Study of Bluebells at Abinger, Autumn 1878

Helen Allingham

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Description

Helen Allingham (1848-1926)
Study of Bluebells at Abinger, Autumn 1878

Inscribed on part of old mount: at Abinger H...../Autumn '78
Watercolour heightened with bodycolour and stopping out
6.5 by 12.5 cm., 2 ½ by 5 in.

Provenance:
By descent to the artist's grandson, Philip Allingham

Helen Allingham (née Paterson) trained first at the Female School of Art, Bloomsbury, before entering the Royal Academy Schools in 1867 (her aunt, Laura Herford, had been the first female to be admitted to the Schools in 1860). While studying she started working as an illustrator, to support herself whilst studying - and in January 1870 was employed as a founding staff member, and the only woman, on The Graphic, a new illustrated weekly magazine. By 1872, with sufficient commissions to support herself, Allingham left the R.A. schools to concentrate on her illustrations.

On her marriage to the Irish poet, William Allingham (1824-1889), Helen was able to abandon her career as an illustrator and devote herself to watercolours. The Allinghams were at the centre of artistic and literary London life; they knew many of the leading lights including Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones and William Morris, as well as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin who was a particular champion of her work. In 1881, the Allinghams moved to Sandhills in Surrey, near the renowned garden designer Getrude Jekyll, who became a close friend. Her fellow artist Miles Birket Foster was also a near neighbour. It was whilst in Surrey that Allingham began to produce the cottage subjects for which she became particularly renowned.

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