Cornelia’s remark “These are my jewels,” referring to her two sons, has touched a sentimental chord from Roman times to the present. We find it echoed as “A Mother’s Pearls” in the 1842 catalogue of the seventh annual exhibition of the Artists’ Fund Society of Philadelphia. The entry goes on “A necklace of miniature portraits of the children of a family by T. S. Cummings”; the family was the artist’s own. As there are nine children linked together in the necklace, Mrs. Cummings had a distinct numerical advantage over Cornelia. The charming portrait of Mrs. Cummings entitled The Bracelet was also included in the 1842 exhibition.

Thomas Seir Cummings, the artist and head of this family, was brought to New York from Bristol, England, as a boy. At fourteen his drawings showed so much promise that his father placed him in the drawing school of John Rubens Smith. Smith specialized in small water-color portraits, which show considerable insight and moderate skill. Three years later Cummings was taken on as a pupil by Henry Inman. There were only a few years difference in age between the two, and both were energetic and hard workers. In three years they formed the business partnership of “Inman & Cummings Portrait and Miniature Painters” on Vesey Street. Even before the partnership began Cummings felt that he was doing well enough to marry, in 1822, a lovely sixteen-year-old girl from Bristol, Jane Cook.

While miniatures by Inman and Cummings have certain similarities in their clear and objective presentation, Cummings used brighter colors and his approach is more lively. In 1827 Inman withdrew from miniature-painting to concentrate on oil portraits, thus leaving the miniature field to Cummings. The two artists continued good friends and worked together for the artistic life of New York.

The portrait of Mrs. Cummings was given to the Museum in 1927 by her daughter Mrs. Richard B. Hartshorne; the following year, with her sister Miss Fanny S. Cummings, she gave the family necklace. In 1941 Miss Estelle Hartshorne offered to identify the children in her grandfather’s necklace, and we now have their names and dates in our files.

All the miniatures in the necklace must have been painted about the same time because the sequence appears planned and graduated as to size and age, except for the little one tucked in between the two biggest in the middle. He was Charles, the first born, who died nine years before the youngest, Sarah, shown here at the upper right end of the string, was born. Her birthday was in January 1840. The necklace was first shown in the sixteenth annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, which opened on May 3, 1841. When we asked Miss Hartshorne which of the girls had been her mother she said her mother was not there. Her
The Bracelet, by Thomas Seir Cummings, a portrait of his wife, Jane Cook, painted in 1835 when she was about twenty-nine. Height, 6 5/8 inches. Gift of Mrs. Richard B. Hartshorne, 1927

name was Josephine, and she was born after the necklace was finished. In fact there were five more children born afterward. Of all these fourteen children only the last died in infancy, and another at the age of three. Many in the family lived into their seventies, eighties, and nineties, as did their parents.

The mother of this handsome brood might well have modeled as a fashion plate in her golden brown off-the-shoulder gown. A letter from the artist to his son-in-law Richard Hartshorne, which is in our files, states that the miniature was painted during the winter of 1835 and was first exhibited in the eleventh annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design. We must then conclude that this pretty young
woman had already borne six children and possibly seven, depending on whether the artist was referring to the early winter months of 1835 or the end of the year. Her son George was born on November 1, 1835.

There are three other Cummings miniatures in the Museum’s collection, one of Levinus Clarkson, given by Mr. and Mrs. William A. Moore, one of an auburn-haired young man, given by a great-granddaughter of the artist, Miss Florence Brevoort Kane, and a portrait of Gustavus Adolphus Rollins, given by his son A. C. Rollins. This last has an interesting view of New York harbor in the background. It shows a circular structure, almost surrounded by water, which must be Castle Garden, or, as we knew it, the old Aquarium. Mr. Rollins was for fifty years a member of the New York Stock Exchange, and from his alert expression he must have been a person on whom investors relied with confidence.

Cummings and other New York artists were very busy in the eighteen-twenties founding the National Academy of Design. It was formed in opposition and protest to another group called the American Academy of Arts, established a quarter century earlier by a group of gentlemen of every profession except the arts. Artists had not been allowed to have any say in the management of the earlier Academy, and art students had many complaints of the treatment they received. Samuel F. B. Morse was elected President, Henry Inman Vice-President, and T. S. Cummings Treasurer of the new institution. In 1865 Cummings published the *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*. A fascinating volume, it gives the first forty years of the Academy, its trials and triumphs, high-flown oratory, and matter-of-fact records. Cummings labored faithfully for the Academy as officer and teacher, pulling it through and holding it together when an indifferent city withheld support.

After publication of this record Cummings moved to Mansfield, Connecticut, where he and his wife celebrated their sixty-seventh wedding anniversary in 1889. After her death the same year the artist moved to Hackensack, New Jersey, where he died five years later.