

Can we consume our Surplus?

or

The influence of furniture on Love

The influence of furniture upon love is a subject which ought properly to be treated in an historical way by the Moderator. The influence of ~~Chaldean~~^{Chinese}, Graeco-Roman, Druid or late Jacobean furniture on the manners of those times it requires little learning to understand. The spiked style of the Early Christians, the leather beds of the German barbarians, the hieroglyphically inscribed stone couches of the Chaldeans supported upon revolving globes ^{and cylinders} ~~and~~ or the less substantial supports of late Louis, Rococo, Empire, or Norwegian Art closely interacted with the emotions of their possessors.

This paper will deal, however, with the influence of furniture in our own case. Does it really make a great difference to us in what rooms we live, whether we clothe them with chintz or with velvet, whether they are hard or padded? That it makes a difference in some ways, is obvious. These things affect our pleasure and our convenience. But do they do more than this? Do they suggest ^{to us} thoughts and feelings and occupations?

The effect on us of their external architecture is, I believe, ^{much} ~~very~~ slipshod than their internal proportions. I myself have spent most of my life inside buildings which are as pompous as possible. But what effect has a flitting between Eton, King's, and Whitehall had? People who live in the Great Court at Trinity are very different beings from those who live in the Fellows' Buildings at King's. But I put it down to the inside shapes of the rooms, much more than to the different look outs. And it is consistent with this that those who live in ^{the little rooms in} Newton's Court are not so very different from themselves in the Great Court.

The shape of the rooms, however, seems extraordinarily important - to one's calmness and the flow of ideas in work, anyhow. It is difficult to be at ease in a very high room or in one which is crowded with a great variety of objects.

In what sort of rooms does one fall in love? Take this room, for instance. Could any human being hope to fall in love here? There is nothing very aphrodisiac, is there? ^{oddish} Reichertz within walls of pale green. This room is cool and reasonable. Besides, it is not secret enough. Few rooms in King's are. But consider some of the rooms in Trinity, dark and secret. ~~It~~ It is in them that I should choose to fall in love.

It has been said that there is no Society in France because the rooms are shaped as they are and the furniture. The hearthside would not make surprise ~~from~~ chairs. For this purpose also ~~these are~~ ^{these are} advantages in Trinity. Lytton's old room or Turner's in the Great Court, especially Turner's, was the best place for the Society.

But when we consider our spirits, then the advantage ^{lies in} ~~is in~~ room like this. ~~place~~. Here one is, at least, cheerful. The best way, perhaps, is to fall in love in other people's rooms and enjoy yourself in your own.

Apart from the ~~exact~~ proportions of rooms and their colours, the comfort of the chairs has an important emotional effect beyond their mere comfort. Their discovery alone must make an insurmountable gap between ancient and modern times.

Why is the furniture of women so different from the furniture of men? It is as different as their dress. Who could commit sodomy in a boudoir or sapphism in Neville's Court? It represents and it evokes an entirely different set of feelings. One of the reasons why people are not allowed to smoke in women's rooms arises out of the fact that the smell of smoke is so unsuitable to the furniture which they keep in them.

The nature of the furniture which surrounds women suggests, perhaps, that the contents of our rooms are effects, not causes. In that case we all have, within the upholstery's unity, the furniture that we desire. Sheppard deserves ~~to~~ to be uncomfortable, and Gerald insolent. In fact Lytton had his stall built to measure, and Norton ~~is not~~ is not the dreams of his own bedroom.

Never since my first term have I seen a room for which Hawtrey himself was responsible, and then only for a moment. It was in a tower of the New Coast.

If this is true, our furniture is, after all, very unimportant, and leaves us very much where we should be without it. But I don't think it is quite true. Our furniture may be the best we can do, and yet we may desire something much better. My poems do not really do my feelings justice. My landscapes even do not truly suggest the influences of nature to which I am most sensitive. Why should the opposite be true of my furniture? Sheppard's really requires the most refined and luxurious suite, and would be much happier and better if he had one. If Norton slept in the bed of Marie Antoinette, what might not his dreams be? If Hawtrey worked in the temple of Osiris at Philae, the currency of the Strick Settlements would be ^{as} stable as the Pyramids.

It is important, therefore, that we should live in rooms and on chairs built to ^{our} measure by the most skilled upholsters.

Can one deduce, do you think, from reading Plato that never in his life had he sat in a padded arm chair? On the other hand is it possible to believe that Voltairi had no fountain pen?

My paper is nearly finished, and I should like to return again to the question with which I began - the influence of furniture on love. The kind of person, I mean, and the kind of way in which one falls in love seems to be connected with one's visual surroundings. One would not easily, for instance, ~~fall~~ become in love with Cleopatra in the King's Combination Room.