

SPRING'S THE TIME.

VIOLETS in the hazel copse,
 Bluebells in the dingle ;
 Birds in all the green tree-tops
 Joyous songs commingle.
 Phillis through the flowery ways
 Strays from dawn till gloaming.
 Oh, the happy breezy days !
 Spring's the time for roaming.

In the budding of the year,
 In the daisied meadows,
 Where the brooklet ripples clear
 Through the willow shadows,
 Corydon, among his sheep,
 Sees fair Phillis roving,
 Feels a rapture new and deep—
 Spring's the time for loving !

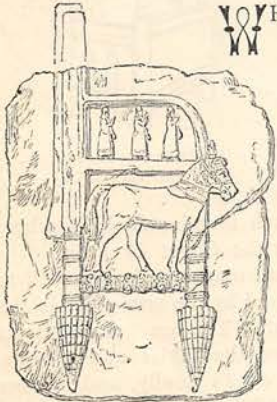
Merry moments swiftly pass,
 Corydon and Phillis
 Wand'ring through the dewy grass,
 Through the daffodillies.
 In the woodlands faint and far
 Tender doves are cooing ;
 Flocks and fields forsaken are—
 Spring's the time for wooing !

Amber cowslips fresh and sweet,
 As a first love-token,
 Corydon at Phillis' feet
 Lays—no word is spoken.
 Oh, you brooklet ! dance along,
 Whirling, dimpling, spinning ;
 Babble out your sunshine song—
 Spring's the time for winning !

M. C. GILLINGTON.



ARM-CHAIRS—ANCIENT AND MODERN.



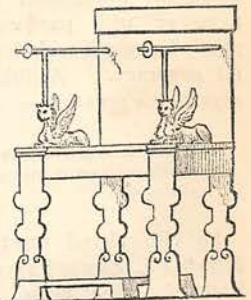
ASSYRIAN ARM-CHAIR OR THRONE.
 (From Layard's "Nineveh and
 its Remains.")

WHEN Charles Dickens looked at an arm-chair, once, it grew into the featuresome likeness of a crabbed monster. It would be cruel in us to take a modern arm-chair and distort its lines and proportions in any such fashion, and then call it "a study of the antique." An easy-chair ought to make us lose or recover our individuality, just as the need may be, without impressing us with anything very startling about itself. Yet it is such a simple, familiar, and indispensable part of a room, that it seems an affectation to talk about its history or its "evolution," though it has a record dating back to the earliest civilisations. The arm-chair and the easy-chair are not, however, of equal age, rank, or importance. They are distinct things, in a way ; and our modern makers have blundered into the discovery by constructing arm-chairs that are not easy, and in pleasing us with reviving the ancient in form and forgetting the modern in ease. The arm-chair is very ancient ; the true easy-chair is not more than five hundred years old.

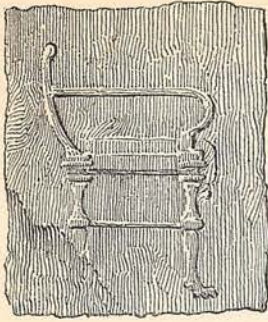
The arm-chair is the seat of kingly power, of judicial authority, of lordly pre-eminence, of ecclesiastical rule, of professional instruction. In a word, it was the throne. Our word "throne" is from a

Greek word meaning a chair, or single chair, as distinct from a *diphros*, or double chair, in which two persons could sit. But we now reserve the word "throne" for official and State chairs. Layard found on some of the tablets of Nineveh "representations of chairs supported by animals and by human figures, sometimes prisoners, like the Caryatidæ of the Greeks. In this they resembled the arm-chairs of Egypt, but appear to have been more massive." We give a representation of one from a Khorsabad slab. The throne of Solomon, as described in the First Book of Kings, was of ivory, inlaid with gold. "There were stays [or arms] on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays." The throne had steps and a canopy. The Persian throne was of gold, with light pillars of gold, encrusted with jewels, upholding the canopy. The Egyptian thrones were of the arm-chair type, the arms formed of figures of captives or subject princes. The ordinary Egyptian household chairs were armless, though Wilkinson gives one with a frail morticed bar ; and even the fauteuils from the tombs of the kings at Thebes, rich and elegant as they are in form and upholstery, had merely low padded ridges, scarcely deserving of the name of arms.

The Greeks had reclining couches and thin-barred arm-chairs in domestic use, but they reserved the true arm-chair for other repre-



POMPEIAN CHAIR.



GREEK CHAIR.

feet, a very high upright back, and is ornamented with sculptured car and horses. They had no Epicurean notions of their deities, and never presented them to the eye of the public lounging in an easy-chair, which would have suggested the idea of infirmity. On the contrary, they are full of force and energy, and sit erect on their thrones, as ready to succour their worshippers at a moment's warning. In the Homeric age these were nobly carved, like the divans, adorned with silver studs, and so high that they required a footstool."

Lofty straight backs and low straight arms were common in all these chairs of authority. The use of the footstool was rendered unnecessary in later times, because such chairs had their seats lowered; but as long as it was required, reference is often made to it as in itself suggesting sovereignty, or completing the picture of it. Isaiah was thinking of some grand earthly chair of state when he suggested the magnificent image—"The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." Our Pompeian chair shows the more simple form of the Roman state chair.

From Roman to our own times, through various forms and local peculiarities, the association of authority with the arm-chair has continued. Shakespeare makes Coriolanus, in expressing his good wishes, say—

"The honour'd gods
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men."

In *Timon of Athens* he turns the association into a sneer with pardonable poetic licence, if with doubtful accuracy. Alcibiades says to the senators—

"Now breathless wrong
Shall sit and pant in your great
chairs of ease."

In the third part of *Henry VI.*, Edward says to Richard, after news has come of the death of "sweet Duke of York"—

sentative purposes. Mr. J. A. St. John says:—

"The thrones of the gods, represented in works of art, however richly ornamented, are simply arm-chairs with upright backs, an example of which occurs in a carnelian in the Orleans collection, where Apollo is represented playing on the seven-stringed lyre. This chair has four legs with tigers'

"His name that valiant duke has left with thee;
His dukedom and his chair with me is left."

A French duke's chair of the seventeenth century, with upright back, carved arm, and flat cushionless seat, is represented in one of Abraham Bosse's prints. The "*Chanson de Roland*" describes a *faldestol*, or elbow-chair, for princes. Charlemagne had one of gold, and the Egyptian Emir one of ivory. The Trinity College Psalter contains two representations of the *faldestol*, and in one of them two chiefs are seated.

To call for a chair for a guest, when such articles of luxury were rare, was a mark of special respect. In the English romance of "*Sir Isumbras*," the queen pays him, in his guise as a palmer, this special honour—

"Bryng a chayere and quschene [cushion],
And sett yone poore palmere therein.

A rich chayere than was sett;
The poore palmere therein was sett;
He tolde hir of his laye."

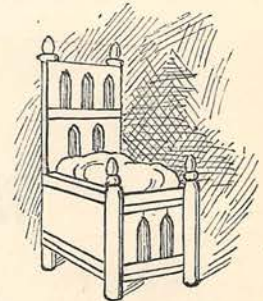
Occasionally the term "chair" was applied to what we should call a sofa, with ends and arms alike. In the early English romance of "*Horn*," a gentleman is invited to be seated—

"A riche cheir was undon
That seiven might sit thereon."

It was covered with a *baldekin*, a mark of royal dignity. A similar couch is represented in a French illuminated MS., where Charles V. is dining with the Count de Foix.

In visiting old castles and mansions, it is as well to bear in mind the part played by the arm-chair in the dining-room or banquet-hall. The benches and stools were of oak, and so were the tables and trestles. Retainers, members of a chief's family, and visitors even, sat on forms without backs. But at the end of the hall, says Lacroix, "there was a large arm-chair overhung with a canopy of silk or golden stuff, which was occupied by the owner of the castle, and only relinquished by him in favour of his superior or sovereign." A raised bench at the end of the hall, with carved back and arms, was a later form of this state chair in some countries, and an earlier one in others. There is a survival of the fact in such terms as "Bencher" and the "Bench," magisterial or ecclesiastical. In the slang of Shakespeare's time, however, a bencher was a tavern-haunter, from which circumstance we may infer that such places were better furnished than ordinary houses, where forms were general.

In later times the state chair was reduced in size, but it was always constructed so as to give erectness rather than repose to the body. Old inventories constantly mention such chairs as precious things, for it became common to use leather, silk, velvet, and

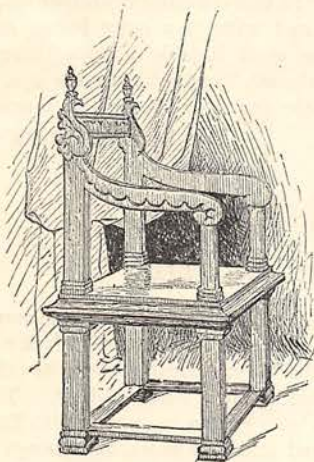
ANGLO-SAXON EASY-CHAIR.
(Harleian MSS.)FALDESTOL.—(From the
Trinity College Psalter.)

cloth of gold in France, Spain, and England. A canopy and state chair are still shown at Chatsworth. The chair is square-backed, straight-armed, and richly embroidered. Sauval describes the Princess of Orleans' chair as having "four supports painted in fine vermilion, the seats and arms of which are covered with vermilion morocco or cordovan, worked and stamped with designs representing the sun, birds, and other devices" (all symbols of sovereign power), "bordered with fringes of silk and studded with nails."

It is much to be regretted that when more luxurious notions began to prevail, the fine oaken chairs of our castles, halls, and country-houses were banished to the servants' hall or to the lumber-room, or sold as worthless antiquities that few persons cared to preserve. It is possible that some of them were put to even lower uses. When Sir Roger de Coverley had seen the two coronation chairs in Westminster Abbey, Addison says he "whispered in my ear that if Will Wimble were with us, and saw those two chairs, it would go hard but he would get a tobacco-stopper out of one or t'other of them."

When Sydney Smith entered upon his newly-built parsonage at Foston, near York, he gave a carpenter who came to him for parish relief a cart-load of deals, and a barn to work in, with the laconic injunction, "Jack, furnish my house." One of the chairs Jack made stood for some years in Sydney Smith's "justice room," then found its way into the kitchen, was then given to Mrs. Kilvington, and is now in possession of his new biographer, Mr. Stuart J. Reid. It is a rustic chair of justice, and as such it is worth a passing allusion.

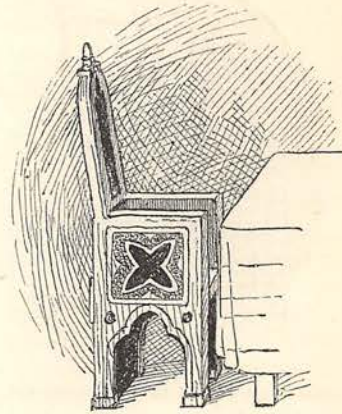
The transition from the arm-chair to the easy-chair was not made all at once. When men and women wanted real repose, they formerly found it in divans, couches, sofas, and what in Shakespeare's time were somewhat reproachfully called "day-beds." A loose



DUKE'S CHAIR (A.D. 1587).

cushion was made for wooden chairs, and it was sometimes placed upon, at other times underneath, a

richly embroidered cloth or an animal's skin. It is doubtful whether for many hundred years the easy-chairs of Western Europe were anything more elaborate. The fixed seat and padded back and arms did not come into use in England until Queen Elizabeth's



BLOCK-CUT CHAIR.

time. An arm-chair was, in fact, an article of costly luxury, and sometimes of reproach. In Wiclif's New Testament, he makes the scribes fond of the "first chaieres in Sinagogis." Marston, an English dramatist, describes "a fine-fac'd wife in a wain-scot carv'd seat" as "a worthy ornament to a tradesman's shop," but he is lashing the practice with his whip. Ben Jonson, satirising the way in which women spend their time, writes—

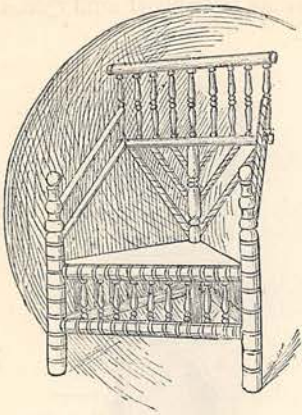
"At twelve o'clocke her diner time she keeps,
And gets into her chaire, and there she sleeps
Perhaps till foure, or somewhat thereabout."

By a very picturesque phrase, Shakespeare conveys the impression that chairs were only fit for the aged. In the second part of *Henry VI.*, when the Duke of York has slain Clifford of Cumberland, the son comes upon the body of the father, and exclaims—

"Wast thou ordain'd, dear father,
To lose thy youth in peace, and to achieve
The silvery livery of advised age,
And in thy reverence and thy chair-days, thus
To die in ruffian battle?"

The turned and fanciful chairs, some of which are still in use as survivals, or as imitations, were originally made in Flanders, and persecuted Huguenots brought the art of making them to London in their brains and fingers. A good many of them had triangular seats, and arms, backs, and legs were what we should now call imitation bamboo. They were usually called "joined chairs," to distinguish them from the heavy oaken chairs, carved out of one solid piece, which they were replacing. Illustrations of the block-made chairs are found in some of our old ballads. In the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford is a very curious example of the "joined chair," said to have been used by Henry VIII. More elegant and elaborate chairs followed our colonial extensions, and the wealth and knowledge they brought. Eastern

types were multiplied, and golden cloth of Spain and India, won from captured caracks, was employed to adorn the chairs of nobles and merchants. The most



JOINED CHAIR OF THE TIME OF HENRY VIII.

fantastic art in chairs, however, did not come to us until the *ancien régime* was in its glory in France, and the drawing-room had become the centre of a dazzling and artificial kind of existence, all fine sentiment and frippery.

It is clear that in early ages the double chair without arms, on which man and wife sat, each on the side, and not on the front, was the domestic chair. The chairs in Anglo-Saxon MSS., though not positively double, retain some features of the type, as they are long in the seat, with a back on which the sitter rested his arm, as he sat sideways on the bed-like structure, projecting knobs on the real front making the common plan of sitting uncomfortable. The couch without arms or back was Oriental. In old English families we may yet meet with huge double arm-chairs, in which man and wife used to sit. They are sometimes called "courting-chairs."

A description of varieties in modern arm-chairs from the early part of the last century downwards would be tedious and out of place. The throne type and the semi-reclining type are freely used and mixed, without

any regard for the fitness of things, though the first should be reserved for the dining-room, and the second for the drawing-room. The use of oak, English and foreign, has been extensively revived, though without any apparent reason; it is more costly than less common wood. Brass nails for ornamentation are being discarded, like very fantastic carving, because they tear the clothing. Chairs are much less massive in their woodwork—the seat is longer, the general design less ornate. Physicians do not recommend stuffed and spring chairs for habitual use. Artistic furniture is now lighter, more Flemish, with a tendency to follow squarer lines of structure. Combinations of lightness and strength, even with rush bottoms, are not uncommon. "The old arm-chair," in fact, has not only all Eliza Cook's tender memories about it, but it is clearly returning to older English types. A



SYDNEY SMITH'S CHAIR OF JUSTICE.

plain wooden chair with the golden-lettered inscription on it, "In this old chair my father sat," which the writer has met with in a quiet home, suggests that even in the most humble abodes there may be a domestic "throne," agreeable to the eye, convenient to use, and the centre of affectionate memories.

EDWIN GOADBY.

THE LARGEST ISLAND IN THE WORLD.

NOW that there are steamers on the Upper Congo, and a telegraph wire runs right across the middle of Australia, few parts of the world remain so unknown and mysterious as the great island of New Guinea, lying between the equator and the north of Australia, part of which has just been annexed to the British Empire. New Guinea, which is the largest island in the world, or at any rate in the habitable part of the world, is considered to be about as big as Great Britain and France put together. It owes its name

probably to the early Portuguese discoverers, who were struck with the resemblance of the black natives to the negroes of the West African coast; its other name of Papua is said to mean "frizzled hair." Though New Guinea has been known more or less to Europeans for three hundred and fifty years, and though the western half of it has for some time been claimed as Dutch territory, while within the last few years missionaries have settled on its shores, and much of its coast has been carefully surveyed, yet the vast interior is still almost untouched. Few of its inhabitants have ever