety, though not all of equal excellence. His sofas were given serpentine, convex curved, or straight backs, upholstered. His only open-back design was the bar-back or four-shield, like a row of chair backs. His French designs are considered the most successful. He designed window seats similar to Adam's, Louis XVI in type, elegant in their simplicity, with no backs and with the ends or arms rolling gracefully outward. He made dressing-tables with heart-shaped mirrors, Pembroke tables with two-hinged leaves, card tables, and pier tables with semi-circular tops.

His bedroom furniture was often charming, with

beds, wardrobes, commodes, dressing-tables, etc., more complete and less heavy than they had been previously. His bedsteads were handsome, with carved and reeded pillars, and his wardrobe supplanted the old highboy.

In his mirror frames he took a leaf from Adam's book. They were made largely of compo and were very delicate and fragile, with Classic ornament predominating. His smaller pieces show much grace and avoidance of over-ornamentation. They include urn-shaped knife-boxes in mahogany and satinwood, a great variety of inlaid tea caddies, graceful fire screens, work tables, dressing-glasses, and little inlaid stands. He probably made no clock cases, but his influence is to be seen on those of the period, with their inlay of lines, bandings, and sand-burnt ovals and shells.

It is difficult to arrive at a comparative estimate of Hepplewhite's position in the Hall of Fame. We know so little about him; his own work as a cabinet-maker is so difficult to identify; so little is known as to just how far his designs should be credited to his own originality. We may safely conclude, however, that he was a man not without force, imagination, originality, and artistic resources. He had an eye sensitive to design, and he must be given credit for

the general high level of his design, proportion, and workmanship. Lightness, delicacy, grace, and refinement characterize his style and give us an inkling of the character of the man. He may be reckoned something of a pioneer, for he was one of the first of the cabinet-makers to break away from Chippendale domination. Adam undoubtedly influenced his style, but did not entirely determine the best of Hepplewhite's designs. George Hepplewhite was at least a practical cabinet-maker of independent if not original ideas, and his work certainly produced a profound effect on the style of the period.

Personally, I have always felt that Hepplewhite, if he deserves credit for all that bears his name, was a greater designer than Chippendale, a man with a better balanced mind and a truer sense of line and proportion, though I know that Chippendale has generally been considered the greatest of the Georgians. R. S. Clouston, the English authority, says: "I am unable to rank Hepplewhite with Chippendale on the one side or Sheraton on the other, either in construction or design, yet there is an undefinable charm about his work, even when faulty by rule, which, like some old song, touches a higher and more human note than can be attained by mere correctness."



## CHAPTER XII

THOMAS SHERATON

(1751-1806)

OF ALL the English craftsmen and masters of design and applied art, Thomas Sheraton was one of the most interesting in point of character. His passing, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marked the end of the Golden Age of English cabinet-making. He was the last, but by no means the least, of the creators of English styles. His fame as a cabinet-maker and furniture designer ranks next to that of Thomas Chippendale, and those who believe that he was Chippendale's superior, that he never had an equal in his particular field, are able to support their contentions with sound argument. Thomas Sheraton was a genius, if there ever was one.

Thomas Sheraton and George Hepplewhite were contemporaries in London; but in the development of style, Sheraton followed Hepplewhite. Hepplewhite's designs were the first to achieve popularity; Sheraton's were the last to give way before the invasion of barbarism.

Sheraton was born in humble circumstances at Stockton-on-Tees in 1751, three years before Chippendale published his "Director." He was a country lad who somehow managed to pick up a fair but unbalanced education. He never received adequate specialized training. He taught himself drawing and geometry, and was probably apprenticed to some local cabinet-maker. In early life he referred to himself as a mechanic, with small advantages of academic education.

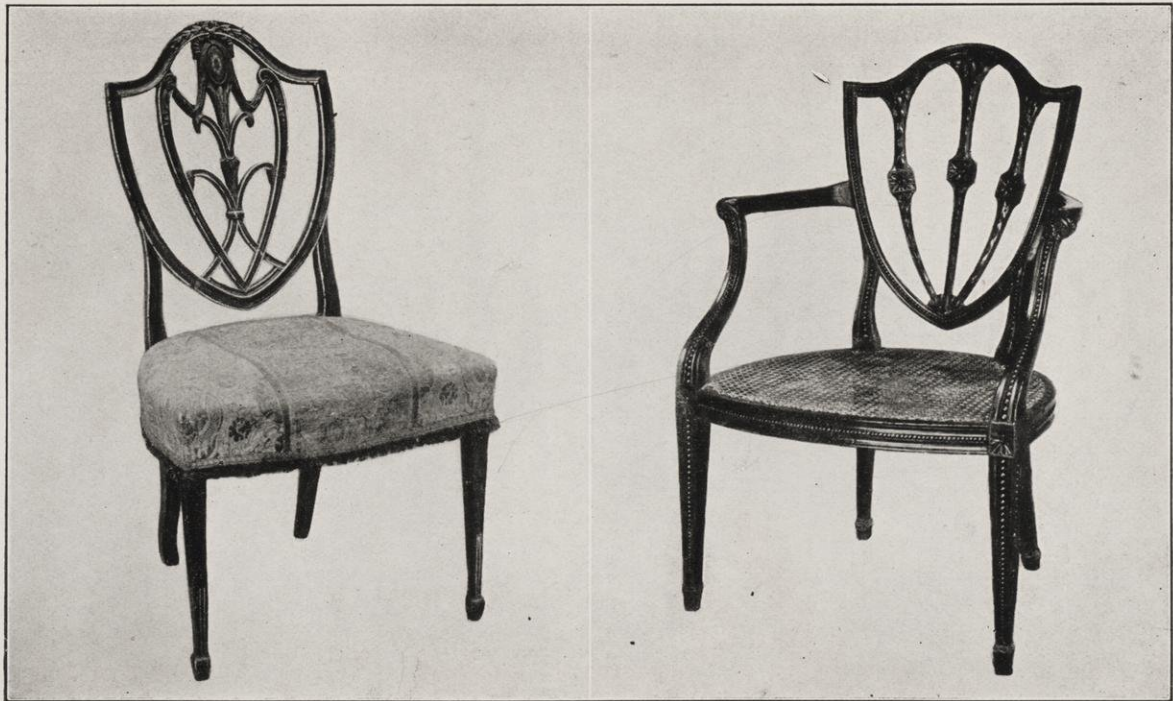
Little is known of his work until he went to London about 1790, when he was nearly forty years old. He was just a poor journeyman cabinet-maker and Baptist preacher. All his life religion played an important part in his affairs. He was, in short, a strange blend of mechanic, inventor, artist, mystic, and religious controversialist. His parents had been Church of England people, but he became a zealous Baptist, preaching occasionally in Baptist chapels, and issuing pamphlets on religious topics.

In London he opened a shop in Soho. He was not a good business man, and he never achieved the commercial success of Chippendale or Hepplewhite. In fact, his output was very small. He is supposed to have made and sold some furniture of his own and to have executed orders for the Adam broth-

ers. But it is doubtful if he ever executed many of his most cherished designs, and it is probable that most of the furniture attributed to him was built by others after the drawings in his books. After 1793 he practically gave up the cabinet-making business and became a designer and a publisher of books. It is upon these that his fame chiefly rests, though there is evidence to prove that he was himself a workman of rare gifts.

His first essay in the publishing field was a series of eighty-four designs, not dated, and now very rare. His "Drawing Book," of which I shall speak later, appeared in 1791, in quarto form, with 111 plates. An "Accompaniment" and "Appendix" were published during the following two years. A second edition appeared in parts from 1793 to 1796, with 119 plates, and a third edition in 1802, with 122 plates. In 1803 his "Dictionary" appeared, and in 1804-7 his "Encyclopædia," in 125 parts, of which he lived to publish only thirty. There was also a posthumous volume by him, published in 1812, made up chiefly of plates from the "Dictionary" and "Encyclopædia," and called "Designs for Household Furniture."

These books were all published by subscription, and none of them made any money for their author.



An American-made shield-back chair in pure Hepplewhite style. Metropolitan Museum of Art

A Hepplewhite shield-back armchair with cane seat. Metropolitan Museum of Art



An American-made escritoire in the Hepplewhite style. Metropolitan Museum of Art



Tambour desk (open) of mahogany with satinwood inlay, Hepplewhite style. Metropolitan Museum

He did much of the canvassing himself, travelling as far as Scotland and Ireland. Of the "Drawing Book" 782 copies in all were sold.

Meanwhile, however, Sheraton had gained some reputation as a skilled draughtsman and student of design, and he was able to eke out a livelihood by giving lessons in drawing. He was always poor, however, though an industrious worker. He had none of the salesman's gift; of tact in business he knew nothing. He has been called an artistic genius living in chaotic poverty.

For what little we know of Sheraton's private life we are largely indebted to the "Memoirs" of Adam Black, who later became a successful publisher and Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Black, then a young printer's apprentice, lodged for a time with the Sheratons, and was possibly once employed by the cabinet-maker. Later he aided in the publication of the "Encyclopædia," and appears to have held Sheraton in considerable respect even when he first knew the family.

"He lived in a poor street in London," writes Black, "his house half shop, half dwelling-house, and himself looked like a worn-out Methodist minister, with threadbare black coat. I took tea with them one afternoon. There was a cup and saucer for

the host, and another for his wife, and a little porringer for their daughter. The wife's cup and saucer were given to me, and she had to put up with another little porringer. My host seemed a good man, with some talent. He had been a cabinet-maker, and was now author, publisher, and teacher of drawing, and, I believe, occasionally preacher." After a better acquaintance with Sheraton he wrote: "This many-sided, worn-out encyclopædist and preacher is an interesting character. . . . He is a man of talent and, I believe, of genuine piety. He understands the cabinet business—I believe was bred to it. He is a scholar, writes well, and, in my opinion, draws masterly—is an author, bookseller, stationer, and teacher. . . . We may be ready to ask how came it to pass that a man with such abilities and resources is in such a state. I believe his abilities and his resources are his ruin in this respect—by attempting to do everything he does nothing."

Such is the sorry picture drawn by a contemporary of one of the masters of English style, a true creator to whom posterity has accorded a juster meed of fame. But with all his poverty, his ill success, and his inclination toward bitterness, Sheraton was not an unhappy man. In one of his books he

wrote: "I can assure the reader though I am thus employed in racking my invention to design fine and pleasing cabinet-work, I can be well content to sit upon a wooden-bottom chair, provided I can but have common food and raiment wherewith to pass through life in peace." A brave spirit, truly, though possibly not an entirely satisfactory husband and father.

Sheraton appears to have lived in various parts of London. At first in Soho, we find him in 1793 at 41 Davies Street, Berkeley Square, and in 1795 in Soho again, at 106 Wardour Street. The last years of his life were spent at 8 Broad Street, Golden Square.

He should have acquired a competency as many of his fellow-craftsmen did, but he died a poor man, his latter days embittered by chagrin at his own ill success and at the better luck of rivals whom he knew to be less competent. Overwhelmed by the wave of bad taste that had at last set in, worn out with overwork and disappointment, in a dingy street, over a poor little shop, there died, on October 22, 1806, the last and one of the greatest of the masters. And with him passed the glory of the Georgian era.

The following obituary notice, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, shows what faint praise was bestowed upon him even then: "In Broad Street, Soho, after a few days' illness of a phrenitis,



aged 55, Mr. Thomas Sheraton, a native of Stockton-on-Tees, and for many years a journeyman cabinet-maker, but who, since the year 1793, has supported himself, a wife, and children, by his exertions as an author. In 1793 he published a work in two volumes, 4to, intitled 'The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book,' to which is prefixed a numerous list of subscribers, including almost all the principal cabinet-makers in town and country. Since that time he has published 30 volumes in folio, of a work to be completed in 125 numbers, intitled 'The Cabinet-Maker and Artist's Encyclopædia,' of which he sold nearly a thousand copies. In order to increase the number of subscribers to this work, he had lately visited Ireland, where he obtained the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant, the Marchioness of Donegal, and other distinguished persons. He was a very honest, well-disposed man, of an acute and enterprising disposition; but, like many other self-taught authors, showed the want of a regular education in his writings. He has left his family, it is feared, in distressed circumstances."

Sheraton lived in an age when the aristocracy bought lavishly of luxuries, but made little of obscure genius. Hence, his style became popular while the

man remained unappreciated. His fame is chiefly posthumous.

With a century intervening to clarify our estimate of his contribution to the development of English style, we are forced to rank him well up with Chippendale and Hepplewhite, if indeed he was not the superior of either of them. If not so versatile as Chippendale, he was truer to his artistic ideals. Chippendale and Hepplewhite were both good workmen, but Sheraton was a poet in line and colour, with all of a poet's shortcomings. His talent was as fine, his industry as unflagging as Chippendale's, but he was less able to conform to the popular demands. He was more versatile than Hepplewhite, who, with all his talent, had serious limitations. His many-sidedness was less successful than Hepplewhite's directness; he paid the penalty of his own versatility; he made more mistakes than Hepplewhite, but he achieved higher points of perfection. His genius was less sane and balanced than that of Chippendale and Hepplewhite, but he possessed greater ease of technique, more grace of execution, a higher ideal of beauty, a finer feeling for perfection of line and proportion. His work was uneven, to be sure, but no finer things were ever designed outside of France than Sheraton's best.

He was a deep student of his art, and he wrote with some elegance of diction. But as a writer he was verbose and pedantic. He became known as a poor, eccentric pamphleteer. His books owed their modest success to the designs they contained, not to his writings, for they show a tart character and a self-assertive and ungenerous spirit. Nevertheless, they exhibit a broader outlook on art than those of his rivals.

As a man, Sheraton possessed many faults, which account in large measure for his lack of material success. He was too much of a poet to be a good merchant. He was narrow, bigoted, self-centred, assertive, jealous of the success of others, sharp of tongue, of an intensely artistic temperament. He was incapable of catering to the taste of the wealthy. But he was big in his artistic ideals. He gave his best to the world. He brooked no sham. His work shows his honesty, refinement, knowledge of his art, and an unparalleled sense of beauty. He was a skilled draughtsman and mathematician, a man of culture with strong doctrinal proclivities, an ascetic in his mode of living. Withal, he was the most remarkable figure in the history of English furniture.

A further word as to his books, of which mention

has already been made, and upon which a large share of his fame is based. The full title of the third edition of his first book, containing 122 copper plates, is: "The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book. In four parts. By Thomas Sheraton, Cabinet-Maker." The first part deals with mechanical drawing and geometry, and includes an account of the Five Orders of Architecture, with the interesting theory that all were of Hebrew origin. The second part deals with perspective and furniture designing, and the rest of the book is given up to furniture designs with descriptions of them. Among other things, we find here shield-back chairs similar to Hepplewhite's. The Appendix contains elaborate beds, fine tables, pulpits with spiral stairs and graceful canopies, and clock cases.

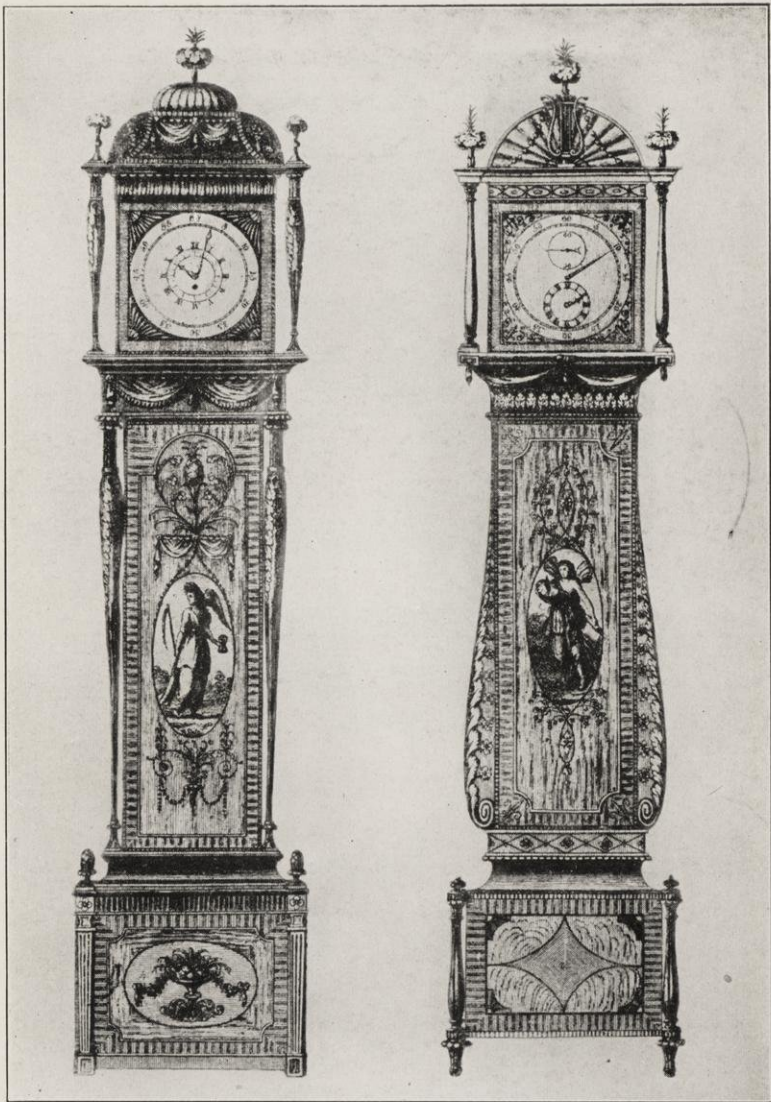
The text was Sheraton's undoing. It displays his conceit and his tendency to disparage the work of Chippendale and all others. The treatise on drawing and perspective is of limited value. But the designs, though of unequal merit, show the hand of the master. The best of them display perfect proportion and a pleasing symmetry. A few are absurdly ornamental. Many of the chair backs are delightful in grace and delicacy. The book was republished in German in Leipzig in 1794.

“The Cabinet Dictionary,” which was published in 1802–3 and sold for £1 12s., contained 88 plates with a glossary of terms, a supplementary treatise on drawing, etc. Some of the designs show the tendency toward the bizarre which marred Sheraton’s later work.

This tendency is even more marked in “The Cabinet-Maker and Artist’s Encyclopædia,” which contained about 50 plates, printed in colour. Here we find the fatal Empire tendency. His harmonious marquetry, dainty painting, and lightness of finish have given place to clumsy carving and brass mounts. Some of the chairs are grotesque. Even his charming little work tables have become squat and his sideboards and bookcases cumbersome, and his clever mechanical inventions have become freakish.

The posthumous volume, made up largely from the plates of the last two books, was entitled “Designs for Household Furniture, exhibiting a variety of Elegant and Useful Patterns in the Cabinet, Chair, and Upholstery Branches, on eighty-four plates, by the late T. Sheraton.”

In style, Sheraton was a purist with leanings toward the Classic. In his best work he never countenanced ornament for its own sake. Simplicity of line he combined with delicacy and re-



Design for inlaid clock-cases, from Thomas Sheraton's "Drawing-Book"



Designs for richly inlaid pier tables, from Sheraton's "Drawing-Book"

straint. His forms were severely balanced, his decoration finely finished, his design varied—all giving an unsurpassed impression of lightness and grace. Hepplewhite's work was in vogue when Sheraton first came to London, and his earlier designs were in the style of the popular school. But he soon felt the drift of taste toward the Louis XVI, the chastest period of French decorative art, with which by nature he was in sympathy. His work, like that of the French designers, was a reaction from the rococo and represents the culmination of the Classic spirit introduced by Robert Adam.

Sheraton unquestionably owed much to his predecessors. Like Hepplewhite, he was quick to perceive the possibilities of the Adam style, and he appreciated them more fully. It is easy to trace the Adam influence in his work, but he was at least original in his way of working out the Adam theories, in the graceful sweep of such curves as he used, in the use of the straight line where it was best adapted, in his slender forms, and in his method of using satinwood. As he developed his style, he became more and more attached to straight lines, square corners, and rectangles, depending for beauty on perfection of proportion and delicacy of interior detail, until he was caught in the tide of decadence.



Sheraton made use of fine carving in low relief, but inlay was his specialty. His later work was often painted, gilded, and otherwise decorated. It included carved satinwood picked out with gilt, and cameo panels with gorgeously coloured wreaths, cornucopias, musical instruments, etc., were much used. He also inserted Wedgwood medallions.

In his carving, Sheraton employed Classic details—the urn, vase, lyre, swags of drapery, vases filled with flowers, and the husk of wheat or bell-flower. He was somewhat less devoted to the draped urn than was Hepplewhite. These same details he employed to some extent in his inlay, with carving added only as an accessory. But in his best work, simple inlay predominated—the husk and the fine line of light wood. He also used the fan, oval, and sunburst forms.

Sheraton introduced in much of his furniture the reeded supports of Louis XVI, which had been employed also by Adam. The reeded column in sideboards, tables, and desks he used with fine appreciation of its value. A feature of his cabinets was a swan-necked pediment surmounting a cornice—the revival of a Queen Anne ornament.

He continued the use of mahogany, but employed satinwood quite as extensively. He also used syc-

more, tulip-wood, apple wood, rosewood, kingwood, harewood (sycamore stained pale brown), white-wood dyed apple green, and other materials, especially on his smaller pieces. He used them as a painter uses pigments; never were woods combined with such consummate skill.

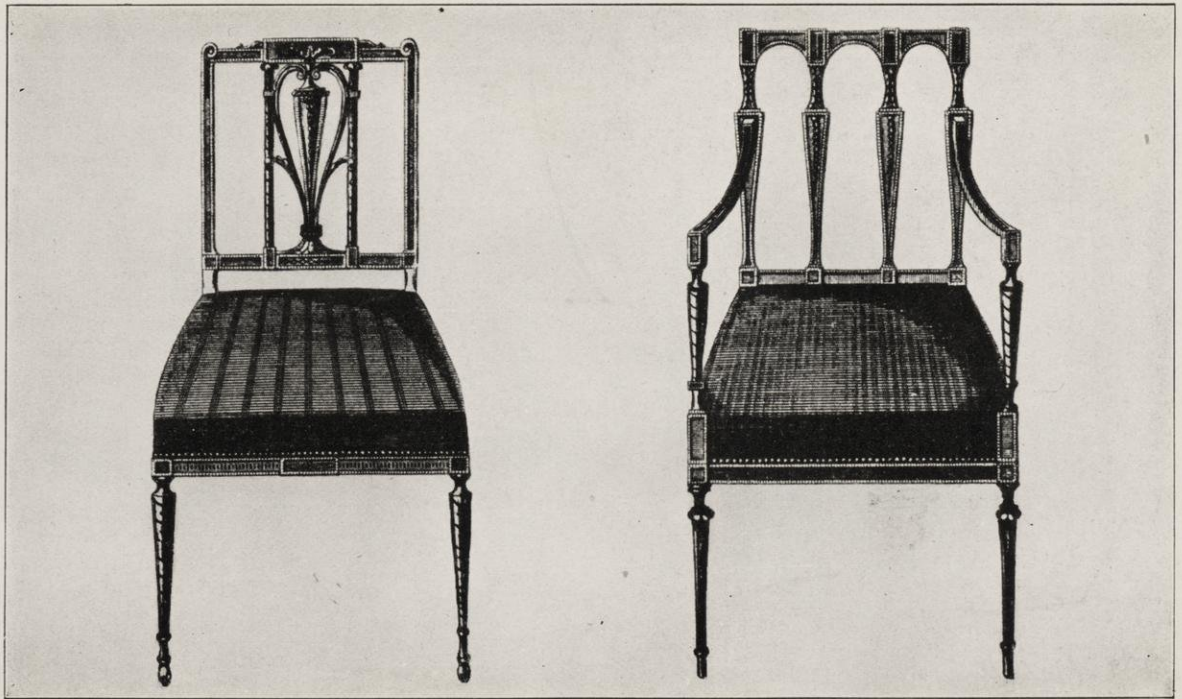
Roughly, Sheraton's furniture may be divided into three classes—carved, inlaid, and painted. Many pieces, to be sure, were ornamented with both inlay and moderate carving. His most notable carved pieces were sideboards, bookcases, desks, and writing tables, which are less commonly seen here than in England. Noteworthy among his inlaid pieces were graceful drop-leaf tables ornamented with narrow lines of inlay, sideboards, pretty tea trays, dressing glasses, knife cases, and writing boxes. The best of the painted furniture was designed by Sheraton and decorated by such artists as Pergolesi, Cipriani, Angelica Kauffmann, and others. Some of this was executed for R. & J. Adam, and was of exquisite workmanship. Satinwood formed the foundation for most of it.

Sheraton's fame in this country, like Hepplewhite's, rests largely on his chairs, tables, and sideboards. And of these, perhaps, his chairs stand out preëminent. In general they were light, elegant,

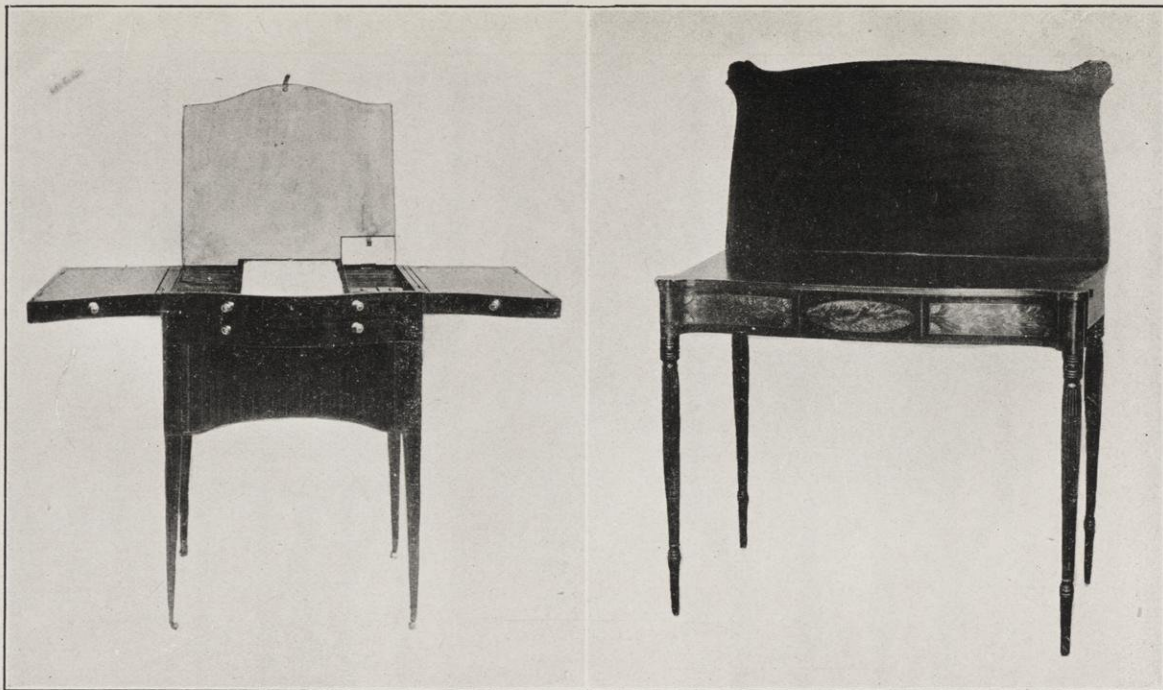
and rather more severe in style than either Hepplewhite's or Chippendale's. His drawing-room chairs are without comparison for elegance and beauty.

Among Sheraton's earlier chair backs were some that resembled Hepplewhite's. Others, like those of the Adam brothers, often consisted of two uprights connected by two slightly curving cross-pieces, from two to five inches wide, plain, carved, or pierced. Later, however, he largely abandoned these forms for those based on straight lines and square corners, employed with great skill and refinement of composition. He has come to be known as the exponent of the square back, as Hepplewhite was of the oval and shield-shape, though his designs were not confined entirely to this form.

What is commonly known as the typical Sheraton chair back is a simple, rectangular frame, the top of which is seldom curved, but often broken by raising the central portion slightly above the rest; it is almost never a perfectly straight line. In spite of their rectangularity, Sheraton's chair backs are never harsh or unlovely. Always there is some slight variation of angle or breaking of line to give the touch of grace, and always there is just enough shaping of parts and carving of details to relieve the austerity without losing the simplicity.



Two typical chair designs, from Sheraton's "Drawing-Book"



A drawing-table in Sheraton style. Metropolitan  
Museum of Art

A typical Sheraton table, with inlay on the front  
and with tapering reeded legs

Sheraton never used the broad, pierced splat of Chippendale, and when he used a splat at all, it was not joined directly to the seat, as with Chippendale, but to a low cross-piece. When he borrowed Hepplewhite's shield, he straightened out the top and lightened the proportions. This type is seldom seen in America. He frequently used a carved and pierced piece in the middle of the back that suggests Hepplewhite in its details of urn and drapery, but his carving was more restrained and severe than Hepplewhite's.

Within the frame of the rectangular backs are often found from three to five (usually three) slender uprights, a pierced urn form, and occasionally diagonal pieces, but never a broad, flat splat. The outer uprights or stiles are continuous with the rear legs of the chair. In some of his later work he used a lyre-shaped back, sometimes with brass strings—a style adopted by the American cabinet-maker, Duncan Phyfe. He also originated, or adapted from Adam and the French, a parlour chair with a square back and a round, upholstered seat.

In his earlier arm-chairs, Sheraton started his arms high up on the back, as did Hepplewhite, allowing them to sweep downward with an easy curve toward the front supports, which were usually

straight and continuous with the front legs. These high arms helped to support the back and made for strength. Later he lowered the arms somewhat, varied their shape, and curved the supports.

Sheraton's chair legs are slender and tapering, sometimes square and sometimes round. The reeded round legs of his tables and sideboards, however, are seldom found on his chairs. The square legs are most commonly found with square seats and backs, the round ones with curves. He used no underframing on his chairs. The ornamentation of his turned legs is always restrained. The square legs are sometimes carved in low relief patterns, sometimes reeded or fluted, sometimes plain. Often they terminate in the spade foot which Hepplewhite introduced. Sheraton never used the Dutch leg or the Chippendale cabriole, and never the ball-and-claw foot.

Sheraton's chairs were mostly of mahogany or satinwood, though some of his later designs were produced in beech, painted white and gold. His parlour chairs were upholstered in the seats in a manner similar to Hepplewhite's, in silk or satin, striped, figured, or painted or printed with formal designs. The seats of his later painted chairs were sometimes of rush. He also revived, to a small

extent, the use of cane which had been popular in the time of Charles II.

Sheraton's sofas were, as a rule, long, simple, and of elegant proportions, fashioned chiefly on straight lines. Most of the details of design were similar to those of his chairs.

Sheraton's tables exhibit a great variety of pattern. They were for the most part dainty, with slender, tapering legs, and were usually not carved, but decorated with a delicate inlay of lines or husks. There were many shapes of tops, mostly showing curves, and with various forms of leaves. The Sheraton table tops were often inlaid, sometimes elaborately; some of them were painted. There were card tables, with square or turned legs, and with a top of wood rather than of baize. The Pembroke table is a pattern of the Sheraton period, with hinged leaves supported on brackets instead of on movable legs as in former styles. The pouch table was Sheraton's invention—a work table with a silk bag suspended from a frame. He also made dining-tables in two parts to form a circle.

Sheraton's sideboards were, and still are, very popular in this country, with their gracefully curved surfaces and fine inlay. In the main the shape followed that of the Hepplewhite and Shearer side-



boards, except that Sheraton's end curves were convex while Hepplewhite's were concave. They usually had four tapering legs in front and often a brass rail or rails on top at the back. [Frequently they were furnished with cleverly fashioned drawers and cupboards, and in some instances with a sliding desk for the butler's accounts.

Sheraton was, indeed, without a rival in the invention of ingenious mechanisms. There were tables which opened out to form writing desks, dressing tables with concealed mirrors and other accessories, desks with secret drawers, etc. In some cases these mechanical additions were almost too complicated to be practical, but they had their vogue at the time.

Sheraton designed many sorts of desks, bookcases, and cabinets. There were bureau-bookcase desks, with many drawers and pigeonholes, and slight boudoir desks for ladies, with concealed drawers, etc. He was fond of placing gathered green silk behind the glass doors of bookcases and cabinets.

There were numerous useful and often cleverly constructed articles for use in the library and bedroom. There was a library table, for example, with disappearing steps, book rests, secret drawers, etc. Satinwood was largely used for the commodes, bureaux, small writing-desks, toilet tables, and other

articles for the boudoir. Some of the painted ones, decorated by Kauffmann and Pergolesi, were extremely dainty and elegant—as fine as anything in the Louis XVI style. Indeed, they may be said to mark the culmination of style in English furniture before degeneracy set in.

Sheraton's beds depended for their effect largely on drapery and upholstery. He was a master in the handling of draped lines, but he rather overdid it. His beds included elegant four-posters with wonderfully arranged curtains, alcove beds, sofa beds, summer beds (including one divided in the centre to give greater circulation of air), French beds, state beds, beds with domes and canopies, etc. They were usually built high from the floor and required steps to mount them.

Sheraton offered designs for inlaid, painted, and japanned tall clocks, and later, as these went out of fashion soon after 1800, shelf and bracket clocks. They were not always suited to the works and dials then in use, and often lacked something of grace, but his use of inlay undoubtedly influenced other makers of clock cases. It is quite possible that no clocks were ever made to most of the Chippendale or Sheraton designs, as the clockmakers were conservative and did not welcome novelty or variety.

Neither Chippendale nor Hepplewhite was Sheraton's equal in the designing of small bijou pieces for ladies. In some respects they represent the high-water mark of Sheraton's work, being beautifully inlaid and of elegant execution. His tea caddies, urns, and knife boxes were more varied than Hepplewhite's and daintier. He designed toilet glasses, fire screens, liqueur cases, small cabinets, etc.

In addition to his furniture designing, Sheraton did a moderate amount of interior decoration, including a Chinese room, after the Chambers-Chippendale manner, for the Prince of Wales.

The less said about Sheraton's latest work, the better for his reputation. The craze for the style of the French Empire, at its best a somewhat unnatural and debased style, forced Sheraton into line. He was perhaps too versatile and adaptable to stand against it in his later years; possibly poverty forced him to stray from those lofty artistic ideals that characterized his earlier work. He himself attributed all this to the decline in popular taste, but a stronger personality might have stemmed the flood yet a little while longer. He succumbed to the reaction from the chaste and delicately fashioned Classic toward the heavy, over-elaborate, fantastic, and stiffly formal. The designs in his last

books show a great decline in lightness, grace, charm, and meaning. They were better than some of those produced by his contemporaries, but they did not represent Sheraton.

The most extreme of these designs rioted in sphinxes, fabulous beasts, dull and cumbrous forms, and various ornamental extravagances, worse than anything produced in France or America. Chair legs were ungracefully curved, with the concave facing outward, less attractive than either the cabriole or the straight forms, and executed with far less skill than those of Duncan Phyfe. Chair backs were full of curves, restless and inappropriate. His so-called Herculaneum chair, based on Roman lines, was a noteworthy example. The beds show a distinct decadence of style. Some of his cabinets, etc., were not so bad, and he did at least refine the brass mounts that had become popular, but for the most part these latest designs fell hopelessly below his former level.

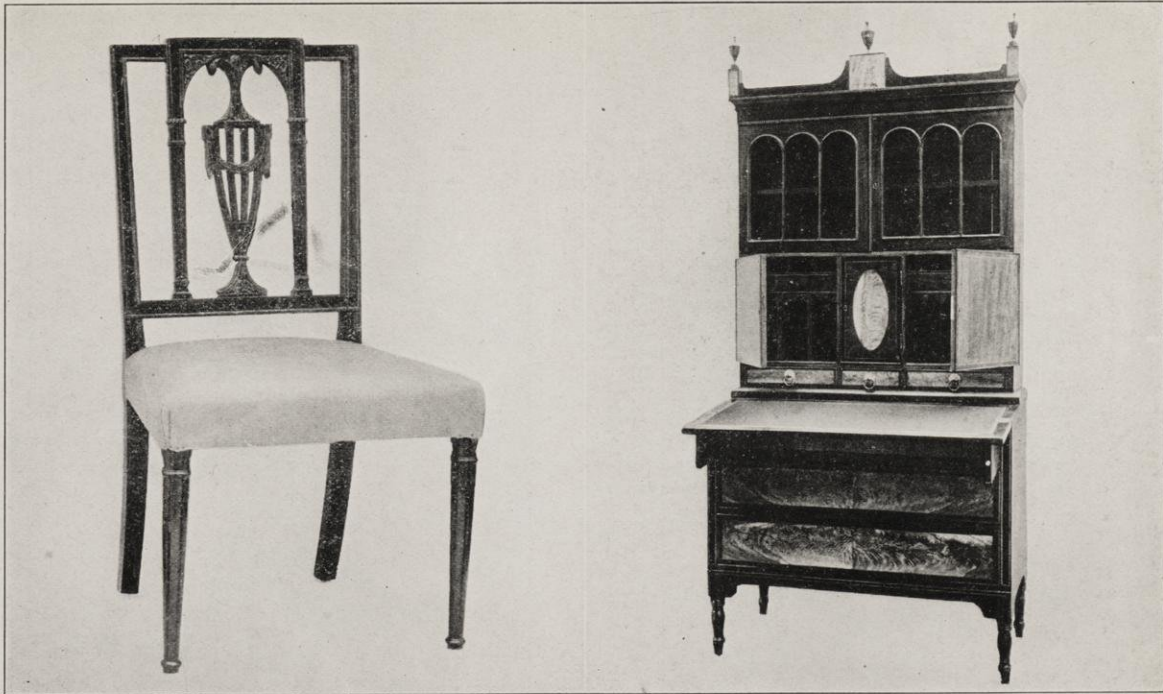
In this country the influence of Sheraton lasted rather longer than in England, for our styles were not complicated by the Egyptian fad. And we had, in Duncan Phyfe, the New York cabinet-maker, a worthy successor who kept the Classic tradition alive for yet a little while. If Phyfe had lived and done

his work in England, he would deserve an honourable place among the creators of English styles. To a thorough appreciation of the delicacy and refinement of the Adam and Sheraton styles he added a native originality in ornament and an unsurpassed feeling for curve and proportion. But even Phyfe succumbed at last to the popular demand for the heavier Empire forms.

In England the Gillows and others produced furniture of rosewood inlaid with brass and other types fashionable in the early nineteenth century. Some of this was not bad in design, but in general it showed the passing of good taste.

The chief exponent of the decadent style in England, suggested by Sheraton's later work, was Sir Thomas Hope, who published a book of designs for furniture interiors, crowded with restless, extravagant, and artistically meaningless forms of Roman and Egyptian derivation. His interiors looked more like sections of a museum of antiquities than rooms in livable homes.

A debased treatment of French Empire forms followed. In America, after 1812, this style was applied with less extravagance, but even here the furniture was heavy, with broad veneered surfaces and sweeping scrolls and curves. Then followed, in

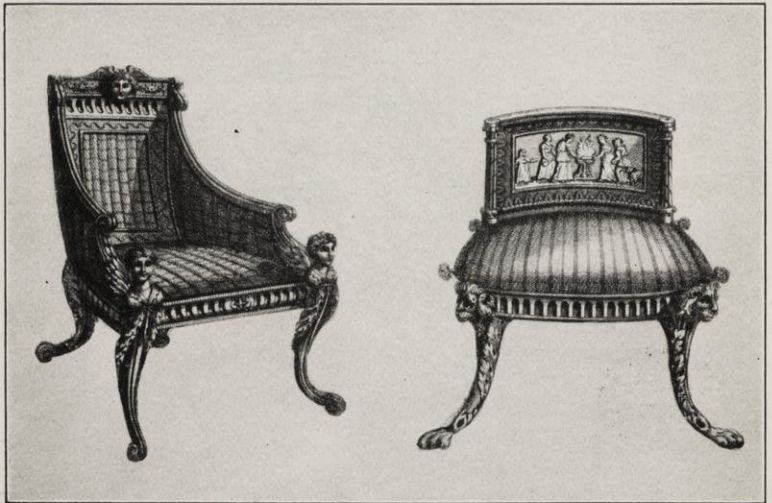


An American-made chair from one of Sheraton's designs, showing the typical rectangular back. Metropolitan Museum of Art

A Sheraton secretary or bookcase desk, rich in inlay and fitted with many drawers and pigeonholes. Metropolitan Museum of Art



An inlaid sideboard with knife cases, a brass candelabrum, and a tambour front. From Sheraton's "Drawing-Book"



An example of the decadent style of Sheraton's later years. "Herculaniums," from his "Cabinet Dictionary"

both countries, a reversion to a degenerate rococo, ornately carved cherry and rosewood, black walnut, and after that the Deluge.

With the decline of Sheraton's best period, incomparable as it was, there passed the glory of English style. The English furniture of the late eighteenth century was rivalled by that of France alone; none better has ever been designed or fashioned. It is the irony of the history of art that this Golden Age owed its death partly to the fall of its greatest master.

THE END





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