THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE REPUBLIC.

[Eighteenth Paper.]

PAUL REVERE.—[1735-1818.]

PROGRESS OF THE FINE ARTS.

THE growth of the arts of design in this country has been of necessity much slower than the national development in other directions. The early colonists had neither time nor inclination for the culture of art. They distrusted and restrained the imaginative faculty, which is the soul of art, and applied all their energies to the great practical tasks which confronted them on their arrival on the shores of the New World. They had the vast wilderness to subdue, houses to build for themselves and their children, to found commonwealths on the broad basis of liberty and justice, and for many generations were compelled to maintain fierce warfare with crafty and cruel foes allied with the civilized enemies of the religious freedom which they had fled hither to establish. If the early New England colonists gave any thought to art, they probably regarded it as one of the forms of luxurious vanity and license belonging to a state of society which they held in abhorrence, and from which they were resolved to keep their land of refuge free. Allowance must also be made for the force of circumstances. The struggle for mere subsistence was too severe for the indulgence of the imagination. The only graces known to the early colonists were the austere virtues of their rigid theology. To adorn the home or the person was in their eyes a sinful waste of time, which could be well employed only in the practical duties of the present life and in preparing for the next. The influence of this stern training was of long duration; it still exists, indeed, in the prejudice to be found in many communities against the presence of pictures or sculpture in houses of worship, although this may be partially ascribed to the old Puritan revolt against Romish practices.

With the physical development of the country, and the consequent freedom from the harassing cares which had kept the thoughts of the early colonists on the arts of necessity, one form of luxury after another crept in upon the homely life of our ancestors. Pictures began to find their way here from the Old World, and artists began to visit the colonies. It is probable that they met with many discouragements and but scanty patronage, for few authentic traces have been preserved of those early pioneers of art. Cotton Mather, in his *Magnolia*, refers to a "limner," but he gives us no name. One of the first of whom we have other than vague traditions was a native of Scotland, John Watson by name, who came to the colonies in 1715, and established himself as a portrait painter at Perth Amboy, then a flourishing commercial rival of New York. In a building adjoining his dwelling-house he established the first picture-gallery in America. The collection was probably of little value. Watson, who combined the art of portrait painting with the business of a money-lender, amassed a considerable fortune. He never married, and dying in 1768, at the age of eighty-three, left his wealth and his pictures to a nephew. Taking sides with the loyalists in 1776, the nephew was compelled to flee the country. The deserted picture-gallery, left to the mercies of the undisciplined militia, was broken up, and the collection of paintings was so effectually scattered that all trace of them was lost. None of the portraits executed by Watson are known to be in existence, and he is remembered only as an obscure pioneer in the culture and development of a taste for the fine arts in this country.

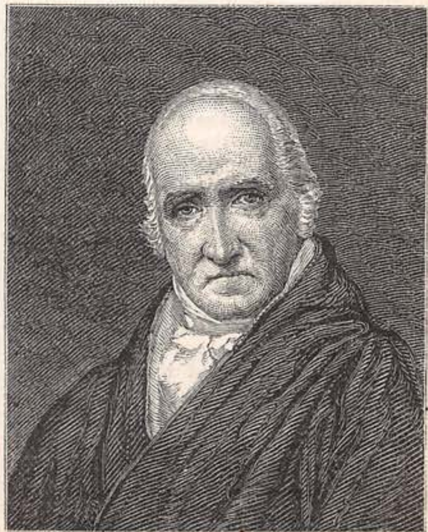
To John Smybert, also a Scotchman, American art is more largely indebted. He came to this country in 1728 with Dean Berkeley, afterward Bishop of Cloyne, whose fellow-traveler he had been in Italy. The failure of the dean's grand scheme for the estab-

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY.—[1737-1815.]

lishment of a "universal college of science and arts for the instruction of heathen children in Christian duties and civil knowledge" left Smybert to the free exercise of his profession. In early youth he had served his time, says Horace Walpole, "with a common house painter; but eager to handle a pencil in a more elevated style, he came to London, where, however, for a subsistence he was compelled to content himself at first with working for coach painters. It was a little rise to be employed in copying for dealers, and from thence he obtained admittance into the Academy. His efforts and ardor at last carried him to Italy, where he spent three years in copying Raphael, Titian, Vandyck, and Rubens, and improved enough to meet with much business at his return." Thus accomplished, Smybert was well fitted for a career in the New World, which presented no rival in culture and experience. His talents appear to have been in great demand, and they were certainly used to good purpose. To his pencil we owe many excellent portraits of eminent divines and magistrates of his time, and the only authentic portrait of Jonathan Edwards. His picture of the Berkeley household, now in the Yale College Gallery, is said to have been the first containing more than one figure ever painted in this country. He may be said to have been the first teacher of art in America, as it was from his copy of a painting by Vandyck that Allston, Copley, and Trumbull received their earliest inspiration and their first impressions of color and drawing.

It was long before art received popular encouragement and support in this country. True, Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to Charles Wilson Peale, dated London, July 4, 1771, prophesied the future prosperity of art among his countrymen. "The arts," he says, "have always traveled westward; and there is no doubt of their flourishing hereafter on our side of the Atlantic, as the number of wealthy inhabitants shall increase who may be able and willing suitably to reward them, since, from several instances, it appears that our people are not deficient in genius." But Trumbull, who spoke from experience, bluntly told a young aspirant for fame that he "had better learn to make shoes or dig potatoes than become a painter in this country." Year by year, however, partly through the influence of art associations, and partly through the influx of the works of foreign artists, the love of art became diffused among our people, and it is many years since American painters and sculptors could justly complain of the want of popular appreciation.

One cause of the slow growth of art sentiment and art knowledge among Americans was the absence, even in the larger cities, of public and private galleries of paintings like those to which the people of every European city have constant access, and where they may become familiar with the works of the great masters of almost every age and country. Of late years these opportunities have notably increased among us. Wealthy citizens of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, Cincinnati, and other cities have accumulated extensive and valuable private galleries of the best works of native and foreign artists, and have evinced commendable liberality in opening their doors to the public. There are also fine galleries



BENJAMIN WEST.—[1738-1820.]

of paintings and statuary belonging to societies, like the Boston Athenæum and our own Historical Society; but to most of these the general public can not claim admission, and their usefulness as a means of art culture is, therefore, comparatively restricted. There should be in every large city a public gallery of art, as in Paris, Berlin, Munich, London, Dresden, Florence, and other European cities, to which, on certain days of the week, access should be free to all. The influence of such institutions would be immense. There is many a working-man in Paris who knows more about pictures and statues than the majority of cultivated people in this country. He visits freely the magnificent galleries of the Louvre, hears artists and connoisseurs converse, and if he is a man of ordinary intelligence and perception, he acquires a knowledge of pictures and artists which can not be attained in a country where such opportunities are rare, or only to be enjoyed either by paying for them or by the favor of some private collector. True, the want of public art galleries has been in a measure supplied, in most of our large cities, by the collections of art dealers like Schaus and Goupil, who of late years have imported many of the finest specimens of the works of foreign artists, and who admit the public to their exhibition rooms without fee. But this privilege is, for the most part, confined to the educated and the wealthy. Rarely is a working-man or working-woman seen in these rooms, although no respectable and well-behaved person would be denied admission. Enter the galleries of Paris, of Munich, or Dresden, on a holiday, and you will find hundreds of people belonging to the working classes, men, women, and children, feasting their eyes on the treasures of art, and filling their minds with love for the beautiful. The refining influence of such an education can not be overvalued. It may not be quite as useful as the practical instruction of our common schools; but while we can not subscribe to Ruskin's opinion that it is more important that a child should learn to draw than that he should learn to write, there can be no question as to the ennobling and refining influence of art upon personal character and upon the community. The lack of this culture among our people only a few years ago was manifested by the commotion which Powers's "Greek Slave" made on its arrival in this country. Many persons questioned the propriety of exhibiting a nude statue. A delegation of distinguished clergymen was sent to view it, when it was at Cincinnati, for the purpose of deciding whether it should be "countenanced by religious people." Not many years ago a well-educated country lady, visiting Boston for the first time in her life, was shocked to find a pretty and modest-looking young woman seated at the ticket table in the statue gallery of the Athenæum. The young woman was engaged in sewing-work. "She ought to employ her time in making aprons for these horrid, shameful statues," remarked the indignant visitor, as she left the room. Prejudices like these, the fruit of ignorance, are happily dying out, and few traces of them will be found in the next generation.

The American Art Union, founded in 1839, in imitation of the French *Société des Amis des Arts*, exerted an important influence upon American art culture. For upward of ten years it distributed annually from five hundred to more than a thousand works of art. Its yearly subscriptions reached the sum of one hundred thousand dollars. It issued a series of fine engravings from the works of American artists, and for several years published a bulletin embracing a complete record of the progress of art in this country, together with much valuable and interesting information regarding the arts and artists of Europe. Through the agency of its commissions several American artists, who have since attained high rank in their profession, were first brought to public notice. The institution was broken up about ten years after its organization on account of the violation, by its method of distributing prizes, of the State laws against lotteries. But during the period of its existence it accomplished much toward awakening a love of art throughout the country, and it deserves to be gratefully remembered for its services in this direction.

GILBERT STUART.—[1754-1828.]

In one respect, however, the Art Union was the indirect means of temporary harm.

COLONEL JOHN TRUMBULL.—[1756-1843.]

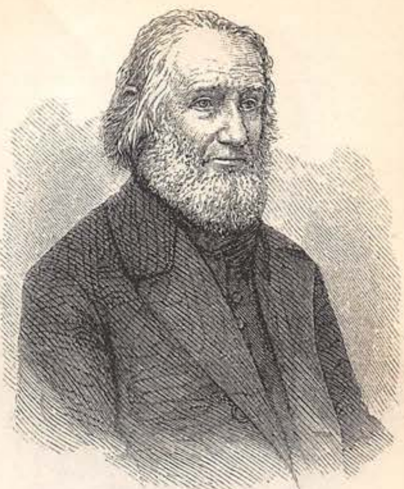
Through its activity America was revealed to the proprietors of the great picture manufactories of Italy and Belgium as a new and promising field for the sale of their wretched copies and imitations. Thousands of these vile productions were palmed off upon innocent persons in this country as genuine works by old or modern masters of note. The writer was once present at an auction sale of such a collection in a flourishing city in the western part of this State. There was great excitement over it. Here were "old masters" by the dozen, their genuineness attested by printed labels on the back of the frames giving names and dates, while the catalogue, filled with glowing praises of the artists and their works, made no mention of copies. The pictures were marvelously cheap. A Madonna by Raphael sold for thirty dollars, frame and all; a large picture by Rubens for about the same price; and landscapes by Claude, Ruysdael, and others brought from ten to twenty dollars each, according to the expensiveness of the frames. This was about twenty-five years ago. Thanks to the general advance of culture and knowledge, there is now probably hardly a village, and certainly not a city, in the country where such an imposition could be attempted without detection. Most of the "old masters" purchased at these sales have long since found their appropriate resting-place in the lumber-room.

The National Academy of Design, in this city, has unquestionably exerted a most important influence on the culture of art in America, and in the diffusion of the knowledge and love of art among the people. The present organization was preceded by an association of artists formed in 1801 under the name of the New York Academy of Fine Arts. Seven years later it received the act of incorporation, under the name of the American Academy of Fine Arts, and Chancellor Livingston was chosen president; Colonel John Trumbull, vice-president; De Witt Clinton, David Hosack, John R. Murray, William Cutting, and Charles Wilkes, directors. Through the instrumentality of the American minister at Paris, the Emperor Napoleon presented to the institution many valuable busts, antique statues, and rare prints. There was still, however, so little general support afforded by the community, and picture buyers were so few, that the enterprise languished from the first, and it was saved from total dissolution only by the temporary accession of Vanderlyn's celebrated "Ariadne," afterward so admirably engraved by Durand, and certain pictures of West, in 1816. These important additions to its collection enabled the institution for a time to tide over the danger which threatened its existence. A school of instruction, with models and art lectures, was also organized, in the hope of reviving popular interest in the Academy, but want of means to carry out the plan on a broad and liberal foundation interfered with the working of the project; and a fire, which destroyed a great part of its models and drawings, in 1828, gave the *coup de grâce* to an institution which had been dying by slow degrees.

The American Academy of Fine Arts having given up the ghost, another institution was formed to take its place and carry on the work it had begun—the National Academy of Design, of which the first president was Professor Morse, whose invention of the electric telegraph, some years later, cast his artistic career wholly in the shade. Founded on a broader basis than its predecessor, and meeting more fully the wishes and aims of the artists, the new institution speedily acquired strength and popularity, and it is to-day the most important and most influential art society in the United States. The most eminent painters and sculptors of America are enrolled among its members. Its management has frequently subjected the Academy to sharp animadversion, sometimes not undeserved, from those who deemed it too conservative, not to say illiberal, for the progressive tendency of the age; but none can be so unjust as to deny that its general course has tended to the elevation of American art and the popular diffusion of art culture. Nor should fault be too rashly found with its acknowledged conservatism. The best and most enduring reforms are those which come slowly, in obedience to the demands of long experience and mature consideration, while nothing can be worse, in a society as well as in the state, than capricious and hasty changes, which frequently introduce abuses more objectionable than the old.

For more than a third of a century the National Academy, to use the words of Bryant's address on laying the corner-stone of the Academy building, "had a nomadic existence, pitching its tent now here, now there, as convenience might dictate, but never possessing a permanent seat." At length the munificence of art-loving citizens of New York enabled the society to erect a building well suited to its purposes and worthy of the great city in which it stands. The corner-stone was laid October 19, 1863, and the first exhibition was held in the completed building in the spring of 1865. The Academy building, on the corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue, is a handsome structure in the style of the celebrated Doge's palace at Venice. It is built of marble, banded with graywacke, with simple and appropriate decorations. The cost of the ground and building was about two hundred thousand dollars, a large part of which was contributed by citizens of New York. There are six exhibition galleries, including the corridor, which for the present afford all the space required for the Academy and water-color exhibitions; but an enlargement will be necessary in the near future to meet the increasing demands for room.

Philadelphia was not far behind New York in establishing an Academy of Art. In December, 1805, a meeting of seventy gentlemen of that city, most of them members of the bar, was held in Independence Hall for the purpose of considering the project. Their deliberations resulted in the signing of articles of agreement, the original of which is still preserved, providing for the creation of an Art Academy, which was pledged "to promote the cultivation of the Fine Arts in the United States of America, by introducing correct and elegant copies from works of the first masters in Sculpture and Painting." George Clymer, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was elected first president of the association; of the twelve directors only two were professional artists—William Rush and Charles Wilson Peale. Benjamin West, as the most distinguished son of Pennsylvania in the ranks of art, was elected an honorary member of the Academy. He was then under a cloud in his adopted country. His royal patron had become insane, and the Prince Regent had withdrawn the commission for the decoration of Windsor Chapel with a series of large pictures on the progress of Revealed Religion. He was sixty-seven years old, and this recognition from his native State, coming at a time when he was smarting under a sharp disappointment, deeply touched the venerable painter's heart. "Be assured, gentlemen," he wrote in reply, "that that election I shall ever retain as an honor from a relative." Robert Fulton, artist and in-



ALEXANDER ANDERSON.—[1775-1870.]

ventor, and Bushrod Washington were the next honorary members after West.

Unlike its New York rival, the Philadelphia Academy made haste to provide for itself a permanent home. The society's charter, procured in the spring of 1806, makes mention of a building then near completion. It was of simple design and well proportioned. Its main feature was the "Rotunda"—a handsome circular room with a domed ceiling. The first exhibition was held in March, 1806. The collection of works of art contained over fifty casts of antique statues from the Louvre, two Shakspearean paintings by West, and a few other pictures by European artists. The ladies of Philadelphia appear to have been peculiarly sensitive on the subject of nude statuary, and one day in the week the Academy was thrown open for their exclusive benefit. Gradually the Academy acquired a large and valuable collection of paintings and casts, many of them bequests from wealthy citizens. In 1811, in conjunction with the Society of Artists, it gave its first annual exhibition. The second, in 1812, was marked by the presence of several important works by American artists, evincing the progress made by native talent. In 1816 the Academy collection was enriched with a noble painting by Allston, "The dead Man revived by touching the Relics of Elisha," and also by Leslie's "Clifford"—a fine composition, taken from the scene in *Henry VI.* where Clifford murders the young Plantagenet, Rutland.

The collection gradually increased in value by gifts and judicious purchases, and at the time of the destruction of the building by fire, in 1845, it was without a rival in America. A valuable Murillo, a representation of the "Carità Romana," or Roman

REMBRANDT PEALE.—[1778-1860.]

Daughter, bought in Spain from the collection of Joseph Bonaparte, perished in the flames, with many other paintings, casts, and statues in marble. The Academy soon recovered from this disaster. It now possesses a valuable gallery of statuary, comprising modern works in marble and casts from the antique, a permanent gallery of paintings, consisting of about a hundred and fifty works by native and foreign artists, and an excellent library. Its new building, the opening of which will be one of the most interesting features of the Centennial celebration, is a noble structure, admirably suited to the purposes for which it is designed.

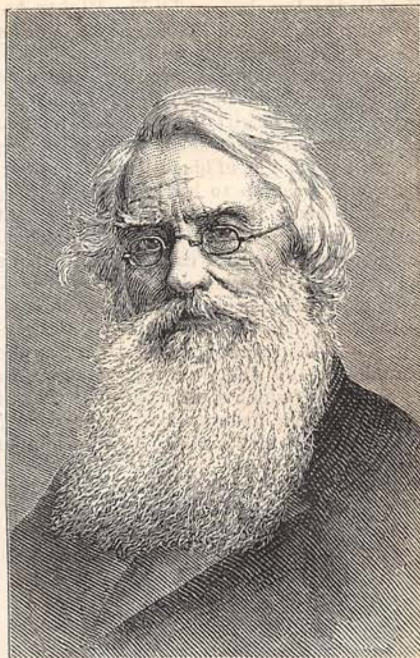
It is only within a recent period that the beautiful art of painting in water-color, long since carried to perfection in England, became popular in this country. It had many stubborn prejudices to contend with. Works in water-color looked slight and unsubstantial compared with those in oil, and a taste for them had to be created and fostered. In the Academy exhibitions a corner was usually set apart for them, but they were generally few in number and of trifling value. The first organized movement in the direction of a water-color society in this country was made in 1850, when a class was started in New York for study from life, the sketches being made in water-color. The members were for the most part well-known designers or engravers. They held their meetings every fortnight. In December, 1850, this "class" adopted a constitution, and thus formed the first Society of Painters in Water-Colors in the United States. There are records of meetings held from time to time until the opening of the Crystal Palace in this city in 1853. Then each member of the society contributed a specimen of his work. The collection was hung by itself on a screen, and was specified in the catalogue of the exhibition as "Water-color Paintings by Members of the New York Water-color Society." This was a dying effort. Nothing was ever heard of the society again.

With the exception of one or two foreign collections, nothing more was seen of water-color paintings in this country until the autumn of 1866, when the Artists' Fund Society, in its annual exhibition held in the National Academy of Design, made a feature of this branch of art. Mainly through the efforts of Mr. John M. Falconer, an enthusiast in water-colors, the society was able to fill the East Gallery and part of the corridor with a fine collection of works by native and foreign artists. Encouraged by the pleasure manifested by the art-loving public, which then for the first time had the opportunity to judge of the real capabilities of water-color painting, a number of artists at once started a project for the organization of a water-color society which might popularize this beautiful art on this side of the Atlantic. A call signed by Samuel Colman, William Hart, Gilbert Burling, and William Craig was sent out to all the professional and amateur artists who were known to be interested in the movement. The result was the organization, in December, 1866, of the present flourishing institution of "The American Society of Painters in Water-Colors."

The first exhibition of the new society was held in the galleries of the National Academy of Design, under Academy manage-

WASHINGTON ALLSTON.—[1779-1843.]

ment, in connection with the fall and winter exhibition of oil-paintings. It was in many respects a successful experiment. The collection contained nearly three hundred works, among which were many crude and insipid compositions side by side with works of great value and still greater promise. The public was pleased with the novelty; the water-color galleries were crowded day and evening with admiring spectators. But the sales were few. The public admired, but did not buy. But the water-colorists were not discouraged. They clung to their work, firm in the faith that as knowledge ripened, their reward would come. Each year witnessed a marked improvement in their exhibition, both in the number and quality of the works exposed to view. The exhibition of 1874 filled all the Academy galleries except one, which is considered unfavorable to the proper display of water-colors, and the hanging committee was obliged, for want of room and other reasons, to return almost as many pictures as were exhibited in 1867. The popular prejudice against water-colors gave way to a just appreciation. During the first four exhibitions the number of sales could almost be counted upon one's fingers; but during the six weeks of the exhibition of 1874 the sales of water-colors on the walls amounted to $20,000, a success unprecedented in this country. Now that it pays to paint in water-colors, the permanent success of the society depends only upon the members and the exercise of good judgment in the conduct of its affairs. Its exhibitions, although held in the Academy building, are no longer under the management of the National Academy, nor in connection with its exhibitions.



PROFESSOR MORSE.—[1791-1872.]

THOMAS SULLY.—[1783-1872.]

The water-color society has an active membership of fifty-four artists. Its financial affairs are in a flourishing condition, and there is every reason to predict for it a brilliant future. Plans have already been perfected which will secure for the society a creditable display at the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, when the country will have an opportunity to see what our artists have been able to do toward rivaling those of England in this important branch of painting.

Turning from these societies, the most important art associations in the United States, to special departments of art, we come first to the consideration of portraiture, which was pursued with more success than any other branch before and immediately after the Revolution. Benjamin West, whose career, like that of John Singleton Copley, belongs mainly to England, began portrait painting in 1753, and had he not forsaken it for historical and religious painting, his fame would probably have been more enduring. Of the immense number of paintings executed by him during his long career, estimated at upward of three thousand, only one—"The Death of Wolfe"—rises appreciably above the dead level of Academical mediocrity. His mind, hopelessly devoid of imagination, constantly aspired to the treatment of themes which might well appall the most daring genius—such, for example, as "Moses receiving the Law on Mount Sinai," "The Opening of the Seventh

Seal in the Revelations," "The Mighty Angel with one Foot on the Sea and the other on the Earth," etc. A pretty story is told of his first attempts at painting. Inspired at the age of nine by the sight of some engravings and the gift of a paint-box, he used to play truant from school, "and as soon as he got out of sight of his father and mother, he would steal up to his garret, and there pass the hours in a world of his own. At last, after he had been absent from school some days, the master called at his father's house to inquire what had become of him. This led to the discovery of his secret occupation. His mother, proceeding to the garret, found the truant; but so much was she astonished and delighted by the creations of his pencil, which also met her view when she entered the apartment, that, instead of rebuking him, she could only take him in

HENRY INMAN.—[1801-1846.]

her arms and kiss him with transports of affection." Doubtless many other soft-hearted mothers have thus greeted what they fondly imagined to be the dawning of genius in their offspring, but with consequences less appalling. The young artist went early to Rome, where his appearance, coming from the far Western world, excited curious interest and attention. Crowds followed him to observe the impressions created by the marvels he encountered. On the completion of his studies, which he pursued with assiduity, he went to England, there soon afterward married, and there remained until his death, at the age of seventy-nine. But a very small number of his works are owned in this country. His "Christ healing the Sick," presented by the artist to the Pennsylvania Hospital, is still in the possession of that institution. It was once greatly admired. The Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts owns his "Death on the Pale Horse;" his "Christ Rejected" and his "Cupid" are also owned in that city. His "Lear" may be seen in the gallery of the Boston Athenæum. Two of his pictures, illustrating scenes from the Iliad, belong to the collection of the New York Historical Society. It must be remembered to his honor that he was the first historical painter to break through the absurd Academical traditions which required modern subjects to be painted in the so-called classic style. When his "Death of Wolfe" was exhibited at the Royal Academy of London, the adherents of the old style "complained of the barbarism of boots, buttons, and blunderbusses, and cried out for naked warriors with bows, bucklers, and battering-rams." Reynolds and the Archbishop of York remonstrated with West against his daring innovation. The artist calmly replied that "the event to be commemorated happened in the year 1758, in a region of the world unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and at a period when no warrior who wore classic costume existed. The same rule which gave law to the historian should govern the painter." Reynolds was at length compelled to acknowledge the justice of the popular verdict in favor of the new style, and to declare that "West has conquered. I foresee that this picture will not only become one of the most popular, but will occasion a revolution in art." West was a sensible, kindly man, of pure life and lofty aims. His ambition, unhappily, was far beyond his capacity as an artist, and his fame has steadily declined since his death. His highest distinction as an artist was his elevation to the presidency of the Royal Academy.

Copley's American career closed with the beginning of the Revolution. He was born in Boston on the 3d of July, 1737, and died in London on the 25th of September, 1815. He was the only native painter of real genius and culture of whom the New World could boast prior to the Declaration of Independence; and the skill and assiduity with which he pursued his profession are attested by the number of portraits from his pencil which still exist in the possession of old families in New England, and occasionally in the Southern States. It has been said that the possession of one of these ancestral portraits is an American's best title of nobility. Chiefly celebrated for his portraits, Copley also attempted historical compositions, a department of art in which he received but little encouragement, although the "Death of Chatham," and "The Death of Major Pierson," the latter being regarded as his greatest work, evinced considerable power of composition and color.

Dunlap, in his scrappy but entertaining history of the arts of design in America, gives the names of a large number of por-

trait painters, native and foreign, who flourished during colonial and Revolutionary times in this country. Most of them have been long forgotten, and but few merit attention at the present day. There was Wollaston, who painted several portraits in Philadelphia in 1758, and afterward in Maryland. His portrait of Mrs. Washington was engraved for Sparks's biography of our first President. Judge Hopkinson paid him a tribute in commonplace verse in the *American Magazine* for September, 1758. In many of the older dwellings in Maryland may be found portraits from the pencil of Hesselius, an English painter of respectable capacity, settled in Annapolis in 1763. Cosmo Alexander, who came to this country in 1770 and remained a year, was Stuart's first instructor in art. His best-known work is a portrait of the Hon. John Ross, a prominent member of the Philadelphia bar. Blackburn, an Englishman, a contemporary of Smybert, painted several excellent portraits during a brief visit to this country, which are still held in high esteem. The name of Robert E. Pine is chiefly remembered for his portrait of Washington. This artist brought to America the earliest cast of the Venus de' Medici, "which was privately exhibited to the select few—the manners and morals of the Quaker City forbidding its exposure to the common eye." Pine sympathized with the American cause, and projected a grand series of historical paintings to illustrate the events of the Revolutionary war. His plan also comprehended the portraits of leading generals and statesmen. Invited to Mount Vernon in 1785, he passed three weeks at that place, and produced a portrait of Washington which is believed by many to be a more correct and characteristic likeness of

THOMAS COLE.—[1801–1848.]

HORATIO GREENOUGH.—[1805–1852.]

the man than the later and better-known portrait by Stuart.

Passing over several names on which it would be pleasant to dwell if space permitted, we come to Charles Wilson Peale, the first painter of Washington. He was born in Chestertown, Maryland, in 1741. Determining at an early age on the profession of portrait painting, he first sought instruction in Philadelphia, and afterward in Boston, where he studied Copley's pictures. In 1770 he went to England, and there studied with West, who, with his usual kindness, opened his heart and purse to the poor and struggling artist. Peale returned home after a residence of about four years abroad, and became an officer in the Revolutionary army. "He did not," says Tuckerman, "forget the artist in the soldier, but sedulously improved his leisure in camp by sketching from nature, and......by transferring to his portfolio many heads which afterward he elaborated for his gallery of national portraits." His portrait of Washington as a Virginia colonel, well known through the art of engraving, possesses a historical value as great as its artistic merit. It was painted in 1772, and is the earliest authentic likeness of Washington in existence. A subsequent portrait was executed by Peale in compliance with a resolution of Congress, passed before the occupation of Philadelphia. "Its progress," writes Titian R. Peale to a friend, "marks the vicissitudes of the Revolutionary struggle. Commenced in the gloomy winter and half-famished encampment at Valley Forge in 1778, the battles of Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth intervened before its completion. At the last place Washington suggested that the view from the window of the farm-house opposite to which he was sitting would form a desirable background.

Peale adopted the idea, and represented Monmouth Court-house, and a party of Hessians under guard marching out of it." Congress adjourned without making an appropriation for the payment of the artist, and the portrait remained on his hands. The testimony of contemporaries stamps this picture as a most faithful likeness of Washington in the prime of life. Peale painted fourteen portraits of Washington, of which the two we have mentioned are the most important. His career was long and honorable. His talent as a portrait painter in oil and miniature was in constant demand far and wide, not only in this country, but by sitters from Canada and the West Indies. He died, revered and regretted, at the age of eighty-four, in 1826. His son, Rembrandt Peale, at the age of eighteen, made a pencil sketch of Washington, and long afterward painted a portrait of him from memory, assisted by Houdin's bust.

We must pass with only brief mention the names of William Dunlap, chiefly known for his history of the arts of design; Robert Fulton, more celebrated as an inventor than as an artist; John Wesley Jarvis, genial, gifted, and erratic; Malbone, like Jarvis, celebrated for his success in miniature painting; Chester Harding, once the rival of Stuart in portraiture; Gilbert Stuart Newton, whose memory is affectionately honored in Leslie's autobiography; C. C. Ingham, one of the last of the old generation of portrait painters; and Morse, who early forsook painting, and whose name is connected with the most important invention of this century, the electric telegraph. Contemporary with these artists were many who achieved high reputation in their day, but whose names are now known only through the annals of art societies.

One of the greatest portrait painters of America, Gilbert Charles Stuart, was also one of the earliest. He was born in Narraganset, Rhode Island, in 1754, according to an anecdote of his own, quoted by Dunlap, in a snuff mill, the first in New England, erected by his father. In after-years he dropped his middle name, which had been given to him at his baptism to signify his father's fidelity to the royal house of Stuart. He commenced portrait painting at Newport, Rhode Island; was taken to Edinburgh at the age of eighteen; resided several years in London, where his success was marked, and passed some time in Dublin and Paris. In 1793 Stuart returned to this country, and from that time till his death, at Boston, in 1828, pursued a career of remarkable industry and ability. Many of the most famous statesmen of America sat to him, and his portraits of Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, and other distinguished men are well known through engravings. Our ideas of Washington's personal appearance are derived from Stuart rather than from Pine or Peale. He also painted an immense number of society portraits. His works are widely scattered on both sides of the Atlantic. In power of drawing and expression, and in truth and purity of color, his portraits stand almost without rival in American or European art. He was great in the portrayal of individual character. Allston declared that he "seemed to dive into the thoughts of men, for they were made to live and speak on the surface." The same admirable artist has also well said that Stuart "was, in its widest sense, a philosopher in his art. He thoroughly understood its principles, as his works bear witness, whether as to harmony of colors or of lines, or of light and shadow, showing that exquisite sense of a whole which only a man of genius can realize and embody. Of this not the least admirable instance is his portrait of John Adams, whose bodily tenement at the time seemed rather to present the image of a dilapidated castle than the habitation of the unbroken mind. But not such is the picture. Called forth from its crumbling recesses, the living tenant is there, still ennobling the ruin, and upholding it, as it were, by the strength of his inner life." Stuart painted but three portraits of Washington from life, but made twenty-six copies of these originals. There is a certain weakness about the mouth, Washington having lost his teeth when the originals were painted, but the general bearing is noble and dignified; and we may congratulate ourselves, with Leslie, "that a painter existed in the time of Washington who could hand him down looking like a gentleman."

To sketch even in outline the career of every American artist who has achieved celebrity in portraiture or any other branch of art would extend this article into a good-sized volume. Among those artists who belonged partly to the last and partly to the present century, and whose genius has left a deep impression upon American art, may be mentioned John Vanderlyn, whose "Ariadne" and "Marius" are justly celebrated, and who has given us the best portraits extant of Madison, Monroe, Randolph, Clinton, Calhoun, and other eminent Americans; and Thomas Sully, a native of England, but whose career belongs to America, and whose portraits are distinguished by exquisite grace and refinement. To the present century belong many eminent names, such as Henry Inman, happiest in portraiture, but also charming in landscape, and the first American artist who attempted *genre* painting with success; William Page, who emulates Titian and Veronese as a colorist, whose portraits rank among the noblest of modern times, and whose Venetian reproductions have excited the highest admiration as well as the severest criticism; Charles

Loring Elliot, whose portraits are distinguished by richness of color, a manly simplicity and force of execution, combined with a subtile grasp of individuality which no other American portrait painter has evinced in an equal degree; Daniel Huntington, whose versatile pencil, not confined to any single branch of art, is equally happy in portraiture, landscape, *genre*, and historical painting; Oliver Stone, recently deceased, whose portraits of women and children, in which he chiefly excelled, are characterized by a peculiar grace and refinement; Thomas Le Clear; Richard M. Staigg, who, besides the exquisite ivory miniatures by which he is chiefly known, has shown a happy talent in *genre* painting; George A. Baker, whose portraits of women and children are of rare beauty and refinement. Other names might be mentioned did not want of space forbid.

Historical painting has not found in America the encouragement accorded to other branches of art, partly, perhaps, because we have never had a really great historical painter, and partly because the genius of the age does not favor it. Colonel John Trumbull attempted to depict the events of the Revolution in a series of large historical *tableaux*, which are now chiefly valued for the faithful portraits they contain of the soldiers and statesmen of that time. His sketches and studies for these works show a vigor and grasp which are wanting in the larger canvases. His "Death of Montgomery," the "Signing of the Declaration of Independence," and the "Battle of Bunker Hill," and others of his important works, exhibit considerable skill in grouping and composition, but it would have been better for his fame had nothing remained but the original sketches and portraits. His talent is displayed to greater advantage in the "Trumbull Gallery" at New Haven than in the national Capitol. As aid-de-camp to General Washington in the early part of the Revolution, Colonel Trumbull enjoyed peculiar facilities for studying his character and features under the most varied circumstances, and his portrait of him now in the gallery at New Haven is full of soldierly spirit. By contemporaries, to whom it recalled the leader of the American armies, it was preferred to Stuart's.

Pre-eminent among American historical painters stands the honored name of Washington Allston; yet even of him it must be said that performance lagged far behind design, and that his fame is in great part the legacy of contemporary admiration. The quality of his genius was akin to that of the old masters of religious art. It might be said of him that he painted for antiquity. His mind, even in youth inclined to serious contemplation, was moulded by early study of the old masters, and the results of this training may be traced in all his works. It

HIRAM POWERS.—[1805-1873.]

was to him that Fuseli bluntly said, "You have come a great way to starve," when the young American, on his first visit to London, announced his purpose to devote himself to historical painting. Nothing daunted, Allston pursued his studies in England, France, and Italy with unflagging diligence, and with the grand goal of his ambition constantly in view. His earliest large picture, "The Dead Man Revived," obtained the prize of two hundred guineas from the British Institution, and was soon after purchased by the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. This was followed by a long list of important works, many of which are owned in England, where Allston enjoys even greater repute than in his own country. He suffered much from feeble health and from pecuniary embarrassment, and one of his most important works, "Belshazzar's Feast," remained, in consequence, unfinished at his death. His first studies for this painting were made in London in 1817. At intervals he worked upon it for nearly thirty years, and was engaged upon it on the last day of his life. Even in its unfinished state it attests the grandeur of the artist's conception, but it also reveals in a striking degree the limitations of his genius, chiefly the vacillation of thought, the wavering choice, displayed in changes of plan and apparent dissatisfaction with parts of the work as it proceeded. Allston himself regarded this picture as his greatest composition; to finish it worthily was the desire of his heart; but his genius found its best expression in some of his less ambitious paintings, in which his refined sense of the beautiful, his love of the graceful, and his intimate knowledge of form are

allowed free play, untrammeled by the struggle to paint in the "grand style."

Historical painting in America has been mainly, thus far at least, the reflex of European schools of art. Trumbull's style was formed in London under the tuition of Benjamin West, Allston's by long and conscientious study of the great masters of the Venetian schools, and Emanuel Leutze, our most vigorous and prolific historical painter in recent times, the engraving from whose picture of "Washington crossing the Delaware" has carried his name into every American household, was the disciple of Lessing, with whom he studied at Düsseldorf. The conditions of American society are not, indeed, favorable to the development of this branch of art, which can not flourish without a patronage which does not exist in this country. Our government patronage has been a positive detriment to art. With few exceptions, the national commissions have been awarded to artists of inferior merit, whose success was often due to lobby influence. The consequence is that the national paintings at Washington are, with a few worthy exceptions, a national disgrace. A blank white wall would be less displeasing to the cultivated eye. It is, perhaps, vain to hope for a remedy. In the scramble for government art patronage, charlatans alone enter the course; men of genius, whose productions would do the nation honor, will never descend to an unseemly scrub race with "artists" who could hardly paint a respectable sign for a village tavern. Hence it is that while we occasionally see an American historical painting of high merit, the branches of art which most flourish in this country, and which have reached a degree of excellence unsurpassed in Europe, are portraiture, landscape, and *genre* painting. For correct drawing, truth of color, and a fidelity to expression as nearly absolute as the art can be carried, American portrait painters, as a class, stand in advance of their European brethren. There are no portraits in the world, if we except those of the old Venetian masters, superior in the highest qualities of art to those of Stuart, Elliot, Page, Huntington, Le Clear, Stone, Baker, and others who have devoted their genius to this branch of art. American portraiture may not display so much Academical "effect" as the French, but effect is not in itself an essential quality of high art. It is often an artistic trick to catch the uncultivated eye and hide defects of drawing.

In landscape painting, as in portraiture, America very early declared her independence of European schools. Our artists have gone directly to nature for inspiration, and each, following the tendency of his own genius, has found in her varied aspects of loveliness and grandeur what no Academical training could have taught. Fidelity to nature is a characteristic trait of American landscape art; a fidelity not servile, but conscientious and loving, with none of the conventional trickery and Academical effects characteristic of every European school of landscape except the English; a fidelity not inconsistent with the widest display of imagination and fancy, nor with freedom of individual expression. If characteristic specimens of the art of each of our landscape painters, from the venerable Durand, whose hand has not yet forgot its cunning, to the youngest aspirant for a place on the walls of the Academy, could be gathered into one gallery, they would form an exhibition unrivaled in the world in all the higher qualities of art, in individuality, and in truth to nature. Such a collection—a nucleus already exists in our Metropolitan Museum of Art—ought to find a place in New York. How interesting to the student would it be to trace the development of landscape art in the pictures of Durand, Cole, Huntington, Inness, Church, Bierstadt, Gifford, Kensett, Whittredge, M'Entee, Colman, Hubbard, and a host of others who have won deserved honors by their faithful delineations of nature! The limits of this sketch preclude extended personal characterizations where so many deserve special notice; and equally out of the question is even the briefest account of what the most eminent have accomplished toward bringing American landscape art to its present high position.

In more senses than one such an exhibition would be essentially American; for although many of our foremost landscape painters have gone abroad for study or in search of special aspects of nature, they have found in the grandeur and in the beauty of our own country the highest inspiration. Gifford brings nothing from Venice or the East superior to his magnificent transcripts of the scenery of the Hudson and the sea-coast, although that element of the picturesque afforded by the architecture of the Old World is wanting in the New; nor did Church find in the Andes inspiration for a nobler picture than his "Niagara." Bierstadt's splendid delineations of the sublime scenery of California and the Rocky Mountains far surpass his "Vesuvius." Thomas Cole found in the Catskills the material for his most beautiful pictures; and where but in America could M'Entee have become the interpreter of those autumnal effects which he renders with such beauty and fidelity? The happiest efforts of Kensett were inspired by years of patient study among the mountains of New England and New York, the lakes and rivers of the Middle States, and along the Eastern sea-coast. Whittredge's magnificent pictures of Western scenery cast into the shade his earlier though beautiful views on the Rhine. But the list is almost inexhaustible; it would

include nearly every eminent landscape painter in America.

Several of our most eminent landscapists are known also as successful marine painters. Colman began his artistic career by painting shipping and sea views. Many of the finest pictures of Kensett and Gifford represent various aspects of the sea in connection with views of the coast. One of Church's most important compositions is his picture of a gigantic iceberg floating majestically in a tranquil expanse of ocean. William Bradford has devoted himself almost exclusively to the delineation of the arctic seas, with their rugged glacier-riven coasts, their icebergs, and their terrible ice-plains, the scene of adventure and disaster. Among our most noteworthy marine painters may be mentioned F. H. De Haas, a native of Rotterdam, but for many years a resident of this country. His pictures of sea storms are strong and effective; and he has also painted many beautiful coast scenes. Charles Temple Dix, had his life been spared, would have achieved great success in this branch of painting.

In figure and *genre* painting we have the names of many gifted and accomplished artists, such as Eastman Johnson, Edwin White, E. W. Perry, Matteson, S. Mount, J. Wood, J. G. Brown, John W. Ehninger, Elihu Vedder, George H. Boughton, W. J. Hennessy, R. C. Woodville, and others. Mr. White is also a careful and admired portrait painter, and has essayed historical composition with marked success. Mr. Johnson stands at the head of American *genre* painters. He was among the first to recognize in American life the picturesque and characteristic traits which our artists were once fain to seek abroad. Thanks to his intuition and to the example of his admirable achievements, American *genre* painting now rivals that of any European nation in variety and excellence, and gives promise of greater triumphs in the future.

The best animal painter in America is W. H. Beard, whose half-humorous, half-serious compositions have not been excelled by any other artist at home or abroad. He has a special *penchant* for bears, and has made them the medium of caustic satire on humanity, as in his "Bears on a Bender"—a picture which established his name, and the great success of which influenced his career. His brother, James H. Beard, also an animal painter of merit, employs his pencil almost exclusively in the delineation of domestic animals. The late William Hays painted many admirable animal pictures, of which the most important are "The Stampede" and "The Herd on the Move." The names of Tait and Bispham must also be included in the list of painters who have made special study of animal life, and have been successful in the delineation of it.

THOMAS CRAWFORD.—[1813-1857.]

The list of American sculptors embraces a number of eminent names, beginning with that of Horatio Greenough, from whose hand came the first marble group executed by an American. Sculpture, as is well known, was not popular in this country for some years after the Revolution. Nude statuary was especially an abomination not to be tolerated; and Greenough, Crawford, and Powers waited many years and endured keen disappointments before they received popular recognition. Their residence abroad, rendered necessary by the absence of the proper facilities for the prosecution of their art at home, removed them in a great measure from popular sympathy, and their achievements, except by report, were known to a comparatively small number of people. But travel, culture, familiarity with foreign galleries, and the more general distribution of casts and statuary throughout the country have produced a marked change in popular ideas. Statuary forms a more or less important part of every Academy exhibition, and it is no longer necessary to set apart a day exclusively for the admission of ladies. Nor is it longer essential that an American sculptor should reside in Italy, or go abroad at all, except for the purpose of study among the masterpieces of antique art. Several of our most eminent sculptors pursue their art at home, and retain an individuality which might be endangered, in some degree at least, by a foreign residence. Our foremost living sculptor, J. Q. A. Ward, achieved several signal triumphs in his art, without the advantages supposed to be only attainable abroad. His "Indian Hunter," his "Freedman," his statue of Shakspeare, now in Central Park, and his numerous portrait busts, all attest the vigor and originality of his genius. Ward is the most thoroughly American of all our sculptors. Greenough, Crawford, Powers, Story, went early to the studios of Florence or Rome, and in the contempla-

tion of ancient art they lost the inspiration of the New World, and became European artists, not to be distinguished, by any characteristic of their work, from the English, French, German, and Italian sculptors surrounding them. Palmer, like Ward, never studied abroad, and yet, despite certain peculiar theories in regard to his art, he has produced some admirable work. Besides the artists already named, among those who have acquired distinction as American sculptors may be named Thomas Ball, Henry Kirke Brown, Randolph Rogers; Joel T. Hart, of Kentucky; and Launt Thompson, who, though born in Ireland, has become thoroughly Americanized. He acquired his art with Palmer, in whose studio he remained about nine years. Thompson has executed some very characteristic portrait

JOHN F. KENSETT.—[1818-1872.]

busts and several statues of great merit, the most important being that of General Sedgwick. The varied *genre* groups of John Rogers, chiefly representing scenes and episodes of the late war, entitle this artist to a permanent, if not very lofty, place among American sculptors. Several American women, among them Miss Harriet Hosmer, Miss Margaret Foley, and Miss Emma Stebbins, have also attained high repute as sculptors.

The art of engraving has reached a high degree of excellence in America during the hundred years which have elapsed since Paul Revere, the hero of the memorable ride celebrated in Longfellow's verse, engraved caricatures and historical subjects in Boston. Revere worked on copper, an art which, like lithography, has been almost driven out of existence by wood-engraving. The first wood-engraver in America was Dr. Anderson, who died a few years since at the age of ninety-five, having, in the course of his long career, seen the art advance from a rude state to the finish and refinement it has attained in the hands of such men as Linton and Anthony, and of men who are second to these masters only. Wood-engraving has been a powerful agent in the dissemination of a knowledge and love of art throughout the country, not only by the reproduction of the works of eminent masters of Europe and America, but by spreading broadcast through illustrated books, magazines, and journals the artistic creations of Darley, Hoppin, Fredricks, Nast, Moran, Sol Eytinge, and a hundred others who have devoted their talents to illustration.

The history of caricature in the United States has been so recently and so amply given by Mr. Parton in the pages of this Magazine that it is only necessary here to note some of the leading names in this department of art. Among political caricaturists Thomas Nast stands without a rival in the vigor and sharpness of his satire and in versatility of invention. In social caricature we have Sol Eytinge, whose inimitable delineations of the humorous side of negro character excite genial amusement, but never derisive laughter; Bellew, Woolf, Reinhart, Frost, Wust, Thomas Worth, Hopkins, and many others, whose names would fill a large catalogue.

Looking back through the hundred years of our existence as an independent nation, we see a steady and healthful growth of art in all sections of the country. Year by year the number of American artists has increased with the diffusion of culture among the people; art societies are springing up in all parts of the country; exhibitions worthy of the Old World are held in cities where fifty years ago there was scarcely a break in the primeval forest. Europe sends us yearly an accession of artists, who become American, as West, Copley, and Leslie became English painters. Schools of art spread culture and knowledge all over the land. Massachusetts has made drawing a part of her system of common-school education with admirable results. The art school connected with the Cooper Union in this city has also done great service in the way of elementary training in drawing, painting, wood-engraving, etc. The work begun by the American Institute of Architects awakens the hope that another generation will see a vast improvement in the architecture of our public and private buildings. As wealth and culture increase, the fine arts will find increasing support, and the coming century will witness a development in the sculpture, painting, and architecture of this country as marvelous as its progress has been in the mechanical and industrial arts.

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