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**COVER CAPTION:** *Alvan Clark (1804–1887) at age 40 or so at the pinnacle of his career as a portraitist specializing in miniatures. Still in his future at this point was a decade of struggle to establish himself as an optician, and not until 1860 was he able to found a telescope-making factory, from which in his 50s, 60s, and 70s he successively fashioned the optics for the world’s five largest and best refracting telescopes, which rocketed him to international fame. This special single-topic issue focuses on those early years of Clark’s struggle. This portrait was painted between 1840 and 1845—around the time Clark just began making telescopes—by American painter Chester Harding (1792–1866). In oil on panel, the portrait measures 68.9 x 55.56 cm (27 1/8 x 21 7/8 in.); it was bequeathed to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston by Mrs. Alvan Clark Eastman, and is used with permission.*

[Credit: © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston]

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