

**CALIFORNIA WOODS.**

THEIR EFFECT WHEN PROPERLY POLISHED AND FINISHED.

Figures and Markings Accounted For. Handsomest Woods for House Decoration—Growth of the Laurel—Leading Fancy Woods—Queer Figures.

"Oh, yes," said the architect, "natural woods are now being used very extensively for the interior finish of expensive houses. Here is the plan of a house which we are now building in San Mateo, and, as you see, all the ceilings are in panels, and there on the side of the rooms are wainscotings of oak. Of course, this is a very expensive house, as the oak is of the best and comes from the east."  
 "How long has this fashion been in vogue?" asked the reporter.  
 "Well, natural wood interiors have been used to some extent in the houses of wealthy people for the past eight years, but recently they have come greatly into demand. In fact, the architectural tastes of Californians in general, and of San Franciscans in particular, I think, are vastly improving. The woods for interiors, of course, to be used advantageously must be hard woods. California laurel, white cedar, redwood, eastern maple and oak and Mexican mahogany are generally used, and you have no idea what a pretty effect they make when properly polished and finished. As you know, nearly all these woods have naturally pretty figures and lines in them, and their surfaces look much handsomer than paper or painted boards."  
 "Talking about natural figures," interrupted a dealer in fancy woods, who was listening to the conversation, "I have seen some very pretty and unique ones on the natural wood, and in my museum have a number of interesting specimens. I find that the prettiest figures are generally on the wood of trees which grow in a marshy or well irrigated place."  
 "How do you account for that?" asked the reporter.  
 "Well," replied the wood dealer, "I think that the bark overgrows the twig, and will therefore wrinkle. When the twig grows the wood will, of course, fill up all the wrinkles and cavities in the bark, and its surface will therefore be marked and ridged. This is what makes the figures on the wood. Sometimes, also, the bark runs through the heart of the tree. This is a fact not generally known, but to it I attribute the existence of so many hollow trees in the forests of California, for the bark will be ignited from any prairie fire and burn through the core of the trunk, leaving the tree hollow."

THE HANDSOMEST WOODS.  
 "What do you consider the handsomest woods of the coast for house decoration?"  
 "Well, I scarcely care to commit myself on that point," was the reply. "The fact is that the beauties of California and Oregon hardwoods are but little known, and it is only a few who have studied the subject who are aware of the undeveloped industry existing in the figured woods of this coast. At the last mechanical fair there was an excellent exhibition of California fancy woods, which surprised everybody. It was not supposed that our forests were so rich in such desirable growths. As for the Oregon woods, I think the ash is very pretty. It is figured with concentric curves and admits of a very high polish. The Oregon maple is the most beautiful wood I have ever seen, I think. Its color is a light yellow, and its surface is covered with small, wavy lines, which look like snowflakes. It reminds one much of a sheet of burnished gold, and when the gas-light plays upon its burnished surface the effect is grand. Like most of our woods, however, it is but little known. The Oregon maple is also a pretty wood. Its surface is covered with small parallel lines, close together."  
 "But tell me something about our own woods," interposed the reporter.  
 "Well, take the laurel," was the reply. "California laurel is figured beautifully, but, unfortunately for it, it has been confounded with pepperwood and myrtle, which are softer woods and rot quicker. Our sycamore, which has only recently become known as a fancy wood, is also very prettily figured. Its grain is like that of the beech, and has something like waving vertical lines close together. Why, before its qualities as a fancy wood were known, it was used for the manufacture of tobacco boxes. In New York it is called buttonwood. Sycamore is very strong, and can be used advantageously for veneering. Redwood is also a handsome wood for interiors. It admits of a very high polish, and for a cheap wood is probably one of the best in the market. The best figures on redwood are generally found in the burls, or large knots. But few figures are found in the body of a redwood. Laurel is also a good hard wood. A curious fact about laurel is that the tree looks as if a great tree had grown and then melted down and another tree had grown from the residue of the first. The curious growth makes a large burl. This curious growth, the center of which the tree grows, from did specimen of sycamore grows. A specimen in Laurel grows a formation may be burl of that tree, near San Rafael. The burl of that tree is fully fifteen feet in diameter, and the tree grows from the center of it."

LEADING FANCY WOODS.  
 "What are our leading fancy woods?"  
 "Well, I should say walnut, sycamore, laurel and redwood are in the lead. They are all very prettily figured. A good piece of figured wood is always in demand, for, as our friend says, the use of such woods for interior decoration is becoming very general. Redwood, I should say, seems at present to be the favorite. The Santa Cruz redwood is generally prettily figured. You must understand, of course, that a piece of wood must be cut in just a certain way to bring out the figure, and it takes a good deal of experience, too, to know not only how to cut it, but how to treat the wood so that the figure will be shown to the best advantage. I might say that Oregon maple looks very well in furniture, and is used extensively for that purpose in this city."

"I understand that specimens of fancy woods are very often secured in which the lines assume some well developed figure, such as a head or an animal. Have you ever come across any of these?" was asked.  
 "Oh, yes, indeed," was the reply. "I well remember a piece I have in my museum now, in which the head of a child is distinctly shown. Where do you think I got it? Why, it came from an old pile that had been for years stuck in the mud, supporting Donohue's old building on First street. I have a piece of California walnut, which was exhibited at the fair, in which, as plain as day, can be seen the figures of a man and woman. They are side views. The man is apparently as naked as when he was born, but the woman is attired in complete walking costume. The specimen is called 'Adam and Eve.' I have also a splendid specimen of California laurel in which there is a bear's head. But the figures are almost as many as are the specimens. Heads, bodies and even trees are also figured in the woods. I have seen one piece in which there were two birds. Come up to my place some day and I will show you the whole museum," and the wood expert and the architect sauntered away.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Sarah Bernhardt is described by a Boston writer as having an "Evangeline-like head."

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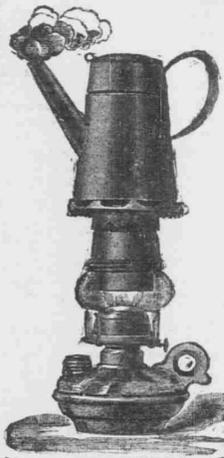
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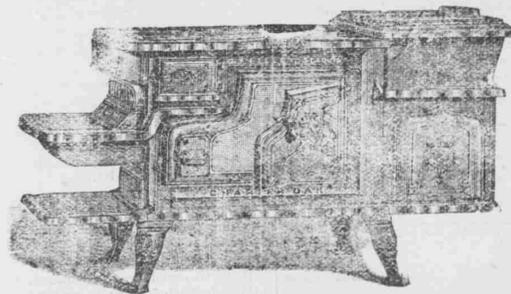
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