

A CHIPPENDALE ROMANCE

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A Chippendale Romance by Eben Howard Gay

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EBEN HOWARD GAY

**A CHIPPENDALE
ROMANCE**

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CHIPPENDALE BOOKCASE

A
Chippendale
Romance

By
Eben Howard Gay

Illustrated

Longmans, Green, & Co.
Fourth Avenue & 30th Street, New York
London, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras
1915

To
A. B. G.

Foreword

A LOVE of the beautiful, as expressed in the purest forms of art that past centuries have evolved, a passion for collecting antique furniture, silver-plate and porcelains in the periods of their highest development, the æsthetic delight borne of surroundings of mellowed art-objects carrying with them the intangible but permeating atmosphere of by-gone years, the charm of living in their constant companionship, — these influences formed the mainspring that found expression in the Georgian House and its original furnishings here described.

In prefacing a work upon antiquities, *Walpole* wrote:

“From the antiquarian I expect greater thanks; he is more cheaply pleased than a common reader: the one demands to be diverted, at least instructed — the other requires only to be informed.”

These lines furnish an apt definition of the different classes of readers which two writers upon the same subject recognized to exist. Yet before the words quoted came to the notice of the present author, his plan of presenting his theme had found expression in the following text, which, to his knowledge, was the first time a story had been employed as the vehicle for conveying

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information upon antiquities, hitherto confined to formal treatises. The narrative form adopted in these pages, with such 'diversion' and 'instruction' as, haply, they may be found to contain, was accordingly fixed upon as best suited to impart to the general reader the author's experiences in the charmed world of the collector — while, at the same time, to meet the requirement of the antiquarian "to be informed," a technical analysis of the specimens illustrated was prepared for each plate.

Although the exigencies of the story have called for some play of fancy, conscientious efforts have not the less been made that all statements of fact should be trustworthy. The episodes recorded are actual experiences, while the collectors introduced are pen-portraits of antiquarians, both living and dead, whose favorite hobby of gathering curios has been their life-long pursuit.

The furniture portrayed, which is all in mahogany, was assembled by the author and formed the decoration of his house, views of whose exterior and interior are included among the illustrations. The book-case forming the frontispiece has been directly traced to Chippendale, wherein it differs from the great bulk of antique furniture, which, unlike English plate, bears no mark of its birth or maker. It is customary, therefore, to refer to specimens bearing the decorative motifs of which

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the original designer made habitual use, as being of "Chippendale style," "Hepplewhite style," etc., as the case may be.

If the writer be charged with holding a brief for Chippendale, he would not disclaim that he conceives this master-craftsman to have been the most artistic furniture-designer the world has yet produced.

Should these pages help to preserve memories of the house and its furnishings beyond the vicissitudes of time and fortune — should they arouse a deeper interest in the consummate art attained by England in the XVIII Century — and serve to differentiate the main features of the principal schools of furniture then extant — Chippendale, Hepplewhite, Sheraton and Colonial, that ancien régime of sustained beauty, now, alas! quite vanished — the author will be content.

E. H. G.

BOSTON, October, 1915