LOT 41
PROPERTY FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION
MARIE SPARTALI STILLMAN
1844-1927
BY A CLEAR WELL, WITHIN A LITTLE FIELD
signed with monogram and dated 83 l.r.
watercolour with bodycolour and gold paint
54.5 by 48cm., 21½ by 19in.

ESTIMATE 20,000-30,000 GBP
Lot Sold: 81,250 GBP

PROVENANCE
Mrs Money-Kyrle
EXHIBITED
London, Grosvenor Gallery, 1884, no.368;
London, Barbican Art Gallery, The Last Romantics, 1989, no.29

LITERATURE

CATALOGUE NOTE
This charmingly lyrical watercolour was one of several pictures by Stillman inspired by the writings of the early Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio, the best-known of which is The Enchanted Garden of 1889 (private collection). For the present picture, Stillman used the translation written by D.G. Rossetti for whom she posed in the 1870s as a model and from whom she learnt much to inspire and guide her art. The poses of the three women are similar to those found in Rossetti's paintings, although the background is closer to the work of Stillman's other mentor, Ford Madox Brown. The motif of women holding up branches of foliage, probably derives directly from pictures by Rossetti, such as The Beloved (Tate), Il Rasmoccello (Harvard Museums) and Sibylla Palmifera (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight). The same gesture is present in Stillman's Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool) also shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1884.

‘By a clear well, within a little field
Full of green grass and flowers of every hue,
Sat three girls, relating (as I knew)’

‘Of Three Girls and their Talk’, Boccaccio (translated by D.G. Rossetti in his Earthly Paradise)