

28 COTTAGE & FARMHOUSE FURNITURE

and for those not possessed of it, the means the collection of superlative styles is at an end. Singularly enough, the most native furniture and that most typically racy of the soil has not hitherto attracted the attention of wealthy collectors. The plutocrats who buy only the finest creations of Chippendale, who have immediate private information when an exquisitely designed Sheraton piece is found, who amass a mighty hoard of gilt Stuart furniture, or who boast of an unrivalled collection of Elizabethan oak, do not touch the minor furniture made during a period of three hundred years for the common people.

The finest classes of English furniture made by skilful craftsmen for wealthy patrons must always be beyond the range of the minor collector. Every year brings keener zest among those interested in furniture of a bygone day, and it is therefore increasingly difficult for persons of taste and judgment who cannot afford high prices to satisfy their longings. It is obvious that specimens of massive appearance finely carved in oak of the Tudor age, or of elegantly turned work in walnut of Jacobean days, must be readily recognised as valuable. Sumptuous furniture tells its own story. It is unlikely nowadays that such wonderful "finds," concerning which imaginative writers are always telling us, will occur again—except on paper. Popular enthusiasm has been awakened, and more often than not the possessor of some mediocre piece of furniture or china attaches a value to it which is absurd. The publication of prices realised at auction has whetted