



Adolphus Knell (1795-1875) Shipping in Calm Coastal Waters Oil on
artist's board, signed verso Circa 1870

Adolphus Knell

\$2,950



REF: 2362

Height: 17.77 cm (7")

Description

Adolphus Knell (1795-1875)

Shipping in Calm Coastal Waters

Oil on artist's board, signed verso

Circa 1870

Another beautifully atmospheric Victorian marine painting by the distinguished English maritime artist Adolphus Knell, depicting sailing vessels and fishing craft resting upon calm sunlit waters beneath a vast open sky. Painted circa 1870, the work possesses the quiet elegance and refined restraint for which Knell became especially admired during the nineteenth century.

The composition is wonderfully balanced. A dark-hulled sailing ship dominates the right-hand side of the scene, its rigging and sails silhouetted crisply against pale atmospheric light, while to the left a smaller vessel with warm reddish sails provides a striking note of colour across the cool silvery sea. Tiny distant ships dissolve softly into the horizon, creating a remarkable sense of depth and maritime openness.

Particularly appealing is the treatment of light upon the water. Knell captures the shimmering reflections of the afternoon sun with delicate horizontal brushwork, allowing the sea to glow with subtle silver-blue tonalities. The sky itself is rendered with broad soft cloud formations that drift gently across the composition, reinforcing the painting's calm and contemplative atmosphere.

Adolphus Knell was among the most accomplished British marine painters working during the Victorian era. Born in 1795, he specialised in highly refined coastal scenes, shipping portraits and calm sea subjects at a time when maritime painting enjoyed enormous popularity throughout Britain. His works were regularly exhibited at important London institutions including the Royal Academy and British Institution, where collectors admired his ability to combine accurate nautical draughtsmanship with poetic atmospheric effects.

Knell belonged to the great English tradition of marine art that evolved from both Dutch Golden Age seascapes and earlier British maritime painters such as Charles Brooking and Clarkson Stanfield. However, unlike artists who focused on dramatic storms or naval battles, Knell often preferred quieter moments of maritime life - anchored vessels, still waters and softly changing coastal light. This gives his paintings a lyrical quality that remains highly attractive to modern collectors.

The panoramic format used here is especially effective, lending the work an almost cinematic breadth while enhancing the serenity of the open sea. The restrained palette of pale blues, silvery greys and soft greens allows the composition to retain an understated sophistication ideally suited to elegant interiors, coastal settings and traditional country-house decoration.

There is also a strong decorative quality to the work. The contrast between the luminous water and the darker silhouetted shipping creates a refined visual harmony, while the delicate distant sails evoke the romance of nineteenth-century maritime Britain at the height of the sailing age.

Paintings by Adolphus Knell continue to be highly regarded among collectors of English marine art, particularly intimate cabinet-sized examples such as this, which combine fine atmospheric handling with timeless nautical subject matter.

Signed ...