THE ETHICS OF HOME FURNISHING

However has toiled for a long, hot, dull, wearisome way through barren, uninteresting country and come at last to a shadowy, quiet, little grove where flowers bloomed and a cool spring gleamed, found that his whole being responded to its beauty, his tense nerves relaxed, his mind was refreshed and his heart free.

Some such exultation of spirit comes to a man who enters a simply, unpretentiously furnished home after a hard, fatiguing day of work. The grove is restful because it is never pretentious; it is beautiful but is not, as one might say, conscious of the fact. This same simple spirit of unpretentious beauty should be a characteristic of every home. Pretentiousness is the opposite of truth, so never accomplishes anything; a pretender is always held in contempt and never arrives anywhere. Simplicity, as Wagner in his “Simple Life” so eloquently and convincingly points out, is never relegated to any one phase of life. A laborer’s life may be the most complex and complicated of existences while a rich man’s may be free from intricacy, affectations and artificiality. Simplicity consists in being one’s self with no attempt to deceive. A beautiful room should be no more pretentious than a beautiful flower. It can be humble like the violet, sumptuous like the rose, elegant and stately like the lily, gracious like a spreading oak tree, but in every case it must be itself, honest and with no dissembling.

There is something that borders on immorality in imitation period furniture. It is dishonest, for it assumes to be something that it is not and should be as scorned as counterfeit gold. Faithful copies are an entirely different matter and are not to be ranked with the loose, untruthful shams, so commonly offered for sale. If furniture is sold under period names it should be the best possible representative piece. A chair that is sold as Gothic or Jacobean or Chippendale should be a truthful reproduction of a characteristic example of the work of those times. Many of our homes seem naturally to require Colonial furniture. Some need ornate French, others the rich Spanish, and when supplied with honest, not fraudulent, copies of those periods are charming and without affectation, because they truly represent a period or the desire of the owner of the house.

In this series of articles on home furnishing we are endeavoring to point out, by presenting the matter in several different ways, the beauty of unpretentiousness. There is no reason why we should make our rooms like committee rooms or give them the cold and awe-inspiring atmosphere of the class rooms or lecture hall by having chairs all alike and tables made after a similar model. What is the
AN EIGHT SIDED OAK TABLE
with its rich interesting beauty, appropriate for drawing room, library or sitting room. Leather covered oak chairs sturdy in construction yet graceful in design, also appropriate for various rooms.

A COUCH
which can be used as a day-bed. The back fitted with cane panels. The framework of oak with curved arms and top rail which gives softness and grace.

The use of the console at the head of this couch is novel, convenient and decorative: It will hold the books ready for reading, a vase of flowers and a small lamp and helps form an interesting group in the room.
A DAVENPORT at once cozy and luxurious: The beautiful turning of the stretcher gives it a most distinguished appearance: The little table at the end is also of oak, well turned and constructed with rare precision: This little table is appropriate by a window, at the head of the davenport or at the side of a bed.

THIS MODERN REFECTORARY TABLE SHOWS A delightful innovation of design in the placing of the legs: The breaking of the stretcher rail by extra legs is a part of an unusual but well thought out construction: The chair at the side of this table is made to harmonize with the davenport above.
BOOK CASES WITH GLASS DOORS THAT PROTECT the books, while permitting the rich variety of their bindings to show and add their pleasant color to a room, do more perhaps than any other one article of furniture, unless it be a piano, to bring about a comfortable home atmosphere.

This one of dark, warm-toned oak, substantial but not heavy looking, with the graceful Gothic treatment of doors and simple decorative carvings, with the arm chair beside it with its beautiful carved stretcher upholstered in richly covered tapestry, and a bright jar of gay berries or flowers upon it, forms an inviting and dignified group for library, study or hall.

THE DAY-BED has come to be almost an indispensable article of household furniture: The one at the right is quaint and charming, light and ornamental, but strong and enduring. The hand turned posts give it an old-time air which is distinctly interesting.
WRITING tables provided with a drawer in which envelopes and paper can be hidden from sight are preferred by some people to the usual writing desk.

Such a table fitted with squares of Chinese brocade, a red lacquered torii penholder and tall mahogany bud vase is a new form that will find a welcome because of its adaptable qualities: The little stool also is a novelty.

In these three pieces, recent creations of the Craftsman shop, three distinct forms of hand turning may be seen.

THIS LONG library table is unusual in the design of the eight legs and stretcher rails: This design gives an interesting variety of paneling: The chair at the left is beautiful in its simplicity and use of the square frame and the arch of the back.
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advantage in this mechanical, dull furnishing of a room? Why should we carelessly and foolishly purchase things without consideration of their related beauty one to another and their use to us? Chairs all alike, arranged in a row, can never make a room pleasant and homelike. How much better that each piece should have been designed separately instead of as part of a group. We buy furniture in sets, simply because we drift into such purchasing carelessly without exercising love, understanding or imagination. After we have lived with them for a short while, we often come to hate them. We should give more study to the matter of furnishing our homes, buying a few things at a time, as we find articles that we like, and thus gradually build up our home as we would build up our education. If we buy too quickly and without thought, we not only overcrowd our homes, but give them the appearance of display rooms instead of homes.

How charming the atmosphere of a room simply furnished with chairs of different shapes and uneven heights, and not too many of them so that they seem in the way, with tables of different shapes, a useful, substantial one to put books and a lamp upon, and a gracefully curved console against the wall, with comfortable looking day-bed, and plenty of luxurious downy pillows upon it, with a carved chest, perhaps a few pictures of all sorts and sizes and shapes selected because they were wanted, soft light coming from silk shades. Certain pieces of furniture of widely different types are companionable as are some people of diametrically different characters. Why not have our rooms filled with furniture of different types as we enjoy having friends of different interests? There is some underlying bond that draws certain pieces of furniture, like certain people, together, that makes them seem congenial, that acts as a foil to each others’ best qualities.

A distinguished man of culture and refinement accustomed to the most luxurious living found that he did not feel strange when talking with the chief of a wandering tribe of Bedouins because they had a mutual bond of sympathy in the love, interest and appreciation of a good horse; they became the best of friends, enjoyed one another’s company and gained much through association.

If we can have but only one living room, why should we have only one type of thought in it, such as is represented by a set of furniture? We do not have but one kind of book in our library or one kind of picture upon the wall; we do not choose but one kind of friend. Variety of form and type, of color and of size, makes far greater grace, informality and sense of comfort. There is always an unconscious feeling that in the mind of the host or hostess there is but one strict,
This room though modern has the quality of beautiful old homes because of the harmonious variety of furniture and background of rich oak paneling.

rigid standard of philosophy and thought that would discountenance all others as impossible and beneath their interest. We all like rooms that put us at ease, so that the best that is in us of kindliness, wisdom or wit is realized.

We are showing a few more pieces of furniture that carry the atmosphere of individuality and originality, yet are genially and accommodatingly adaptable to the character of other pieces. Take the eight-sided table in the first illustration. It would act in a harmonizing way in a room of almost any type, for it is alike enough with its graceful carving, spindles and base to harmonize with some articles, and different enough with its octagonal top to add variety. It brings a quality of difference to its companion tables and chairs. The chairs by its side are of the good-natured kind, that can be moved from the dining room to the hall or to the library without losing their dignity, as it were, and so looking ill at ease, out of place, and thoroughly uncomfortable and disgruntled about it. They would be
lovely and gracious anywhere they were placed, because that is their nature and no surprising change of environment would alter it. They fit in happily with the table, yet would be on equally friendly terms with the davenport and the little table shown in the photograph below. The hand turning is different in each of the pieces; each has its own intimate character, yet neither quarrels with the others. The davenport can be used as a day-bed, for it is both wide enough and long enough, and can be covered with many kinds of materials. The cane panels in the back and the curve of the arm and top rail give softness and grace.

All these articles, the most recent creations of the Craftsman shops, are of oak, finished by Mr. Stickley's new method, so that all the native rich warmth and glow of the wood is retained. No luster or veneer conceals the pattern of the grain, for it has been treated more as the Japanese treat wood, that is, by rubbing and bringing out its character, rather than by concealing it.

The second group of photographs shows a distinctly fine class of furniture, yet the pieces have this same conveniently interchangeable and adaptable character. The davenport can serve as a bed in case of need, can be upholstered in any material or color desired, is soft, cozy and luxurious-looking. The beautiful turning of the stretcher rail gives charm and distinction. This piece, and the chair shown below, are truly cosmopolitan. They would fit in a simple, old
fashioned house as sociably as in the most elegant of modern ones. The long table shows a delightful innovation of design in the placing of the legs, the breaking of the stretcher rail by the extra legs gives good line of design, as well as increases the strength of construction.

The quality of this furniture that makes it so notably different from any other is rather difficult to describe. It seems alive like a tree out in the forest and makes us want to say of it as we would of a beautiful tree that it is

"Sturdy with fifty winters, gracious with fifty summers."

It is sturdy of construction and gracious of line, vigorous yet kindly and its effect on the atmosphere is as enlivening and refreshing as the introduction of something brought in from the woodland.

One of the guards in the Metropolitan Museum seemed especially interested in the treasures under his care and gave the old makers rare praise in his own appreciative way: "They did nothing but leave beautifulness behind them," he said with the utmost reverence for the men who were able to make the things that hundreds and thousands of people go to admire and study. Very little of our present-day furniture will find place in the treasure houses of the future. Such articles as we have been illustrating combine the elements of lasting greatness because of their simplicity and workmanship.