



C.F. Wilson



Cover illustration:

His Last Investment

This cottage interior by the Surrey watercolourist, Charles Edward Wilson (1854-1941) illustrates in exquisite detail the sparse, but comfortable contents of a home set in the home counties during the 19th century.

The elderly lady sits, quilting, in a rush-seated ladderback armchair of a design recorded by Gertrude Jekyll in her book, *Old West Surrey* (1904) as a common chair from Surrey, and in so doing particularly pinpoints the source of the artist's inspiration. Glimpses of a settle with cushions and valance are seen with a table under the window, and a joint stool behind the sitter to the left.

The emphasis on textiles in the picture is a prominent feature, with curtains hung to keep draughts from the sitter, and another to prevent draughts from the door. The cloth valance or lambrequin across the large open fireplace is lifted to allow more up-draught to the fire, perhaps aided by the pair of bellows hung to the right; or to ease access to the blackened kettle. The elderly lady's gaze dwells on the two Old English breed of rabbits on the floor, as does the boy's, and perhaps the artist used these, with the turnips and the wording of the title to inject a certain frisson into this apparently quiet domestic scene, as well as an allusion to the self-sufficiency of cottagers in the 19th century.

The mantel shelf holds small and precious items, functional, but decorative; a pair of brass candlesticks; a chamber stick; a mantel clock; a Staffordshire figure; a tea caddy; a pottery vase; and attached to the wall over the fireplace, the shaped sides of a spit-rack, now being used to hang flat irons upon.

Dr. B.D.Cotton

Photograph by courtesy of Sworders Fine Art Auctioneers, Stansted Mountfichet, Essex.