THE LIMNER COMPANY



RICHARD CROSSE (1742 - 1810)

Portrait miniature of a Gentleman, wearing green coat with gold details, white stock and lace cravat, his hair powdered grey and worn 'en queue'

Circa: circa 1770

circa 1770

Watercolour on ivory (licence TKQKHQXQ)

Oval, 40 mm (1 $^{5}/_{8}$ in) high

Set in gold bracelet clasp mount (one slide missing)

The works of Richard Crosse are distinct and were painted in both enamel and ivory, as is the case here. It is not known who the gentleman in this portrait is, but he displays wealth and an awareness of fashion trends of the period, with a coat decorated with gold embroidery and a delicate lace cravat.

Crosse was born deaf and non-verbal but this did not detract from his abilities as a miniature painter. He was one of many miniature painters with these conditions, such as Charles Shirreff (1749-1829). It is said that he first took this up as a hobby, though he was able to carve a career out of his craft, later becoming the enamel painter to King George III and achieving the status of both a prolific and successful artist. His most famous works in public collections depict those closest to him, including his brothers and himself. One self-portrait can be found in the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGOID.68426), and a portrait of one of his brothers, either James or Edward, can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (P.148-1929).

It was his brother James who cared for the artist for many years, according to Foskett (1972). James may have also provided support to his brother when he fell in love with Miss Sarah Cobbe, only for her to reject a proposal and run away with a Mr Haydon. The sorrow resulting from this heartbreak appears to have followed Crosse throughout his life. In the memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846),

the son of Miss Sarah Cobbe (later Mrs Haydon) and Mr Haydon, the painter recounts a meeting between the pair later in life, which evidences this. Mrs Haydon was travelling to London in her dying days, and met Crosse again at her Brother's house, where he was staying. Haydon recounts Crosse's reaction:

'He sawher before him, broken and dying; he felt all his affection return, and flinging himself forward on the table, he burst into a paroxysm of tears, as if his very heart-strings would crack.' [1]

Tragically, Mrs Haydon died the next day.

[1] B. R. Haydon, *The Autobiography and Memoirs of Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846)*, 1926, p. 60.