SARAH COLEGRAVE
FINE ART

Narcissus

Francis Martin Russell

Sold

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REF: 55911

Height: 71.12 cm (28")

Width: 48.26 cm (19")

Description

Francis Martin Russell was born in Marlborough, Wiltshire, the son of John and Harriet Russell. His father was listed was an ironmonger but at that date the title would suggest more that a general hardware retailer. He would have been a merchant who arranged the manufacture of finished pieces from smiths, nailers and other metal works and then organised the sale and distribution of the finished products to retailers. In this role John Russell came into contact with Sir John Guest, the great South Wales Ironmaster and Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil and it was Guest who, in 1839, nominated the 19 years old Francis Martin Russell for entry to University College, London to study Medicine. Russell qualified in 1842 and that same year took up a position as house surgeon at the Glamorgan and Monmouth Infirmary (now Cardiff Royal Infirmary) with a salary of Â£100 per annum. In 1854 he left Wales and moved to Canada where he joined the Medical Faculty of Trinity College, Toronto as Professor of Botany and Medical Jurisprudence. Unfortunately the Medical Faculty was closed in 1856 and Russell returned to Wales where he resumed his medical practice as surgeon to the English Copper Company based in Cwm-Avon, Taibach, Glamorgan. In the late 1870s Russell retired from medicine and moved from the intense industrial frenzy of South Wales to the calm of genteel Caledonian Place, Clifton. He now had more time to devote to his interest in botany and it was in Clifton that he executed these beautifully studied botanical watercolours which date to the early 1880s. Looking upon his subject with the eyes of a botanist, the accuracy of a surgeon and the hand of an artist he recorded the flowers he would have seen around him and included native species as well as the more exotic plants that were becoming fashionable and then being grown by the Victorian gardener. Russell died in Clifton in 1915 at the great age of 94.

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