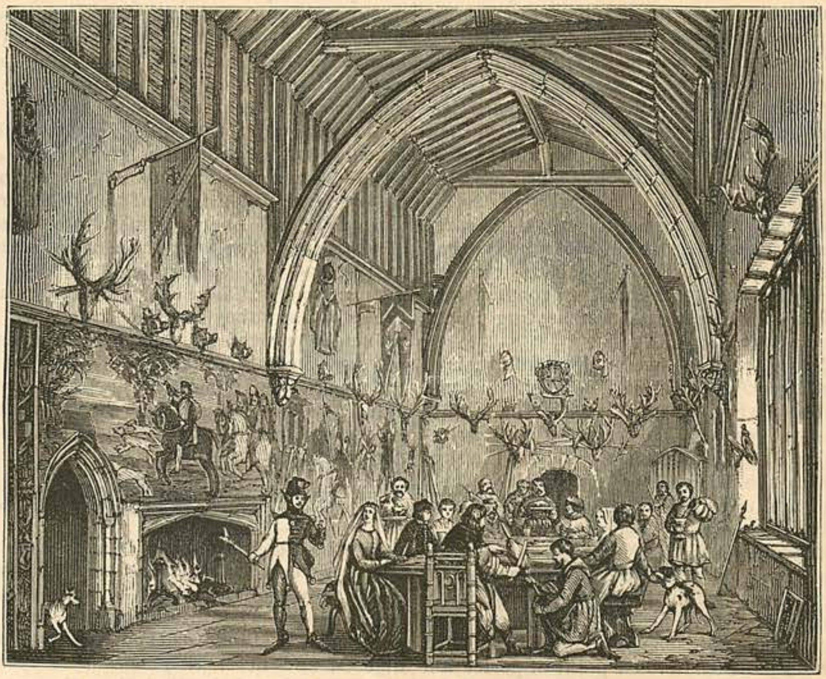
MEDIÆVAL FURNITURE.



MEDIÆVAL GOTHIC HALL.

When the author of *Vathek* began the wonderful work of Fonthill Abbey, shrouding the slow progress of the building in such secrecy that the people imagined the halls of Eblis were undergoing bodily transfer thither, he became responsible, with the exquisite grace and beauty of the structure rising under his will and the architect's fancy like the exhalation of Pandemonium, for much of the power of the Gothic revival.

It is true that Walpole had already inaugurated the movement at Strawberry Hill, and that the wits of that earlier day strolled up and down the cloister there in the belief that they had revived the grandeur of the mediæval. But to admire is one thing, and to equal is another; and Walpole's archæology was so far outstripped by his taste that the latter is entirely lost sight of in the condemnation of the former.

If it was singular that, in an age when the classic was at last beginning to be understood, one of the leading spirits should have suddenly awakened to the charm of a style entirely antipathetic, it was quite as singular that, in a land where the marvelous magnificence of the towers and spires and pinnacles of castle and cathedral took the morning and evening light every where about them, the people should have needed any awakening to their beauty. That they did so is only too evident from the buildings with which they began to follow Walpole's example, full of absurd incongruities and absolute ignorance of detail; and it was only when Fonthill was thrown open to the public that a new departure was taken, profound study was given to Gothic art, and a flood of light thrown upon the dark places of mediæval life. It is owing to that study that we are able to-day to tell, with some distinctness, the manner of furnishing among those of our ancestors who were fortunate enough to have any furnishing, and to continue that manner in present use, and adapted to circumstances of which, in the wildest flight of their imaginations, our ancestors would never have dreamed.

Without doubt the furniture with which Beckford made the interior of Fonthill Abbey beautiful was as rich and rare as could be had; but with equal certainty we may believe that it did not approach in accuracy that which our best restorers and dealers can supply to-day, after a half century's research into derivation, use, and fitness.

Note.—We are indebted to the works of Viollet-le-Duc for several of the illustrations in this paper representing Gothic interiors. The addition of the letters C. and L. to the titles of cuts indicates that they are copied from Collinson and Lock's *Sketches of Artistic Furniture.* In like manner the initials B. J. T. are added to the titles of cuts reproduced from B. J. Talbert's *Gothic Forms applied to Domestic Furniture.*—Ed. Harper's Magazine.

Gothic art had been so completely drowned out by what Ruskin rather strongly calls "the foul tide of the Renaissance" that even its traditions were forgotten, and in the first years of its revival any thing with a crenelated top, or with a pointed arch let into the sides, was considered satisfactory Gothic. Furniture was of a superfluously ecclesiastic and architectural description, the various articles sometimes little shrines and chapels in themselves, and it is only since we have become familiar with the rules of Gothic construction that we find it possible to carry those rules into the practice of an advanced civilization, and produce furnitures combining Gothic beauty and modern convenience, without the attempt at representing miniature cathedrals.

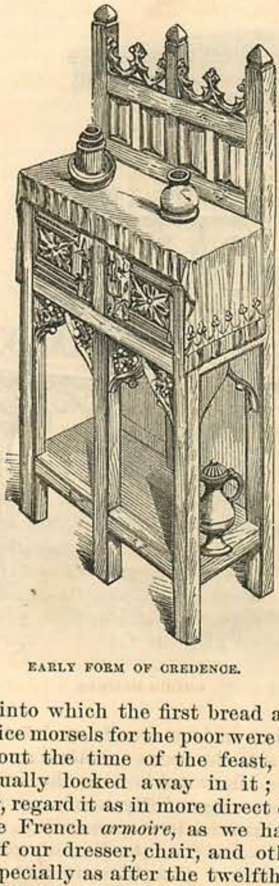
Convenience, as we understand it, is a word that could have had small significance for those who lived and died in the Middle Ages, yet convenience was what they struggled to attain, and convenience was the suggestion, the motive, in every article of their furniture. We are accustomed to think of their life as one of barbaric splendor; and splendid indeed it must have been, so far as color and gold-work and picturesque effect are concerned; but it must in equal truth have been a life of positive discomfort. Our plate of a castle chamber in the fifteenth century pictures the last point of perfection which the Gothic reached before touching the modern, and that of the twelfth century, all the sumptuousness attained at that precise era, and both represent the extreme condition of the wealth of their epoch. But far from that height of luxury were the halls of the lesser nobles and small suzerains; and they, again, were at an immeasurable distance from the heap of straw and the rude chest of the peasant in the mud hut, through which the poultry and the pigs ran; or from the one room of the city artisan, with shelf over shelf in the wall, where all the family slept, from the grandparent to the baby, into which no sunshine came, and the gutter before whose door was the open sewer.

From the fifth to the tenth century, in what may be called the Dark Ages rather than the Middle Ages, with the exception of one or two more fortunate meridians, life in Europe, even under its most favorable aspect, was little better than an encampment between stone walls. Wherever the old Roman sway had extended, there some remnants of the Roman furnishing, some elements of its manufacture, remained; but after the sixth century the instances were only to be found with kings and the *haute noblesse;* the greater part of the petty lords had only what the rude workmen in their retinue could make, answering to the day's needs. The day then was one only of offense and defense. The lonely tower was perched among rocks that doubled its fortifications. It was undesirable that there should be much in it to satisfy the rapacity of a foe. Off upon a raid, and uncertain of return, it was best to have one's wealth at command. The most powerful lord, says a learned antiquarian, did not, in those stormy times, dare to be separated from objects whose loss he could not repair; and so fixed did the habit become that, long after tranquillity prevailed, nobles and princes never made a journey without carrying a train of household articles, plate and linen. Thus a few chests, at that early day, were the sole movables. In England they were called standards; in France, *bahuts.* These chests were seats and tables by day; they were beds by night. As refinement progressed they were ornamented, sometimes mounted upon feet, and at last made into objects of surpassing elegance; but the love of them never was outgrown, and the poet saw it even at a far later time, when he described

> "The chest contrived a double debt to pay—
> A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day."

After the Conquest the nobles, to each of whom several estates had been granted, when they had thoroughly exhausted one estate moved with all their possessions to another; the standards then were immense objects, and necessarily became very important, although by that time there were other furnitures; but these held the plate and the mighty hangings. Many of them are still preserved, very handsome ones being visible at Chatsworth and other residences; and nothing, by-the-way, is more suitable for a hall in the modern Gothic than one of these vast receptacles. What their size and weight was may be judged from the incident which Larousse relates in the life of Fredegonde, the rival of the beautiful and wretched Brunhilda. Fredegonde's daughter, Regonthe, taunting her mother one day on the fact that she kept all the jewels of King Chilperic, the girl's father, to herself, Fredegonde threw up the lid of the coffer and began dragging out the great necklaces, the collars of pearls, the chains, and the girdles. "It tires me," said Fredegonde; "put in your own hand and take what you will." But no sooner did the girl do so, leaning far within, than her mother threw down the lid, pressing on it with all her might, so that Regonthe would presently have lost her head but for the attendants, who ran, at her screams, and rescued her.

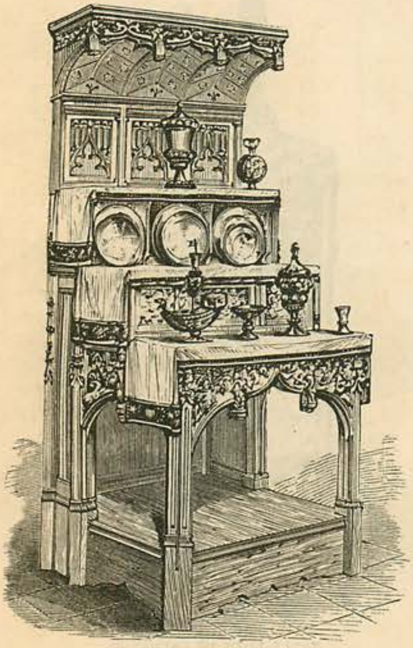
As wealth somewhat increased and life became more stationary, the use of these standards and bahuts was partly obviated by an article called the armory, borrowed from the church, where it served for the deposit of the sacred vestments and vessels and books, as well as for the armor of the man-at-arms of the chapter, who held his fief from the crown on condition of attending the great ceremonies of the church armed *cap-a-pie.* This armory was at first made with great simplicity, of uprights and cross-pieces of scantling, sometimes mortised together, sometimes held by a peculiar glue and by iron bars, the hinges and bolts and all the iron wrought with such remarkable nicety as to constitute a true ornament in the structure. There were no screws known, and the hinges and bolts and the escutcheons of the locks were nailed in their places, and a strip of gilded leather or of crimson cloth was inserted beneath them, serving both to relieve them around the edges and through the interstices, and to hinder abrasion of the wood by the hammer—a custom that endured long after screws rendered it unnecessary. Often these armories were decorated with an uncouth painting of white and black upon a scarlet ground; sometimes they were covered with untanned leather, or with a stout linen stretched and glued on the wood, and the painting applied on the new surface, and in a few old Roman examples there is a sort of *champ lévé* ornament, an incision like that of engraving, filled with color, or rather filled with paste and afterward colored. We can imagine that this piece of furniture was made to present a sufficiently rich appearance in the great dark halls capable of absorbing much gay color and making no return. When, at the end of the thirteenth century, they began to cover them with sculpture and to paint and gild the sculptures, the effect could hardly have been more brilliant; but in another hundred years color had entirely given place to carving. At this time, too, something like a revolution took place in joinery —for it was a simple joiner, usually a member of the household, who did all the work in wood, and even stretched the leather or parchment for the painter; the mitre was done away with in the joining of the corners, and they met at right angles, which greatly increased the strength of the joint; and as panels made of several boards, simply mortised and not bound by any frame, needed to be very dry and well seasoned in order not to shrink and one day fall to pieces, it was thought best to make them of a single board, beveled into a frame to prevent gaping; thus flat surfaces no longer presented themselves for continuous painting, and whatever was the ornament of the upright and transverse of the frame, the panel must have its own ornament. This ornament, partly for the sake of strength, and partly for that of breaking the line and affording variety, presently became the parchment panel, a carving in the similitude of rolls of half unfolded parchment, offering a score of different outlines, a simple and elegant form used in England in the early days of the Tudors, much later than its familiar use on the Continent, and after a long rest in vogue again at the present. As late as the fifteenth century this armory and the chest were the only furnitures that could be locked. When the armory in the next century was lifted on four feet and the space inside the doors filled with little drawers, the cabinet came into existence; and it answered then the same purpose as the chest or bahut with its compartments. It has been thought by certain antiquarians that the armory, the old ambry or aumery, was so named from having been originally a repository for alms, an alms dish in charge of the almoner, that always stood upon the table, often a very beautiful piece of the service, into which the first bread and certain choice morsels for the poor were thrown throughout the time of the feast, having been usually locked away in it; others, however, regard it as in more direct descent from the French *armoire*, as we have the names of our dresser, chair, and other objects, especially as after the twelfth century the difference between the Anglo-Norman or English and the French furnitures is hardly noticeable. The distinction between the old Saxon cupboard and this armory consists only in the circumstance of the locked doors of the latter, the cupboard being composed of open shelves for display of the articles standing upon it—the court cupboard, with which we are all familiar. To attend upon this when in the household



EARLY FORM OF CREDENCE.

of a sovereign was a knight's distinction, and lordly personages were proud to pour the wine and serve the spice from its shelves.

When the armory and cupboard were combined we have the article called by the French a credence, although greatly enlarged. The credence was also taken from the church, where, in its primitive estate, it was a small stand used by the priest, with doors inclosing a shallow space the top of which served for a shelf, while another shelf was inserted far below between the feet. As the spirit of ornamentation grew, a back was given to this article; the back was built up higher, and by-and-by a dais bent itself over the top in canopy. Before it reached this dignity, it stood behind the host's seat to support various vessels used first by the taster; and the inclosure done away with, its frame afterward became the original of the dinner wagon. By degrees, as the East sent its luxuries in more quantity, as things of beauty came from the English goldsmiths and Venetian glass-blowers and Flemish copper-workers, it had amplified its size to receive them, doubled and quadrupled its shelves, and had become with its high back and dais a fixture against the wall. When in this shape, dispensing with the little closet beneath, it was the dresser that in the age of Henry the Eighth was relegated to the kitchen by name, although as the court cupboard it still maintained its honors and played a fine part in the splendors of the day. At the time that the Burgundian dukes by the display of their enormous wealth had created prodigious rivalries in expenditures and magnificence, these carved and costly shelves became the subject of some of the most tyrannical restrictions that etiquette ever imposed. Our ladies, who set out their pretty trinkets on their étagères, where we have the modern of the dresser, can riot in as many shelves as they will, but in the beginning only ladies of certain rank could enjoy the article at its full opportunity for effect; queens might have five shelves, countesses might have three, a knight's lady must content herself with the primitive article. Queens, also, were the only ones who could be indulged in "cloth of gold of cramoisy" laid upon the shelf, while sometimes, even as early as the twelfth century, the dresser of a sovereign was even itself of gold. Numerous other regulations concerning the drapery and the dais—although as absurd as those which obliged the gibbet on which a great lord hung his subjects to possess four legs, a lesser noble's three, while the least lord of all was only able to do his hanging on a two-legged affair—show the consideration the dresser enjoyed. Sometimes the back was carved, sometimes a curtain of gilded leather, not unlike the thick Japanese paper often used now to line the cove of the arching top in the similar article, or of Eastern silk, was stretched across it; but over all the shelves a smooth drapery was laid, a napkin of creamy damask, it may be, or cloth of gold fringed and bordered with black velvet; and on these various shelves stood the rich possessions of the house—vessels of gold and silver, tiny coffers sculptured in ivory from Constantinople and beyond, vases of beryl, of carved agate, of sardonyx, the golden covers of a precious manuscript, perhaps, thick set and crusted with gems, an ancient ivory diptych, plates, hanaps, which were vases with a long foot like a chalice, comfit pots, flambeaux of rock-crystal, and the nef or cadenas, usually a large golden ship such as that which the reader can see on the lower shelf of the picture of an ancient dresser which we give. This cadenas was a receptacle for the knives and spoons, which were kept under cover with the perpetual fear of poison that haunted those dark days, and some remnant of which lasted as lately as the days of the Stuarts. "To Whitehall," says Pepys, "and saw the king and queene at dinner; and observed, which I never did before, the formality—but it is but a formality—of putting a bit of bread wiped upon each dish into the mouth of every man that brings a dish." It was no formality in the earlier time, when it was death to lift the cover of the king's dishes as they came from the kitchen, and when a crier cried, "The king's meat!" and the


GOTHIC DRESSER.

trumpets sounded, and those upon the way uncovered—a custom, the latter, which was alive in France even in the present century.

The last variation which this picturesque piece of furniture endured was in becoming the buffet. Its shape then in household use, and except upon extraordinary occasions, did not differ materially from that of the dresser, although the latter stood against the wall, while the buffet was movable; but it was an appanage of dining, after dining lost something of the rude character when the table was a bench and the diners sat on the floor or on trusses of straw. The buffet was often a merely temporary erection also; no elaborate carved or iron work adorned it then, but it was entirely covered with the richest stuffs, and decorated with the most costly of the gold and silver plate; sometimes it was a mere series of steps where the squires went apart to cut the meat and bread, but on days of parade it was a piece of great magnificence, made in any shape that pleased the fancy, a round or a lozenge, and the word implied not the mere scaffolding under the draperies, but the whole mass of splendor, and when one "offered a buffet" of refreshment to any grand personage, one offered also its silver and gold, its unicorns' horns, and its cups set with jewels.

Sometimes the buffet stood in the inner space of the table that was spread in the shape of a horseshoe, the guests sitting around the outside, the servants waiting on the inside, the fool, with his bauble, wandering where he would. This was a shape which our ancestors had from the Romans, and which the straight-backed race retained longer than they did the couches on which the Romans reclined at table. They used it when the number of guests was great; but it was varied by round and square and oblong forms, the latter being the most customary. The first table after the bench ceased to be useful in that line, and the husband and wife played chess upon the coffer, sitting at either end of it, would seem to have been a simple board on trestles. It is doubtful if we have compassed any thing better yet. There was usually one in the hall, to be moved at will, at which the master of the house sat at meat, and fixed or dormant ones along the side for the use of others. The table of the ninth century is pictured to us as a semicircular arrangement, with a short drapery hanging around it, just beneath an upright edge similar to the guard which at sea prevents objects from sliding off the table, or the rim of the old Roman *abaci*. There was no cloth on the board itself, and only the dishes containing the viands, the knives, and the bones thrown at random. If the guests would drink from the enormous vessels provided, they turned away or left the table. In the twelfth century the little upright edge still remains, but the drapery hangs more gracefully from a metallic rod that encircles the board, completely hiding the trestles. Plates appear upon it, and forks which take up the morsel by pressure upon the two prongs, not by piercing it. Before this a table appears with but three sides, the farther one filled by an upright back, and quite covered by a cloth; but upon the common tables cloths do not appear till the thirteenth century. A little later we come across napkins of damask — surnapes they are called; by-and-by embroidered with gold, and fringed at both ends, used when the lavers or enameled basins of rose-water were carried around the table; and "napkyns of Reyns" are named among the effects of Henry the Fifth. The surtout, or central ornament, corresponding to the épergne, was in use, though, long before the time of the wicked Fredegonde. People of great wealth indulged great luxury in the matter of tables. Charlemagne had one of massive gold, and three of silver, the first representing Rome, the second Constantinople, and the third being described as a disk of silver of remarkable grandeur, sculptured in relief with the terrestrial hemispheres, the constellations, and the paths of the planets. It is, however, a question if these tables were not in reality great trays or pateras decorating the wall, the word "table" being used as its original, "tabula," might be. Gibbon, meanwhile, tells us of another table, belong-

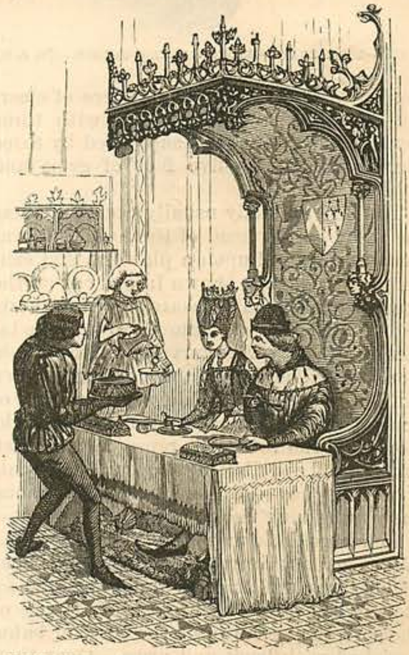
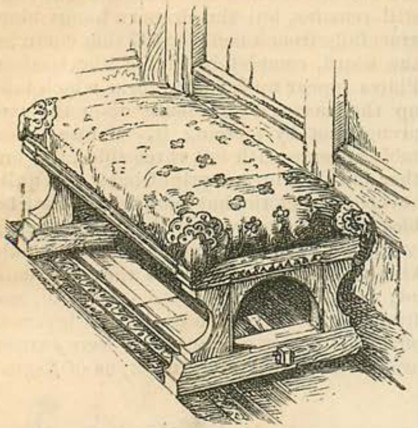


TABLE USED BY GREAT PERSONAGES.—FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES.

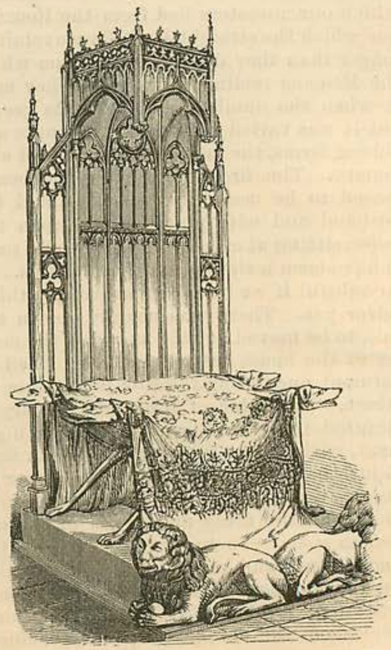


DINING-ROOM SEAT.—MODERN REPRODUCTION.—[B. J. T.]

ing to the Goths, of a single piece of emerald—meaning glass—encircled with three rows of fine pearls, and supported by three hundred and sixty-five feet of gems and gold.

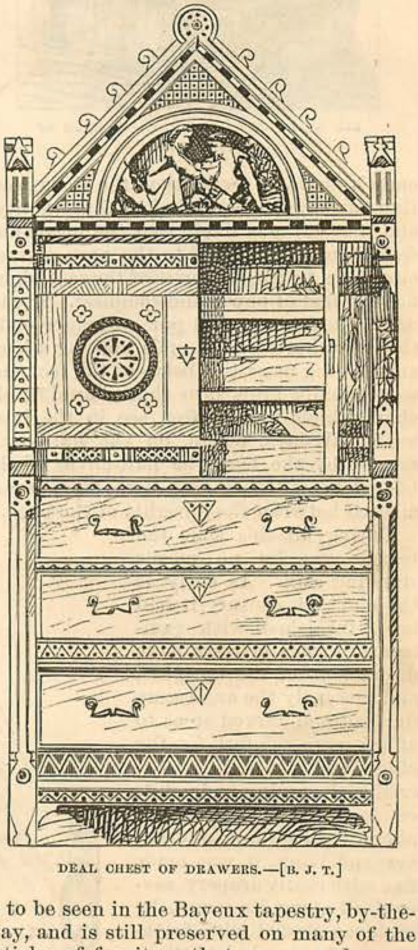
The lord and lady usually occupied alone the table at the head of the hall, that was sometimes raised upon a platform and canopied by a dais, as shown in our cut on the preceding page. The meats, after the guests had seen them, were removed to the side tables, where they were carved; and the guests were seated at long tables running down the hall—temporary things on trestles, or heavy fixtures on which the mummers might mount in the intervals, representing brief dramas and distributing flowers. The seats were benches—originally spelled bancs, their use giving rise to the word banquet—which were little more than the old "form." When, as not infrequently chanced, they had lockers underneath, and were used for storing the table-linen and other things of the sort, they seem to be the chest or bahut enriched with back and arms. Over them was thrown a banker or cloth, a single thickness of rich material, successor of the courtepointe one which was doubled and stuffed and tufted through from side to side, and which, in its turn, had succeeded the dressed furs provided by the chase, lying loosely in place till a freer life and a lighter construction rendered objects more movable, when their slippery inconvenience caused them to be secured by bands, and afterward by nails. In England these benches were commonly called "binks"—a pronunciation not yet forgotten, as any one knows who has heard the London omnibus men bound for the Bank, and shouting their destination, "Bink! Bink!"

There could hardly, as we have said, have been much acquaintance of comfort in these primitive seats, although their legitimate descendant, the kitchen settle, has been a hospitable friend to many a weary bone. But except for the single stools in common use among the inferiors, and the little folding seat that appears to have descended directly from the Roman, preserved through the exigencies of camp life—whence, indeed, it had one of its names, and which, also, was the origin of the chair that the Spaniards made of steel, to be taken to pieces and carried to the wars—except for these, chairs were very infrequent. In almost all old manuscripts and ivories people are represented sitting on beds and couches, and such chairs of the mediæval period as we have still existing are chairs of ceremony. Indeed, the chair was almost literally the throne, the seat of sovereignship. For centuries there was but one in the hall, and in that the master sat, and relinquished it only to his superior. Sometimes it was a rude carpentry; sometimes leather surcingles were stretched between four uprights, supplying seat and back. Many of these chairs were at first little more than stools, the back being so low, and that even when the fabrication was exceedingly rich, as we can see in an existing specimen made of copper covered with Limoges enamel, with gilded balls upon projecting rods at each of the corners, looking more like an ornamented packing-box than any thing else; the wall of the room was tapestried, however, behind such seats as these, and thus the need of a back was supplied. After the Conquest the wood that entered into the manufacture of the chair was frequently

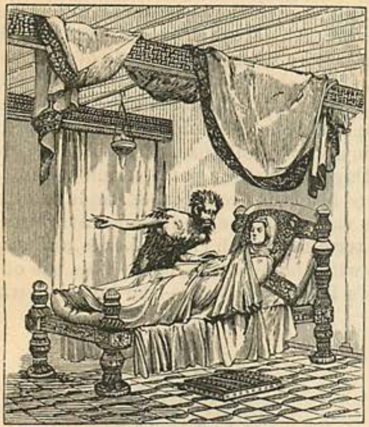


FAUTEUIL OF CHARLES V.—FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

very handsomely turned; and a hundred years later all quaint shapes that could be devised appeared—sometimes light, a mere reticulation of metal bound together with straps; sometimes huge constructions, apparently for the middle of the room, quite fenced in by an open gallery, leaving only a space for entrance. They are all exceedingly spacious, made so by the change in garments that had been brought about by communication with the East, through whose means the long-worn clinging cloths were laid aside for the stiff brocades and half-gold fabrics that thus came to knowledge. They would all seem to have been much higher than the present chair, and, for the greater part, furnished with footstools, either fixed or free. This footstool, that lifted the feet from the cold contact of the stone floor, is a feature of the style, let us say in passing, that is far too valuable to be forgotten in reproductions, and is capable, for so slight a thing, of charming effect. At about this time first appeared the outlines in furniture that we are accustomed to consider more particularly Gothic, and which have persuaded many furniture-makers that they only are correct, being adopted from the architectural designs which we know by that name; and we see the seat supported on the pointed arch and the trilobe, with quatrefoils and trefoils, and tiny crocketed pinnacles at the corners. Then the chair became a magnificent object, took on a high back rich with carving, but carving that was done in sunk relief, so deep-set that it was uncomfortable to none; and the chair of the plain citizen and the farmer, if not rough with this thick carving, had always at the head the battlemented crest. In the variety that we find, some are like those belonging to a Duchess of Orleans, the legs of which were painted vermilion, and on whose cover, garnished with a "fringe of soy," were wrought dogs and birds and other devices; another is covered in blue cloth of gold, with pommels of copper, gilt and enameled at the corners; and in the same inventory with the latter, taken in 1466, is noted "a chaire of astate of yren covered with purpell satyn, fur^d, and a case of lether thereto." In the mean time the camp-stool had not been allowed to remain in the primitive state of the curule chair. Always pleasant to the eye, with its changing broken lines, it was destined to honor and beauty. The throne of the chief after battle, under the bannered door of his tent, it was also the episcopal throne, and more frequently than any other form of seat was the civic throne. In France this shape was called a fauteuil, from the older French of faudesteuil, derived probably from the monkish Latin of faldistorium, that in turn was derived from the Anglo-Saxon and German faldstool. It used to be declared that the folding-stool of the bishop was indicative of his spiritual jurisdiction, and that the footstool before it was emblematic of the temporal, which should be subjected to the spiritual, power; but the footstool was presently adopted, with the folding-stool itself, into civic and domestic use. The bronze throne of Dagobert, whose parts terminate in panthers' heads, is the oldest example extant of this variety of the mediæval seat; but others terminate with eagles' heads, and others yet with the heads of lions. This use of the lion's head and claws—the latter of which is to be seen in the Bayeux tapestry, by-the-way, and is still preserved on many of the articles of furniture that are nowadays no further classified than by the words "old-fashioned"—has been a matter in some dispute with archæologists. M. Lenormant regards it as something brought about only under the influence of purely Christian ideas. "The lion," he says, "is, in the allegorical language of our religion, the emblem of justice, because of the two lions which made the arms of Solomon's throne, the just king *par excellence*, and of the twelve whelps which ornamented its steps." But if such was Sol-



DEAL CHEST OF DRAWERS.—[B. J. T.]

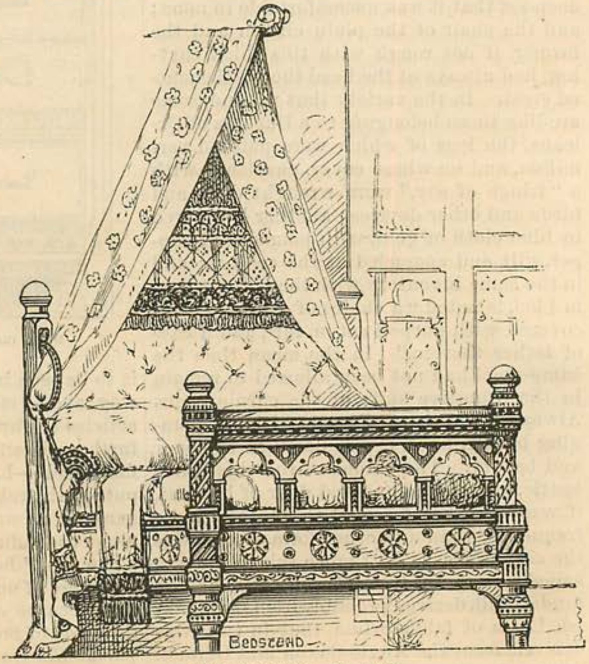


BED OF TWELFTH CENTURY.—"DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE."

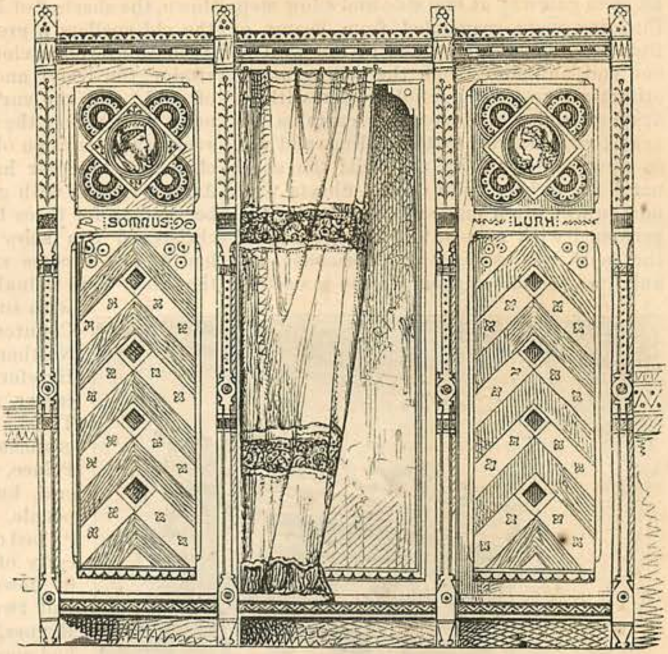
omon's chair, it seems that the lions were thus made use of long before Christianity; and it is quite as likely that the heads and feet, being thus added to the part covered elsewhere by the draperies of the seat, signified the fact of power and conquest. Eventually the folding-stool put on longer ends, then bars between the ends, making a back and making arms, and between the feet, and so gradually grew into that charming old chair which we so often see in the later mediæval days, where, on the half-circle formed by the legs, the half-circle of the body sits, with straight bars finely ornamented between the uprights of the back.

During all this time the bench was by no means standing still. As early as the eleventh century it had been furnished with rudimentary arms, or rests, mere projections of the uprights, and presently the arms were finished and curved so as to afford more comfort for the elbow, and if it was not covered with carving and painted in lively colors, or set about with gilding and silver and ivory, it was made fine with costly drapery, covered all along its length by cushions stuffed with feathers, and having indentations in the middle of the four sides so as to fit softly into the various hollows of the frame—cushions, indeed, bearing much weight in the mediæval furniture, their use marking one of its links with the Byzantine—and frequently forming seats by themselves. Silk patchworks, imitating some of the rare old Gothic marquetries, are by no means out of place upon these cushions as used to-day; and they give the grandam and the little child, into whose hands that needle-work is usually committed, an active interest in the furnishing. In the thirteenth century the bench dropped an apron before its seat, frequently of intricately carved open-work, and filled the part both of seat and coffer. Its back was extended, partly for ornamental reasons, and partly for prudential ones on account of the draughts and damps in the immense halls, and the back was often surmounted by a dais. When this back was not covered with carved arms and legends, or the conventional floriage of the time, there was hung across it, on little hooks, a dorsel, a curtain of goffered leather, of needle-work, or of precious stuff, in which the germ, although not the idea, of the antimacassar can be seen. If one reasons from the controlling principles that originally form a style, it will be seen that, although the low-backed chair is all very well, and sufficiently authorized by custom, yet the high-backed chair was born of the very necessities of the life in the vast airy apartments where the protection of the body from the draughts of which we have previously spoken was at the best but slight, and that the dorsel is almost a component part of it, and with its brightening bit of color always a welcome one.

It is easy to see how, from a form of this bench without the back, the couch came into being, a little lower, a little broader, a

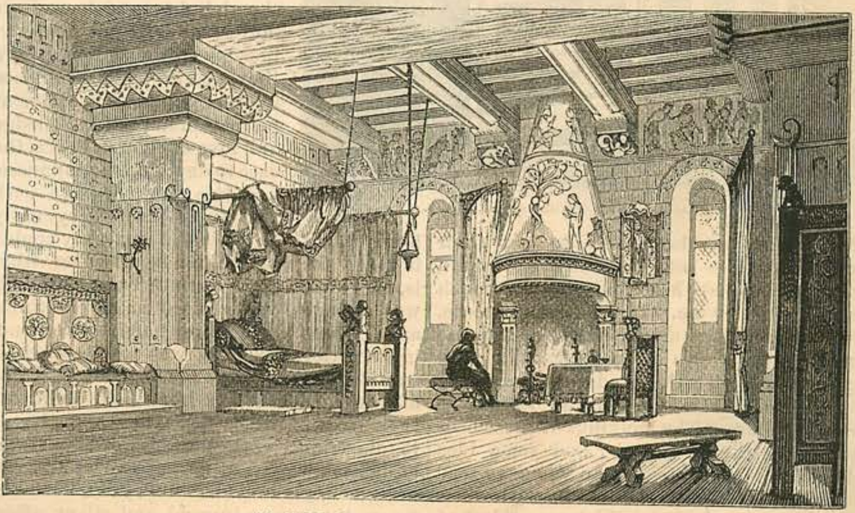


DEAL BEDSTEAD.—[B. J. T.]



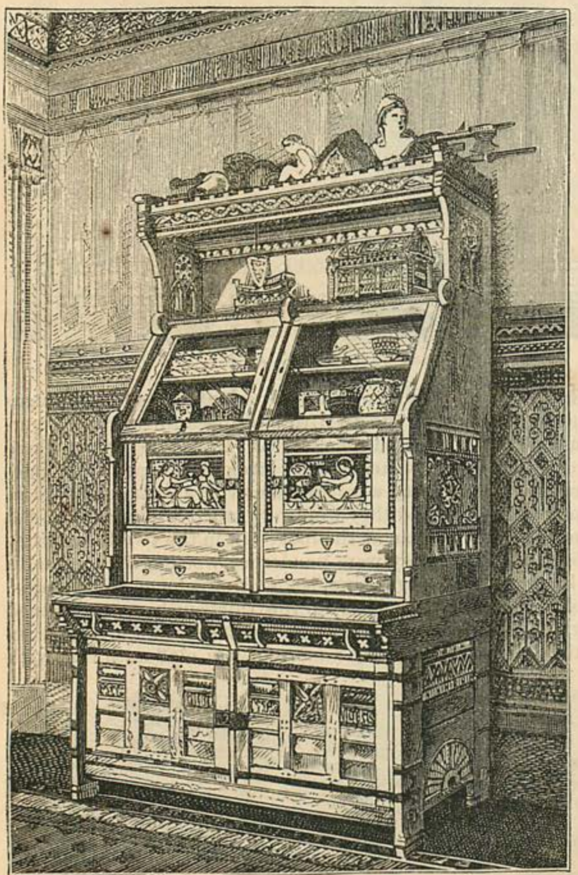
DEAL WARDROBE.—[B. J. T.]

little more luxurious as to its cushions. It appears on the Continent not much later than the close of the fourteenth century, and became so cherished an object that it presently underwent as absurd regulations as the cupboards had endured: only a queen or a member of her family could place her couch before the fire—the corner of the room was good enough for those whose blood was not so blue. Undoubtedly the couches often served for beds, although by this time beds and bedding had become quite luxurious. Among the wealthier nobles some scattered examples of the Roman traditions remained, such, for instance, as that in the drawing from the old manuscript of Herrade de Landsberg (representing the dream of Pilate's wife), where the forms, the turning, and the rich ornament are on such a model. But the instances are very rare; the bench had been the bed for generations of those who, if they knew better, had nothing better to do; and when that was discarded, an original style had come into existence, out of which the shapes to be seen in the representations of the rooms of the twelfth and fifteenth centuries perfected themselves. In the early years these bedsteads were often of bronze; sometimes they were provided with a back or third side, and they were very much higher at the head than at the foot; but in the twelfth century they were ponderous wooden fixtures, with huge canopies, and enveloped in curtains. The beds of the thirteenth century stood upon four large low supports, and were boxed in by a more or less elaborate rail, with

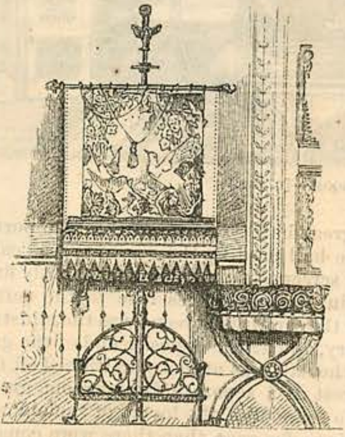


CHAMBER OF CASTLE IN TWELFTH CENTURY.

an open gateway at one side and a low step. Curtains were suspended from beams, or from long metal rods fixed in the wall at one end, and slung from the ceiling at the other; afterward the whole tester, with its drapery and the depending curtains beneath, was secured to the ceiling, and not, as now, supported by the bed; the usual name for it being the celer. Sheets were now in use, often made of silk, the pillows perfumed with rose-water, and the size of the beds was something enormous: the knights who had slept under the same tent thinking it but hospitable to put their brother knights into the same beds with themselves—beds here and there as much as twelve feet wide. In such beds parents, children, and dogs all slept together, and so vast was the king's bed that it was visited by whippers with their rods of office before he entered it, lest some traitor should be secreted there. The hangings of these beds were exceedingly superb; and some idea of their splendor may be had when we read of a chamber of pleasaunce hung with white silk and linen cloth, in which was a bed of down, the sheets "of Raynys"—Reims gave the old spellers a great deal of trouble—"the counterpoint cloth of gold furred with ermine, the tester and celer shining cloth of gold," and the curtains of white sarsenet. "They were the richestly hanged that ever I saw," says an old chronicler; "seven chambers together hanged with cloth of Arras wrought with gold as thick as could be; and as for three beds of state, no king christened can show such three." Beds had at last become such affairs of luxury that they were valuable bequests not only with such personages as the Countesses of Pembroke and Northampton, the Earls of Hereford, and Dukes of Lancaster, as King Edward the Third, who left one to his grandson, or as the Black Prince, who bequeathed several, but with the untitled people, one of whom leaves "a bed of gold swans, the tapestry of green with bunches of flowers of divers kinds, and two pairs of sheets of Raynes," so that Shakspeare had some countenance in his famous bequest. At the birth of heirs of estates and of princes, the beds and their surroundings were prepared with peculiar care, sacred texts and representations were every where in sight, and all that could suggest pain or fright was banished.


BRIC-À-BRAC CABINET, GOTHIC STYLE.—[B. J. T.]

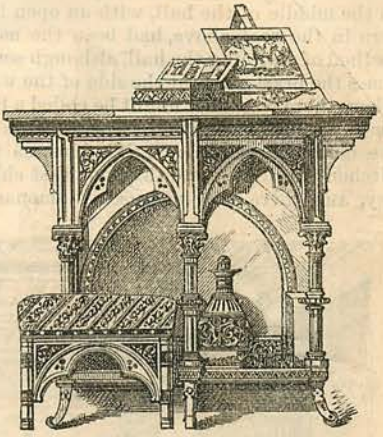
Hangings, however, had important office in other places than about the beds. The love of decoration in the mediæval era was intense, and the delight in color. It is noticeable with all semi-civilized people that long before they attain equal eminence in other points, they arrive at perfection in their knowledge and love of color. This is the case to-day with the Japanese, and this was the case *with* our ancestors. They early hung upon their walls the best they could; if partly for warmth, for beauty also—that is, they made their warmth beautiful; if it was linen, it was painted in divers tints; and if it was leather, they had it correspondingly variegated; if it was needle-work, it was the glory of the East, or that to which all the women of the household dedicated their lives until the day when Arras began to take tribute of the nations; or here it was of damask, woven at first of scarlet and violet, green, yellow, blue, and gray, with the figure thrown up in gold and silver, afterward of the rich crimson that has given its name to the damson plum, and there of the Venice silk where velvet flowers swam upon a silken ground. Sometimes the hangings were used for portières, sometimes to separate the great room into several, always to ornament the wall, and the best ones were not all the time in use. In the few dwellings remaining of this era, although the hangings are utterly gone, portions of the hooks that held them are yet in the wall. In certain rooms, not the loftiest, the hangings swept from top to bottom; in others the benches, with their decorated and daised backs, ran nearly round the room, in which case the hangings were sometimes dispensed with, except for the windows and doorways, and for the strip of stuff depending from the chimney-piece, to be swept aside or to pull between the sitter and the blaze according to the degree of heat; in others a wainscot extended some six or eight feet from the floor, then came the hangings, and above the hangings a painted or sculptured frieze, the directions for the painting of these walls above the hangings being often of the most elaborate description. In the last days of the Gothic an ornamental plaster-work supplied the place of this hanging, and intruded upon the cornice. But at a period shortly before that, when not only had windows been enlarged, but filled with glass, and the glass stained, it is difficult to imagine any thing too rich and brilliant for the effect of these wall decorations—the panels carved and gilded, the hangings emblazoned with the most rich and delicate coloring, the painted glass carrying on the story in even greater brilliancy. We may be more comfortable to-day; we can not be so splendid.



SCREEN FOR DRAWING-ROOM.—[B. J. T.]

"Clothes of gold and arras were hanged in the hall,
Depainted with pyctures and hystoryes many folde,
Well wraughte and craftely with precyous stones all,
Glyteringe as Phebus and the beten golde."

The hangings and the wall paintings also were usually scenic; the Mort d'Arthur, historical events, hunting, falconry, and Scripture supplying subjects, the latter always treated as if it were a story of chivalry, and David and Jonathan being armed as knights. The personages whose story was thus wrought were portrayed in gigantic stature, the necessity of size and space being caused by the peculiarity of the tapestry-work, which absorbs light in the interval between the stitches, and does not represent a slant by a direct line, but by a succession of minute angles formed by the stitches. When such sums were paid as eight hundred "francs d'or pour un tapis Sarrazinois," two thousand for a chamber of three pieces of tapestry, and about twelve thousand pounds, modern money, for a set of arras, cloth of gold, and baudequin, it may be understood that they were held as great treasures; and we are not surprised that nobles moving from one place to another took their hangings as well as their glass windows with them.



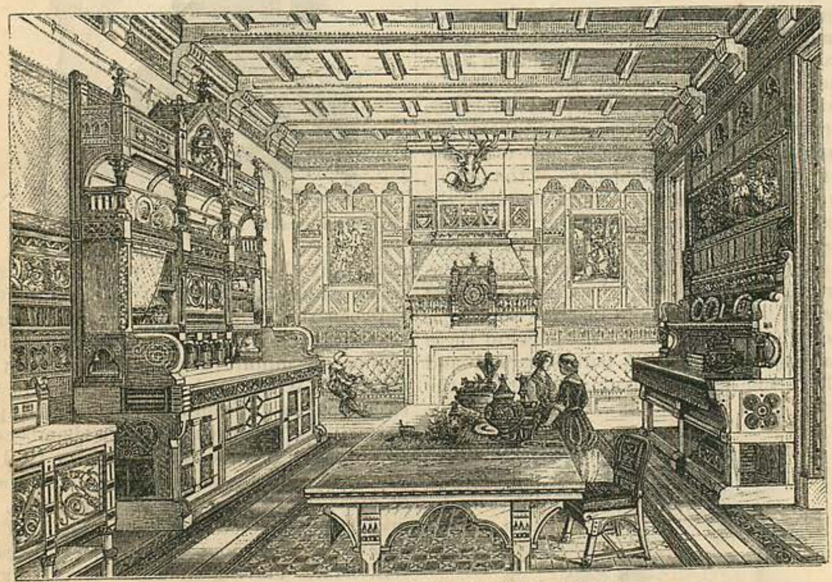
GOTHIC TABLE AND STOOL, DRAWING-ROOM.

The floors, meanwhile, had improved from paving of rough flags strewn with straw, in summer with reeds, to fine many-tinted tessellation of "flaundrestyll," so called because brought from Flanders; but carpets were not known in England much before the middle of the thirteenth century, when the embassadors who preceded Queen Eleanor aroused the ire of the people by laying them in her halls—

"Tapets of Spayne on flor by syde
That sprad shyn be for pompe and pryde"—

a custom the Spaniards probably derived from the Moors, as mats and rugs had long been the companions of the Orientals; the earliest carpets used in churches were of somewhat kindred design—the Persian, with geometrical figures, circles, and arabesques.

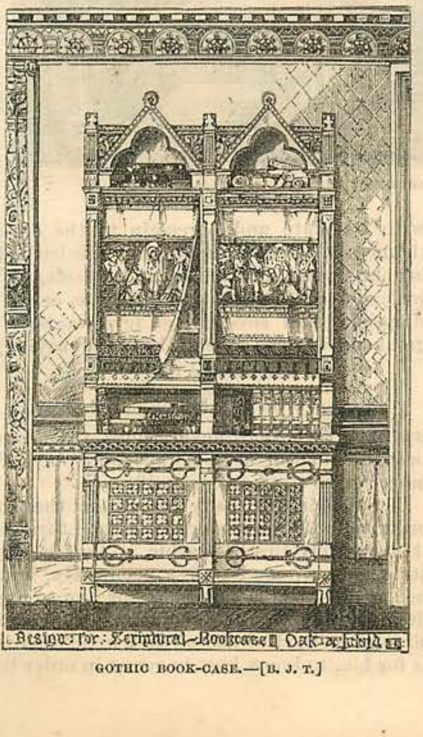
It was not till about the close of the fourteenth century that the last height of the domestic Gothic was reached, although the great impulse seemed to gather most visibly in the eleventh. It may not be too fanciful to suppose that in the matter of interiors the introduction of chimneys had something to do with this, and chimneys were an accompaniment of the eleventh century. Until then a huge brasier built up on the floor in the middle of the hall, with an open lantern in the roof above, had been the usual method of warming the hall, although sometimes the brasier was at the side of the wall, where there was what might be called a fireplace without a chimney. The principle of the chimney was known, it seems, as the kitchen was little more than one vast chimney, and there are instances in monastic buildings of the ninth century of detached shafts to carry off the smoke from underground furnaces; but it was not applied, although there was sufficient sense of the possibilities of comfort, now and then, for an arrangement of flues from such furnaces, extending beneath the stone floors and diffusing a mild warmth. But the eagerness with which the chimney was seized, after its introduction—sometimes there being two in the room, and sometimes the happy owners luxuriating in four, one on each side—shows the part it took in the great work of building up the fabric of home. "Under the chimney" became a proverb for inviolable confidence, and the expression for a vagrant was concerning one who "warms himself at the chimney of King Réné," that is, who stands in the sunshine. The manner in which the chimney was adorned, built out in a hood or mantel, under whose originally vast projection one sat, given a bay carved with armorial bearings, and ornamented, together with all its belongings, amply evinces how well the fact was comprehended that, with the chimney, home became a place of comfort and delight, fit to decorate and make beautiful and linger and enjoy one's life in.



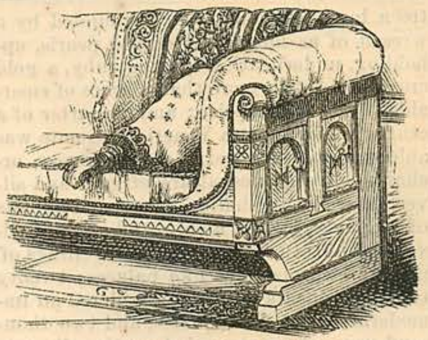
INTERIOR OF GOTHIC DINING-ROOM.—[B. J. T.]

The introduction of the chimney, too, made the separation of the daily life into many rooms a more comfortable and possible thing. The screens, which were an invariable companion of the Gothic scene, before the dais—as a raised platform, the place of honor, at one end of the room, was sometimes called—around the fires, beside the bed, and in the division of sections of the great hall, so much so that the portion of the hall used by the servants was called "the screens," now became frequently fixed, and in some instances rose to the rafters. Over the servants' screens was the minstrels' gallery, and at the opposite end of the great hall the dais was at last partitioned off from the rest as a separate dining-room, greatly to the scandal of the lovers of the old order of things, for even then there were conservatives and radicals, so that many a regulation was made against "dining in chambers," instead of with the people in the hall. Behind the dais was another room, the lord's solar; and the lady's closet followed this—a place to make dainty with all the refinements and deliciousness yet reached; and from this arrangement gradually grew hall, dining-room, drawing-room, bedroom—the furniture of the latter consisting of bed, coffer, priedieu, and tapestry—while staircases either externally or in the turret led to sleeping-rooms above; all of which was wonderfully different from the time when life went on chiefly in the one great hall, and when, if a guest came, his bed was built up, cushioned, and curtained before his eyes. The guest was always very welcome in these halls; he brought the outside world with him, he gave pleasure, he gave the dwellers there the opportunity of giving pleasure; legends relating to him were often wrought over the chimney, and the door of the drawing-room was built into the room in a sort of porch, as if too much stress and honor could not be paid to the place of his entrance: a certain good baron, indeed, one Fulk Fitz Warine, caused the highway to run through his hall, in order that all travelers should receive his entertainment.

Our ancestors employed some eight or nine hundred years in attaining all this. Their progress had been slow until the last two centuries of it, when Western civilization seemed suddenly to begin to stir in its sleep, to awake, and to march onward with a swift step to join that civilization with which Venice, Constantinople, and the farther East were already luxuriating. It was from Venice and the East that the awakening came. While our ancestors, together with most of the inhabitants of Western Europe, had been occupied with petty warfare among their petty strongholds, Venice had inherited the splendors of the Greek Empire, and made herself cosmopolitan by her commerce with all the known world. Magnificence and grace and beauty could go no further than they went in the civil buildings of the Venetian Gothic. When the greater part of Christendom sat in comfortless squalor, without chimneys or fireplaces, without glass in their windows, with no pleasures but those of war and such rude diversions as hawking and the chase, Venice was mounting an eminence of social and intellectual culture, with few houses without gardens of some description and aviaries; with a passion among her people for music, birds, and flowers; with a discriminating taste in color, so that blue was already known as the Venetian color; with a constant tendency toward refinement. Slow as communication was then—so slow that fifty days were required for a Venetian to receive the answer to his message to Constantinople—yet Venice in the eighth century kept up constant intercourse with Greece, Egypt, and India, and in her adventure familiarized herself with France, England, and Flanders as well; and the Venetians thus led the fashions of the world in the fair at Pavia, where Charlemagne's courtiers were eager to buy mantles like their monarch's, and the ladies sought cloaks of cloth of gold like those which the brides of Venice wore. In one of the later years of his reign two of the Doges came to Paris laden with gifts for Charlemagne, and one of them married a French lady there, and doubtless sowed the seed of much luxury about him; and it was from the Venetian market that the daughters of Charlemagne procured that finery in which, despite the common rumor of their homespun, a veracious writer describes them—Rhotrude enveloped in a mantle held together by a gold agrafe enriched with precious stones, violet fillets in her yellow hair, with a crown of gold diapered in gems; Bertha's hair disappearing under a golden net, rich ermines covering her shoulders, and chrysolites sprinkling the golden folds of her vestments. The wealth of Venice even then was enormous: an abbess could afford to give the Doge a diadem in whose cen-

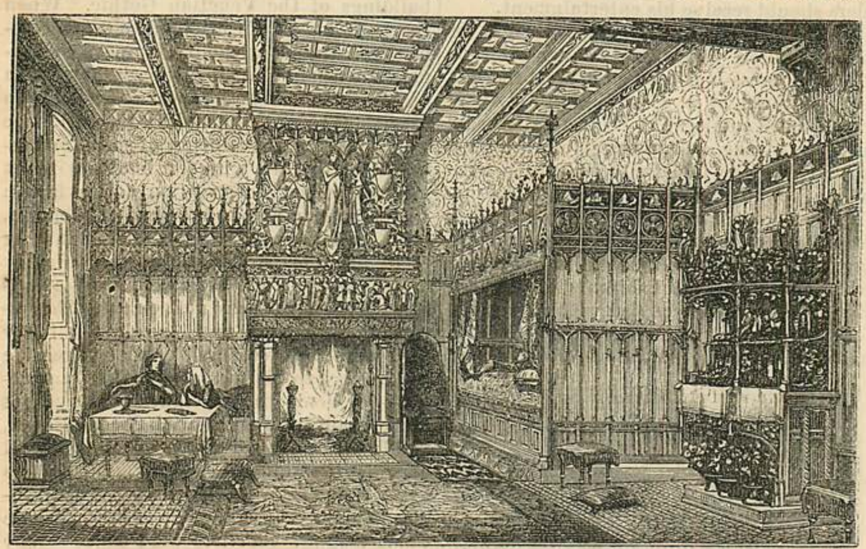


GOTHIC BOOK-CASE.—[B. J. T.]



GOTHIC SOFA.—[B. J. T.]

tre a huge diamond was surrounded by a wreath of as huge pear-shaped pearls, upholding, underneath a blazing ruby, a gold cross inlaid with more than a score of emeralds of marvelous price; and a quarter of a century before that a Venetian primate was able to bequeath serfs, cattle, horses, orchards, olive groves, altars of gold and silver, altar cloths, chalices, vases and goblets of porphyry, jewels, a ship, and store of silver and of corn. Many of the dwellings of private citizens were like palaces; twenty thousand ducats was not considered an immoderate price for a house, and two thousand were often expended on the ultramarine, gilding, carving, mosaic, and glass of a single room. The commonest Venetian broke as much as he would of the lovely glass—which, we believe, no machinery to the present day degrades, fashioned by the fingers as it is—at a time when in England glass drinking vessels were so rare that Henry the Third had but a single cup, the gift of Guy of Roussillon, which he thought precious enough to send to the goldsmith, Edward of Winchester, with directions to set it in hoops of silver gilt, with a handle, that he might present it to the queen.



CASTLE CHAMBER OF FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

Rumors went abroad, of course, of all the luxury and beauty of life in the East, in Venice and Byzance and among the Moors. The Venetians themselves visited the northern ports, and a colony of them settled in Limoges. The inhabitants of the northern coasts began to feel an emulation to procure for themselves these rich stores of the Orient. Journeys and voyages were taken, people returned from the Crusades that had made Venice a sort of rendezvous, and finally Constantinople, that immense treasure-house, surrendered its wealth, and the splendor that had been confined to sovereigns was scattered among the people. The priesthood, with its trained intelligence, led the way in the procurement and the enjoyment of luxury; commerce grew up, exchanging rough productions for precious commodities; and that elevation of woman which accompanied the Gothic did an infinite work in addition toward the softening of manners and the beautifying of interiors. At last, in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, we have the mediæval at the top of its wave, in successions of lofty rooms where moved stately-mannered men and women clad in superb robes, rooms full of colors and gilding, carved woods, and heavily swinging tapestries, each piece of furniture supplying separate traits of the picture, from the resplendence of the cupboard with its plate and porcelain to the dark richness of the sculptured and high-backed benches with their daises and dorsels. If we had ever thought of this time as one of simplicity and severity, of few wants, of great content, the time of the quaint saying,

> "Lever à six, diner à dix,
> Souper à six, coucher à dix,
> Font vivre l'homme dix fois dix,"

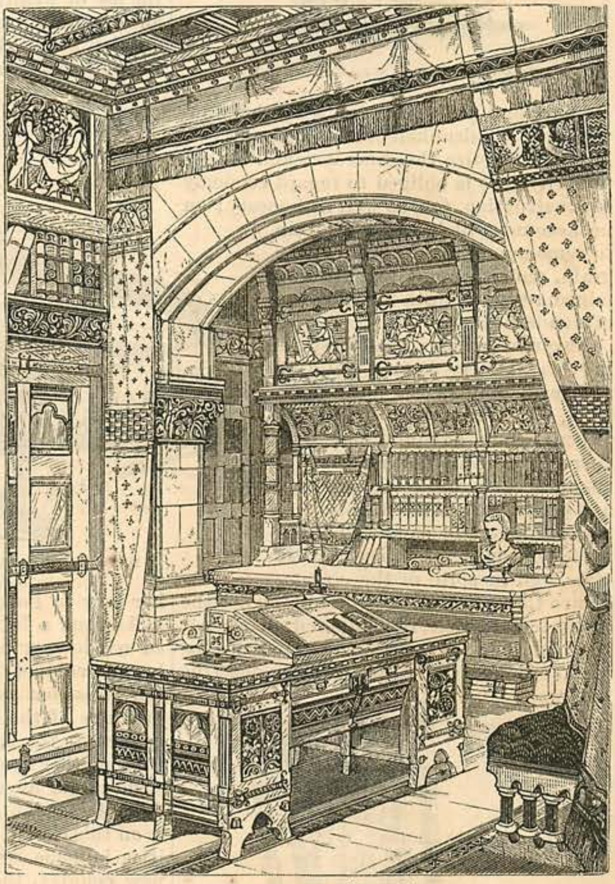
we have seen that, nevertheless, there has been no time of more gorgeous display, of more active state and magnificence.

The reader will easily understand that in order to build his modern house and furnish it accurately in the Gothic, if that is the style chosen—and unless accurately, best not at all—it is as necessary for him to understand something of the origin, the genesis, and method of use of each article as it is for him to know how to count in order to cast up a sum in addition. It is, indeed, impossible for him, with all the new requirements of life, to furnish it in specimens of the ancient Gothic alone. Nothing is so absurd as your "Middle Age manners adapter," who does not take the difference in time into account, who attempts to reproduce the ancient and leaves the modern out of his consideration. The best that can be done, the only thing that should be done, is not to reproduce the ancient simply, but to adapt the ancient to the modern, and in order to do that, one needs some archæological knowledge, a tolerably definite idea of the way affairs were ordered in the days that are gone.

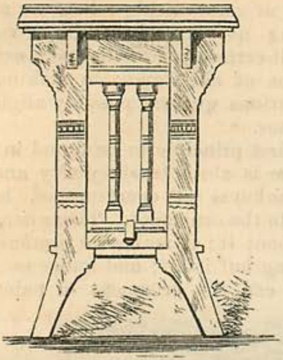
It would be idle to ignore the alleviations of existence that modern times have compassed, in order to produce a perfect picture in our dwellings of the ancient, with its struggle for convenience and its result of inconvenience; to forego the illumination of our rooms with great sheets of mirrors, for instance, because Aregonde looked at her beauty only in a hand-mirror; to refuse the use of gas, because in the mediæval rooms pitchy torches hung in hooks upon the wall, oil burned in cups, and wax in the great chain-swung copper circles; to drop piano, book-case, pipes, photographs, wall-paper, because the mediæval never heard of them; to insist upon a comfortless chair, because the Gothic spine was made of steel. One might as well refuse to read a poem of Tennyson's because it was not written in black-letter. And thus nobody proposes to do it.

The way to furnish our houses according to the Gothic style would seem to be to violate no generally accepted modern custom in adhering to mediæval form. We are not going back to mediæval life; we are bringing the Gothic to add beauty to our life—our life, which is confessedly loftier than the mediæval in every purpose and attainment, with the single exception of invention in art. If we take the Gothic where our ancestors left it, and apply its principles to the exigencies of the present, we shall avoid the great danger that threatens the age of crystallizing where we are, and becoming nothing but Chinese copyists. We shall certainly have to make new combinations of old forms; in making those combinations we may possibly alight upon new forms.

The first principle to be found in Gothic furniture is absolute simplicity and truth and frankness of construction, however elaborate the ornament. There is no falsehood about it; it makes no pretense to be any thing but itself; and under no consideration can the ornament of painting or carving or inlay be suffered to conceal the structure—it may adorn it as it will, but it ceases to be characteristic at the moment in which it attempts to hide the purpose of any article or of any member of an article. Every article is made for a specific use, and only after long tentative groping; it is proud of itself, it declares its intention and its consummation, it ornaments the way in which it reached its perfection, and its whole air is that of dignity. Not that it is ungainly, stiff, or inaptly solemn; but if the reader will compare its aspiring lines,

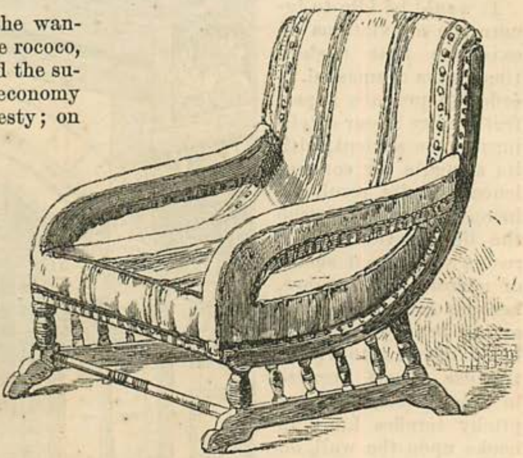


GOTHIC LIBRARY.—[B. J. T.]



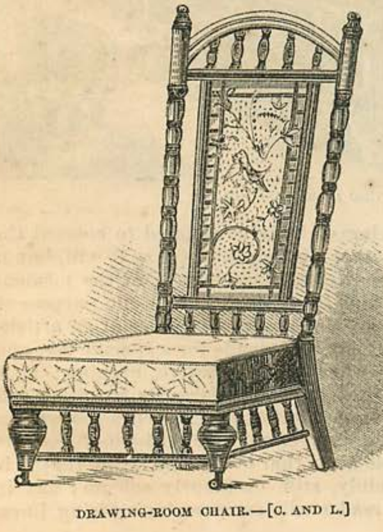
DRAWING-ROOM TABLE.—[C. AND L.]

its pure and perfect curves, with the wanton lines and drunken curves of the rococo, he will recognize the difference and the superiority. It is obliged to regard economy of construction, too, as well as honesty; on no account will it suffer a strain to come upon the weak way of the grain, and it scorns to pare and mince away strength for the sake of slenderness or grace.



DRAWING-ROOM CHAIR.—[C. AND L.]

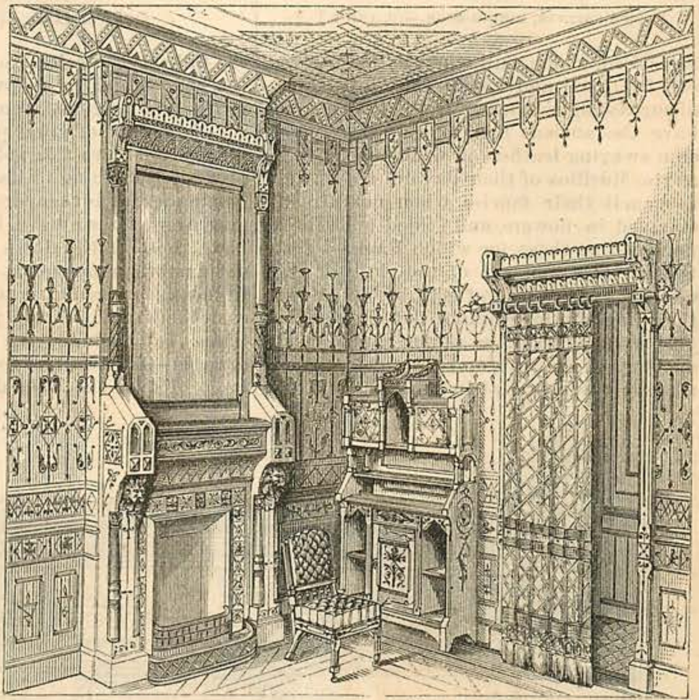
Nevertheless, one must hesitate in this country before building and furnishing in the pure mediæval, for as a style it is one between whose day and our own there is a more distinct barrier than there is between our own and that of any of the Renaissance styles. Strongly as the claim is made that it is not an ecclesiastic style, and in spite of the circumstance that neither the pointed arch nor the crocketed pinnacle, the diapered surface nor the little carved monsters, are indispensable in order to make furnitures on the true Gothic principles, yet the fact remains that its chief constituents and ornaments were first used in the churches, and it was brought to perfection at a time when the Church and the clergy were paramount in every thing after a fashion that has long ceased. It belongs, in truth, to a form of life almost all of whose conditions have long passed, religious, civil, and domestic; that with us have never obtained. It is not indigenous to the soil, as it is in Europe; it must of needs be an adoption, and possibly an affectation. It is grandiose, moreover; it requires space and the use of wealth; to choose it seems to be an assumption of poetical taste and antiquarian knowledge; and it is the source of strange anachronisms when a maiden with her hair in Pompadour rolls and cushions looks from a latticed and mullioned pointed window, or handles the toys of a flamboyant cabinet; or when a beau in a modern dress-coat stands beneath the armorial bearings of the hall or the chimney-piece, or mounts the battlements to see the view. On the other hand, it may be said, this is the style of our ancestors, Saxon and Norman; their descendants have as much right to use it on this side of the water as on the other; it is in some respects the best fitted to a new country, the same reasons that gave it birth acting for its reproduction; it is a reminiscence, for most of us, of the mother country, whether that country be France, England, or Germany; we do not intend to allow anachronisms, as by adapting, instead of servilely copying, we infuse new blood and a new life, and leave nothing that can produce anachronism; and whereas the capabilities of most of the Renaissance styles may be held to be exhausted—and this is the controlling and deciding reason—the Gothic was arrested before a thoroughly complete development, and is yet full of possibilities. Exceedingly pic-



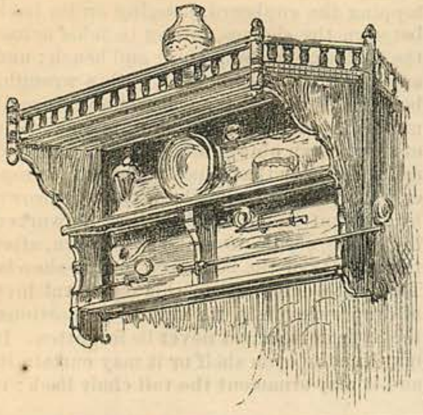
DRAWING-ROOM CHAIR.—[C. AND L.]

turesque as it is, it has also an archaic character to which it is interesting to see the present applied and watch for results. Far from being a dead style, as many others are, it is alive, waiting for complete development under modern needs and ideas, and rich with possibilities.

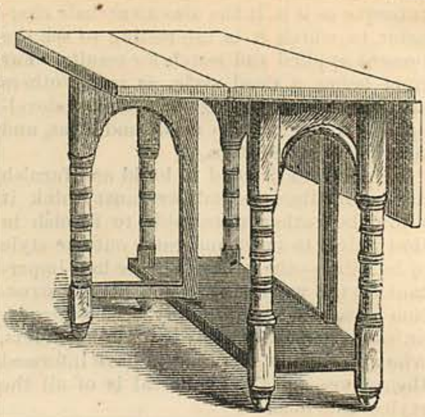
If it is then decided to build and furnish in the mediæval—and we must think it would be rather unsuitable to furnish in that unless to meet and carry out the style of building—the reader will see how important to the undertaking is a little instruction as to what has already been achieved, unless he leave it entirely to his upholsterers, who are already supposed to have informed themselves, for the mediæval is of all the styles the most difficult in which to furnish, its study being recondite, while it requires and enforces more purity than any of the others, mingling willingly only with the Saracenic, which is a connection of its own Byzantine branch.


MODERN GOTHIC DRAWING-ROOM.—[POTTIER AND STYMUS.]

One is not, however, obliged always to pursue the matter to the letter, and rebuild the rooms of a mediæval castle in order to produce mediæval effect; suggestion sometimes answers as well as absolute reproduction. If, for instance, one can not afford or does not desire every where along the wall and below the frieze the heavy hangings which, in themselves or their suggestions, are a requisite of the style, they are suggested in sufficient manner by the dorsels, the curtains, and the portières, which are obligatory, the last belonging to the style, if one may say so, constructively, as they were used previous to doors and after doors, and represent doors in the primitive divisions of the great hall made by the hangings themselves. It would be impossible to dispense entirely with these hangings, for they were a part of the original thought of the style. It saw the wonderful beauty of the breaking lines and changeful colors of drapery, and used it every where, topping the cupboard, hanging on its back between the shelves, falling in folds across the shelves, enriching chair and bench; and any thick, soft-falling stuff with a wrought border answers the purpose now, since it meets the idea; while there are not many of us who can obtain any thing like the old embroidery, or that tapestry which is properly warp filled in not by a thread thrown by the shuttle, but by short threads worked in by the needle to suit the pattern, after the manner of the border on broché shawls. Thus with deference to this mediæval love of drapery, even in its minute proportions, the little dorsel must never be forgotten. It may line the open shelf or it may curtain it, and it may ornament the tall chair back; it may be of such handiwork as the ladies of the house can themselves attempt, or else of bits of brocade, of plain velvet, gold-fringed or otherwise adorned, or of available pieces of thick silk or satin, but always with regard to the design of the period when these treasured stuffs came from the Orient; if not entirely covered with wrought-work, then most frequently of open spaces of plain tint or small powdered ornament between broad bands, in which wheels encircle Byzantine griffins and peacocks, swallows, leopards, apples of gold, roses, eagles, and branches of palm, equal regard being paid to the colors, none of the brilliant modern colors being used, but the ecclesiastical colors, as they

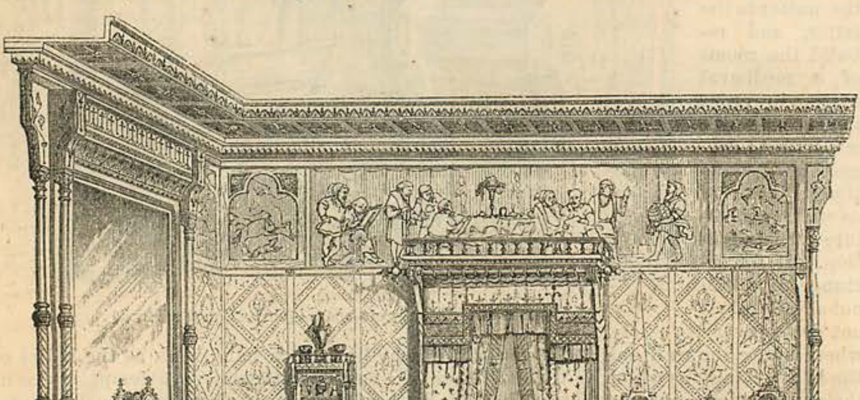


PIPE SHELVES, DINING-ROOM.—[C. AND L.]



BEDROOM TABLE.—[C. AND L.]

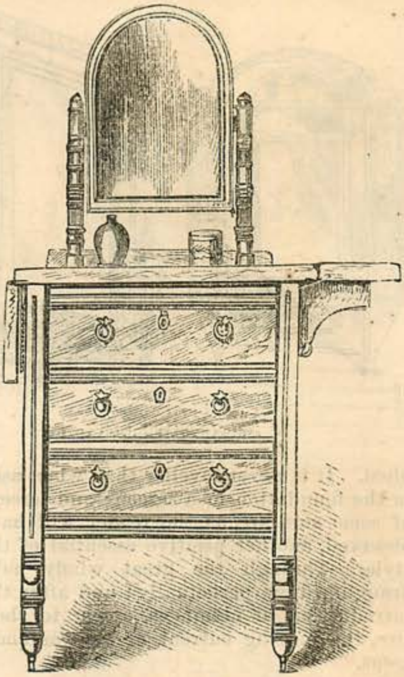
are called, which, dull when by themselves, can be toned and harmonized into effects of surpassing richness. If, then, we can not have the ancient hangings of stately solemn swaying leather, on which such artists as the Murillos of their day did not disdain to pencil their fancies when not already stamped in flowers, and gilded and tinted, nor such as those for which Raphael drew the cartoons, nor yet of the cloth of gold of cramoisy or cloth of gold of blue, where the minutely long-drawn flat filament of gold wound about a silken thread made one way of the web, and the richly colored silk the other, so that in this light one saw the full sheet of color, and in the other only the body of golden yellow lustre, on which pearls and precious stones sometimes brocaded borders of gorgeous embroidery—if we can not have this splendor, we can yet produce something of its effect by infinitely simpler and cheaper methods. Whatever draperies we have, it is admissible to hang those of the doors and windows under lambrequins, square-cut and without fullness, corresponding to the celers of the early beds and the top pieces of the portières that excluded the last remnant of a draught—for ourselves we suspect the porch built in over the later drawing-room door


Centennial Exhibition 1876. A. KIMBEL & J. CABUS, 7 & 9 east 20. Str. New-York.

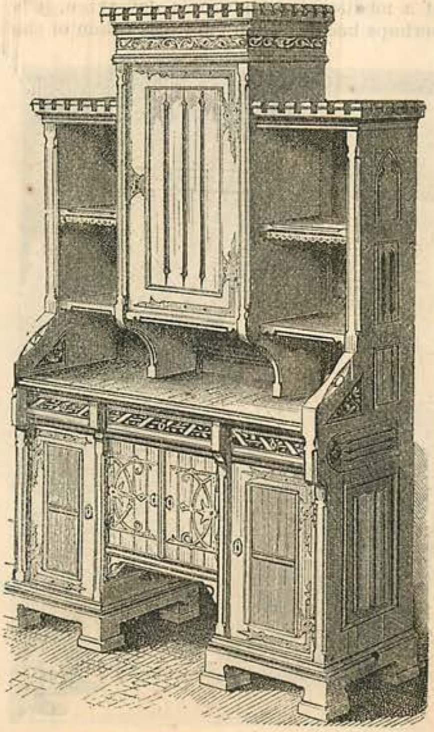
DRAWING-ROOM.—[KIMBEL AND CABUS.]

had quite as much to do with this dreaded draught as with honor to the guest—but tiny hooks are the indicated manner of holding the dorsels, and the suspension of curtains and portières by means of rings upon metallic bars is not only the most graceful, the most cleanly, but quite as pure style. Loose wall-hangings, meanwhile, inclosing a room entirely, as in the antique fashion, are not so consistent with the spirit of modern use, which in our adaptation is greatly to be respected, as the decorated flat surface on which the Gothic looked with favor in its painted frieze and mosaics; and a high dado of paneling, with a wooden cornice, and the space between stenciled in close pattern or covered with paper diamonded and diapered in fleur-de-lis, geometrical arabesques, and fine foliations, sometimes the dado itself of another paper, or, if of wood, framing in its upper panels a series of softly colored hand-painted tiles, makes quite as beautiful and quite as characteristic a wall decoration as a more servile imitation could effect.

Yet if some things can be left partially to suggestion in furnishing after the mediæval manner, other things must yield strict conformity to rule. Thus carpets are not to extend to the side of the room or fit closely into corners—first, because derivatively they have no right to do so; and secondly, because of the large and heavy articles that stand directly upon the floor, and are not easily moved. They are to cover the centre and leave a goodly margin of floor about them, the floor inlaid or handsomely polished; they are to be heavy and lie flatly by their own weight, to be of geometrical or of that conventional design which elaborates the abstract idea of some object of beauty without repeating the object itself; and however large their size, it is to be remembered that they are always intrinsically rugs.

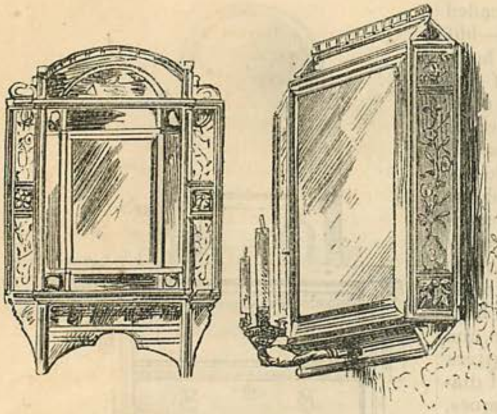


DRESSING-TABLE.—[C. AND L.]



SIDEBOARD, MODERN GOTHIC.—[POTTIER AND STYMUS.]

Again, an essential accompaniment of furniture of this description is wrought iron-work and brass, copper and bronze, wherever such can be suitably introduced. This was the chief ornament of the pristine style, that on which it relied for much of its most brilliant effect; and long before they were the masters of any other art, the mediævals were accomplished workers in the metals, "cunning to work all works in brass." Yet this is never to be used as decoration for its own sake, but always for some constructive purpose rendered decoratively. A hinge extending two-thirds across a door, of whatever metal best contrasts with the color of the wood, expanding into trefoils or more intricate foliations, bolts and locks and handles made with equal richness, and compassing all manner of quaint designs of leaf and ouphe, grilles of elaborate net-work before the shelves, and lesser guards to keep the objects there in position, are among the uses to which this metal-work may be ap-

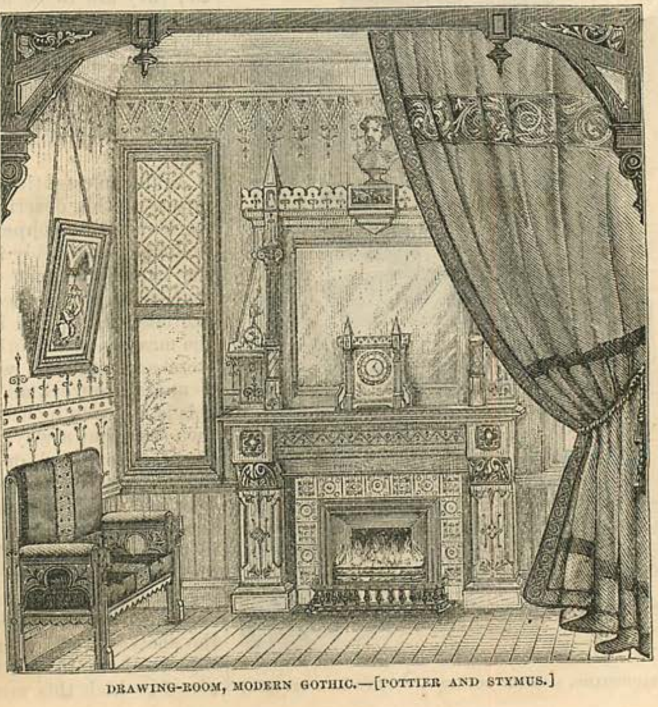


GIRANDOLES.—[C. AND L.]

plied. It is never lovelier than when used in the foundation of a screen; and screens of some sort are, as the reader will have observed, another positive essential of the style. Through the great windy halls draughts drew perpetually; and after the introduction of chimneys, owing to their size, the moving current of air was enormous.

> "A chain-dropped lamp was flickering by each door,
> The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
> Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar,
> And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor."

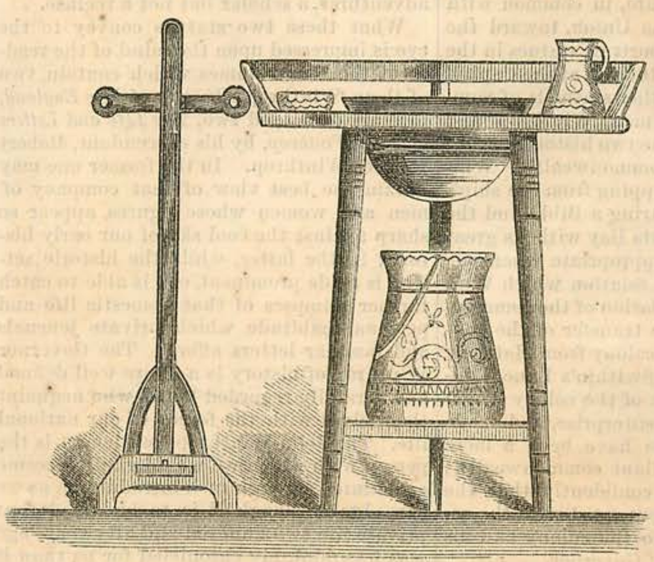
Under such circumstances the screen was a necessary clothing; and it offered a surface for decoration that was never neglected. This screen can be made of costly tapestry, or of the household needlework, or of any other material that harmonizes with the general style; sometimes of painted panels, sometimes of interwoven peacock feathers upon a background, the finest that we know consisting of a Byzantine carving in ebony making a lattice over plate-glass whose back has been gilded till it is a complete illumination—the fire-screens a single frame upon a foot, the others in folding leaves. When these screens are mounted in brass and brightened with the airy brass filigree, they are of service in lightening the drawing-room, which, with the best of Gothic, must needs be always a little heavy, as a glance at the examples of modern Gothic in our wood-cuts shows.



DRAWING-ROOM, MODERN GOTHIC.—[POTTIER AND STYMUS.]

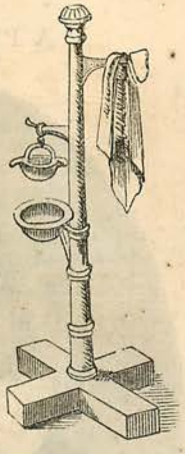
Nothing can be better than the Gothic for the rich, permanent, abounding appearance due the dining-room; it recalls its old feasts and orgies, and takes to the dining-room naturally: sideboard, carving table, dinner wagon, cupboard, are all ready to the hand, and can hardly be too heavy there. Nothing, either, can be in finer unison with the music-room, not only because the minstrel's harp belongs to it, and because it is a thousand years and over since it has known the organ, but because its shapes in their full decoration are those with which we associate the sound of solemn music, and seem sometimes as if they had arisen beneath its enchantment. Nothing can be more suited to the library, where its arched and pointed and traceried forms can have their last development, while books can have no fitter shrine than its cloistered recesses: that books were scarce in the old days, and were handiwork at that, does not matter; that is where the present leads the ancient on. If a hundred books were more than the library of a mediæval prelate or a sovereign, it is perhaps because such care was taken of the hundred that we have our thousands now. There are, besides, among the ancient forms many fine ones of lecterns to hold the book that one reads or from which one copies, to keep it open, advance or withdraw it, and of *scriptionales* or writing-desks with their inkhorns, so that we have to apply little or no fresh invention to mediæval library furniture. It is the natural furniture of the hall, where the first idea on entrance should be of shade, shelter, and solidity; and its cleanly, solid, simple forms even lend themselves kindly to the bed-chamber. But nothing can be more difficult to treat, and treat satisfactorily, than a drawing-room in the Gothic. Dark and sumptuous and steadfast, it is not easily rendered light and airy, and fit for the idle, laughing, sunny life of that pleasant spot. It calls marquetry to its aid there—an ornament always rather sparingly used by the Gothic—porcelain plaques, ebony and the silver-stained maples, satinwood and the winy wealth of color of the mahogany, having a right to enrich itself with all that it can assimilate with its own identity, of whatever place or date. It uses the light filigree brass-work to crest its cabinets, and for its gasalier and sconces; adopts the mirror, and hangs smaller beveled glasses besides, where effective; piles cushion upon cushion; makes its seats luxurious; throws soft drapery in delicate tints wherever it can be disposed. If, by good fortune, a conservatory at one end of the drawing-room presents the usual glass doors, it is afforded opportunity to indulge in triple-arched casements that the exotics within shall garland in blossoming tracery, if they are not already

> "Diamonded with panes of quaint device
> Innumerable, of stains and splendid dyes."



OXFORD WASH-STAND AND TOWEL-HORSE.—[C. AND L.]

It is hardly necessary to say that it requires great art to harmonize all this, to keep the heavy outlines down, and to hinder the brass and porcelain and tapestry from gaudiness. In Europe, where such rooms are ancestral and often historic, one accepts them as they come; but here, whoever furnishes in mediæval style has no ancestors upon whom to throw it off, and is personally responsible, and the rooms are quaint and curious or rich and imposing, according to idle chance or individual character.



MEDIÆVAL WASH-STAND. ["TURNER'S DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE."]

Finally, it is to be considered that, in any room and under all circumstances, the mediæval renders honor to the chimney-piece. It is the point of brilliancy from which all the rest departs, or the point of shadow to which it all converges. It is not, as some appear to think, an accessory of the room; it is the room itself. In the late years of the Gothic it was often sunk in the wall, and, owing to economical necessities, advantage is apt to be taken of this, and it is treated with narrow allowance of space. But in the growing vital years of the style, as we have shown, its importance as the domestic altar was recognized. It was built out into the room and made beautiful, and in pure strictness it is to-day of generous amplitude. Its tiled hearth still remembers the huge and hospitable fires that gathered the wide groups around its generous warmth, and is able yet to glow with the festivity of the great Yule-log. Beside it is the throne of the master and mistress. It is the heart of the house, the secret place of the family, the shrine of home. It can hardly be too highly decorated in that noble style which first glorified and sanctified the name and the idea of home.