FURNITURE AS ARCHITECTURE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF
CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH (PART II)

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Where this harmony of mathematical proportions which we associate with Palladio came from is easy to answer, for his own country provided Mackintosh with the tradition of Vitruvius which had fed Palladio. Colin Campbell and his Vitruvius Britannicus brought the classical proportions to Scotland, where a solid respect for classicism produced in the next century the great work of Robert and James Adams and without doubt fascinated Mackintosh two hundred years later. The lack of architectural opportunities for building in Glasgow diverted this innate sense of proportion in Mackintosh to the making of chairs and tables and of environments consisting of objects of utility: either public environments, as in the series of tea rooms with their challenge to the designer to make a city of chairs, or a few private ones: villas for the equally few sympathetic sponsors, such as the Cranstons, Messrs. Blackie and Bassett-Locke. It was the last of these three who, with his sympathy for what was being done in Germany and Austria, allowed Mackintosh to develop a style chiefly dominated by a feeling for cubic space, determined by his architect's view of the world which was in turn fed by Scottish Palladianism.

This alone would not have done it. There was a tradition in England more recent than the classical one, a tradition which galvanized the Scots now interested in their own background of native handicrafts to work in the channels of the popular English Pre-Raphaelite movement. To the basic Scottish Vitruvian sense of mathematical harmony in architectural relations we must add the heritage of Edward Burne-Jones. The Pre-Raphaelites, as the Larners remind us, were interested in chair design and they illustrate in their book what is perhaps the earliest "art chair" by Holman Hunt in 1855. Rossetti also designed a chair for Morris in 1866, but it was Burne-Jones who seems to have had the most varied and inventive ideas for chairs, one of which Baillie-Scott adapted from a tapestry illustrated in The Studio (123). Burne-Jones's attitudes towards furniture are broadly continued by Mackintosh. The former had invested the furnishings in his pictures with the harmonies of classicism, joined to a modern distrust of recognizable orders, although he retained the early Renaissance goldsmith's technique for decorated architectural surfaces. King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, perhaps the most widely seen and most widely influential of Burne-Jones's pictures, shows an architectural handling of throne, steps and balcony which produces an environment that is original and decorative. (Ill. 9). His David Moaning, one of a pair of stained glass windows in which the king's throne, (Ill. 10) empty of his presence, is focused on, with drapery emphasizing its structure, could be called the portrait of a chair. (Ill. 11). The rose as the motif of the early