





Cover Picture

A Cottage Interior: Poor Old Woman's Comfort
William Redmore Bigg RA (1755–1828). Oil on canvas
1793. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Bigg was born in Felsted, Essex. He studied at the Royal Academy Schools and lived and worked in London, specialising in genre pictures of the 'virtuous poor'. Comfort became a key word in late 18th century social thought and was particularly associated with depictions of humble cottage interiors. In this painting the old woman's comforts include a table, laid with her meal of bread, butter and tea, and a comfortable chair, in which she sits in front of a small fire, on which the kettle is boiling. The consumer goods, such as the tea wares and the clock, were by now common among the rural poor, contributing to the old woman's material comfort. Do the chairs and cricket table suggest a regional origin?