

CHAPTER II

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY STYLES

Typical Jacobean furniture—Solidity of English joiners' work—Oak general in its use—The oak forests of England—Sturdy independence of country furniture—Chests of drawers—The slow assimilation of foreign styles—The changing habits of the people.

TO the lover of old oak, varied in character and essentially English in its practical realisation of the exact needs of its users, the seventeenth century provides an exceptionally fine field. The chairs, the tables, the dower-chests and the four-post beds of the farmhouse were sturdy reflections of sumptuous furniture made for the nobility and gentry in Jacobean and Elizabethan times. The designs may have been suggested by finer and early models, but the balance, the sense of proportion, and the carving, were the result of the village carpenter's own individual ideas as to the requirements of the furniture for use in the farmhouse. Obviously strength and stability were important factors, and ornament, as such, took a subsidiary place in his scheme. But, although coarse and possessing a