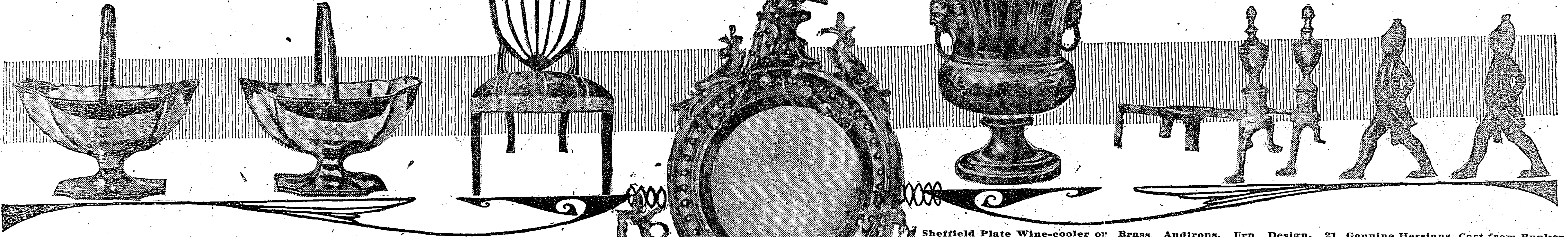


# MANY PITFALLS FOR THE UNWARY IN BUYING ANTIQUES

Cunning Dealers Ready to Impose on the Ignorance of Collectors.

Buyers Do Not Take Precautions to Establish Genuineness of "Curios."



Two Superb Sugar Bowls in the Collection of Charles R. Waters, Made from Spanish Doubloons.

Shired-back Heppelwhite Chair, Worth About \$100.

Sheffield Plate Wine-cooler or Ice-pail, 12 Inches High, Worth \$150.

Brass Andirons, Urn Design, 21 Inches High, Owned by Miss Grace Atkinson, Worth \$30.

Genuine Hessians, Cast from Bunker Hill Cannon, Owned by John D. Doland, Jr., of Salem.

AMERICA was born old. The charm of the early American colonists lay in the fact that although they had lived laborious lives as pioneers in a savage country, they had kept their birthright as heirs of well-developed civilizations.

The inventory of the property belonging to the great grandfather of John Adams showed that there had been a silver spoon in the family four generations back; and Lafayette and de Ségur, with their exacting standard of manners, the standard of the old nobility of France, testified that they never met truer gentlemen than their hosts in the New England villages.

The same charm attaches to the early colonial homes. As soon as the battle with the wilderness was overcome, and for that matter much earlier, while savage neighbors and rough toil and pestilence were still a familiar part of the common life, the urbanities and luxuries of the continent from which the settlers drew began to find place in their simple houses. Much of the household furniture that was brought over was of good quality, although, under the existing conditions, there could be few pieces for each settler.

Very early in the history of Boston, the business of a silversmith was accounted a prosperous one, and John Burt, who died in 1748, left a property inventoried at over \$30,000, a huge sum for the time.

It is obvious, therefore, that the present recrudescence of enthusiasm for colonial relics and American "antiques" of various kinds leads us toward no barbarous styles or crude fumbblings after beauty of form and color. Perhaps we cannot be said to have grown toward crudity in our ideals, but certainly the American home has lost much of the fine common sense to its mellow youth, and the desire to restore to it a little of the atmosphere of culture and intimacy belonging to a time when the home was the centre of social existence deserves to be furthered.

An excellent little book on "The Lure of the Antique," written by Walter A. Dyer and published by the Century Company, will go far toward stimulating the interest of the moderately initiated lover of old things, and at the same time will provide him with many an item of information as safeguards against error and fraud.

The author writes in an admirable spirit, with moderation, knowledge, and what is most essential of all—good taste. "Make your antique furniture a means, not an end," he says. "There is charm and beauty in it, when it is chosen with good taste and good judgment, which the devotee can never adequately express nor the Philistine ever understand. It is desirable only when it is real, when it is beautiful, when it is good for something, when it means something. In short, when it is good, it is very, very good, and when it is bad, it is horrid." The old nursery rhyme has seldom been more truthfully applied, and the fact that the quest for antiques is becoming more and more a quest for examples characterized by beauty of design and material is one of the most favorable auguries for permanence of popular interest in this field.

The furniture used by our forefathers—chairs, tables, beds, chests, &c.—naturally claims first attention by its importance in the general equipment of the household. We have learned from our Hudson-Fulton exhibition how simple was the furniture brought to this country in the seventeenth century. There were first the chests of the "Connecticut type," sometimes carved and paneled. Later came a chest with a drawer under it, as the household belongings multiplied and more storage space

was needed; then two drawers, and three, until gradually the highboy appeared with its accompanying lowboy, with elaborately turned and carved legs, the whole aspect of the piece indicating the progress made in the art of living since the humble oak box served the needs of the family.

Mr. Dyer devotes only a paragraph to these useful pieces of furniture under pressure of the multitudinous material offered by his general subject, but he wisely discards any intention of belittling their importance. Had he not given some such assurance, the shadows of our grandmothers would have haunted him in protest against his neglect of their most comfortable and dear possession.

Chairs pursued much the same general line of development as the chests, moving from the massive toward the light and elaborate styles, but with many more variations and detours. Among the chairs described are the old French, Spanish, Flemish, and Italian types, but the English chairs, most of which embodied foreign elements of style, were the prototypes of those used in America. The Windsor chair from the first was popular with our cabinet makers for its quaint grace and strength, but it was a peasant style, and not to be compared for beauty of proportion to the best of the Chippendale and Heppelwhite.

It was about 1760 that the famous Thomas Chippendale came up to London, there to connect his name permanently

with a \$80 Windsor to a \$200 Chippendale. "Any general statement regarding prices and values would be likely to be misleading," the author says. "The Georgian chairs command the highest prices, while some of the best of the cottage chairs may be picked up for a song. A thousand dollars would be a reasonable price for a set of six genuine Chippendales, while you may be able to get a good slat back of much earlier date for 75 cents at a country auction."

In this country, probably, it would be very difficult to get six genuine Chippendale chairs for as little as a thousand dollars, but at the sale of the contents of Cambridge House, Regents Park, in Spring, such a group was quoted as bringing a hundred pounds. Little, however, can be argued from the mere statistics of the salesroom, the condition and period of the pieces sold, as well as their genuineness playing a prominent part in their auction-room success.

The prices for old mahogany furniture of all kinds run high—from the standpoint of the collector of moderate means. The handsome and commodious old desks and writing tables which had become an important part of the furnishing of American houses by the latter half of the eighteenth century are quoted as bringing, in the case of the finer pieces of the classic Georgian period, anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000, while even the more common forms of the late American secretary

of mahogany veneer are worth from \$100 to \$200.

Tables, which varied in style as much as the chairs, almost every form of old chair having its corresponding table, are exceedingly popular with collectors, and certain forms, when pure in style and in good condition, bring extravagant prices. Mr. Dyer mentions a genuine "pie-crust" table that brought \$7,000 not long ago, and adds that \$1,000 is not an uncommon price for a good example. The latter sum is also not infrequently paid for a sideboard of unusually fine quality.

The chapter on bedsteads opens up a field in which the ordinary collector will wish to tread warily, the cumbersome four-poster of the eighteenth century having no place in the small rooms of the modern house; and the collector who is willing to turn his house into a museum of useless articles having no place in Mr. Dyer's audience.

By 1750 four-posters of an early Georgian type were common in this country, and those that were made here were plain, depending for covering upon the ample draperies dismissed from modern homes on the ground of hygiene. The great cabinet makers no doubt produced a sufficient number of bedsteads, but authentic examples are rare and very costly. Four-posters that are sixty or seventy years old are already valuable, and a striking bed, combining the style of the Adam brothers with that of Heppelwhite, of date 1775, is estimated to be worth about \$700.

Having inoculated the inexperienced reader with the subtle poison of the collector's passion, the author proceeds to the antidote. Everyone knows at the present day of celebrated "fakes" that have been palmed off as antiques, and of celebrated methods of imitating certain marks of age; but the cool rehearsal in connection with one's favorite hobby, of the ingenious devices by which the collector may be and frequently is deceived, is a blood-curdling affair.

Furniture especially lends itself to the wiles of the faker. Mr. Dyer assures us

that at least two men, within the last generation, have made fortunes by manufacturing fraudulent specimens, and that many others have made a livelihood piecing together different parts, treating the wood with stains and acids, gluing, scraping, denting, and otherwise simulating the wear and tear of time. He divides fake antiques into three varieties: "The piece made up of bits of old antique carving and panels, the plain genuine antique which has been made to command a higher price by means of added carvings, inlay, &c.; the piece that is faked throughout—usually a copy."

The first sort is most successful in Europe, where old church pews and windmill beams are converted into handsome furniture with deceptive perfection of workmanship.

The second class is sometimes spoken of as "glorified" furniture, and the author advises a close examination to detect differences in the old and new wood, the presence of modern screws, nails, &c., and, in the case of the pie-crust table, investigation of the thickness of the centre, "glorified" tables having been developed from tables with plain flims shaved down in the centre in order to give the raised gallery at the edge, which is then carved in the pie-crust pattern.

When the collector buys of a dealer, and Mr. Dyer is reasonably optimistic as to the chance of fair treatment at the hands of the average dealer, the demand for a written guarantee is advised; as, aside from common honesty, business

credited with the slightest artistic merit, yet the "old blue" arouses the deepest enthusiasm in its admirers, and no other old china is so widely collected in this country.

Probably its historical interest chiefly accounts for its popularity, most of the designs printed on it being drawn from historic buildings and famous American views, but also it is popular because much of it can be obtained for prices which a moderate purse can command. Some of the Clews patterns may be bought for \$10 or less, and cups and saucers by Woods are to be had for from \$5 to \$15 a pair. Here, as elsewhere, of course, certain pieces have a scarcity value, and Mr. Dyer gives \$250 as the record price given for an Ohio State platter, in Mayer series of plates and platters, bearing the arms of the various States in a border of trumpet flowers. Even this, however, is a small sum in comparison with the \$1,200 and over brought by a pair of Chelsea

bowls less than four inches high, in a recent auction sale at Christie's.

The wise advice given to the collector starting out in the field of old china is to restrict himself at the outset to some particular line, perhaps to the views of a single State or city, or to the wares of a single maker. To the question, How widely is Staffordshire china counterfeited? Mr. Dyer receives different answers ranging from "Scarcely at all" to "The shops are full of fakes," and has come to the safe conclusion that the truth lies midway between those extremes.

He quotes one instance of a modern reproduction of Wood's "Battle of Bunker Hill" plate which was so scratched by an emery wheel and so yellowed by a salt bath and boiling in fat as to deceive many a so-called connoisseur. The principal safeguard, he tells his readers, lies in the potter's mark, nearly all the valuable pieces having been made by potters using a mark, and he gives an extremely valuable list of marks with reproductions for aid in identification. To counterfeit these marks would be a penal offense, and few

venture upon so bold a step for the comparatively slight reward.

A chapter also is given to the Wedgwood pottery, in which the costly and exquisite and intensely appreciative ware is described in its various forms for the collector to whom mechanical perfection has a higher charm than strong individuality. Another and very valuable chapter is given to the English luster ware, so beautiful in color, and often so beautiful in form, that the lack of enthusiasm shown for it is difficult to explain. The demand for it is now increasing, however, especially good pieces having brought as much as \$100 each, and Mr. Dyer warns his readers that as it is all comparatively rare in this country the wise collector will not tarry in securing what he can of it.

The chapter on Lowestoft cannot fail to interest to those who remember the high shelves of old corner cupboard doors where their grandmothers kept this fashionable ware which, after years of dispute as to its origin, is now believed, according to Mr. Dyer, to have been made almost altogether in China, and decorated either there or in England from English patterns for the English trade. This also is a comparatively inexpensive ware, rich in early American associations, for the collector whose patriotism provides him with a fair proportion of his satisfaction, but Mr. Dyer, comparing present prices with those noted by Mrs. Earle in her "China Collecting in America," published in 1892, finds that values have risen 100

per cent, and a good piece that could be bought for \$10 in 1892 would now bring \$20. Old pewter forms another comparatively inexpensive class of antique objects which appeals to the economical collector of quiet tastes. The soft gray sheen of its surface is more beautiful in the eyes of many than the more brilliant lustre of silver, and its recall of a period completely passed is not without a sentimental value.

We still use silver, glass, mahogany, and china, but we no longer use pewter, and our association with it is limited to its place on the old colonial dresser in every form of domestic utensil in favor with our ancestors. The fact that only special pieces bring very large sums is a safeguard for collectors, as the making of bogus specimens is unprofitable, although occasionally indulged in by the indefatigable counterfeiter of antiques.

From pewter to silver is a long step, and the collection of old silver is an en-

terprise for the rich, which has, however, rewards commensurate with the outlay. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the charm of a fine piece in a pure style for the connoisseur sensitive to its pleasure-giving quality.

As Mr. Dyer points out, the field is so enormous that no collector can do more than keep to one small corner of it. The discussion in the present volume is restricted to old British ware, and the author declares that to his mind the English domestic silverware, dating from 1700 to 1850 includes all that one man can hope to know much about or possess much of. The eighteenth century includes the Queen Anne period, marked by massive and simple styles; the Lamerie period, named from a silversmith, with a rococo tendency; the classical or Georgian period, which was characterized by the finest and purest forms.

The method of marking silver by a system of hall marks has made the identification of English silverware "more accurate and complete than of almost any other class of art objects"; as for five centuries record has been kept of these marks and of all annual date-letters at the Goldsmiths' Hall, London.

Mr. Dyer devotes a number of pages to the outline of this system of markings, but the subject demands, as he says, reference to special books. In spite of precautions as elaborate and careful as can be conceived, however, the counterfeiter has entered this field also and the collector is given the following warning:

"There are in general two motives for forging hall-marks: first, to pass off inferior metal as standard; second, to make a piece appear to be older than it is. In the first case, if a piece is suspected, the base metal can be discovered by some system of assaying. In the second case the safest way is to study period styles as well as hall-marks to see if they agree. A hall-mark of the year 1750 on a piece of silver of the style made in 1800 would be good ground for suspicion." The old Georgian silver, too, was hand-made, and the hammer marks on the inside of cups and tankards should be apparent. The soft white color of old ware often cleaned and long exposed to the air is a significant point to observe. Finally the position of hall-marks on authentic pieces should be studied, as the marks were not placed at random.

In this chapter prices are hardly touched upon, and as a single hint of their possibilities we quote the price record of a couple of forks in Lord Tweedmouth's collection sold this Spring at Christie's. The forks belonged respectively to William and Mary's reign, and Queen Anne's and brought the notable sum of 620 shillings per ounce.

Other chapters of Mr. Dyer's book concern Sheffield plate, looking glasses, lamps and candlesticks, clocks, glass, copper and brass, and salt glaze ware, andirons and fire-irons, each accompanied by illustrations and usually with some indication of the market prices of the different objects at the present day.

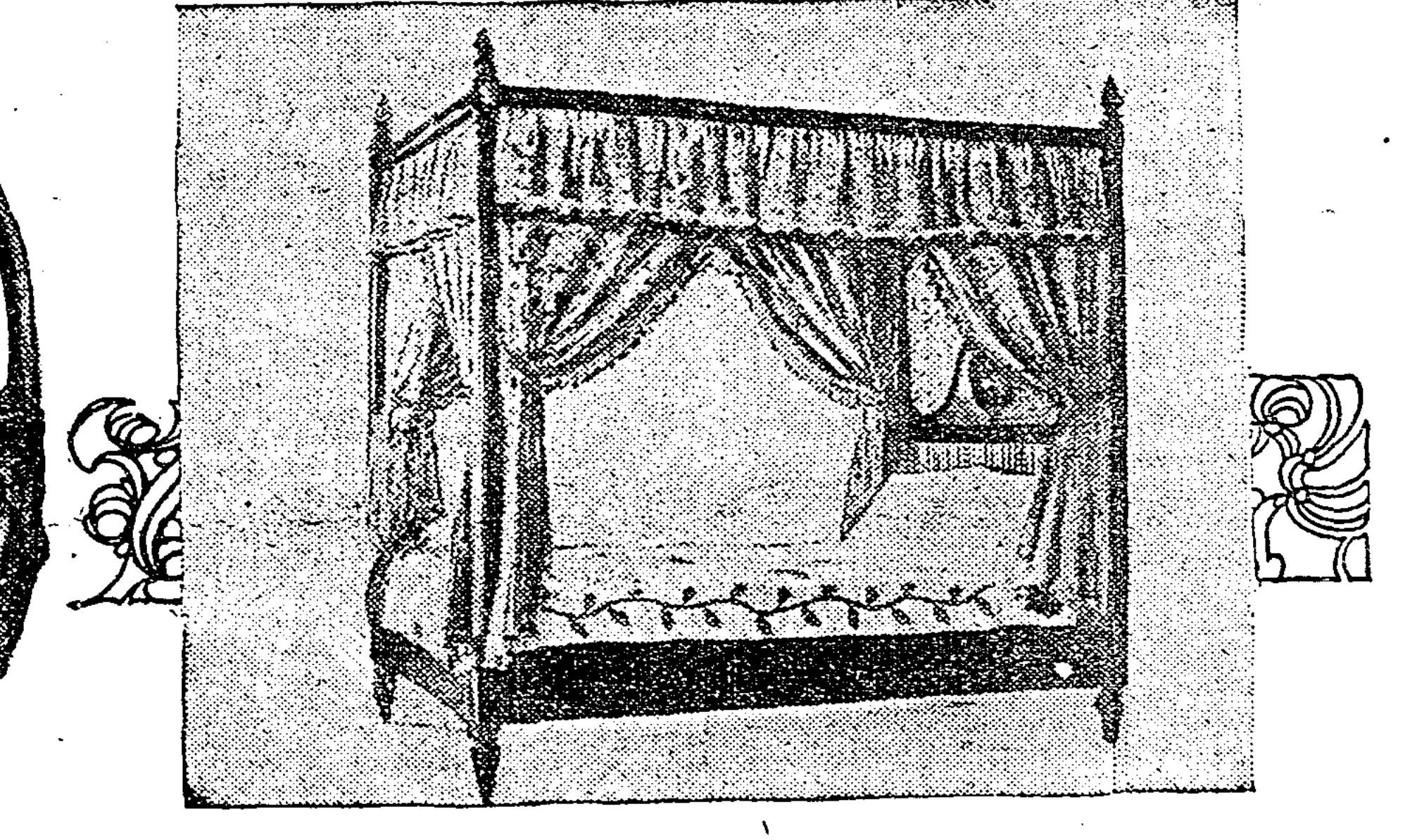
The reader who perseveres till the last page will be apt to close the book with a mind divided among many temptations. Yet, as the author himself declares, only the surface of the vast subject has been brushed. The treasure house of the past is practically inexhaustible, and the lover of antique beauty who once tastes the joy of "collecting" will risk all dangers of fraud and will make many an acknowledged sacrifice to his hobby rather than abstain. "Why do you collect?" is a question Mr. Dyer is fond of asking, but the more pertinent inquiry would be: "Why do you not collect?"



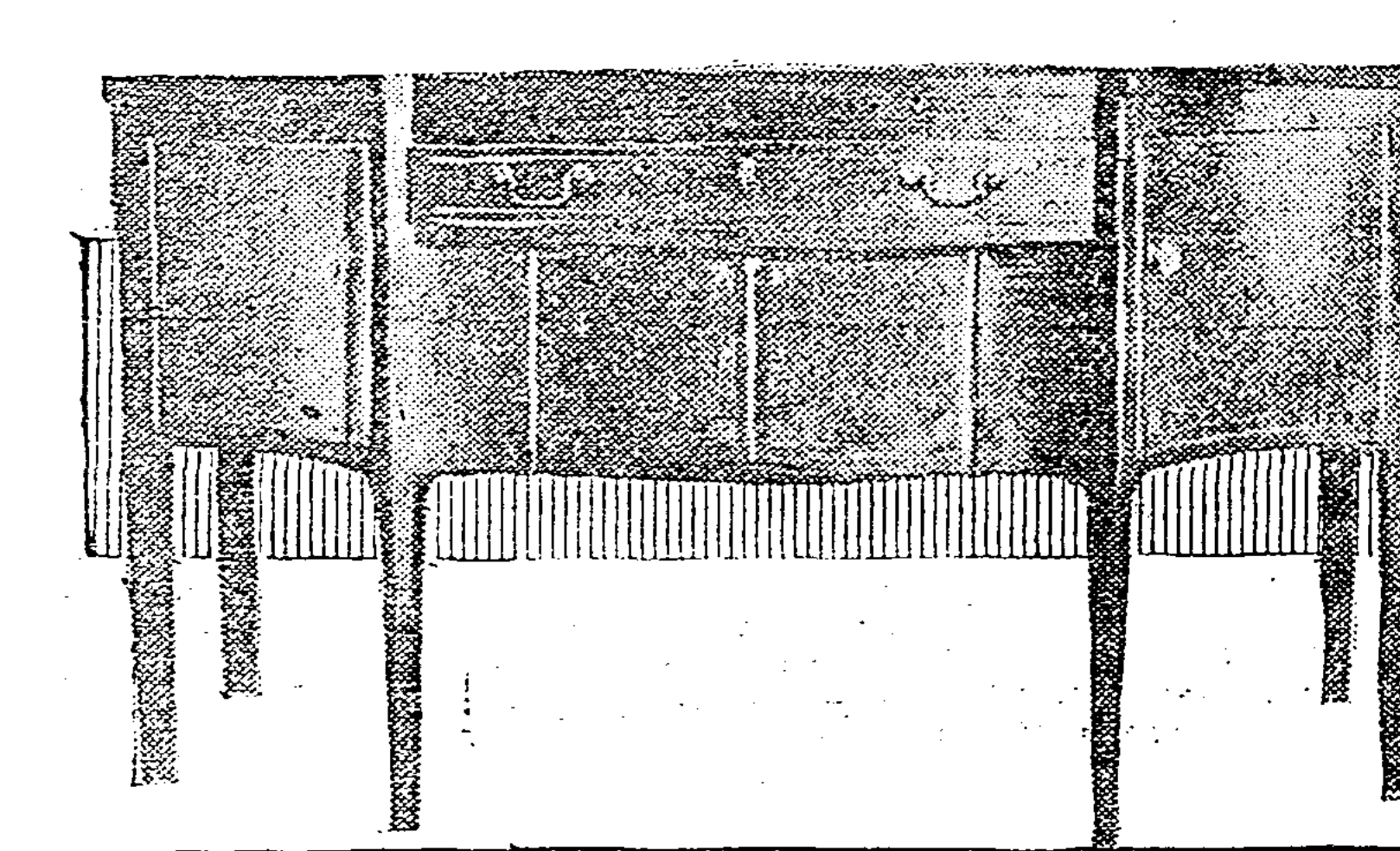
Straight-Front Secretary with Ball-and-Claw Feet, Said to Have Been Owned by Israel Putnam, Owned Now by George F. Rogers. This One Is Worth \$225 Without Historical Associations. Date About 1740.



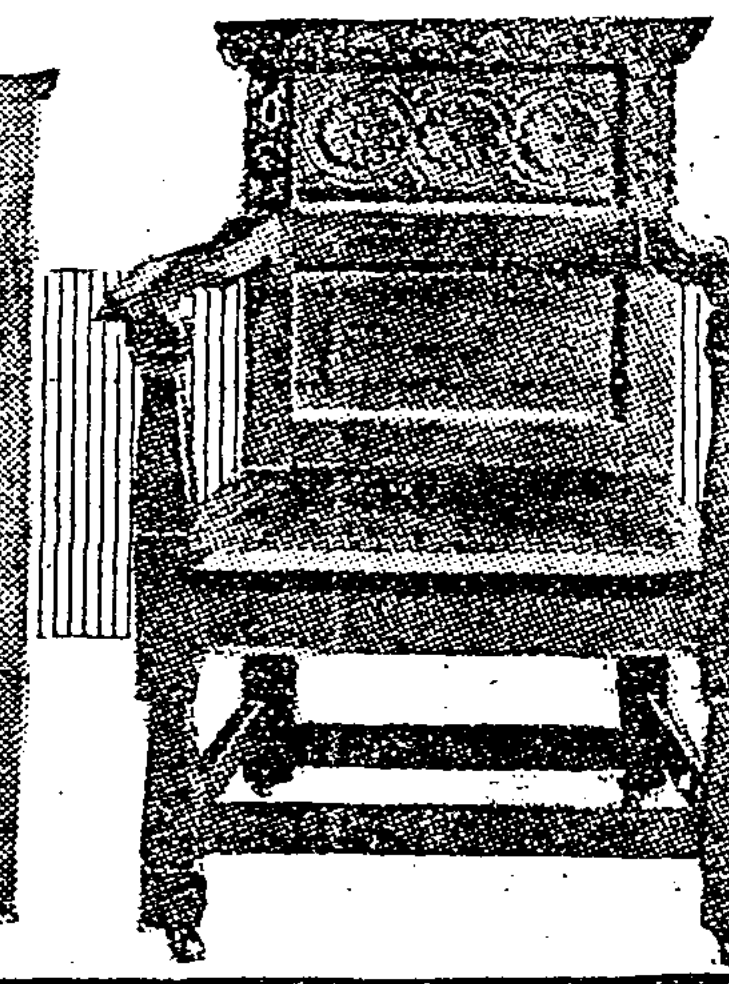
Wedgwood Teapot of Black Basalt, Owned by Mrs. Bosworth. These Illustrations Are Copyright, 1910, by The Century Co.



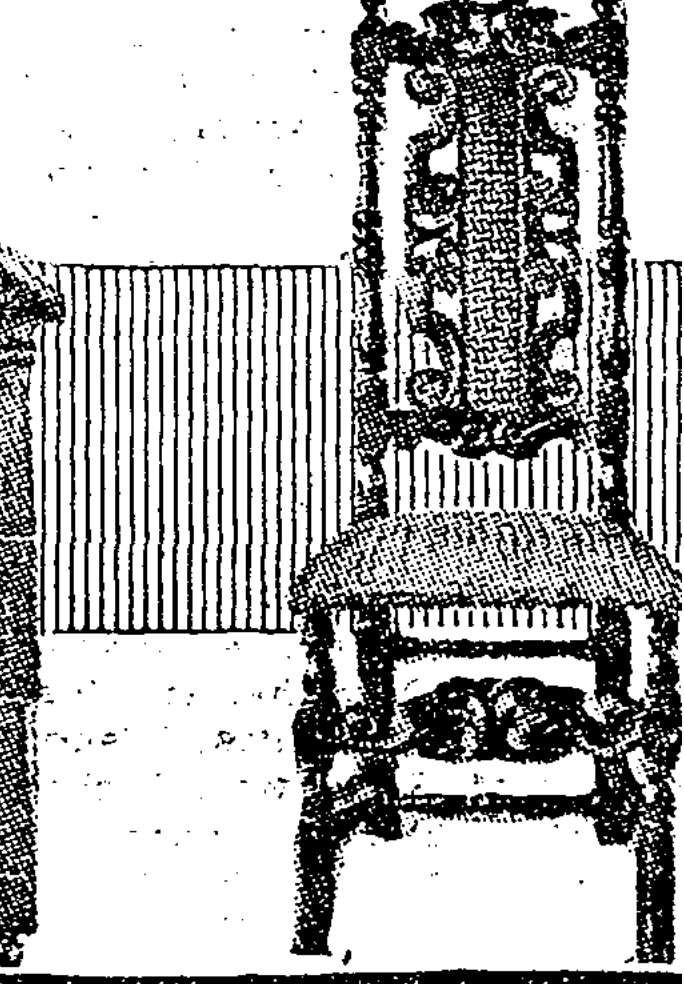
One of the Most Striking Old Beds in America: Date 1775. It Combines the Style of the Adam Brothers with that of Heppelwhite. The Headboard Is Surmounted by an Urn, and the Posts Are Reeded. Worth About \$700.



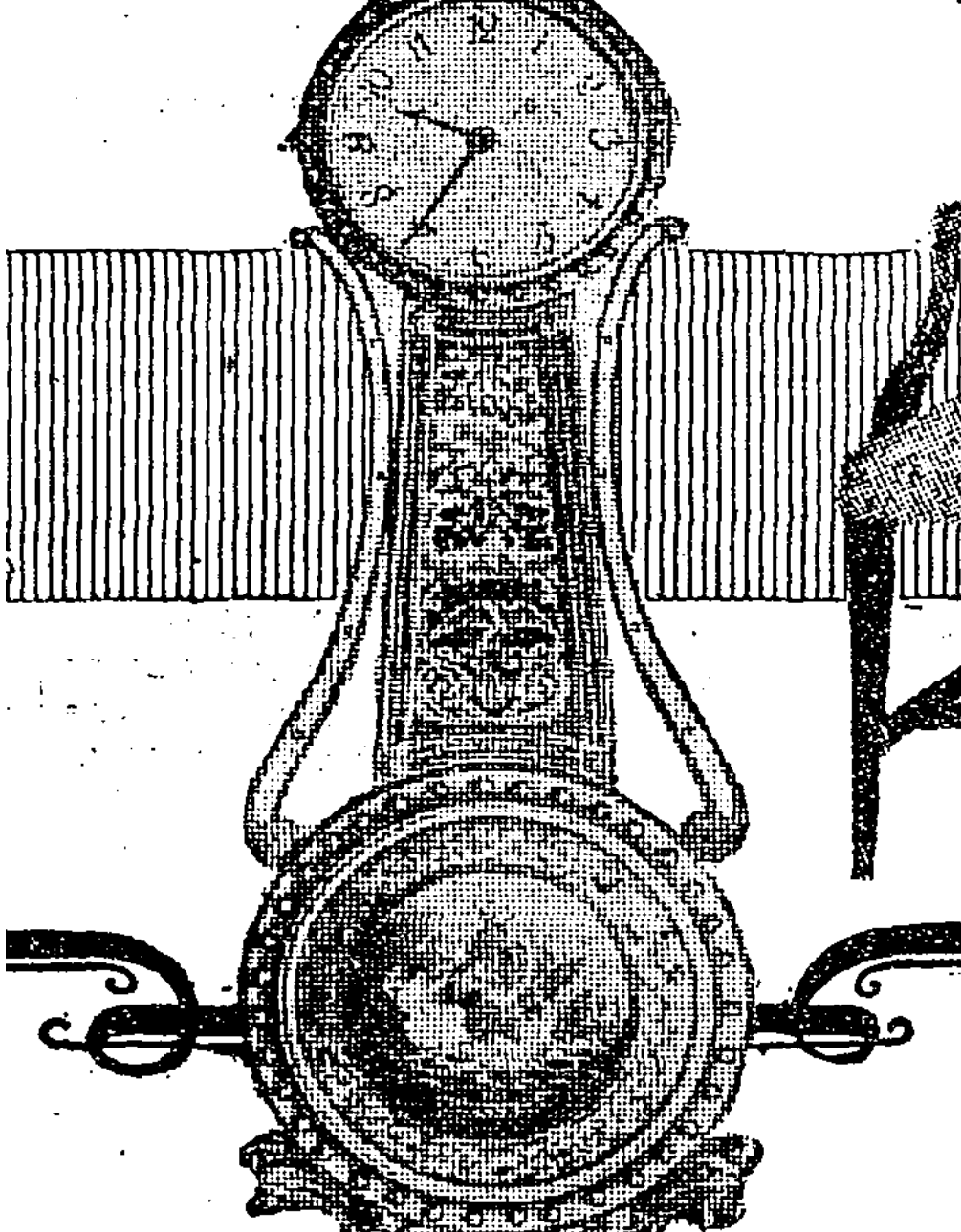
Mahogany Sideboard of Late Heppelwhite Period. The Two Middle Legs Are Curiously Placed with One Corner to the Front. Date About 1775. Value About \$350.



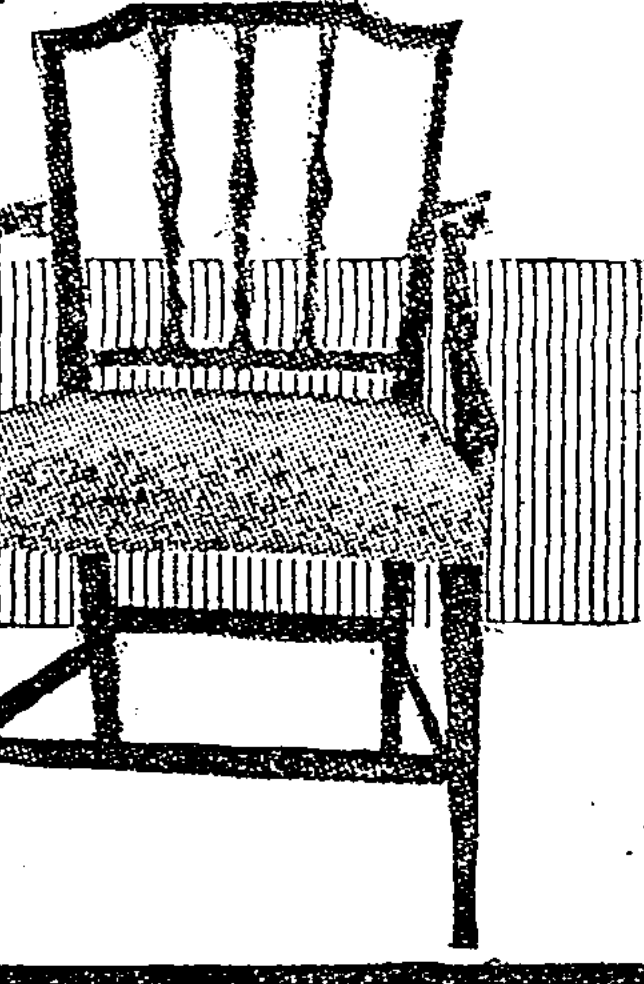
Carved Oak Elizabethan or Jacobean Windsor Chair, About 1600. Worth About \$200.



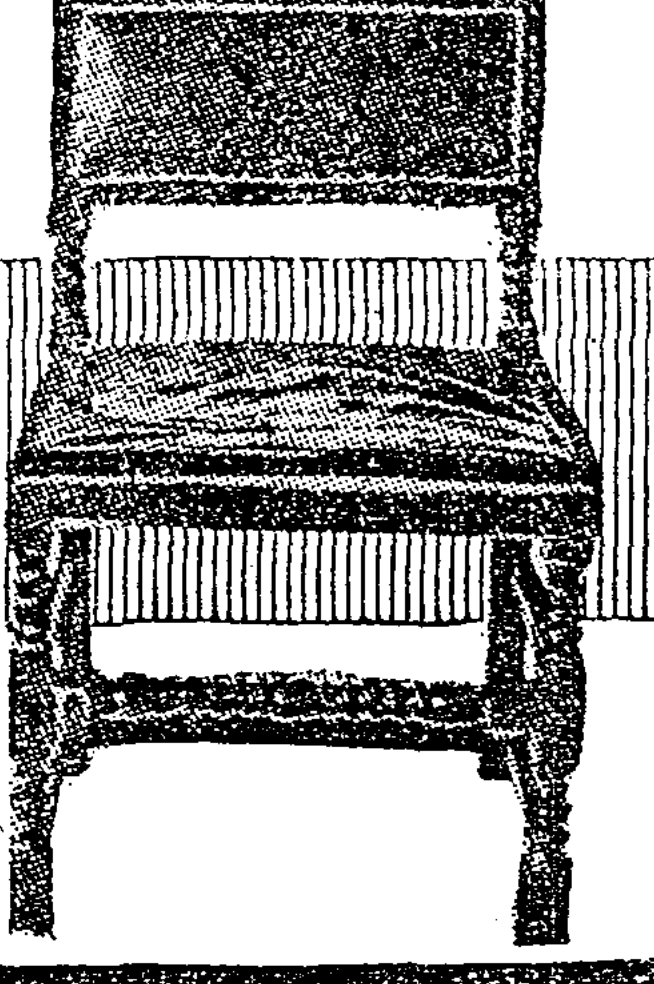
Excellent Charles II. Chair, Flemish Type, Worth About \$125.



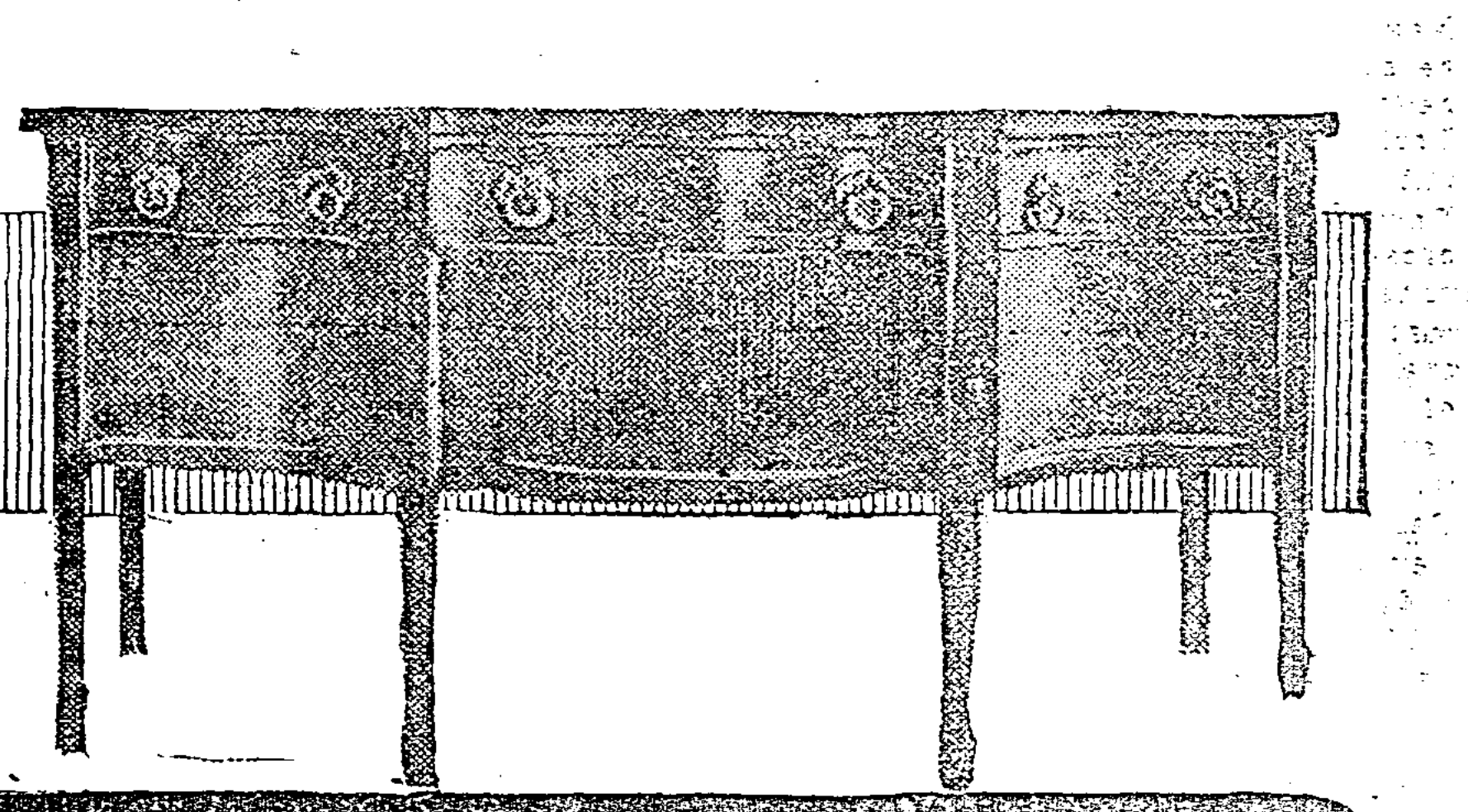
Banjo Clock, About 1820, Made by L. Curtis, Owned by Mrs. E. C. Swift. Worth \$175 to \$225. These Illustrations Are Copyright, 1910, by The Century Co.



Sheraton Armchair, Worth \$150.



Charles I. or Cromwellian Chair of Turned Wood and Leather, Worth \$100.



Heppelwhite Sideboard in Mahogany, with Tambour Front and Spade Feet, Date 1770. Handles Are of Late Period. Value \$350 to \$400.

prudence and the law discourage signing one's name to a written falsehood. Beyond definite rules for guidance in buying old furniture, which necessarily are closely restricted to quite obvious precautions, the following propositions are advanced for the benefit of the prospective collectors of furniture:

"First. Nine-tenths of the antiques offered for sale in the open market are questionable, and many pieces are certainly fakes.

"Second. Even though a piece is a genuine antique, if it is deceptively displayed, I would have none of it. It may be all right for a museum, but not for a