THE LIMNER COMPANY



ENGLISH SCHOOL (17th century)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing buff coat with gold sash, white lace jabot tied with a blue ribbon, curled wig

Circa: Circa 1675

Circa 1675

Oval, 6.7 cm (2 $^{5}/_{8}$ inches) high

Watercolour on vellum

Pearwood frame

Painted around a decade after the Restoration of King Charles II, the gentleman in this portrait seems to have held a military role. Although he does not wear armour, he wears a sash across his torso that perhaps denotes him as a military man – although this garment would have been called a 'scarf' and not a 'sash'.

In battle, the colour of a scarf would have been essential in determining the sides – for example, we know that for the Battle of Edgehill in 1642, the orange-tawny colours of the Earl of Essex were universally adopted by the Roundheads, and crimson scarves were the mark of a Royalist. In 1644, a book entitled 'The Young Horseman or the Honest Plain Dealing Cavalier', noted that "...every horseman must wear a scarfe of his Generalls Colours..."

The buff coat worn by the gentleman in the present work is also a sign that he was connected to the military. Such coats, made from cow hide, were worn by cavalry and officers, often under steel or iron breastplates. This thick leather might have provided some protection during combat but not from thrusts or firearms. An expensive garment, it also gives some indication in this portrait of the sitter's social standing, as he also wears a fine lace jabot tied with a blue ribbon. Although there was little conflict in the late 1660s/ early 1670s, the groundwork for the Third Anglo-Dutch War was being laid, with treaties

like the Secret Treaty of Dover signed in June and December.

The artist here cannot be identified with any certainty and they may have been a gentleman or lady amateur. Painting miniatures at this period was thought to be a suitable pursuit for gentlemen in particular, and may talented artists from this period, such as Matthew Snelling or Thomas Flatman, added miniature painting as a secondary pursuit (Snelling earned his living selling artist's supplies, while Flatman was primarily a lawyer).