

*Mr. F. E. James's Water-Colours*

STUDY OF A ROSE

FROM A WATER-COLOUR BY F. E. JAMES

no more than W. W. May, the charming marine artist, who in late life was Keeper of the Painted Hall at Greenwich, just because in early life he had been a sailor; no more than Robert Goff, who was in the Coldstream Guards; or Seymour Haden, President of his own Academy, and once such a successful surgeon that he might have been President of the College of Surgeons to boot. In art of any kind—in Painting, Writing, Modelling—the spirit in which a man does his work, and not the means that he possesses or the family he belongs to, constitutes him professional or amateur. Is his art his chief interest? If so, whatever may be his *status* upon other grounds, professional artist, serious professional artist he is, with his books or his pictures. To the serious artist a little money is of endless usefulness, even if it be only that scanty portion of three hundred a year and an umbrella—for that scanty portion which has caused the fool to eat the bread of idleness has caused the wise man to work with a will. It has gone some little way towards securing him that deepest boon for the artistic nature, *la liberté du travail*. It has freed him in a measure

260

from the obligation of producing the “pot-boiler.” Francis James has never produced the “pot-boiler.”

I suppose it was his exquisite enjoyment of flowers, as he has lived amongst them, that gave the first impulse to him to render them in art. Then as to method in Water-colour Painting, there came the influence of De Wint—dare I say it?—and then the influence of some, at least, of modern French practice, and then the influence of his neighbour down in Sussex—that sensitive Impressionist, H. B. Brabazon, with his mature thought upon the matter, and his delightful practice, his “blobs,” upon the drawing paper—“blobs” which are so very few and are so exquisitely right. Mr. James has become, of late years at all events, less purely an Impressionist than Mr. Brabazon. In his work, whatever be its theme, there is always more of positive and of refined draughtsmanship. But the influence of Brabazon is there all the same; or, at least, is there from the first. An immense sensitiveness as to colour, a refinement of colour which does not preclude boldness—the cultivation of an alertness as to the most delicate gradations of colour—these things characterise