

**A MEMOIR OF
LORD LYNDHURST**

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A memoir of lord Lyndhurst by William Sidney Gibson

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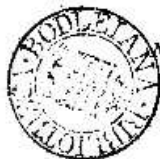
WILLIAM SIDNEY GIBSON

**A MEMOIR OF
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OF
LORD LYN DHURST.

BY WILLIAM SIDNEY GIBSON, ESQ.,
M.A., F.S.A., &c.,

OF LINCOLN'S INN, BARRISTER AT LAW, ONE OF THE REGISTRARS OF THE
COURT OF BANKRUPTCY.



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The substance of the following Memoir appeared as a Magazine article shortly after Lord Lyndhurst's death; and, although the Author felt that so slight an outline of the career of that illustrious man is a most inadequate tribute to his memory, the favourable reception accorded to it by friends induced him to reprint and publish it as a pamphlet. It has now been revised and partly rewritten in consequence of certain mis-statements in Lord Campbell's biography of Lord Lyndhurst in his *Lives of the Chancellors*.

LORD LYN DHURST.

MORE than ninety years ago, "when George the Third was King," and Washington was but a village in what were still "his Majesty's North American Colonies," the great lawyer and statesman whose character and career are the subject of the present memoir, was born at Boston, in Massachusetts, which had not then ceased to be a part of the British empire. So lately as the autumn of 1863 there was living amongst us a man who was a scholar at Cambridge nearly three-quarters of a century ago; who was a schoolboy when Blackstone and Lord Chief Justice Mansfield were still living, and who saw Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds; who witnessed the surges of the French Revolution; could recollect (as he told the House of Lords in 1859) the day when every part of the opposite coast was blockaded by an English fleet; remembered the victories of Campordown, St. Vincent, and the Nile; and, above all, that triumphant fight at Trafalgar which almost annihilated the navies of France and Spain; and who could also recollect the expulsion of the French from Egypt; the achievement of victory after victory in the Peninsula; the operations of the British army in the South of France; and, last of all, the great battle which ended the war. In his long lifetime he not only beheld events abroad which changed many dynasties of Europe, but saw at home the ebb and flow of public opinion upon great political questions which threatened to remodel the English constitution; he might have witnessed the parliamentary conflicts of Pitt and Fox,

and could tell us of the eloquence of Sheridan and Burke; he was not only Lord Chancellor when Queen Victoria was a child, but saw the "dull and decorous court" of George III., and had become eminent at the Bar in days when the Prince Regent was giving balls at Carlton House; in his infancy occurred the riots which preceded the revolt of the North American colonies from the mother country; and he beheld the rise of the United States and their growth into one of the great powers of the world. His life, in short, was one of the last remaining links which connected our time with the life and characters of the latter years of the last century, and it is a career that recalls names and incidents which have receded far into the past.

It has been truly said that we recognise something patriarchal in relation to ourselves in persons who have lived from before the French Revolution to our own times; and (as the writer of an article in the *Quarterly Review* on the "Life of Miss Berry" remarked,) there is something in these occasional lengthened spaces of individual existence which seems to make them especially favourable for biographical narrative: the one figure, standing for a period so protracted, by the stream of Time, seems to hold up the mirror of past generations and bygone life.

It was on the 21st of May, 1772, that JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY, the future Chancellor of England, was born. Mr. Copley, his father, was the son of Richard Copley of Lime-rick, by the daughter of Mr. John Singleton, an ancestor of the Singletons of Queensville Abbey, Clare, but was a native of Boston, where he was at that time practising in his profession of a portrait-painter; his mother was the daughter of Mr. Clarke, then "factor" in the tea trade for the East India Company. In New England this lady had a birthright to the colonists' regard, in being lineally descended from Mary

Chilton, one of the famous company of emigrants from Plymouth in "The May Flower," and (according to tradition) the first woman who set foot on the American shore. Little Copley may have seen his grandfather's tea-chests thrown overboard by the excited populace of Boston in the riot by which they signalled their determination to resist taxation by the mother-country; at all events, Mr. Clarke—who appears to have been more a royalist than Copley—had to escape from Boston in the disguise of an Indian; and Copley himself, who was wont to say that he had painted without having had a lesson and before he ever saw a good painting, soon afterwards proceeded to Italy for the purpose of improving his knowledge of Art. This was in 1774—two years before the Declaration of Independence; and on the 24th June, 1775, Mr. Copley, with the future Chancellor and his then infant sisters, landed at Dover after a passage of twenty-eight days—in those times accounted a very short voyage.

Of Mr. Copley's studies in Italy, his copy of a "Madonna" by Correggio, which was long to be seen in the family mansion in George Street, was a memorial; so, too, were the "St. Jerome," after Correggio, a fine copy of the celebrated picture at Parma, the size of the original, and made there about 1774 or 1775, "the Virgin and Child," and "St. Catherine and an Angel;" also, a study for a portion of the last-mentioned picture, painted at Parma at the same time; and which were in Lord Lyndhurst's collection at the time of his death. It is said that the success of his picture, "a Boy with a Squirrel," which he had painted in 1760, and which was exhibited anonymously in England, was the cause of his afterwards coming to this country.*

* This picture, which was exhibited at the International Exhibition, was also in Lord Lyndhurst's collection, and purchased after his death by Mr. Amory of Boston, who married Miss C. Greene, his Lordship's niece.

In a few years after his arrival in London he resided and practised in the house in which his distinguished son always continued to live, and in which he died,—a house in George Street, a few doors from Hanover Square, which was at that time almost a suburban locality adjacent to those Marylebone fields—haunted by milkmaids and covered with daisies—which then spread to the north of Cavendish Square.

Mr. Copley's reputation has been attributed to his felicitous skill in portraiture; but he was not only a portrait-painter. Several well-known pictures attest his skill as an historical painter also. The "Siege of Gibraltar," painted for the City of London, and now in Guildhall; the "Death of Lord Chatham," which is in the South Kensington Museum; the "Death of Major Peirson," the artist's *chef-d'œuvre*, which was painted for Alderman Boydell, afterwards re-purchased by Copley, and now also in the same collection; and "King Charles demanding the Five impeached Members," now in Boston, are the best known examples.

Reynolds was ceasing to paint when Copley established himself in London, and, by the advice of West, Copley's countryman, who was then Painter to the King, he joined the Royal Academy of the day, and gradually acquired fame and affluence and the favour of the court. Round his table in George Street men of taste and rank, and artists of eminence, were wont to gather; and his son, the future Chancellor, profited by his early contact with that refined and polished circle—perhaps, indeed, he owed in some measure to those early associations the graceful and courtly manners which always distinguished him. Mr. Copley's painting room, at the back of the house in George Street, where one of his daughters was wont to read English poetry aloud to him when painting, became the favourite library or "study" of his eminent son.

The lad seems to have been endowed with a love of the beautiful in Nature; if he had not left America in such early infancy, we might well suppose it to have been fostered by the grandeur and wildness which surrounded his childhood's home. At all events he was brought up amidst artistic objects and associations; and he himself stated in the House of Lords, in that speech on the Royal Academy which fell with such peculiar grace and interest from his lips, that he was originally destined for his father's profession: it is known, moreover, that he actually attended for some time the lectures of Barry and of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the latter of whom he may have seen at work with his palette among the lords and ladies of the Court. Thus, we may imagine the future Chancellor seated at the feet of the great painter, much as Lord Mansfield, the future Chief Justice of England, might have been seen in his youthful days as a pupil in the society of Pope.

It is related, that, when a mere boy, he had been asked by a guest of his father's, at one of the dinner-parties in George Street, "Of what profession will you be, my little lad?" and his father quickly answered, "Anything but a painter: he has my permission to be anything he chooses but a painter. He may be a lawyer, and, if he takes my advice, he *will* be one; and then" (continued his father, in what we may call unconscious prophecy), "if he is a lawyer, and an able one, what a bright future may await him! He may be Attorney-General; and, if really clever, why may he not become Lord Chancellor?"

We know not whether he found it more difficult than Blackstone did to bid farewell to his Muse, but he did take his father's advice; and years after the death of his gifted parent—who was privileged only to see his son on the