



Cover illustration:

Words of Counsel by James Brenan, 1876, oil on canvas, 27in (68.5 cm) by 35½in (90cm), signed and dated lower left '76. Courtesy of the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork, Ireland.

This highly detailed Irish interior shows a so-called 'strong' farmer's kitchen. The narrative concerns the customary pre-arrangement of marriage in a farming family. Dowries of cattle and land, chests, linen, bedding and 'fortunes' of money, accompanied the farmer's daughter into marriage with a suitably matched groom. A daughter who disliked such an arrangement might elope for a night with another suitor. Brenan depicts the aftermath of such a runaway match, showing the priest (in black) counselling the angry farmer to allow the youngsters to be wed in his church. The farmer's wealth is symbolised by the amply stocked dresser behind his back, with its customary display of ware. This artist is well represented in Claudia Kinmonth's new book *Irish Rural Interiors in Art* (see page 18).

