

THE LIMNER COMPANY



GEORGE ENGLEHEART (1750 - 1829)

Portrait miniature of Robert Harry Inglis (1786-1855), wearing blue coat, white waistcoat, and frilled white collar

Circa: 1794

1794

Watercolour on ivory (licence UZWLS1M4)

Oval, 2 1/2 in (64mm) high.

With a somewhat cheeky smirk, the young Robert Harry Inglis has been depicted here before his long career in politics, through which he became known as a staunch protestant and opponent to Catholic Emancipation. Inglis was born to Sir Hugh Inglis (1744-1820) and his first wife, Catherine (d.1792). His life is recorded in depth in both the national biography and the history of Parliament. There is also a developed study of his character within E.M. Forster's *Marianne Thornton: A Domestic Biography*.

As a young man, Robert was more interested in travel and culture than politics, and he spent time developing different interests, resulting in him joining both the Royal Society (1813) and the Society of Antiquaries (1816). It was around the same time that he adopted nine orphans, the children of his good friend Henry Thornton and his wife Marianne Sykes. His connection to E.M. Forster comes through the eldest of his wards, Marianne Thornton, who was the author's Great Aunt. The first chapter of the second part of his biography of his Great Aunt is titled 'The Reign of Sir Robert' and details the beginning of the period in which he took responsibility for Marianne and her sisters. Forster notes that Marianne called Robert 'The Eighth Champion of Christendom[1]', likely a reference to his religious nature. Despite being her guardian, Robert was only 11 years older than Marianne, and the pair developed a good friendship throughout their life.

Aside from his selfless guardianship of these children, Robert's life was defined by his political career.

He was known for his opposition to the Catholic Relief Bill of 1825 and for being the MP for Oxford University (1829-1854). Possibly influenced by Marianne, who is known for her role as an abolitionist,

he opposed the slave trade and carried an address against this in May 1838.

Inglis was also involved in arts and culture, and is noted for his early patronage of George Richmond (1809-1896), who painted him around 1837. His two loves of art and politics had collided a few years before when, in 1833, George Hayter included a portrait of Inglis in *The House of Commons*[2], now in the National Portrait Gallery. An oil sketch for the finished work is also extant[3]. In 1846, Inglis also featured in John Partidge's *The Fine Arts Commissioners*, 1846[4], a group portrait recording the group assembled to oversee the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament.

The Inglis family commissioned several portraits by Engleheart of different members of their family. For this reason, their surname appears on multiple occasions in the artist's fee book. A group of these portraits were sold by T.W. Aitchison in 1971, at Sotheby's, alongside miniatures by Engleheart of the Aitchison family. Though it has not been possible to make a connection between the two surnames, a note in the catalogue suggests that the Inglis family were a past relation to the seller.

[1] E.M. Forster, *Marianna Thornton: A Domestic Biography*, Hardcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1956, p.75.

[2] NPG 54.

[3] NPG 4968.

[4] NPG 342.