

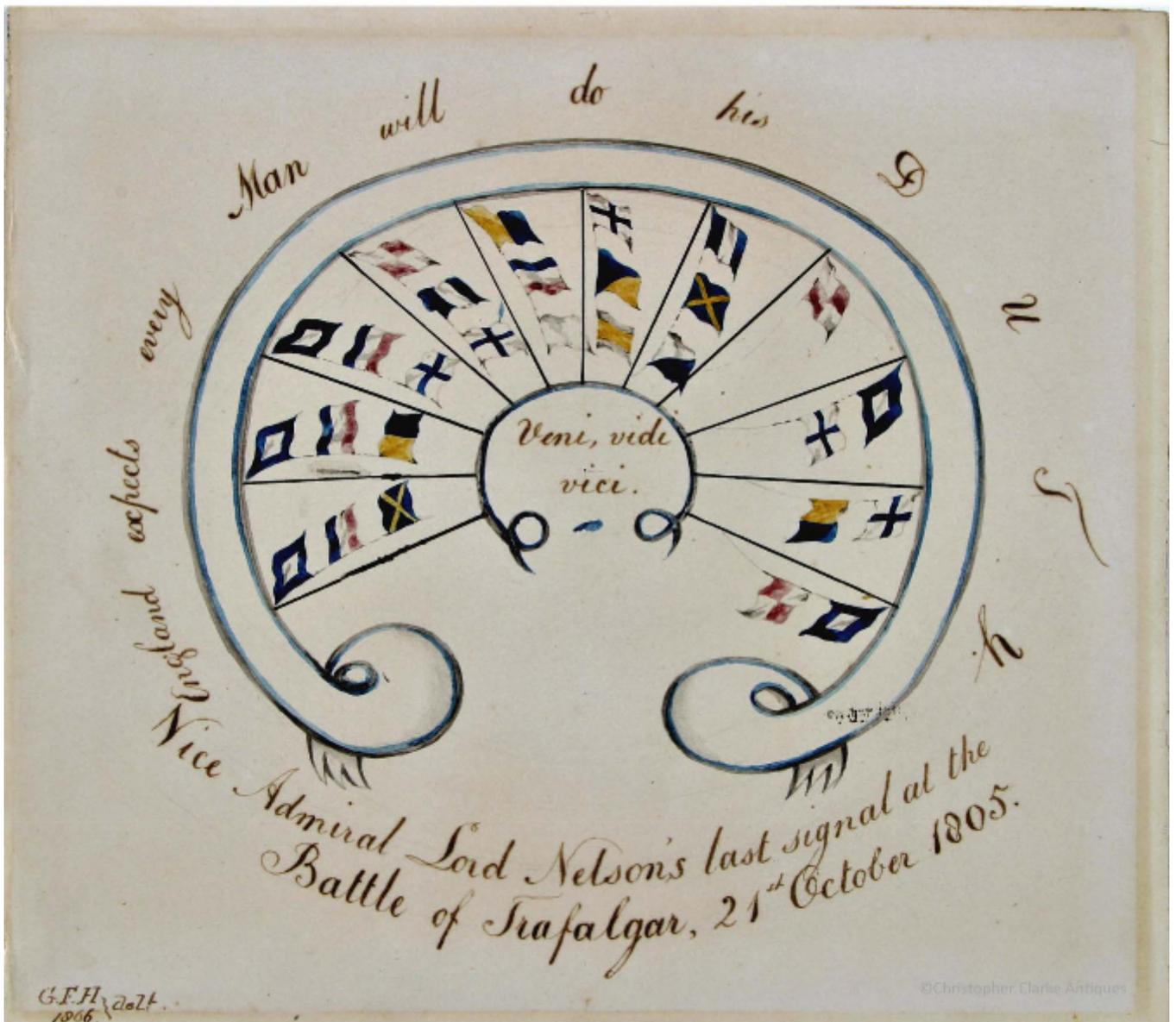


Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

Nelson's Signal by Herbert

Sold



REF: 6585

Height: 22 cm (8.7")

Width: 24.5 cm (9.6")

Description

This watercolour and ink depiction of Nelson's famous Trafalgar signal 'England Expects Every Man Will Do His Duty' is initialled 'G.F.H' and dated 1866 to one corner.

The initials stand for George Flower Herbert who was a 17 year old Midshipman on board the 98 gun Neptune at Trafalgar. From the West Indies, Herbert volunteered for the Navy in September 1803, rising through the ranks to make Rear Admiral in 1860, before his retirement in 1867, a year before his death. The legend to the bottom of picture states 'Vice Admiral Lord Nelson's last signal at the Battle of Trafalgar, 21st October 1805.' To the centre 'Vini, vidi, vici' is inscribed. Two other similar watercolours by Herbert are known, one with an affidavit from his son to the rear, the other with one from his daughter. Both confirm that he was at Trafalgar (as does the Naval Roll), with the son noting that the signal was drawn from his notes made at the battle and the daughter stating that he was the signal midshipman of the Neptune.

Herbert's flags are slightly different to those commonly illustrated for Nelson's signal but this is not unusual. The French captured the Navy's Signal book before Trafalgar and opinion as to which book was used at the battle has changed numerous times. Added to this it must be considered that Herbert was producing these signals 61 years after Trafalgar and an allowance must be made for his possible confusion. Many survivors of Trafalgar sought to make money from their involvement in the event when they later fell on hard times but these were commonly seamen rather than Officers. A Rear Admiral at the time that he produced these pictures, it is unlikely that Herbert made them for such reasons. It is more probable that he drew them as mementoes for his family and friends. This watercolour can be considered rare and is interesting for its direct connection to a man who, on the Neptune, was in the thick of the battle. Dated 1866.