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WILLIAM HODGES, R.A.
From the Engraving by William Daniell, R.A.
of a Drawing by George Dance, R.A.

William Hodges, R. A., in India.

FROM the notice of William Hodges given in the *Dictionary of National Biography* we learn that he was born in London (1744) in very humble circumstances. He was the only child of a smith, who kept a small shop in St. James's Market (the site of which is now covered by the Criterion Restaurant, the contiguous part of Lower Regent Street, and the houses to the west of this, between Jermyn Street and Piccadilly Circus). The boy managed to acquire some knowledge of drawing while employed to run errands for Shipley's drawing school, in the Strand; and, his ability having been noticed by Richard Wilson, R.A., that artist took him as a pupil and assistant. After leaving Wilson, Hodges spent some time, first in London and then at Derby, where he did some scene-painting for the local theatre. He had now found his legs as a painter, and between 1766 and 1772 he exhibited pictures at the Society of Artists. Next he obtained the post of draughtsman to the second expedition to the South Seas under Captain Cook, which occupied him until 1775; and after his return his employment was continued for some time by the Admiralty to finish his drawings and superintend the engraving of them for the published account of the voyage. In 1776 and the following year he sent pictures to the exhibitions of the Royal Academy. Evidently, however, he found his profession insufficiently lucrative; and, having lost his first wife, whom he had married in 1776 (1), he determined to try his fortune in India. On 28th October, 1778 the Directors gave him permission to proceed to that country as a painter; and a month later James Stuart, of Leicester Square, and John Whitmore, of Bolt Court, Fleet Street, were accepted as his securities in £1,000.

By what ship Hodges went out I have not succeeded in discovering; but he seems to have reached Madras early in 1780, for the list of inhabitants at that place, dated 28th February in that year, gives 1780 as the time of his arrival. Madras itself affording few subjects for his brush, he planned an excursion into the interior. In this he was disappointed by Hyder Ali's sudden irruption into the Carnatic; and after waiting some time and finding no likelihood of the war ceasing, he embarked in February, 1781 for Bengal with the idea of returning to England. His chief reason for deciding to go home seems to have been that his health had begun to fail. However, a short stay in Calcutta proved so beneficial in this respect that he changed his mind and remained; induced thereto partly by the fact that he had found

(1) Hodges was married first, on 11th May, 1776, to Miss Martha Nesble, who died in child-bed within a year; second, on 16th October, 1784, to Miss Lydia Wright; and third, to Miss Carr, who was "much beloved and prized by Romney." By his third wife, who died shortly after him, he had five children.

warm friends in Thomas Henry Davies, the Advocate-General, and in Warren Hastings, to whom he brought a letter of introduction from John Macpherson (2). During the rest of Hodges' stay in India the Governor-General proved at once a steady supporter and a munificent patron.

The artist certainly made the utmost use of all the opportunities afforded him. In April, 1781 he went by way of Murshidabad to Monghyr; and this excursion, besides introducing him at Bhagalpur to Augustus Cleveland (with whom he stayed for some time), gave full employment to his busy pencil. Soon after his return to Calcutta, Hastings set out on his memorable journey to Benares, and Hodges was allowed to make one of the party. He shared in the flight to Chunar that followed the outbreak at Benares; and he returned to that city with the Governor-General at the end of September. The party quitted Benares towards the close of the year and reached Bhagalpur early in January, 1782. There the painter took leave of Hastings, and remained for four months with Cleveland, exploring the country round and painting diligently. Cleveland patronised the artist as lavishly as Hastings himself; and when, after his premature death, his effects were sold in Calcutta, no less than twenty-one paintings by Hodges were included (3).

Hodges returned to Calcutta in the middle of May, 1782. There the heat caused a fever, which incapacitated him for a time, and it was not until the cold weather came that he recovered sufficiently to resume his occupation. He then obtained permission to proceed to Agra and Delhi, an opportunity offering by reason of the despatch of Major Browne on a mission to Mirza Shafi Khan, the Emperor's chief minister. From the letter quoted later it would seem that Hodges was given what he calls a salary during this journey; but no information on this point has been discovered in the records. He travelled by way of Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore and Lucknow to Etawa, where he joined Major Browne's party. The Khan was found in the neighbourhood of Agra; and during the time spent by Browne in conference with him, Hodges explored the surrounding country and made many sketches. Finding that no opportunity was likely to occur of visiting Delhi, the painter left Browne towards the end of April and proceeded to Gwalior, where he met David Anderson and his brother James, engaged in negotiating with Sindia. The Andersons were already acquainted with Hodges, for they had been in Hastings' suite at Benares, and they now treated him with great kindness. He was, however, suffering from the results of exposure to the sun and, after remaining ten days at Gwalior, he continued his journey to Lucknow, where Colonel Claud Martin took him into his

(2) Sydney C. Grier, *Letters of Warren Hastings to his Wife*, p. 121.

(3) See advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* of 9th January, 1794, where they are described as follows:—"Hill and Lake of Ture; Hill Mundor; Moory Jurna waterfall; Bejj Gur; Rajmahal; Peer Pahar Hill, Monghyr, Monghyr Fort; Jehangera Fort; Sickergally; another view of the same place; Oodooa Nullah; Byjenath or Deo Gur; Rocks in Jungleterry; Bhagulpore Nullah and Musque; Tomb and distant view of Rajmahal Hills; a Dirgh; Lake Jungleterry; Hill of Ture; a Banyan Tree; Lake Jungleterry and a thunderstorm; Bhagulpore House, distant view."

house and nursed and doctored him back to health. Quitting his kind host in the middle of July, the artist proceeded to Benares, Buxar (whence he made an excursion to Sasaram to sketch the mausoleum of Sher Shah), and Bhagalpur. At that place, to his great grief, he found Cleveland suffering from the illness which proved fatal a few months later. Hodges himself reached Calcutta on 24th September, 1783, after an absence of nine and a half months.

He now contemplated a still more ambitious project, namely, an expedition right across India to Surat; but he found that the expense of such a journey would be beyond his means and so the idea was given up. He decided to return to England. A passage was secured in the *Worcester*, which was to carry home Sir Elijah Impey and his family. Hodges embarked at Kalpi on 26th November; Impey came on board lower down the river on 7th December; and the vessel sailed from Sagar Roads two days later. She reached the Downs on 10th June, 1784.

Before quitting Calcutta, Hodges addressed the following letter to the Governor-General (4) :—

HON'BLE SIR,

As the time approaches on which I have fixed for my departure to Europe, I cannot be so near leaving this country without tendering you my humble but most sincere acknowledgements and thanks for the honor which you have done me and the flattering, as well as very useful encouragement which you have afforded me in my profession as a painter. It has been, and is, in the good fortune of gentlemen who have come to Bengal and could be in any shape instrumental in improving the arts which have advanced the English nation to a summit of particular distinction among the states in Europe, to receive the honor of your patronage and attention; but the favour which you have shewn me (and happy should I be, could I be brought to suppose myself deserving) has been particularly distinguished. I have also the honor to be much indebted to the gentlemen of the Council for their employment of my poor service at your recommendation in the Upper Provinces. I have been rewarded for these services in a very satisfactory degree by the credit of their protection and the salary which they were pleased to allot me; and I wish not to leave Bengal without tendering some fruits of my labor to the Company. I cannot do so in a manner more pleasing or creditable to myself than in soliciting your permission, Hon'ble Sir, to make the tender through you; and under a hope that you will grant it, I take the liberty to request that you will do me the honor of presenting to the Council, for transmission to the Company by one of the ships of this year, five scenes of places which have not yet been represented by any artist who has travelled to that part of India: a view of the Fort

(4) Bengal Public Consultations, 18th November, 1783.

of Agra from the northward: a view of Agra from southward: of the gate of the tomb of Akbar: of the Fort of Gaulier: and of the palace of the Nabob at Lucknow. I have, etc.

WM. HODGES.

CALCUTTA,

13th November, 1783.

The offer was accepted, and orders were given that the pictures should be sent home in the *Rodney* and that the artist himself should be recommended to the Directors in the next general letter. The latter intention was apparently forgotten, or else abandoned on reconsideration; but the Company was somehow made aware of the gift, possibly by a private letter from the Governor-General. Among the Company's home correspondence we find a letter, dated 22nd June, 1784, addressed to the Commissioners of the Customs, referring to the pictures as intended to be hung in the East India House, and begging that they should be allowed to pass free of duty. To this request a refusal was returned; whereupon the Company made an appeal to the Treasury (14th July). The application was referred by the latter to the Customs Commissioners, who in reply said that they saw no reason why the Duty should be excused; and in this view the Lords of the Treasury (21 August) concurred⁽⁵⁾. No further allusion to the matter has been traced in the records; but it seems certain that the pictures were never hung at the East India House, and so we must conclude that the Company refused to pay the duty and left them to their fate. To some extent this may have been due to pique; though possibly another reason was that the Directors were at the time so short of cash that they had made repeated applications to the Treasury for permission to defer the payment of the large sums due to the Government for customs. These requests had been granted; but it may have been thought at the East India House, that it would not look well in the circumstances to pay even the small amount due on the pictures while pleading want of means to meet the Company's liability on its ordinary trade imports.

We must now resume the story of Hodges' career. It has been alleged that he brought back a fortune from India. Of this, however, I find no evidence. It seems unlikely that his paintings had been in so much demand as to leave much of a surplus when his expenses (including his passage home) had been paid; and such indications as there are tend to show that the rest of his life was more or less of a struggle to make a livelihood. He entered on it bravely enough, and kept it up with indomitable spirit. He married for the second time (only once again to lose his wife after a very short time) and settled in Queen Street, Mayfair. He then projected the publication of a series of engravings in aquatint by himself from the sketches he had brought back. These were to form two series of twenty-four

(5) Treasury Minutes at the Public Record Office. Vols. 55 and 56.

plates each, to be issued (with letter-press) in quarterly parts of four each at 30s. a part. The whole work cost £18 unbound, or £20 bound. Upon his application the Directors (22 Dec. 1785) allowed the work to be dedicated to the East India Company and subscribed for forty sets. Hodges was also busily engaged in making pictures in oils from the same sketches, and between 1785 and 1788 he exhibited at the Royal Academy, besides other works, no less than twenty-two Indian views, following up these with four more at the exhibition of 1794. He had been elected an Associate of the Academy in 1786 and a full R. A. three years later. That Sir Joshua Reynolds thought well of his work is shown by a letter from him to the Duke of Rutland, of 20 August, 1786 (6). The Duke, who was then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had expressed a wish that William Marlow, the fashionable painter of landscapes and country seats, would come over to Dublin. Reynolds replied that Marlow had "quitted business"; and he went on to say: "I have met lately with a painter of landskips and buildings that I think excells Marlow—Mr. Hodges, who went the first [sic] voyage of Capt. Cook and has since been in the East Indies. He is now desirous of seeing Ireland, and would embark immediately if he was sure of Your Grace's protection. He is a very intelligent and ingenious artist and produced, I think, the best landskips in the last exhibition, which were taken from drawings which he made in the East Indies."

As shown by this letter, Hodges was always ready to embrace an opportunity of seeing fresh countries. About 1790 he made a tour on the Continent, in the course of which he visited St. Petersburg. After this he turned his attention to writing an account of his experiences in the East, which was published early in 1793, under the title of *Travels in India, 1780-83*. The work, which, apart from its personal details, is interesting as an account of the country at the period with which it deals, is written with such modesty and good taste as to give a very favourable impression of the author; and indeed he must have had a winning personality to secure, as he seems to have done, the warm regard of almost everyone he met. As illustrations, he reproduced fifteen of his own pictures, though this time he took no part in the engraving of them. Eight of these pictures belonged at the time to Warren Hastings. When the latter sold his house in Park Lane, he sent eleven of Hodges' paintings to Christie's for sale, and was much disappointed that they fetched only £125, declaring that he would have burnt them rather than let them go at such a price. Others he evidently retained, for there were several at Daylesford at the time of his death.

The rest of the story may be briefly told. Hodges married for a third time with the result that he soon had five children to provide for. Despite his diligence, he evidently found it difficult to make a living by his profession; and in 1795 he abandoned it, sold off his stock, and settled at Dartmouth, where with some associates he opened a bank. This came to grief

(6) Fourteenth Report of the Historical MSS. Commission, p. 340.

(7) and soon after its failure Hodges died at Brixham (6th March, 1797). Within a short time his wife followed him, leaving the children in poverty. Her brother, upon whom the care of them devolved, wrote to Hastings, begging him to assist by buying the drawings from which Hodges had made the pictures Hastings had purchased. With his usual generosity Hastings complied, and also showed kindness to the family in other ways (8). It may have been at his instance that a Madras cadetship was given to one of the children, Henry William (born 8th November, 1788). The youth went to Madras in 1807, and ten years later we find him taking part in the Pindari War. On the annexation of Khandesh he was appointed Assistant Collector of that district, and this employment he retained for thirteen years. After furlough to England, he returned to Madras in October, 1832, and was made private secretary to the Governor (Sir Frederick Adam); but two months later he obtained the appointment of Government Agent at Chepauk and Paymaster of Carnatic Stipends. He returned to England in 1836 (by which time he had reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel), retired two years later, and died at Aix-la-Chapelle on 19 October, 1845.

Considering what a prolific artist he was, it seems strange that comparatively few pictures by Hodges are to be found in public collections. Neither the National Gallery nor the Tate Gallery possesses a specimen of his work. In the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy may be seen his "View of the Ghauts at Benares;" the India Office has another view at Benares, purchased in 1904; and the Government of India one of the Taj Mahal, though how this was acquired does not seem to be known (9). At Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields there are two drawings in body colour by Hodges, one representing a side view of the mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, and the other a water pavilion near Agra. The Admiralty possesses some of his original sketches made during his voyage with Cook and two more are in the Print Department of the British Museum; while a water colour drawing of a ruined palace at Madura is in the South Kensington Museum.

As we have seen, the story of William Hodges is one of comparative failure. His talents were limited. Portrait painting (the most lucrative branch of the art) was apparently beyond his reach, and the landscapes to which he was obliged in the main to confine himself were in small demand. His pictures are well composed and the colouring is good; but they cannot be said to be of transcendent merit. Lord Valentia, in his *Travels*, comments severely upon their inaccuracy; and it must be confessed that the painter seems to have been more concerned to make a pleasing composition than to copy exactly the scene he professed to portray. In this, however, he was by no means singular, for the same accusation might be brought against the great Turner. His visit to India was the outstanding event of Hodges' career. He travelled much more widely in that country than any

(7) See Extract from the Farington Diary; given as an Appendix on pp. 7-8.

(8) Sydney C. Grier, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

(9) This picture is now at Viceregal Lodge, Delhi.

APPENDIX.

THE DEATH OF HODGES

By way of pendant to Sir William Foster's interesting article, we reproduce an extract from the Diary of Joseph Farington, R.A., in which an account is given of the transactions in connexion with the bank at Dartmouth which ended in the death of Hodges. The Dr. Gretton who is referred to has been identified as George Gretton, Rector of Hensor in Buckinghamshire and Dean of Windsor from 1809 until his death in 1820.

" November 17, 1806—[Dr. Gretton] complained much of the great loss He had sustained by His Brother who was connected with Hodges in a Bank which they set up at Dartmouth. He said His Brother had great abilities for His profession but had become drunken & depraved. After the death of Hodges He allowed His Brother £200 a year to maintain Him so as to enable him to proceed in his profession as an Attorney after the Bank had stopped; but all His wishes were frustrated by the habits He had adopted.—& He now allowed Him a pittance regardless of what may become of Him.—He spoke of Hodges with great bitterness, saying that He had neither *religion* or *principles*: that he was a swindler and a cheat.—He sd. His Brother unfortunately became acquainted with Hodges in the following manner:—

John Carr, brother [in law] to Mr. Hodges, had been placed with an Attorney in London of the name of *Pugh*, who proved to be a flimsy man, & in other respects such, as to cause Hodges to be dissatisfied with Him. At that time Dr. Gretton had a living at Dartmouth, & His Brother was established there as an Attorney.

" Hodges prevailed upon the Doctor to induce His Brother to take John Carr to be His clerk, which caused an intercourse between Hodges & Him, and the former made a proposal to the latter to set up a Bank at Dartmouth and shewed to the latter Deeds not worth six pence to prove that He was worth £12,000, all of which He offered to lodge as a foundation to