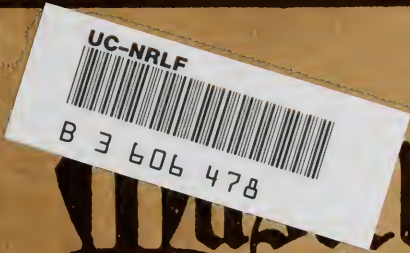


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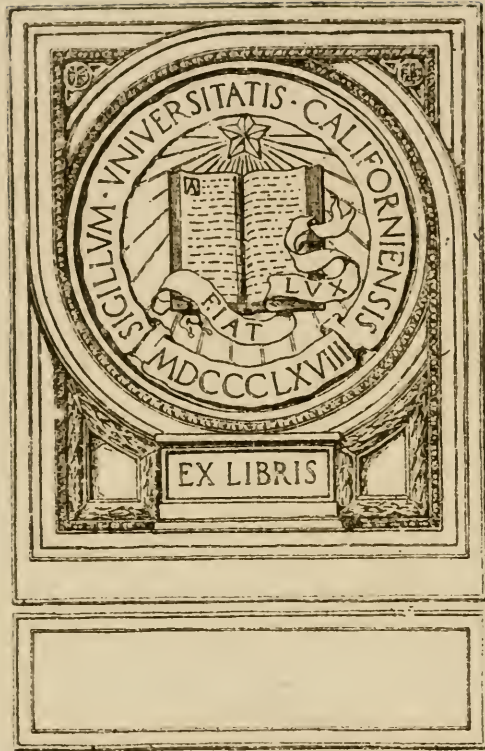
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Copley was a fine looking man, courtly in manner and elegant in his dress. The portrait given above shows him with a powdered wig and wearing a red coat and white muslin stock. The original painting, a sketch in oils, in which the head is life-sized, is owned by Gardiner Greene Hammond, Esq., of Boston, by whose permission it is here reproduced.

John Singleton Copley

BORN 1737: DIED 1815
AMERICAN SCHOOL

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, the first great American portrait-painter, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on July 3, 1737. Both his parents, although of English origin, were Irish by birth. His father, Richard Copley, was a native of Limerick; his mother, Mary Singleton, was the daughter of John Singleton, Esq., of Quinville Abbey, County Clare. Married in 1736, Richard Copley and his young bride determined to seek a new home for themselves in America, the story current in the Copley family being "that Mr. Richard Copley, although endowed with a good name and a handsome person, was not wealthy, and that Squire Singleton perhaps could not, and certainly did not, so largely endow his daughter as to allow her husband and herself to continue to reside in County Clare in the style to which she at least had been accustomed." Accordingly they emigrated to the new world, and forthwith settled in the town of Boston, where, in the following year, their only son, the future painter, was born. At about the time of his son's birth Richard Copley died in the West Indies, where he had gone for his health, and about ten years later his widow, who after the death of her husband had carried on the tobacco business, in which he had been engaged, married Peter Pelham, a widower with three sons; one son only, Henry Pelham, was born of this second marriage.

Unfortunately, but little is known of Copley's childhood and early youth. When very young he is said to have shown a decided taste for drawing, even, according to family tradition, covering the walls of his nursery with childish sketches, and frequently incurring the displeasure of his teachers by the drawings with which he ornamented his school-books. He was by nature quiet and shy, and when his companions were engaged in play or in study would often steal away, pencil in hand, "to muse over his own fancies and to pursue undisturbed his favorite employment."

"The marriage of Copley's mother to Mr. Pelham," writes Mr. Augustus T. Perkins, "was probably of the utmost advantage to the future artist. Besides being a man of unusually good education for the time—a land-surveyor and a mathematician—Mr. Pelham was certainly a passable painter of por-

traits, and a mezzotint engraver of more than ordinary merit. He preceded Smybert, the painter, and Harrison, the architect, who came to this country in the train of Bishop Berkeley, by at least three years. Whitmore, speaking of him in connection with his painting and engraving, says, 'He was the founder, indeed, of these arts in New England.' . . . Pelham most probably taught his stepson, Copley, the rudiments of his art, whilst his example must have been of timely service in fostering such tastes as the child may have shown. The household of Peter Pelham was, perhaps, the only place in New England where painting and engraving were the predominant pursuits."

Beyond the instruction received from his stepfather, however, Copley seems to have been self-taught; although it is difficult to accept the statement made in after years by Copley's son, Lord Lyndhurst, that his father "was entirely self-taught and never saw a decent picture, with the exception of his own, until he was nearly thirty years of age," when there were in Boston at that time numerous portraits by the Scotch painter John Smybert, and by Jonathan B. Blackburn, who succeeded Smybert in that town as "the painter of the quality," to say nothing of a few good pictures brought from Europe by the wealthiest among the colonists.

In 1751, when Copley was fourteen years old, his stepfather died. He and his mother and brothers continued to live in the small house which they had been occupying in Boston, near the Quaker meeting-house in Lindel's Row, not far from the upper end of King Street, as State Street was then called. In the following year the young artist painted a portrait of his stepbrother, Charles Pelham, which, although faulty in many respects, gave promise of what the boy of fifteen was to accomplish in after years. In 1753, when sixteen, he painted and engraved a head of the Rev. William Welsted, of Boston, and also executed in oils a portrait of Dr. De Mountfort, then a child.¹

The next few years passed quietly and uneventfully. The young painter worked diligently at his profession, improving constantly both as a draftsman and a colorist, and being in receipt of an ever-increasing number of commissions for portraits in oils and in crayons.

In 1769, when he was thirty-two years old, Copley married Susannah Farnum, daughter of Mr. Richard Clarke, a wealthy and distinguished merchant of Boston, and agent for the East India Company, whose name was later to become famous as the consignee of the cargoes of tea which were thrown into Boston harbor by way of protest against the tax imposed by England upon that commodity. The marriage was an eminently happy one. Mrs. Copley has been described as a woman of unusual beauty of character, and of such high mental attainments that her companionship was a never-failing inspiration to her husband. Copley frequently introduced her portrait into his subject-pictures, and from a crayon sketch which he made of her,

¹The frequently repeated statement that when Washington visited Boston in 1755 Copley painted his portrait in miniature has been proved to be without foundation. The so-called Copley miniature of Washington, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, was painted by C. W. Peale in 1777. See 'Life Portraits of George Washington' by Charles Henry Hart, 'McClure's Magazine,' February, 1897.

but still more from her likeness in the celebrated 'Family Group' (plate vi), it is evident that she possessed much personal beauty.

At the time of his marriage Copley had as many commissions for portraits as he could execute, and although his prices were not high, ranging from five to fourteen guineas, he was in receipt of a comfortable income. Two years later we hear of him as living in a beautiful house on Beacon Hill, Boston, "fronting on a fine open common;" and it was not long after this that he became the owner of all the land which lies between Charles, Beacon, Walnut, and Mt. Vernon Streets, Louisburg Square, and Pinckney Street—a tract of about eleven acres. Upon this estate—his "farm" he used to call it—Copley's early married life was spent. There four of his six children were born; there he practised his art with unremitting diligence, painting those many portraits of courtly gentlemen in broadcloth or in satin coats and powdered wigs, and of stately ladies in gowns of rich silks and stiff brocades, which have made his name famous.

The population of Boston at this time was about eighteen thousand. Fine colonial mansions standing in spacious gardens embellished the town, commanding unobstructed views of the adjacent country with its hills and forests, and of the harbor, alive with sailing-vessels from all parts of the world. Even in those early days Boston was noted as the center of a learned and cultivated society, and among the distinguished men and women, the eminent statesmen, merchants, and divines, Copley counted patrons and friends, "his courtly manner and genial disposition making him a general favorite."

In 1771, Colonel Trumbull, then a young man at Harvard College, relates that he visited the painter in his home on Beacon Hill, and was greatly struck by the richness of Copley's dress and elegance of his appearance, describing him as being attired in a suit of crimson velvet with gold buttons, and as having everything about him in very handsome style.

In 1774 an important step in Copley's career was taken. Some time before—probably in 1766—he had sent to his countryman the painter Benjamin West, then resident in London, a picture of a boy seated at a table, holding in his hand a chain to which a squirrel is attached. This painting, a portrait of the artist's half-brother, Henry Pelham, was unsigned, and the letter which should have accompanied it having been delayed, the picture reached its destination without an explanatory word. West, however, surmised that it was the work of an American painter from the pine wood of the frame on which the canvas was stretched, and also because the flying squirrel introduced was an animal peculiar to America, and the painting bore so plainly the evidence of a master-hand that he was loud in his praise, enthusiastically pronouncing the coloring to be worthy of Titian. The rule excluding from the exhibition of the Society of Incorporated Artists—the forerunner of the Royal Academy—all anonymous works, indeed all works not painted by members of the Society, was waived, and Copley's 'Boy with the Squirrel' was given a place in the exhibition.

His reputation in England was at once established, and he was urged to go to London; but although strongly tempted to try his fate in competition

with the artists of his day in a way from which he was debarred in his home across the sea, the serious risks which such a step involved caused him to hesitate. "I make as much here," he wrote to a friend in 1767, "as if I were a Raphael or a Correggio; and three hundred guineas a year, my present income, is equal to nine hundred a year in London. With regard to reputation, you are sensible that fame cannot be durable where pictures are confined to sitting-rooms and regarded only for the resemblance they bear to their originals. Were I sure of doing as well in Europe as here, I would not hesitate a moment in my choice; but I might in the experiment waste a thousand pounds and two years of my time, and have to return baffled to America."

His marriage, the family cares which followed, and the necessity of earning an income sufficient not only for the expenses of his travels, but for the support of his wife and children during his absence, postponed all thought of Europe for the time, however, and it was not until 1774, when relations with the mother-country were becoming strained, and he may have felt that his income was in danger of being curtailed, that Copley concluded to cross the Atlantic, in order to improve his style by the study of the old masters in the galleries of Italy and other continental countries, and possibly to try his fortune in England, where he had already established a name for himself. Accordingly, in June of that year, leaving his wife and children to follow later if it should seem best to transfer the home from Boston to London, Copley left his native country, to which, as it turned out, he never returned.

A cordial welcome awaited him in England, where he landed after a four-weeks' voyage. West took him to see all that was best in art in London and showed him every attention. In a letter to his wife, written soon after his arrival, Copley says, "I have just returned from Mr. West's house, where I took tea. He accompanied me to the queen's palace, where I beheld the finest collection of paintings, I believe, in England. . . . I have had a visit from Sir Joshua Reynolds, and from Mr. Strange, the celebrated engraver. Lord Gage is out of town; I have not, therefore, seen him or Lord Dartmouth, but shall be introduced to the latter next week by Governor Hutchinson. . . . I dine out every day."

In addition to his social engagements Copley found ample opportunity for the exercise of his profession; but he was anxious to begin his art studies as soon as possible, and in August he left England for Italy, and passing through Lyons, Marseilles, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, reached Rome in October. His letters to his wife written at this period of his career give the best and most vivid account of his travels. Everywhere his interest was aroused by the novelty and beauty of the scenery, and by the great works of art which he saw. From Genoa he writes: "I am impatient to get to work, and to try if my hand and my head cannot do something like what others have done, by which they have astonished the world and immortalized themselves. Genoa is a lovely city. . . . If I should be suddenly transported to Boston I should think it only a collection of wren-boxes; it is on so small a scale compared to the cities of Europe."

In a letter from Rome, after expressing his relief upon hearing from Mrs. Copley that hostilities between the colonies and Great Britain were not so openly declared as he had feared from the accounts in the London papers, he says: "It is truly astonishing to see the works of art in this city—painting, sculpture, and architecture in such quantity, beauty, and magnificence as exceed description. I shall always enjoy satisfaction from this tour. . . . I know the extent of the arts, to what length they have been carried, and I feel more confidence in what I do myself than I did before I came."

"Everywhere I go," he writes later, "I find some persons to whom I am known, or am introduced to. . . . When I arrived in Naples I waited on Sir William Hamilton, to deliver a letter from Mr. Palmer, of Boston. I was introduced into a room where there was a concert and company. I inquired of the servant which was Sir William, and delivered my letter. Mr. Izard stepped forward and presented me. Sir William read the letter, and politely said: 'Mr. Copley needs no introduction; his name is sufficient anywhere.' I cannot but say I have been surprised to find myself known in places so distant; I am happy, at the same time, in being less a stranger in the world than I thought, and have found in every place persons desirous of rendering such kind offices as a stranger stands in need of."

But with all his enjoyment of foreign travel and keen delight in the works of art about him, Copley was filled with anxiety regarding the disturbed condition of his country, the welfare of his family, and the uncertainty which attended their future and his own career. His main idea was to complete as speedily as could be the studies he had laid out for himself, so that the separation from his wife and children should be of the shortest possible duration, "for till we are together," he wrote to Mrs. Copley, "I have as little happiness as yourself. As soon as possible you shall know what my prospects are in England, and then you will be able to determine whether it is best for you to go there or for me to return to America."

This question was soon decided by the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Copley was in Parma at the time, where he had been commissioned by Lord Grosvenor to make a copy of Correggio's 'Madonna with St. Jerome,' a commission which he successfully carried out, although according to his own acknowledgment his anxiety almost rendered him incapable of proceeding with it.

In a letter to his wife written at this time he says: "I am informed by a letter from London that what I greatly feared has at last taken place, and the war has begun, and, if I am not mistaken, the country which was once the happiest on the globe will be deluged with blood for many years to come. I cannot think that the power of Great Britain will subdue the country, if the people are united, as they appear to be at present. I know it may appear strange to some men of strong understanding that I should hold such an opinion, but it is very evident to me that America will have the power of resistance till grown strong enough to conquer, and that victory and independence will go hand in hand. I tremble for you, my dear, my children and friends."

Dread of the long separation from her husband which would be enforced by war, and the knowledge that there would be no employment for an artist in a country impoverished by its ravages, decided Mrs. Copley to follow her husband without waiting to hear of his return to England, and leaving in the care of Mrs. Pelham, Copley's mother, her youngest child, which was too delicate to bear the long sea voyage, and which shortly afterwards died, she set sail with her two young daughters and son on the last ship which left New England under the British flag. Upon their arrival on the other side of the water they were cared for by Mrs. Copley's brother-in-law, Mr. Bromfield, then in London, until such time as Copley could join them.

The news that his wife and children had left America reached the painter while he was in Parma, and before many months the family were reunited in London, which thenceforth became their home. Their first residence there was in Leicester Fields, but at the end of a year or two they removed to 25 George Street, Hanover Square, where Mr. Clarke, Mrs. Copley's father, lived with them. The house was commodious, and admirably adapted in its arrangements to the requirements of a painter, and there the remainder of Copley's life was spent.

Copley was already well known in London. It was not long before he became the fashion, and commissions for portraits of the nobility and of people of note kept him busily employed. Not only was he engaged in painting portraits, but, fired by the example of West, he attempted, in accordance with the taste of the day, the composition of large historical scenes. The first of his subject-pictures was 'A Youth Rescued from a Shark,' depicting an experience in the early life of Mr. Brook Watson, whom Copley had met on the voyage to England, and whose vivid description of the incident had made a deep impression on his mind. Of the two versions which he painted of this subject one is now in Christ's Hospital School, London; the other is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Upon West's recommendation Copley was intrusted with the painting of a picture of the three young daughters of King George III. in the garden at Windsor. Mrs. Amory has told us how the artist, in his anxiety to do justice to this group and to his own genius as well, so wearied the patience of the little princesses that their attendants appealed to the queen to request Mr. Copley to shorten the time he exacted for their sittings. The queen, however, deemed it best not to interfere, and in the end the success of the picture amply compensated for all trials which the children had undergone.

Copley was, indeed, notorious for his slow method of procedure in painting. On one occasion Gilbert Stuart happening to call at his studio, Copley asked if he would stand for him while he painted a bit of the cambric shirt-ruffle that decorated his bosom. Thinking that it would occupy but a few minutes, Stuart complied, but after standing a long time he became impatient, and Copley apologized for the delay. "No consequence at all," said Stuart, "I beg you would finish—do all you can to it now, for I assure you this is the last time you ever get me into such a scrape."

Another story, of more than doubtful authenticity it must be said, is told

of his undertaking to paint a family group which progressed so slowly that the wife of the gentleman who ordered it died and he married again. At his request a portrait of his first wife was introduced as an angel, while her successor occupied her place on earth. But before the picture was completed the second wife died, and was placed in the clouds above, being in her turn succeeded by a third, who claimed the central position in the group. As the price of this picture was in proportion to the artist's labor, it was disputed by the gentleman, who claimed that the painting should have been completed before his domestic changes had necessitated the alterations. It is further said that Copley went to law about it, and won his suit.

Copley's celebrated canvas, 'The Death of the Earl of Chatham,' now in the National Gallery, London, established his reputation as a historical painter. 'The Death of Major Pierson,' painted some time afterwards, and now in the same gallery, is of greater artistic value, and added materially to his fame, as did his large canvas, now in the trustees' room of the Boston Public Library, of 'Charles I. Demanding in the House of Commons the Five Impeached Members.'

In 1779 Copley was elected a member of the Royal Academy, of which body he had previously been chosen an associate. Soon after this he was commissioned by the city of London to paint a large picture of 'The Siege and Relief of Gibraltar,' now in the Guildhall of London, and, accompanied by his wife and eldest daughter, went to Hanover, Germany, to paint the portraits of four Hanoverian generals who were to figure in the composition. A letter from the English king, George III., was presented to the painter, and insured a hospitable reception for him and his family.

With the exception of this trip to Germany, the remainder of Copley's life was passed in England. "A more congenial sphere for a man of genius," writes Mrs. Amory, "can scarcely be imagined than his London home. It was the favorite resort of his countrymen in England, of every shade of political opinion, and of all that were distinguished in the aristocratic circles of the colonial court, as well as men of art and letters."

But notwithstanding Copley's success in his profession and happiness in his home, his thoughts constantly reverted to that earlier home in America, and in his heart he cherished the hope of returning to it. His property in Boston, which since his departure for England had greatly increased in value, had been sold by his agent at a sacrifice, and Copley, desiring to annul the bargain, sent his son to America in 1795 to regain, if possible, "the farm" on Beacon Hill. To his lasting sorrow, however, this attempt met with no satisfactory result, and there was no alternative but to accept of a compromise of all Copley's claims. "Thus," writes Mrs. Amory, "the dream of his life since he left America vanished, and his last aspiration of returning to close his eyes among the scenes of his youth ended in disappointment."

The last years of Copley's life were saddened by pecuniary embarrassments. "Picture after picture was finished," we are told, "exhibited, and admired, but not sold; so that his self-love was wounded and his spirits de-

pressed." The disturbed political condition of England occasioned by the long continued continental wars, which crippled her financial resources and rendered the times unfavorable to art, was in a measure accountable for this; but there was in addition the fact that new methods in painting were replacing the old, and that what had been acceptable to the generation to which Copley belonged was not in accordance with the taste of the generation which followed. But in spite of discouragements he worked on diligently to the last, always able to interest himself so absorbingly in his painting that with his brush in hand every other subject was forgotten.

In the spring of 1815 Mrs. Copley wrote to her daughter, Mrs. Gardiner Greene, then living in Boston, "I have the happiness to say that we are in health, and this is much when I bring your recollection to the period of life to which your father has attained. In your absence of fifteen years you would contemplate a great change; he grows feeble in his limbs, and goes out very seldom, for walking fatigues him; but his health is good, and he pursues his profession with pleasure."

In the following August Copley had a stroke of paralysis, and on the ninth of September of that year, 1815, he died, at the age of seventy-eight, from the effects of a second stroke. He was buried in the Church of St. John the Baptist at Croydon, not far from London.

His wife survived him many years, as did three children,—Mrs. Gardiner Greene, already mentioned, who, after her marriage, lived in Boston, Massachusetts; Miss Mary Copley, who remained in London; and one son, Lord Lyndhurst, the distinguished British jurist and statesman, who was three times appointed lord chancellor of England.

The foregoing biographical sketch is largely based upon Mrs. Amory's 'Life of Copley' and upon the memoir of the painter by Mr. Augustus Thorndike Perkins.

The Art of Copley

SAMUEL ISHAM

'A HISTORY OF AMERICAN PAINTING'¹

COPLEY'S painting separates itself into two pretty sharply marked divisions, according to whether it was done before or after he left Boston. The latter half is far more skilled and complete technically, but it is the earlier work, the long series of portraits of our colonial dignitaries, divines, judges, and merchants, with their womankind, which is most interesting and characteristic and which gives him his peculiar importance. They are the only pre-revolutionary relics on which we can depend to put before our eyes the very age and body of the time. The very lack of facile skill makes their veracity more convincing than that of the canvases of Gainsborough or Reynolds, where temperament or training idealized or Italianized the sitters into

¹In preparation for the Macmillan Co.

something rather different from what their contemporaries saw in daily intercourse. Gainsborough was a poet, Reynolds an eclectic, wise in all the traditions of the craft, who could at will see with the eye and work with the hand of Van Dyck or Titian—or come pretty near to it. Copley had no such temperament or training; the sitters themselves, in the cold, clear light of New England, were what he tried to put on the canvases, unmodified by any golden mist of Venice or facile brushwork of the Netherlands.

This is not to make him the equal, much less the superior, of the men just named. His surroundings forced upon him a greater sincerity, which seems also to have corresponded with his temperament. He began under the influence of his stepfather, Pelham, and though the latter died when Copley was a boy of fourteen, yet his influence shows through much of the painter's early work. The engraving, in mezzotint, of Welstead, made when Copley was sixteen, much resembles the average work of Pelham, and is more like the production of a mediocre craftsman than the early effort of a boy of exceptional talent. He very soon gave up engraving and seems never to have returned to it in any form, but his early works show its influence in a blackness of shadow and a hardness of style; they were in addition stiff and ungraceful, and in the faces there was a sincerity of plainness which must have been trying to the sitters. Even Smybert, whose work resembles that of Copley at this period, and whose colonial dames are rigid and unbending enough, yet manages to put into their faces a comeliness and charm unknown to the youthful Copley, still struggling uncompromisingly with the difficulties of drawing. His improvement was steady, but it took him long to master certain details like the rendering of eyes, which Smybert never became entirely sure of. At first they were little better than dark slits, and in his best colonial work the lids are often unnaturally prominent. He learned nothing by heart, acquired no ready formulas for execution. He had to see every detail in front of him and put it down exactly as it was. He worked laboriously, mixing each tint with his palette-knife, holding it up and matching it to his sitter's face before he placed it on the canvas. This made him a slow executant, and there are many stories of the tedium of sitting for him; sixteen sittings of a whole day each were not considered too much for a head alone. . . .

The pictures thus produced were without beauty of tone or richness of color. Something must be allowed for the fading of the flesh-tones, probably put in with carmine, but the effect must always have been crude and harsh. The high lights are chalky white, the shadows black or brickish brown; a cold, raw blue (like Prussian blue) is often painfully prominent, and there is no attempt to soften the opposing tints nor to blend them. The paint is laid on heavily and worked smooth until there are no brush-marks visible. There is no attempt to keep the shadows transparent, nor much glazing or working over. It resembles more, in a way, the contemporary French work than the English, where the traditions of Van Dyck were being revived. Nevertheless, in spite of these faults, or possibly on account of them, the portraits have remarkable qualities. The figures are well placed on the can-

vas in good, if rather rigid, poses, and the backgrounds, especially in the full-length portraits, are sufficiently furnished with curtains, tables, and Turkey rugs; but over and above all else is the thorough, unwearied sincerity of the work. Copley knew his sitters, knew their position in the community, their dignity, their character, their wealth. He was in sympathy with them, and judged by their own standard those airs and graces which to a European might seem provincial and uncouth. Holmes has well called his portraits the titles of nobility of the Bostonians of his day.

He painted them as they were, serious, self-reliant, capable, sometimes rather pompous in their heavy velvet coats, but men to be depended on in an emergency; the women fit mates for the men, their faces stamped with that character which left its impress on every child of the ample families of the time. At times there is a difficulty in reconciling his portraits with the reputation of the sitters for grace and beauty handed down in the old diaries and letters, but in time his sincerity triumphed even here, and while the portrait remained crude, hard, and without charm, yet we recognize that it is the portrait of a charming woman. This lack of charm tells terribly against them when hung in a gallery with other pictures, but when seen in the places for which they were destined, the halls or rooms of old colonial houses of Boston or other of the New England cities, or brought together in official groups as in the Harvard Memorial Hall, their inherent strength makes itself felt. They take their places as the true *genii loci* as nothing else could do. Even their faults strengthen the impression. . . . The velvet coats and embroidered waistcoats of the men, the satin robes and laces of the women, are of undoubted genuineness. Even if the satin looks like tin we know that it is satin, and if a colonial worthy goes to the expense of silk stockings not even the most casual observer could mistake them for wool.

In time this unremitting labor began to have its result. During the last ten years or so of his Boston life Copley was master of his trade and could produce what he tried to. That his portraits still remained dry and hard, without atmosphere, was because he had not seen enough good work to recognize what he lacked. But he was now in a position to benefit at once from increased knowledge. He was no sooner abroad than his style gained in ease and simplicity. His portrait of Ralph Izard and his wife, painted when he was in Rome, shows still something of the old stiffness of attitude, the overfilling with detail, but the work is smoother, more graceful, though minutely finished in all its parts in a way more characteristic of the continental work of the time than of the English, where the example of Reynolds had produced a broader, more effective handling. With his London life Copley's work took on more and more of the English manner. His 'Family Group' of himself, his wife, his father-in-law, and his four young children, painted a few years after his arrival, shows this alteration, but retains also the finer qualities of his colonial period and is one of his very best works. The composition is not in perfect unity and the tone is cold, with much of a sort of claret color and his old unpleasant blue, but they are softened and harmonized with skill, and the shadows and blacks are soft, rich, and deep.

The painting of the heads is superb, drawn impeccably, full of character, and with only a touch of the old rigidity; the children especially are most happy in attitude and expression. . . .

The 'Family Group' was preceded by the 'Youth Rescued from a Shark,' and followed by the series of his historical pictures, inspired doubtless by West's; but, surpassing their prototypes, they remain to-day masterpieces of the kind. . . .

These compositions, however, were but incidents in his work. Portrait painting was the business of his life from beginning to end. Probably his latter work should be called better than his earlier. It certainly had fewer glaring faults, but it also had less personality. His earlier work is unmistakable anywhere; his latter often approaches so closely to that of the brilliant circle of contemporary portrait-painters in England that it is practically indistinguishable from it. A little extra firmness and solidity of drawing persists till the end, but the poses, the dark backgrounds, the rich color, the glazings, are all of the school.

Like Reynolds, Copley sought for "the Venetian," the marvelous medium supposed to have been used by Titian, which like the philosopher's stone would by its own virtue transform the leaden tones of mediocre painters into gold. He even thought a few years before his death that he had found it, but he was then only one of many who could paint glowing canvases. Patronage fell off; almost his last important work, an equestrian portrait of the prince regent, from which he hoped great things, remained unsold; his health declined and his life did not long outlast his popularity.

HENRY T. TUCKERMAN

'BOOK OF THE ARTISTS'

C O P L E Y'S portraits are among the few significant art-memorials of the past encountered in this country; and, as they are characteristic to a high degree, they possess the interest which is ever attached to such relics. He was the only native painter of real skill which the new world could boast prior to the Revolution.

It cannot be doubted that his knowledge was acquired under considerable discouragement, and that the excellence of his drawing was the result of persevering study. The want of early advantages appears chiefly in his coloring. The dryness of tone and formality of manner in his pictures is, in a great degree, attributable to the unpropitious influences under which he acquired the rudiments of his art.

Associated as his portraits chiefly are with the colonial or revolutionary period of our history, there lingers around them the charm of a bygone era, which endears even their palpable defects. The want of ease and nature in these time-hallowed portraits is, indeed, as authentic as their costume. They are generally dignified, elaborate, and more or less ostentatious and somewhat mechanical, but we recognize in these very traits the best evidence of their correctness. They illustrate the men and women of a day when pride, decorum, and an elegance sometimes ungraceful but always impressive marked the dress and air of the higher classes. The faces are rarely insipid, and the

hands almost invariably fair and delicately molded. A rich brocade dressing-gown and velvet skullcap, a high-backed and daintily carved chair, or showy curtain in the background, are frequently introduced. "Sir" and "Madam" are the epithets which instinctively rise to our lips in apostrophizing these "counterfeit presentments." There is that about them which precludes the very idea of taking a liberty. They look like incarnations of self-respect—people born to command—men whose families were regulated with the reserve of state policy, and women who were models of virtue and propriety. In reading of John Hancock or Mrs. Boylston, we think of them as painted by Copley. Large ruffles, heavy silks, silver buckles, gold-embroidered vests, and powdered wigs are blended in our imaginations with the memory of patriotic zeal and matronly influence. The hardness of the outlines and the semi-official aspect of the figures correspond with the spirit of those times.

Like all genuine portrait-painters, Copley unconsciously embodied the peculiarities of his age. Pride of birth had not then been superseded by pride of wealth. The distinction of gentle blood was cherished. Equality had only begun to assert itself as a political axiom; as a social principle it had not dawned upon the most ultra reformers. The patrician element still carried honorable sway in the new world, and ere its external signs were lost in republican sameness of bearing and costume, the pencil of Copley snatched them from oblivion, by a faithful transfer to canvas.

RUFUS ROCKWELL WILSON

'NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE' 1902

IT was Copley's own belief that his best work as a painter was done in America, and in this opinion the thoughtful student of his portraits cannot fail to concur. They are never commonplace and the handling is always unmistakable. A calm, deliberate, and methodical workman, he never hurried and never neglected any part of his task. "He painted," as Gilbert Stuart said in after years, "the whole man." Self-taught, Copley's merits and faults are his own. Superior as a colorist to a majority of his contemporaries, he delighted in the brilliant and massive uniforms, the brocades and embroidered velvets, the rich laces and scarfs of his day, and painted them, and the masterful men and stately women which they garbed, with sure and loving hand. He modeled a head with as much care as did Clouet, and he was especially felicitous in catching the expression of the eye, while his skill in rendering the individuality and character of the hand has seldom been excelled.

Copley's faults as a painter are an occasional tendency to dryness, to hardness of outline, and to stiffness in his figures. However, distinction is never lacking in his work, and in his best portraits the faults I have mentioned are hardly apparent. Indeed, their truth, simplicity, repose, and refinement would have done credit to any artist of any time; and painted as they were by a young man who never had a teacher, and who saw few, if any, good pictures save his own until he was nearly forty years of age, they are bound to remain the marvels of our pioneer art.

Copley was essentially a portrait-painter, and his historical and religious pictures, though showing no mean ability, are wanting in imagination, and,

at their best, are little more than groups of carefully executed portraits. Still, considered solely as a portrait-painter, his fame is secure. No painter, not even Holbein or Velasquez, ever lived in closer sympathy with the spirit of his time than did he.

The Works of Copley

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

‘PORTRAIT OF MRS. DANIEL DENISON ROGERS’

PLATE I

ONE of Copley’s most charming works is this portrait of Abigail Bromfield, first wife of Mr. Daniel Denison Rogers of Boston. It was painted in England, and in its composition and technical qualities exemplifies the change which had taken place in Copley’s style since leaving America, the influence of the English school being here clearly marked.

Mrs. Rogers is dressed in white satin with lace ruffles in the neck and sleeves and a white muslin scarf about her shoulders. Her hair, which is arranged in the fashion of the day, is slightly powdered, and she wears a large hat with a soft muslin crown trimmed with plum-colored ribbons and surmounted by white ostrich plumes, while around the edge of the brim is a delicately painted fall of lace. She stands in an open landscape, her skirt, scarf, and ribbons blowing in the breeze. Behind her is a tree, and to the left a brilliant sunset sky, changing in color from pale greenish-blue with white clouds above into a glow of red and gold at the horizon.

The picture measures about three feet four inches wide by a little over four feet high. It is owned by Miss Annette P. Rogers, of Boston, Massachusetts, by whose permission it is here reproduced.

‘MR. AND MRS. RALPH IZARD’

PLATE II

WHILE in Rome in 1774-5, Copley painted this picture of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard, whose acquaintance he had made on the journey to Italy, and of whom he saw much during his sojourn there. Mr. Izard was a wealthy planter of South Carolina, who had been educated in England, and, since 1771, had resided in London. His wife was, before her marriage, Miss Alice Delancey of West Chester County, New York, niece of James Delancey, lieutenant-governor of that State.

Copley’s double portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Izard, the only original work which he is known to have undertaken while on his European travels, is one of his most important achievements. The canvas measures seven feet four inches wide by five feet nine inches high. Mr. and Mrs. Izard are represented at opposite ends of an elaborately carved table with red porphyry top. The lady, in a dress of blue taffeta with white gauzy muslin at neck and

sleeves, a white gauze scarf, and muslin cap surmounting her brown hair, is seated on a sofa upholstered in rose-colored damask with a heavy curtain of the same color draped behind her. The figure of Mrs. Izard is excellently rendered, but that of Mr. Izard is less happy, the wooden qualities which characterize many of Copley's early work being here manifest. The colors, however, are admirable, the close-fitting suit of brownish-gray cloth, light gray stockings, white sleeve-ruffles and stock, contrasting harmoniously with the rose-colored damask of the chair on which he is seated.

In the middle distance is a marble group of which Mrs. Izard has apparently just finished a sketch which she hands across the table for her husband's inspection. Various objects in the background are suggestive of their foreign surroundings—a column and a parapet on which stands a Greek vase, and, in the distance, the Roman Colosseum.

This picture was to have been delivered to Mr. Izard in London, but the outbreak of the American Revolution, and his appointment by the Continental Congress as commissioner to Tuscany, prevented his return to England, and after the war his income was so reduced that he no longer felt able to pay the price agreed upon of two hundred guineas. The picture accordingly remained in Copley's studio until, in 1825, ten years after the death of the painter, a grandson of Mr. Izard, Mr. Charles Manigault, purchased it in London from Mrs. Copley for the original price. It remained in the possession of the family for which it had been in the first place painted until 1903, when it was acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where it now hangs.

'PORTRAIT OF MRS. DANIEL HUBBARD'

PLATE III

THIS portrait of Mrs. Daniel Hubbard is, as a recent critic has said, "a typical Copley, the work representative of the artist's happiest and most refined vein." There is a decided charm about the picture, not only because of the beauty and distinction of the subject, which are here admirably expressed, but because of the skill shown by the painter in the pose and drawing of the figure, the careful modeling of the face and hands, the rich fall of the drapery, and the harmony of the colors.

Mrs. Hubbard is standing by a small table covered with papers, on which one arm rests. She wears a gown of golden brown satin, greenish in tone, cut low in the neck and finished at both neck and sleeves with muslin ruffles deeply trimmed with lace. Around her throat is a muslin ruff fastened with a bow behind. Her dark hair is combed back from her forehead over a cushion and ornamented with pearls. A column, partly hidden by a dark green curtain, is at the left, and in the distance is a gray cloudy sky.

Mrs. Hubbard, who before her marriage was Mary Greene, was born in Boston in 1734. She married Daniel Hubbard, the son by a previous marriage of the lady whom her father married for his second wife, and who, in 1776, was one of the list of proscribed Tories obliged to leave Boston when the town surrendered to Washington.

Copley's portrait of Mrs. Hubbard was probably painted about 1764. The canvas measures three feet four inches wide by four feet two inches high. It is owned by Miss Mary H. Whitwell, of Boston, Massachusetts, by whose permission it is here reproduced.

'THE DEATH OF MAJOR PIERSON'

PLATE IV

THE incident which Copley has here portrayed occurred during the invasion of the Island of Jersey by the French in the year 1781. At the storming of St. Helier, the capital of the island, the lieutenant-governor was taken prisoner, and compelled by the enemy to sign a document commanding the English garrison within the castle to remain quiescent. This command was treated with contempt, the garrison declaring that they would hold the castle at all cost, and Major Pierson, a young English officer only twenty-four years old, having quickly collected a few companies of the Jersey militia, courageously charged the invaders, closing with them in a hand-to-hand conflict, and at the moment of victory was killed by a ball fired at him by a French officer, who was himself immediately shot down by Major Pierson's negro servant.

In the center of the picture the body of Major Pierson is being borne from the fight. At the immediate left is the negro servant in the act of firing upon the French officer by whom his master was killed, and whom we see in the background dying in the arms of a companion. The fact that the figures of the principal groups were all portraits of British officers who participated in the engagement added to the interest which the picture aroused.

Of all Copley's historical paintings 'The Death of Major Pierson' is considered his best. The composition is well ordered, the scene full of action, and the colors harmonious. It was painted in 1783 for Alderman Boydell, who had engaged a number of Royal Academicians, Copley among them, to contribute towards the formation of a gallery of English paintings of historical subjects. Later it passed into the possession of the Copley family, and at the sale of Lord Lyndhurst's pictures in 1864 was purchased for the National Gallery, London, where it now hangs.

The canvas measures about eight feet high by twelve feet wide.

'PORTRAIT OF MRS. THOMAS BOYLSTON'

PLATE V

THE portrait of Mrs. Thomas Boylston is justly considered one of Copley's finest works. "His fame," writes Mr. William Howe Downes in the 'Atlantic Monthly,' "may rest secure upon this portrait, which recalls the work of the great masters by its simplicity, repose, penetrating truth, and refinement. It is executed with the easy skill of a master-workman and has no weak spots. Mrs. Boylston is seated in a handsome arm-chair which is covered with faded yellow brocade fastened with brass-headed nails. Her gown is of a light olive-brown silk, and she wears a white cap and broad white muslin collar, or cape, covered with black lace, wide white ruffled

wristbands, and silk mitts. There is a curtain in the background. The face, which is of a very intelligent and interesting cast, is described with perfect taste, and, it may be presumed, with perfect accuracy; the lady's hands, which lie crossed upon her lap, are characterized with equal force. In its pretty, old-fashioned frame, this portrait, so quiet, so well-bred, so complete, utterly refutes the superficial judgment that Copley could paint nothing so well as his sitters' clothes."

Mrs. Boylston was the mother of Nicholas Boylston, one of the benefactors of Harvard University, who founded a professorship there of rhetoric and oratory, and of Thomas Boylston, who bequeathed part of his fortune to the city of Boston. She died in 1774, the year of Copley's departure for England. His portrait of her, and those which he painted of her two sons, hang in Memorial Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

'THE COPLEY FAMILY GROUP'

PLATE VI

ONE of the most interesting of Copley's works is this celebrated 'Family Group,' painted soon after he was established in his English home, and representing himself and his wife, four of his children, and his father-in-law, Mr. Richard Clarke.

Mrs. Copley, in a bright blue dress and with a white head-dress worn upon her dark hair, is seated upon a sofa of rose-colored damask. At her side, her childish form thrown across a round cushion, is her little daughter Mary, dressed in white with a golden brown sash. The child at his mother's knee, whom Mrs. Copley bends forward to caress as he looks up lovingly into her face, is John Singleton Copley, Jr., the future lord chancellor of England. He is dressed in pale yellow with a gray sash. The little girl in front, standing demurely with crossed hands, and suggestive of one of the young children of King Charles I. painted by Van Dyck, is Elizabeth, Copley's oldest child, who in after life married Mr. Gardiner Greene, of Boston. Her quaintly fashioned dress is of white striped muslin, the skirt showing pink underneath, and around her waist is a pink gauze sash which falls like a train behind. Her cap of frilled muslin is finished in front with a tiny pink rosebud. Behind her, to the left, sits Mrs. Copley's father, Mr. Clarke, with gray powdered wig, holding on his knee the year-old Jonathan, who died while still a child. A long pink ribbon attached to a rattle in the little boy's hand, his yellow hair, and white dress are offset by the black of Mr. Clarke's costume. Copley himself, in very dark blue and with a gray powdered wig, stands behind, leaning on a parapet, with papers in his hand.

This picture, which is about eight feet wide by six feet high, hung for nearly a century over the fireplace in the dining-room of Copley's house in London. Upon the death of his son, Lord Lyndhurst, it was purchased by Charles S. Amory, Esq., the husband of a granddaughter of Copley, and brought to the United States. It is now in the possession of Edward Linzee Amory, Esq., who has loaned it to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where it now hangs, and by his permission it is here reproduced.

'PORTRAIT OF COLONEL EPES SARGENT'

PLATE VII

THIS portrait offers a remarkably fine example of Copley's style at a period prior to his departure for England, when some of his most vigorous and characteristic work was produced. It is undated, but was probably painted before 1760.

Colonel Epes Sargent is represented standing with his right elbow upon the base of a column. One hand is in the pocket of his coat; the other is outspread upon his chest, and is painted so strongly and realistically that Gilbert Stuart used to say of it that art could go no further. "Prick that hand," were his words, "and blood will spurt out." Colonel Sargent wears a long, loosely fitting coat of drab broadcloth buttoned to the throat. White lawn ruffles are in the sleeves, which are finished with deep cuffs. A touch of color is given to the costume by the strip of gold lace which trims an inner vest. His face is round and full, his eyes small, blue, and laughing, his straight nose and thin lips are admirably modeled, as is the broad forehead offset by the light curling wig, from which some of the powder has fallen upon his shoulder. The background of the picture is a shadowy landscape. The canvas measures a little over four feet high by three feet three inches wide.

Colonel Epes Sargent, whose colonel's commission was held under King George II., was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1690, but the latter part of his life was passed in Salem, where he died in 1762. His portrait by Copley is in the possession of Mrs. George Henry Clements, of Flushing, New York, by whose permission it is here reproduced.

'PORTRAIT OF MISS SUSANNA RANDOLPH'

PLATE VIII

THIS portrait, painted in England, is a fine example of Copley's late manner, and is strikingly reminiscent of Gainsborough, whose influence is felt in the pose of the figure, arrangement of the accessories, and somewhat in the scheme of color.

Susanna Randolph was the daughter of the first Brett Randolph of "Chester," Powhatan County, Virginia. Most of her life was passed in England, where, in 1783, she married Dr. Charles Douglass, heir presumptive of the Earl of Morton.

In Copley's picture she is represented standing in a park-like landscape, resting one elbow on a parapet on which lies a spray of jasmine. She wears a gown of sky-blue silk with undersleeves of soft white muslin, and in one hand holds the end of a white gauze scarf striped with gold, which is thrown across her shoulder and encircles her waist. Her brown hair is dressed with pearls and blue ribbons, and a touch of blue is given in the rosette which decorates her white slipper. Her eyes are brown, her complexion clear, and the flesh-tones of face, neck, and arms are delicately rendered. The figure, which is life-size, is relieved against a background of dark foliage, brownish-green—almost olive—in tone. To the left are glimpses of blue sky, and at the horizon a golden sunset light.

The picture measures a little over six and a half feet high by four and a half feet wide. It is owned by Mrs. Charles F. Sprague, of Brookline, Massachusetts, by whose permission it is here reproduced.

‘PORTRAIT OF LADY WENTWORTH’

PLATE IX

THIS portrait was painted in 1765, when Lady Wentworth, then Mrs. Theodore Atkinson, was nineteen years old. She is dressed in a gown of silvery gray satin finished at the neck with lace, and with lace ruffles in the sleeves. A light brown gauze sash threaded with gold crosses the bodice diagonally, and fastened from her shoulders is a deep blue cloak falling in folds behind. A string of pearls, held together with a bow of white ribbon, is around her throat, and pearls are also worn in her dark hair. Both hands rest upon a table before which she is seated, and in one of them she holds a chain to which a flying squirrel is attached—a favorite motive with Copley. Lady Wentworth’s figure is relieved against a curtain of rich dark red, revealing at the right a column and a glimpse beyond of blue sky and white clouds.

Lady Frances Deering Wentworth was the daughter of Samuel Wentworth, of Boston. She was born in 1746, and in early life became engaged to her cousin John Wentworth, the last royal governor of New Hampshire; but in an absence of her lover’s, too prolonged to be agreeable to her, she accepted the hand of another suitor and cousin, Theodore Atkinson, whom she married before John Wentworth’s return. Before many years, however, her husband died, and without delay—within a fortnight, indeed, of the day of his funeral—she married her first love. Upon the outbreak of revolutionary troubles in America, Wentworth and his wife went to England, where he received the appointment of lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia. In 1795 he was created a baronet, and three years later, Lady Wentworth, who was greatly admired for her beauty, graceful manners, and ready wit, was made lady in waiting to Queen Charlotte, wife of George III., at a yearly salary of five hundred pounds, with the privilege of residing abroad at her pleasure. She died in England in 1813.

Copley’s portrait of Lady Wentworth, which was held to be as excellent a likeness as it is a beautiful example of his art, passed, after many vicissitudes, into the possession of James Lenox, Esq., of New York, and was bequeathed by him to the Lenox Library of that city, where it now hangs.

The canvas measures about four feet high by three feet four inches wide.

‘PORTRAIT OF THE EARL OF MANSFIELD’

PLATE X

WILLIAM MURRAY, first Earl of Mansfield, the distinguished British jurist and statesman, who has been called “the founder of English commercial law,” was born at Scone Abbey, Scotland, in 1705. Appointed solicitor-general in 1742, he was afterwards elected to a seat in the House of Commons, where his eloquence and his profound legal knowledge rendered him a leader and a powerful adversary of William Pitt, who headed the opposite party. In 1754 Murray was made attorney-general, and two

years later became chief justice of the King's Bench, being at the same time raised to the peerage by the title of the Earl of Mansfield. Celebrated for his learning and his brilliant accomplishments, it was said of him that he possessed "a courtesy which was seldom ruffled, and an eloquence which never failed." He died in 1793, at the age of eighty-eight, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, London.

The life-sized portrait of the Earl of Mansfield which is here reproduced was painted by Copley in London in 1783, when the earl was seventy-eight years old. He is represented in the robes of a peer of Great Britain. A full gown of brilliant red, trimmed with bands of white fur and of gold embroidery, falls in voluminous folds about his figure, which is clad in a close-fitting suit of black. His face is enframed by a light gray full-bottomed wig. The table beside him is covered with a variegated cloth and piled with legal books and with documents upon which he rests one hand, while in the other he holds a brief. The background is of a neutral tone well calculated to throw into relief the figure with its contrasting colors of rich red, black, gray, white, and gold.

The picture measures seven feet four inches high by about four feet nine inches wide. It is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY COPLEY
IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

FOR a more complete list of Copley's works than is here given the reader is referred to Mr. Augustus Thorndike Perkins's 'Sketch of the Life and a List of some of the Works of John Singleton Copley,' with supplements. The following list includes only such of his pictures as are in collections which are accessible to the public.

ENGLAND. LONDON, CHRIST'S HOSPITAL SCHOOL: A Youth rescued from a Shark — LONDON, GUILDHALL: The Siege and Relief of Gibraltar — LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: The Death of the Earl of Chatham; The Death of Major Pierson (Plate IV); The Siege and Relief of Gibraltar (Study); Study in Monochrome for 'The Death of the Earl of Chatham' — LONDON, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY: Portrait of the Earl of Mansfield (Plate x); Portrait of Lord Heathfield — UNITED STATES. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Portrait of James Allen; Portrait of Rev. William Welsted; Two portraits of Samuel Cooper; Portrait of Samuel Danforth; Portrait of John Rogers; Portrait of Thomas Hutchinson — BOSTON, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS: The Copley Family Group (loaned) (Plate VI); Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (Plate II); A Youth rescued from a Shark; Portrait of John Hancock (loaned by the city of Boston); Portrait of Samuel Adams (loaned by the city of Boston); Portrait of John Quincy Adams (loaned); Colonel Fitch and his Sisters (loaned); Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Lee (loaned); Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Pickman (loaned); Portrait of Dorothy Quincy (loaned); Portrait of Mrs. Daniel Sargent (loaned); Mrs. Richard Derby as St. Cecilia (loaned); Portrait of General Joseph Warren; Portrait of Mrs. Joseph Warren; Portrait of Colonel Sparhawk (loaned); Portrait of John Scollay (loaned); Portrait of Mrs. Skinner (loaned); Sketch of Mrs. Startin (loaned); Unfinished sketch for 'The Death of the Earl of Chatham' (loaned) — BOSTON, PUBLIC LIBRARY, TRUSTEE'S ROOM: King Charles I. demanding in the House of Commons the Five Impeached Members — BRUNSWICK, MAINE, BOWDOIN COLLEGE, WALKER ART BUILDING: Portrait of Governor Bowdoin; Portrait of Thomas Flucker, Esq. — CAMBRIDGE, MASS., HARVARD UNIVERSITY [MEMORIAL HALL]: Portrait of John Adams; Portrait of Samuel Adams; Portrait of Thomas Hancock; Portrait of Edward Holyoke;

Portrait of Mrs. Thomas Boylston (Plate v); Portrait of Nicholas Boylston; Portrait of Thomas Boylston; Portrait of Thomas Hubbard; Portrait of Nathaniel Appleton; Portrait of Mrs. Nathaniel Appleton; Portrait of Samuel Cooper; [UNIVERSITY HALL] Portrait of Professor John Winthrop—NEW YORK, LENOX LIBRARY: Portrait of Lady Wentworth (Plate ix); Portrait of Mrs. Robert Hooper—NEW YORK, NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Portrait of Copley—SALEM, MASS., ESSEX INSTITUTE: Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Fitch—WORCESTER, MASS., AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY: Portrait of Charles Paxton.

Copley Bibliography

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL BOOKS AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES
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THE principal sources of information about Copley are 'The Domestic and Artistic Life of John Singleton Copley, R.A.,' by his granddaughter, Martha Babcock Amory (Boston, 1882), and 'A Sketch of the Life and a List of some of the Works of John Singleton Copley,' by Augustus Thorndike Perkins (Privately Printed, 1873).

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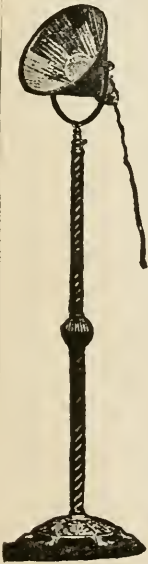
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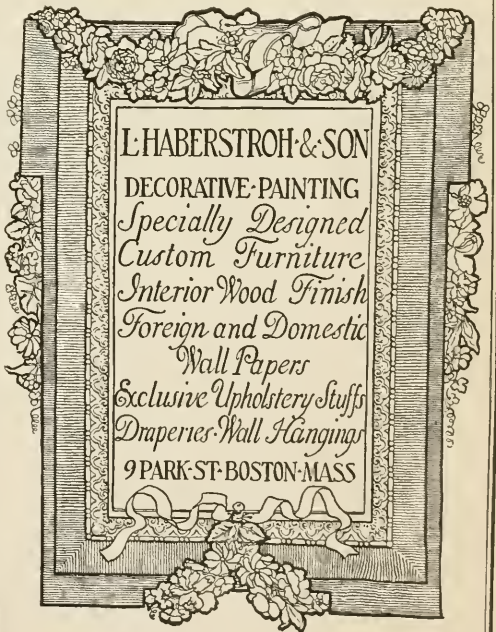
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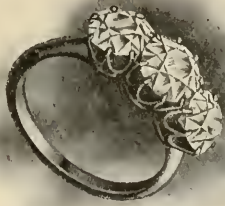
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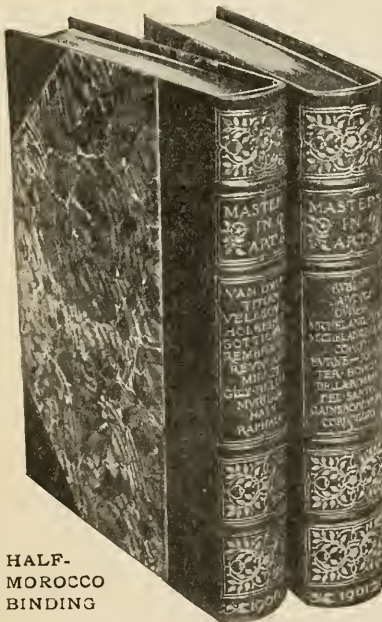
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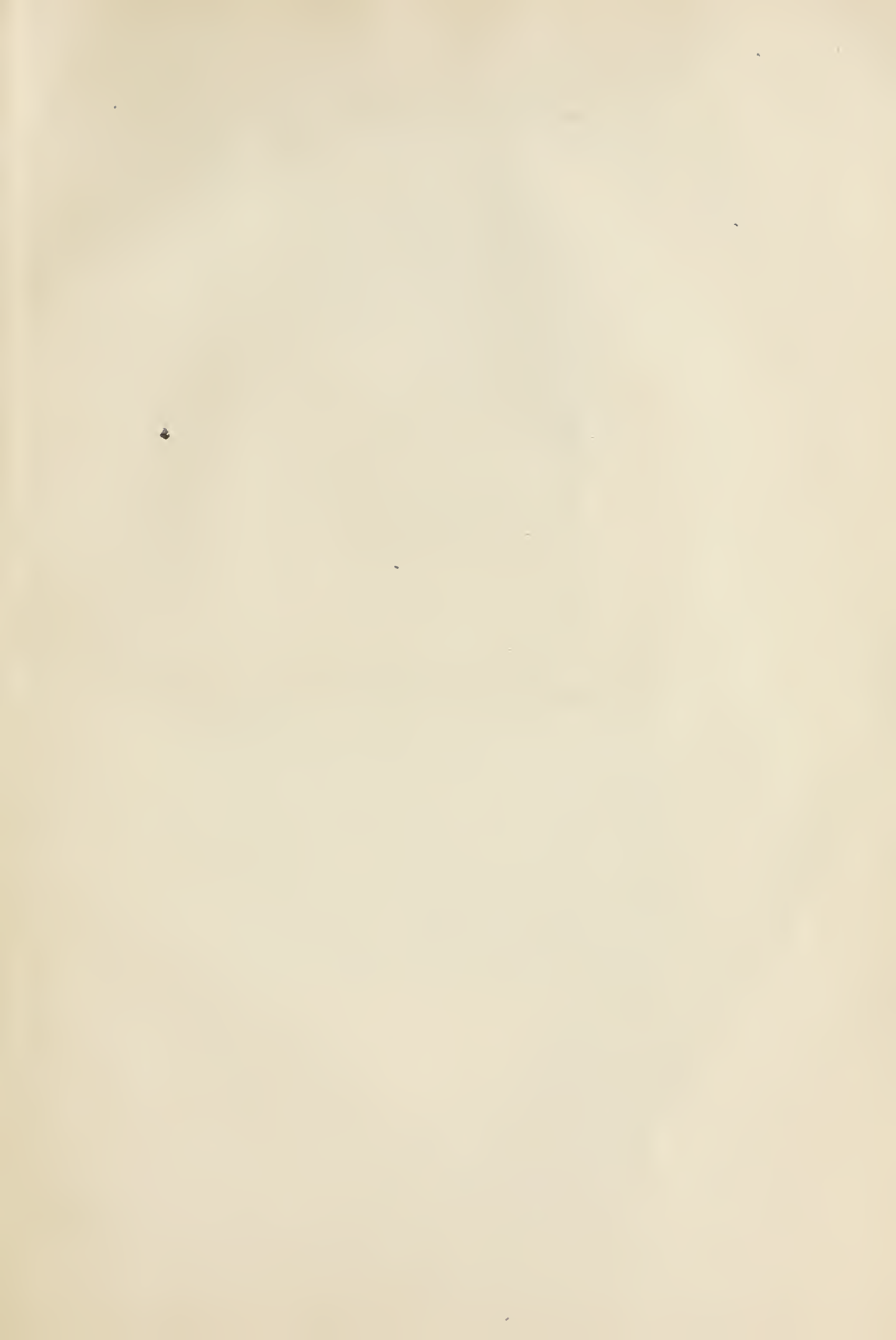
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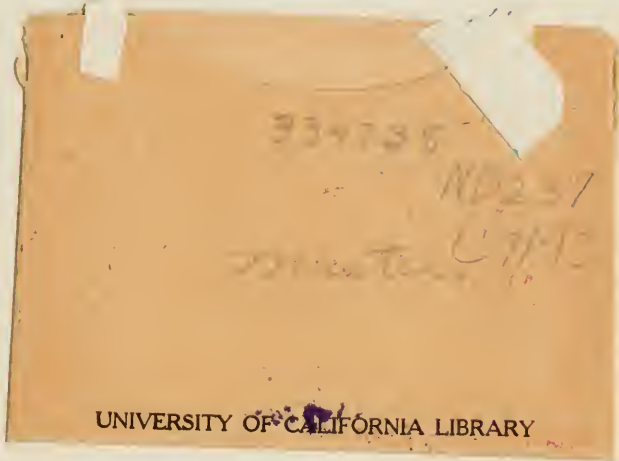
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