

## SPECIAL FURNITURE DESIGNED FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES: ILLUSTRATED BY THE WORK OF C. F. A. VOYSEY



HOW often does the modern civilized person say to himself: "After all, what is a house for? Just why do we build it? What is the use of all this furniture? Why do we wear these particular clothes?" It would be a safe estimate to say that not one in a million ever does this. About all these things they usually ask: "What is in vogue?" or "What is in style?" or "How much can we afford?" This has been going on so long in fact that people have almost forgotten the original purposes of things that serve them in their daily life. They cease to expect beauty and utility and comfort and joy out of the immediate surroundings in which they live. And they have gone so far past the relating of their environment to their life that they no longer quite understand the environment. They look at it through the eyes of tradition.

Certainly in the earlier days men made chairs to sit on and tables to put things on and chests to put things in, and rugs were put on the floor for warmth and curtains were hung to adjust the light, and no more of these things were put in a house than a man and his family needed. A useless article of furniture would have branded the maker as a madman, for everything that a man put his time and material into had to count as a permanent asset. Just so in those days women wove what was essential for strong, durable clothes. Nothing superfluous went through the looms, nothing that was merely pretty and flimsy. There was always purpose in the labor of men and women working for themselves, and no man thought of making what he did not need, for in so doing he would have lost time and labor and the respect of his neighbors. In this remote "uncivilized" time women did not make their gowns to suit the taste and environment of other women of other nations. They knew little of the ways of far-off lands, and scorned heartily what they knew. And the clothes which they wove were fashioned for their own convenience in stout ways, simply and oftentimes beautifully.

**B**UT so far away are these people from our thought today that we have forgotten their good sense and their practical wisdom, and we build our houses and furnish them and dress ourselves from a purely decorative point of view, without purpose and usually without actual beauty. Most of us work very hard for the useless

## SPECIAL FURNITURE FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES

things we put in our houses. We know that we have no use for them, that they will not last us long and that we shall soon want others in their place; but for the time being we break our hearts for their possession. We know how temporary fashion is and yet we struggle for its possession as though it had beauty that would satisfy us for a lifetime. We set no limit on our purchase of these useless things except the space in our house and the size of our purse. We want more furniture than our neighbors have, and we want it newer; then we are at peace until the style changes, and our next flimsy purchase is from no more virile motive than the last, and has no more serious qualities to tide it over the ignominy of its old age. It is like a pretty, characterless woman who during her life has failed to gather friends or memories for her quiet, plain years.

Of course, the time has gone by when most of us can fashion furniture for ourselves or weave cloths for our own comfort and satisfaction. Only occasionally can the really fortunate person accomplish this. But practically all of us, all at least who can afford to buy any amount of furniture, can really decide that our homes shall only be furnished with such articles as possess permanent qualities of beauty and comfort. And many of us can go further and have furniture actually made to suit our houses, of materials that will last a lifetime, of design and in proportion suited to the space it is to occupy.

Many of us can build our own home to live in a lifetime and furnish it for the same length of time. To do this it is necessary to consider our furniture as a work of art, each piece—and not too many of them—perfect for the use for which it is designed. Every man and woman can make a study of good furniture, not to imitate it, but to understand why and how it is made. We can all have our furniture made to meet our own ideal of comfort and suited to our house and our lives. It is in this way that all good furniture in the past has been made, not for style or barter, but to prove how fine a thing can be produced for the use to which it is to be put.

The most beautiful furniture of old times, of Spain, of France, of Italy, of Greece and Bavaria, was all made for special people or occasions; a great man demanded a fitting chair; beautiful women, couches exquisite enough for beauty's resting place, a town hall had to be fitted for a great ceremony, or a palace for a new king. There was always a purpose to be upheld, a harmony to be observed, a use to be considered. And so these old pieces of furniture were fashioned with interest, understanding, definiteness, and thus have grown to set standards in furniture-making, to establish styles of beauty.

## SPECIAL FURNITURE FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES

And if we were to follow the *reason* for the construction of these beautiful styles of furniture, we should still be making excellent pieces for our own comfort. But instead we slavishly follow the *effect* gained by these great cabinetmakers. We imitate the fabrics they used, the color, the ornament, forgetting their philosophy, and in the end gaining nothing but pieces of furniture unsuited in all ways to our lives and our times.

**I**T IS only within the past few years that the idea of having furniture made to suit the individual house has again gained ground, somewhat in England and over a very small area in America, practically not at all in France; while in Germany the mausoleum type of furniture born of Secession inspiration seems adapted to and intended only for exhibition purposes.

In the July CRAFTSMAN we showed a very lovely modern English house designed by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, which was furnished entirely with pieces made from original designs especially planned for that particular house. Most of the furniture and many of the fittings were planned by the owner, others by Mr. Parker. But nothing whatever was bought ready-made. And a house more beautifully, completely and interestingly furnished it would be hard to find. Often Mr. Parker's houses are fitted up in this way. We understand that he planned all the furniture for his own house. It is his belief, after many years of house-building, that no home can be really completely and beautifully furnished without the fittings and furniture designed especially for the actual interiors which they are to fill. And so wherever it is practicable he not only plans the chairs and tables, beds and buffets, but all the built-in fittings such as bookcases, window-seats, screens, shelves, etc.

Another English architect who has given much attention to the making of furniture and fittings for the houses which he designs is Mr. C. F. A. Voysey. He differs from Mr. Parker in that the latter seeks in all the furniture and interiors which he plans to express the ideas and tastes of the owners, while Mr. Voysey is more apt to express his own highly cultured and original ideas, both as artist and artisan. He has in fact established a style of his own in England which has developed through his rare taste, skill, originality and wisdom. Although Mr. Voysey's style is essentially personal, recognizably so, it is also preëminently modern in spirit, so that his furnishings achieve complete harmony in the new English country houses for which they are designed. Being first of all an architect, Mr. Voysey is naturally a designer of *practical* furniture, suited to the very excellent and charming houses which he constructs. He



*C. F. A. Voysey, Architect.*

THE PASTURE HOUSE IN NORTH LUFFENHAM  
A TYPE OF MODERN ENGLISH COUNTRY HOME.





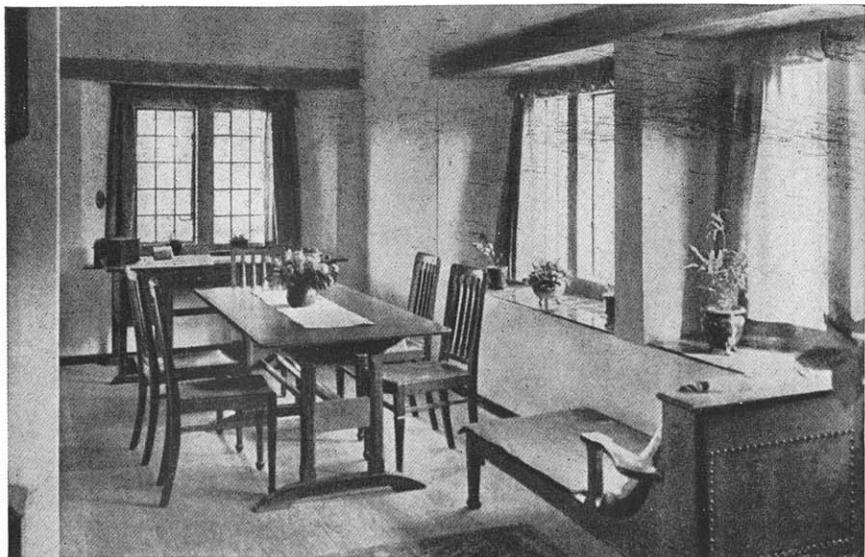
*C. F. A. Voysey, Architect.*

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE PASTURE  
HOUSE IN NORTH LUFFENHAM.  
"WHITEHORSE" TAVERN, STETCH-  
WORTH, ENGLAND.

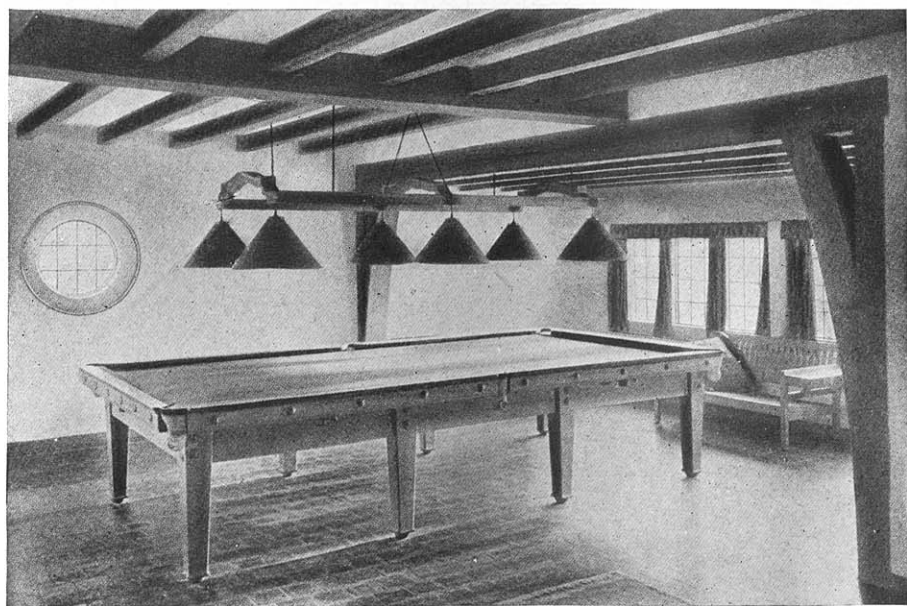
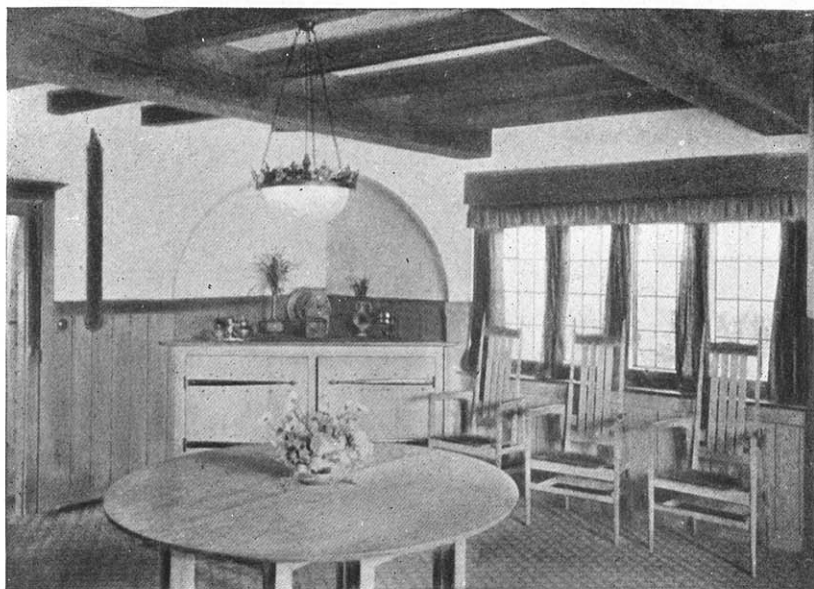


*C. F. A. Voysey, Architect.*

TWO ROOMS IN A VOYSEY COUNTRY HOUSE,  
 "HOLLY MOUNT," IN BEACONSFIELD, ENGLAND:  
 FITTED AND FURNISHED BY THE ARCHITECT.

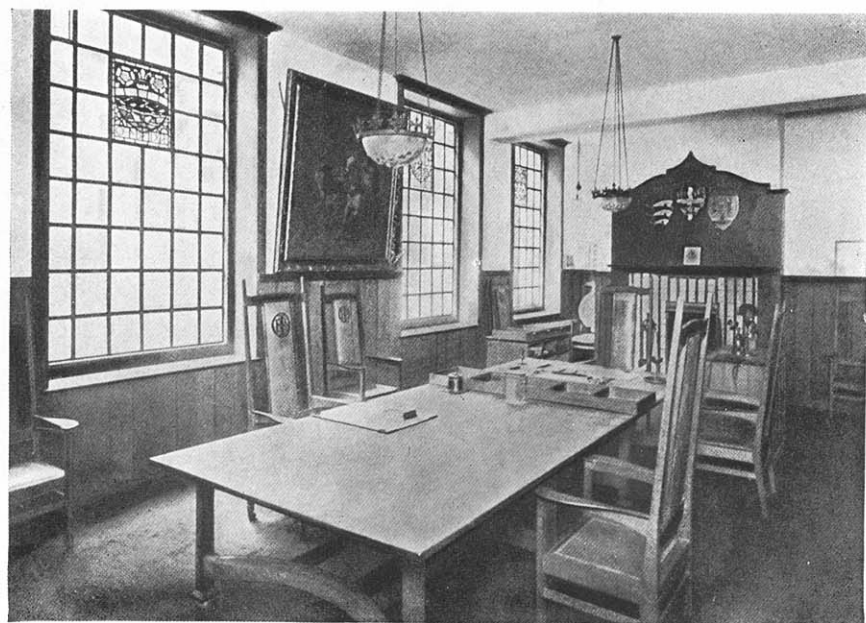


DINING ROOM IN "LITTLEHOLME," KENDAL, ENGLAND.  
HOUSE AND FURNITURE DESIGNED BY C. F. A. VOYSEY.  
FIREPLACE RECESS IN LIVING ROOM AT "LITTLE-  
HOLME": INTERESTING WOODWORK.



DINING ROOM AND BILLIARD ROOM IN A VOYSEY HOUSE: "HOME-STEAD," AT FRINTON-ON-SEA, ENGLAND: INTERIOR FITTINGS AND FURNITURE THE WORK OF THE ARCHITECT.





A FIREPLACE CORNER IN ONE OF THE  
ROOMS IN "HOMESTEAD."

AN OFFICE FURNISHED BY VOYSEY,  
AT ONCE ARTISTIC AND PRACTICAL.

## SPECIAL FURNITURE FOR INDIVIDUAL HOMES

realizes that the supply of real antique furniture is bound eventually to run low, and that the day will come when people of taste will refuse to use furniture made in imitation of periods which are in no way related to modern conditions, and that for modern people and modern houses, modern furniture of character, integrity and beauty is inevitable, as inevitable as the fact that our clothes are modern, our speech equally so, and our whole life in fact on a new and different plane. The present generation both here and in England is on a more substantial basis, and simpler, too, than France and Mediæval Italy. We are less ornate than Spain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We are neither especially spiritual nor ascetic. On the other hand, we are home-loving, comfort-loving people. We average rather a high level of intelligence and taste, and the mass of us in both of these nations at least pretend to live in houses that have both charm and beauty. We demand a better kind of surroundings than the people did even a generation ago. And this point of view will improve from generation to generation so that more and more we shall demand houses of permanent beauty, of real durability, requiring little care, leaving us much leisure for our wide range of interests.

**I**T IS in line with real progress that such men as Voysey and Parker should arrange the gracious, cheerful interiors in their present-day houses, with every sanitary ideal realized, and with simplicity equal to the luxury. In Mr. Parker's furniture one is occasionally reminded in line and finish of the Art Nouveau development in France. But it is a subdued Art Nouveau, shorn of pretense and whimsicality; an Art Nouveau humbled and purified. On the other hand, Mr. Voysey's furniture suggests more his inherited appreciation of the good qualities of the old Jacobean furniture. Yet his ways are not entirely those of the early days. He presents furniture that is much more practical, less ornate, less extravagant, more adjusted to the simpler ways of his present-day home-building. His ideals are for rich and substantial interiors, but closely related to the modern idea of the people for whom he builds and designs. He plans his furniture for sitting rooms instead of great halls, for libraries where the young folks gather instead of a vast dais for haughty royalty, and the result is intimate rather than pompous.

Somehow you feel sure that Voysey plans his houses that all the people living in them may be comfortable, for we are more and more outgrowing all over the world the sacred tradition that some people must cheerfully suffer for the elaborate comfort of others. We are striving to overcome the idea that *any* should suffer, and in

## THE SEARCH

its place to suggest that *all* should help in order that all should enjoy life. In other words, our modern domestic architecture, even in England, is becoming more democratic, and our furniture is being made to uphold the same ideal. We are considering the greatest comfort of the greatest number, and the mass of people who are neither rich nor poor but intelligent are asking for homes and furnishings suited to their kind of lives. Mr. Voysey's contribution to this phase of international development has been great, although so far as we know it may have been quite unconscious, merely the outgrowth of his own intimate relation to progress, his understanding of beauty and his wise expression of it.

## THE SEARCH

I SOUGHT for Truth upon the storm tossed sea,  
But waves like tritons hid the depths from me.

I sought for it in violets well of blue,  
But breezes shook the naiad pool of dew.

I sought for it beneath the flaming briar,  
But roses on my head heaped coals of fire.

Then ceasing aye to search with anxious eyes,  
I saw the Light that rules the earth and skies;

And heard all nature say with voice of youth:  
"Behold the Beautiful itself is Truth!"

EDWARD WILBUR MASON.