

ALEXANDER HILL EVERETT (1790-1847), 1817

Anonymous

watercolor on ivory

3 1/4 x 2 5/8 (8.23 x 6.67)

signed, l.r.: 'W. I. N./1817'

Gift of Janelle Hardin Morton, Norah Hardin Lind, and Mary Welby Hardin Watkins, 1991.

Hewes Number: 44

Ex. Coll.: Sitter; possibly to his nephew Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909); owned by his son Philip Lesley Hale (b. 1865); to his widow Lilian Wescott Hale; to their daughter Nancy Hale Bowers (1908-88); to her granddaughters, the donors.

Alexander Hill Everett, the older brother of Edward Everett (cats. 45-47), graduated from Harvard in 1806 with the highest honors in his class. He studied law in the office of John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) and accompanied Adams to Russia in 1809 as an attaché. The Foreign Service seemed to suit Everett. In 1815 he was posted to the Netherlands as secretary to William Eustis, the American chargé d'affaires. He returned home after two years to be married and the following year was appointed chargé d'affaires at The Hague. From 1825 to 1829, during the presidency of John Quincy Adams, Everett was the envoy to Spain, and in 1845 President James K. Polk (1795-1849) appointed him commissioner to China. Everett and his wife set sail for Hong Kong in 1846, but he died in Canton, China, shortly after his arrival.<sup>1</sup>

Everett wrote extensively about his experiences as an American abroad. His nephew noted: 'His long residence in Europe and his intimate acquaintance with the French, German, Italian, and Spanish languages, resulted in wide and accurate acquaintance with the literature of the Continental states. [I]n industrious and constant authorship [he] published the results of his observations on social systems and literature.'<sup>2</sup> An 1822 book by Everett on the political systems of Europe was followed in 1827 by America: A General Survey of the Political Situation of the Several Powers of the Western Continent. From 1829 to 1835, Everett was the editor of the quarterly North American Review and contributed several political essays, many of which were reprinted for wider circulation.<sup>3</sup> He was also in demand as a speaker, and several of his addresses were published in pamphlet form. Copies of his pamphlets, including 'An Address on the Character and Influence of German Literature' (1839), and volumes of his poetry are preserved in the American Antiquarian Society's collections.

Sometime in 1817, the year in which this miniature was painted, the twenty-seven-year-old Everett returned to the United States after serving under Eustis in the Netherlands. He had married Lucretia Orne Peabody (1786-1862) in the fall of 1816 and they had gone to Europe on their wedding trip. It is not known whether the portrait was done there or in the U.S. The painter, who initialed and dated the miniature 'W. I. N. 1817,' remains unidentified.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Franklin Everett, Descendants of Richard Everett (Boston: printed privately, 1902), 120-21. A modern label on the verso of this miniature incorrectly states that the sitter was Robert Hill Everett, a brother of Edward, who was appointed consul to China and drowned in the China Sea at age 27. According to the family genealogy, Everett did not have a brother named Robert, and none of his siblings is known to have died by drowning.

<sup>2</sup> Edward E. Hale, Sketches of the Lives of the Brothers Everett (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1878), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. 'Everett, Alexander.'

<sup>4</sup> Everett's whereabouts during all of 1817 have not been firmly established. The sitter had definitely returned to New England by the end of the year, as John Quincy Adams corresponded with Everett in Boston, Massachusetts, and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in September, November, and December. (See 'Letters of J. Q. Adams to A. H. Everett, 1817-1837,' American Historical Review [1930]: 106-14.)