**TABLE** (Lat. *tabula),* a flat, oblong slab supported upon legs or pillars; originally anything flat.@@1 As one of the few indis­pensable pieces of domestic furniture, the table is of great an­tiquity. It was known, in a small and rudimentary form, to the Egyptians, who used wood for its construction; the Assyrians certainly employed metal and possibly other materials in its manufacture. Grecian tables were also often of metal, with three or four legs and of considerable variety of form; they were small and low. By Roman times the table had apparently become somewhat more common. The favourite form was the tripod, but one and four legs were also used. Already the shape varied considerably, and in addition to wood, there were tables of marble, ivory, bronze and the precious metals. The more costly examples were carved, inlaid or otherwise ornamented; cedar and the finely marked or grained woods generally were much sought after. As in Greece the tables were low; they were intended for reclining, rather than sitting; their legs were those of wild beasts, or were formed of sphinxes, termini and other figures. Some of those which remain are of extreme grace and most delicate workmanship; to them the Empire style is enormously indebted. In antiquity tables of any kind can only have been the appanage of the rich. In the early middle ages, although there was variety of form—the circular, semi­circular, oval and oblong were all in use—tables appear, save in rare instances, to have been portable and supported upon trestles fixed or folding, which were cleared out of the way at the end of a meal. The custom of serving dinner at several small tables, which is often supposed to be a very modern refinement, was certainly followed in the French châteaux, and probably also in the English castles, as early as the 13th century. For persons of high degree, fixed tables were reserved. Even at a period when domestic furniture was of a very primitive character and few modern conveniences had been evolved, costly tables were by no means unknown—some dim traditions of Rome’s refinements must necessarily have filtered through the centuries. Thus Charlemagne possessed three tables of silver and one of gold—no doubt they were of wood covered with plates of the precious metals. Before the 16th century the number of tables properly so called was small; hence very few of earlier date than the middle of that century have come down to us. In the chapter-house of Salisbury cathedral is a restored 13th-century example which stands practically alone. In point of age it is most nearly approached by the famous pair of trestle tables in the great hall at Penshurst.

When the table became a fixed and permanent piece of furniture the word “ board, ” which had long connoted it, fell into disuse save in an allusive sense, and its place was taken by such phrases as “ joyned table ” and “ framed table ”— that is, jointed or framed together by a joiner; sometimes people spoke of a “ standing ” or “ dormant ” table. They were most frequently oblong, some two feet or two feet six inches wide, and the guests sat with their backs to the wall, the other side of the table being left free for service. Sometimes they were used as side-tables, or furnished with a cupboard beneath the board; they were supported on quadrangular legs or massive ends and feet full of Gothic feeling, and were several inches higher than the dining-table of the 20th century. Heavy stretchers or foot-rails were fixed close to the floor—for the avoidance, no doubt, of draughts. Oak was the usual material, but elm, cherry and other woods were sometimes used. Soon the legs became bulbous, and were gadrooned or otherwise ornamented, and the frame began to be carved. The intro­duction, before the 16th century closed, of the “drawing table” marked the rapidity with which this piece of furniture was developed. This was the forerunner of the “ extending dining­table.” Of the three leaves of which these tables were com­posed two were below the other; they drew out and were supported by brackets, while the slab proper dropped to the same level. Somewhat later legs became excessively bulbous;

this ugly form gave place soon after the middle of the 17th century to baluster-shaped legs. Hitherto tables had, generally speaking, been large and massive—little in the nature of what is now called the “ occasional table ” seems to have been pro­vided until some years after the Restoration. About that time small tables of varying sizes and shapes, but still of substantial weight, began to be made; many of them were flap-tables, which took up little room when they were not in use. These, however, had been known at an earlier date. Charles II. had not long been on the throne when the idea of the flap-table was amplified in a peculiarly graceful fashion. Two flaps were provided instead of one, the result being the rather large oval table of the “ gate-leg ” variety that has remained in use ever since, in which the open “ gate ” supports the flap. Towards the end of the reign tables began to have the graceful twisted legs joined to the flat serpentine stretchers, which produced, almost for the first time in English furniture, a sense of lightness and gaiety. The walnut tables of the end of the Stuart period were often inlaid with marquetry of great excellence. The number and variety of the tables in well-to-do households were now increasing rapidly, and the console-table was imported from the Continent contemporaneously with the common use of the mahogany side-table.

As mahogany came into general use, about the beginning of the second quarter of the 18th century, an enormous number of card-tables were made with plain or cabriole legs and spade or claw and ball feet, often with lions’ heads carved upon the knees; the top folded up to half its size when open. The Chippendale school introduced small tables with carved open- work “ galleries ” round the edges (to protect china and other small objects), and clustered legs; Gothic forms and Chinese frets were for a time fashionable. Later in this century, so prolific in new forms of furniture, tables were frequently made of rosewood and satinwood; side-tables, often highly elaborate, adorned with swags and festoons and other classical motives, supported by termini or richly carved legs, were gilded and topped with marble slabs or inlaid wood. The Pembroke table, of oblong form, with two semi-circular or oblong leaves, with edgings of marquetry, was a characteristic feature of late 18th- century English furniture, and still retains its popularity. Then came the Empire period; the taper was replaced by the round leg, rosewood grew commoner, and brass mountings the rule. For illustrations see Furniture.

**TABLE, MATHEMATICAL.** In any table the results tabulated are termed the “ tabular results ” or “ respondents, ” and the corresponding numbers by which the table is entered are termed the “ arguments.” A table is said to be of single or double entry according as there are one or two arguments. For example, a table of logarithms is a table of single entry, the numbers being the arguments and the logarithms the tabular results; an ordinary multiplication table is a table of double entry, giving *xy* as tabular result for *x* and *y* as arguments. The intrinsic value of a table may be estimated by the actual amount of time saved by consulting it; for example, a table of square roots to ten decimals is more valuable than a table of squares, as the extraction of the root would occupy more time than the multiplication of the number by itself. The value of a table does not depend upon the difficulty of calculating it; for, once made, it is made for ever, and as far as the user is concerned the amount of labour devoted to its original con­struction is immaterial. In some tables the labour required in the construction is the same as if all the tabular results had been calculated separately; but in the majority of instances a table can be formed by expeditious methods which are inap­plicable to the calculation of an individual result. This is the case with tables of a continuous quantity, which may frequently be constructed by differences. The most striking instance perhaps is afforded by a factor table or a table of primes; for, if it is required to determine whether a given number is prime or not, the only universally available method (in the absence of tables) is to divide it by every prime less than its square root or until one is found that divides it without remainder. But

@@@l For mathematical tables see next article. This use of the word comes from the analogy of the laying out of objects on an ordinary table.