

The General Adaptability of Wicker Furniture

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WICKER furniture has become almost a vogue. Perhaps its popularity is even gradually creating what a future generation will refer back to as a "period." In any case, its popularity today is very real, and is also

paratively or reasonably inexpensive. Furthermore, it is especially capable of wielding a variety of delightful influences upon the home, in the way of brightness, cheerfulness, coziness, and so forth. In fact, instead of constituting a mere furniture



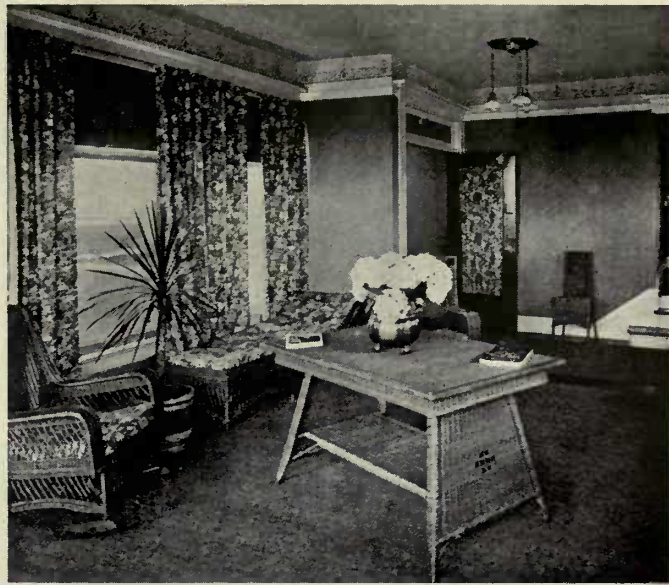
A charming living room, with its wicker furnishings.

well deserved. It is deserved for many reasons. By way of offering a brief summary of these reasons, it may be stated that furniture of this kind, as now manufactured, has real utilitarian value, possesses particularly extensive possibilities in a decorative way, is durable and comfortable in construction and design, and is com-

paratively or reasonably inexpensive. Furthermore, it is especially capable of wielding a variety of delightful influences upon the home, in the way of brightness, cheerfulness, coziness, and so forth. In fact, instead of constituting a mere furniture

Wicker furniture, commonly so termed, is variously manufactured of reed, willow,

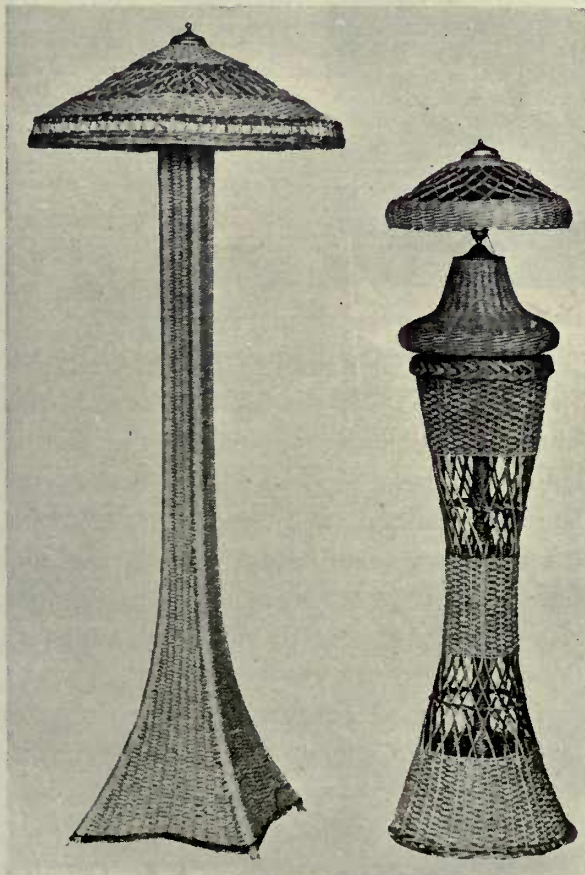
rattan, certain grasses, and so forth. Formerly much of our supply of these raw materials was imported from abroad, but now the most of it is to be obtained at home. In the early stages of its present popularity, our furniture of this kind was of rather frail construction, and hence, being incapable of withstanding constant usage, soon became rickety. It also was often of quite ornate design, patterned with all sorts of useless scrolls and excrescences. The product of today, however, due to the employment of heavier and better joined-together framework and to more scientifically handled reinforcing, is stout and durable, and is quite as capable of withstanding severe usage as any other kind of furniture, while in the matter of design, being generally free from practically all unnecessary ornamentation, it is comparatively simple and yet decidedly artistic and pleasing.



A comfortable sun room.

While a certain quantity is still imported, principally from the Orient, the bulk, by far, of our wicker furniture is manufactured in this country. In fact, its production has become a very important industry, and in nearly every large city there is at least one such factory. It is particularly worthy of mention, in this connection, that a very large part of the work of manufacturing this furniture must be done by hand. Hence, real craftsmanship enters into every piece produced, thus endowing the article with something of the individuality of the maker, or artist, himself. This, as against the machine method employed in the production of most other kinds of furniture, means that each article not only receives personal attention, to insure careful finish, but is also given a kind of intrinsic value in the way of personality.

However, simply because it is largely hand-made, wicker furniture should never be selected without exercising great care. In fact, the method of its manufacture makes carefulness in its selection all the more necessary, for it cannot be expected that every wicker-factory workman is both a trained and a conscientious craftsman, or even that he is invariably supplied with the best materials. In making selections the



Well constructed lamps.

purchaser should see to it that the reed is of straight, clear grain and in long strands; that it is of fairly uniform size, and that it is clean, smooth and perfectly round. It should also be demanded that in the weaving no unfinished ends protrude from the surface to catch the hand or tear the clothes; that seat frames are skillfully doweled and not merely nailed together, to come apart at the first strain; and, finally, that the article as finished presents at a glance a

hour-glass design, for chairs and tables, was especially popular, and remains more or less so today; but perhaps more generally desirable, at least more comfortable for chairs, is some one of the styles that feature the ordinary type of leg supports. However, individual taste may be permitted to govern choice in the matter of design; it is far more important, from the standpoint of design, that the handling of the wicker seem reasonably natural in the matter of

straight lines and flowing curves, instead of appearing tortured into unreal or fantastic shapes.

Wicker furniture also is widely varied in styles and appearances through the character of the weave, the blending together of different materials, and the creation of different color effects. The weave of the reed, for instance, may be either close and compact or in a variety of open-mesh patterns. The combination of reed and grasses of-



Even the dining room may be completely furnished in wicker.

beauty of form and symmetry of outline that stamp it instantly as the hand-wrought product of an artist.

In the matter of design, wicker furniture offers wide latitude for choice. Briefly, it may be had either in plain, straight-line effect or in a variety of styles dominated by graceful curves. Occasionally, to meet the requirements of certain rooms, notably the breakfast room, its lines will suggest severity and rigidity, but more commonly, particularly where lounging and the maximum of comfort are intended, the lines will effect an appearance of sweeping curves and flexibility. Formerly, the Canton or

fers similar opportunities for dissimilarity. In respect to color shades, furniture of this kind is particularly popular in the natural colors of grass, reed or willow, and it may be also stained and enameled. White, cream, ivory, pale gray, dull green and light brown are somewhat usual colors, although there is really no limitation to its possibilities in this respect.

The items of furniture that are now to be obtained in wicker are practically limitless. The following may be named by way of partial enumeration: Chairs of all kinds, settees, couches, sofas, swinging porch seats, tables, desks, sewing-tables, smokers'



A strongly built tea wagon.

stands, tabourettes, bookcases, plant stands, lamp-shades and lamp stands, jardinieres, vases, candle-shades, bird-cages and stands, and so forth. It is possible, moreover, to secure sets for practically the complete furnishing of the library, dining room, bedroom, etcetera.

Wicker furniture has come to be used, or can be used, for nearly every room in the home, although it is rarely that one will care to have his home furnished with it throughout. Instead, to the end that sameness may not be too strongly suggested, it is better to limit its use to only a few of the rooms. It constitutes a kind of furniture that seems especially appropriate for the sun room, the conservatory, the breakfast room, and the porch, veranda or other outside lounging retreat. One or more of the bedrooms also may be so furnished to advantage, either wholly or in part. It is one of the charming attributes of wicker that it may be satisfactorily used in direct association with almost any other kind of furniture, without seeming to destroy harmony.

It is also adaptable to use in relation to various styles and colors of woodwork finish, which, with anything like the same versatility in suitability and effectiveness, is really true of no other style of furniture.

Perhaps one of the most admirable things about wicker furniture is its power of wielding, over the room in which it is used, an influence for increasing the appearance of cheerfulness and coziness. Taking, for instance, a room that as furnished in some other style appears dark and gloomy or unduly stiff and cold, by simply changing a few pieces of the furniture to wicker the room's appearance may be transformed into one of marked brightness, warmth and hominess. Incidentally, the need of such change is quite often felt, and it is rarely indeed that it may not be accomplished with pleasing result in this very simple manner. Wicker furniture is also particularly susceptible to a variety of treatments in the way of upholstering, which may range from subdued effects to extreme brightness, and hence, in this way, other charming possibilities for altering or regulating the general atmosphere of a room are afforded. This upholstering may, of course, be done with expensive tapestries, moderate-priced cretonnes, or even quite inexpensive mate-



A comfortable and attractive wicker couch.

rials, and yet, whatever the kind or its cost, the result is always pleasing and usually surprisingly suggestive of richness. At the same time the appearance of a room may frequently be still further enhanced by the use of drapes to harmonize with the material used for the upholstery.

America, in the early days of East Indian shipping; and wattling was even an art in Europe recorded in Roman history. However, its present popularity, for use in the modern home, is of comparatively recent birth, due, no doubt, to its considerable improvement and modernization in design. Today it is used, to varying extents, in



Furniture for the living room.

Wicker for chairs and other seats also unquestionably assure, if the pieces are properly designed, a maximum degree of comfort. This is true not only because the material is so readily weaved into form-fitting designs, but also because of the material's natural flexibility, or springy, resilient tendencies.

In a sense, wicker furniture is far from being a present-day product. It was probably in the Orient that it had its origin. At least, furniture of this kind is said to have been imported into Europe, and later into

homes of all kinds. In the costly home of interior elegance its use will probably be confined to a single room, like the conservatory or sun parlor, or to the porch alone; in less elaborately appointed residences it may be used in a number of rooms, perhaps including even the living room, and in still humbler homes it is sometimes used for furnishing the rooms throughout. At least, it is always especially adaptable to the secluded, outdoor-inviting porch, and is likewise excellently suited to the seashore bungalow.

