



Thirte Dell'oro



Cover illustration:

The cover shows a rather faded watercolour of a farmhouse interior by the Norwich School artist, John Thirtle, dated 1807. The farm is that of Edmund Miles, a tenant farmer on the Felbrigg estate in Norfolk, who had died in April, shortly before the watercolour was painted. Although Mrs Miles is dressed in white, the family are in mourning: hence the closed exterior shutters and the black neckerchief tied at the waist, worn by the daughter, Ann. The young man is John Sell Cotman, leading painter of the Norwich School, who was to marry Ann two years later. A cat sits on the porch bench, eyeing the chickens who have crossed the worn threshold onto the pamment (traditional Norfolk clay tile) floor.

A low dresser with turned drawer handles stands under the window. A two-stage cupboard is shown with the upper door half open. On the original painting it is possible to discern that this door front has applied stiles framing panels topped by trefoil arches, echoing those on the front door. A candle box and bellows are attached to the wall by the fireplace. The most interesting feature is the cane chair, dating from the 1690s, which must have been deeply unfashionable at the time and would normally be confined to backstairs use. Revival of interest in such furniture would not develop until the 1830s, so perhaps the prominent display of this chair indicates that although it had lost its front stretcher it was a treasured possession of sentimental value.

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