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William B. Hodgson: To Much to Summarize

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WILLIAM B. HODGSON, TOO MUCH TO SUMMARIZE

A term paper presented as A partial requirement of History 500

By Charles J. Mobley
Fall Quarter, 1985
Armstrong State College

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

chapter .	
I. GO EAST, YOUNG MAN	. 1
Chapter	
II. FATEFUL SECOND POSTING	. 4
Chapter	
III. 'MY DEAR MARGARET'	16
Chapter	
IV. GENTLEMAN PLANTER	22
Chapter	
V. NOBLE INTERESTS	. 26
Chapter	
VI. THE LATER YEARS	. 31

Bibliography

Footnotes

CHAPTER I

GO EAST, YOUNG MAN

The monument in front of Hodgson Hall tries to summarize the life of the hall's namesake, William B. Hodgson, describing him as a "distinguished scholar of Oriental languages and United States

Dragoman and Consul to the Barbary States and Turkey." Hodgson was that — and much more. Born humbly, he married into one of the South's leading families and three Confederate generals were pallbearers at his funeral; he didn't attend college, yet he received two hononary degrees from Princeton and wrote pioneering tracts in linguistics; and, after achieving notable success as a diplomat, he embarked on a new lifestyle and became a successful businessman. William B. Hodgson defies summarization, even in stone.

Hodgson's ancestors came to America in the 17th century.

Robert Hodgson made the long journey from England to New Amsterdam
in 1657. He didn't stay there long. Persecuted for his religious
beliefs and activities, Hodgson fled to Rhode Island. 2

The Hodgsons then settled in the mid-Atlantic states, chiefly Delaware and Maryland. Joseph Hodgson - William B. Hodgson's father - was born in Dover, Delaware, in 1766. Joseph Hodgson married Rebecca Hersey on May 10, 1798. The couple settled in Georgetown, where William was born in 1801. One other child, Joseph Hodgson Jr., was born before Joseph Hodgson died in 1805.

The widow Hodgson then moved to Orange County, Virginia, a rural part of the state near Charlottesville. 7

William, though, soon returned to Georgetown, where he attended - and apparently excelled - a school taught by James Carnahan. Hodgson showed a talent for languages at an early age. His copy of Lucian's Dialogues in Greek and Latin has a note in it saying Hodgson read through the book in six months.

This linguistic ability opened doors for Hodgson. In 1824 he applied for a position in the State Department. Writing to then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Hodgson said, "Desirous of being employed in the service of my government, I take the liberty of laying before you my application for a place in your department. For my ability and fidelity to any trust, which you may be pleased to commit to me, I beg leave to refer you to the honorable sources of my recommendation to your patronage."

D.P. Cook, one of Hodgson's "honorable sources of recommendation," said Hodgson "is a young gentleman of fine education, and has such knowledge of the French and Spanish languages, he informs me, as would render him useful in translating papers written in those languages." 11

Hodgson's other recommendation probably carried more weight.

Francis Scott Key, in a letter taken by a secretary in Adams' of
fice, said, "He (Key) wishes to inform Mr. Adams that Mr. Hodgson
has lived in his family, and been particularly known to him from
a boy, that he possesses excellent talents and an uncommon facility in acquiring languages and that these talents are united to
the best principles and habits." Key added that he thought
Hodgson "will be a useful man to the public." 13

Hodgson's cause couldn't have been hurt by the honorary degree he received from Princeton in 1824, even though he apparently never attended a class at the school. 14 The degree, in all

likehood, can be attributed to Princeton's new president - James Carnahan, Hodgson's teacher in Georgetown, who was elected president of Princeton in 1824. 15

The upshot of of all this was a desk for Hodgson at the State Department. ¹⁶ But he had attracted the attention of someone, John Quincy Adams, who would soon have the authority to dispatch a young linguist to the other side of the globe. Adams was elected president in 1824, and he had plans for men with ability like Hodgson.

"My purpose," Adams wrote in his diary, "is to attach to each of the Consulates in Barbary a young man for three years, to learn the Turkish and Arabic languages, and the lingua Franca, with a view to have persons among our public officers versed in those languages. I have desired that Hodgson might be one of those persons, as he has a fondness and a facility for acquiring languages quite uncommon." 17

For Hodgson, it would be "go east, young man."

CHAPTER II

FATEFUL SECOND POSTING

Hodgson's first foreign posting was at Algiers in 1826. 18

There he came under the tutelage of William Shaler, the consul general. 19 Shaler perhaps saw some of himself in Hodgson - both lost their fathers at an early age (Shaler was 13 when his father died); both were bachelors; and both possessed an innate ability to learn languages. 20

Shaler was a veteran diplomat - he had been in Algiers for more than 10 years when Hodgson arrived 21 - and he and Hodgson, by all accounts, got along quite well. Hodgson, during his tenure at Algiers, caught the attention of another future president. Martin Van Buren, then in the State Department, commended Hodgson for taking advantage of the opportunities afforded him. 22

Shaler and Hodgson soon shared another common interest - the languages of northern Africa. Shaler had been corresponding with the American Philosophical Society, concerning the Berber languages, before Hodgson's arrival. 23 Hodgson, at first, learned from and shared with Shaler this particular concern. But then the younger man began moving to the forefront of this particular field.

In 1829, Hodgson sent an article, //Grammatical Sketch and Specimens of the Berber Language//, to the president of the American Philosophical Society. 24 A year later, Hodgson translated a work en-

titled //Notes of a Journey into the Interior of North Africa, by Hadji Ebn-ed-Din El-Eghwaati.//

To say the least, these works were well received. The secretary of the American Philosophical Society, writing the Consulate in Algiers, described Hodgson as a //young man of extraordinary genius.//

The North American Review, in 1832, devoted 20 pages to describing and critiquing Hodgson's effort. That review says, in part:

These publications exhibit very satisfactory evidences of the zeal and industry with which Mr. Hodgson employed the opportunity afforded him by his residence at the Consulate at Algiers for the purpose of extending his own knowledge of foreign languages, and increasing the general stock of philosophical learning. The want of a competent oriental interpreter had been sensibly felt at the Department of State on several occasions of considerable importance, and Mr. Hodgson was attached to the Consulate at Algiers, then under the direction of Mr. Shaler, for the purpose of enabling him to qualify himself for this service. He had previously exhibited a decided talent for the acquisition of foreign and particularly Oriental languages, and the results of his studies at Algiers prove the selection was judicious and fortunate. We are glad to perceive that, though withdrawn from Algiers, Mr. Hodgson has been retained in the public service by the present administration ...

The Review also quoted liberally from Hodgson's articles. For example:

I begin with the word 'Atlas,' the name which has been given from the highest antiquity to that chain of mountains which extends from the western coast of Africa to the confines of Egypt. As this name has come down to us through the Greeks, and is closely connected with the ancient mythology of that people, it seems natural to suppose that it is of Grecian origin; but I am rather inclined to believe that it is derived from the language of the people who in-

the Greeks received it, and, according to their well known custom, softened the harshness of its sounds to give it that euphony which their delicate ears indispensably required.28

Hodeson also voiced the opinion in the article that the '/language spoken by the ancient Egyptians was a branch of the Berber,'/ and he attempted to analyze several Egyptian names by referring to alleged Berber antecedents. 29 The Review, however, appeared unconvinced by Hodeson's arguments on that particular point. '/His observations upon this point, if not always decisive, are certainly worth attention,'/ the author of the review said. 30

Hodgson's future, at this juncture, certainly seemed bright. His language tracts had won praise from his peers; his efforts at the Consulate in Algiers had won recognition and commendation from a future president; and Shaler had exhibited his faith in the budding diplomat by leaving him as acting consul in Algiers in 1828.

when his tour of duty in Algiers was up in 1829, Hodgson returned to Washington - complete with knowledge of Arabic, Persian,

Turkish and Berber. 32 He manned a desk at the State Department for a couple of years and then, in 1831, was handed a plum assignment.

Hodgson was ordered - by President Andrew Johnson 33 - to carry a recently ratified treaty back to Turkey. The treaty was years in the making, and it offers a microcosmic view into the way diplomacy was conducted in the Middle East in the early 19th century.

The Turks were anxious to rebuild their navy, decimated in an ill-fought encounter with superior powers: the Americans were anxious to expand their commercial endeavors, especially in the Turkish-controlled Black Sea. The situation seemed ideal for formal diplomatic relations to be opened between the two nations, but the situation was greatly complicated by the Greek Revolution. Americans sentiments rested strongly with the Greeks, so negotiations with Turkey were conducted in a surreptitious fashion.

The negotiations went on from late 1827 until February of 1831, when the Senate ratified a treaty between the two nations. The treaty established diplomatic and consular relations between the United States and Turkey; it granted the United States most-favored-nation treatment; and it gave American ships access to the Black Sea. On the other hand, a secret provision - which would have granted Turkey's ruler the authority to make contracts to build naval vessels in the United States - was flatly turned down by the Senate. The deal was sweetened somewhat for Turkish negotiators by the gift of \$9,000 worth of snuffboxes.

This was the treaty of commerce that Hodeson was charged with taking to Turkey. His orders read, in part:

^{...} You will be received on the United States Ship, John Adams, and proceed in her to the Mediterranean, in one of whose Ports you will probably find Commodore (David) Porter, to whom you will deliver the dispatches committed to your

care. As it is possible that your further services may be rendered useful to the Commodore, you will, if you are so desired accompany him to Constantinople, and there await, if not delayed beyond a resonable time, the exchange of the ratification ... which you will bring to the United States by some expeditious conveyance, for the present left to your choice.39

The instructions were dated April 15, 1831, and were signed by then-Secretary of State Martin Van Buren. ⁴⁰ They also served as an introduction to Commodore David Porter, recently appointed charge, diaffairs at Constantinople ⁴¹ and a dark cloud on Hodgson's bright horizon.

But for now, every thing seemed bright. Hodgson was on his way, and he seemed destined to be much more than a messenger. Serious historical works on this period in American history often mention Hodgson. David H. Finnie, in his book <u>Pioneers East, The Early American Experience in the Middle East</u>, said, //Hodgson/s star was already on the rise when he was assigned to bring Commodore Porter/s first instructions to him in the spring of 1831 and to go with him to Constantinople.//⁴² James A. Field Jr., the author of <u>America and the Meditermanean World 1776-1882</u>, gives Hodgson the title of //America/s first language officer.//⁴³

Hodgson certainly took his mission seriously. Writing Van Buren from Norfolk, Virginia, before the John Adams sailed, Hodgson said, //... I shall carefully execute those (instructions) which I have received in their spirit and to the letter.//

Through at least part of the voyage to Constantinople, Hodeson

shared a cabin aboard the John Adams - a good way to get to know someone aboard a sloop of war - with Porter, a crusty veteran who would certainly be capable of offering expert advise to the Turks on naval construction. 45

In October of 1831, after weeks of negotiations and the distribution of some \$40,000 worth of presents, the Turks signed the treaty, and Hodgson - in accordance with his instructions - sailed for the United States to deliver the ratified treaty. 46 He was not to linger in the States, though. Porter, most pleased with Hodgson's performance during the treaty negotiations, had requested that Hodgson be assigned to the Consulate at Constantinople as dragoman (interpreter). 47 Porter had been especially impressed by Hodgson's abilities in Turkish. 48

Hodgson returned to Constantinople in the summer of 1832. He was still highly thought of by Porter. As a matter of fact, the commodore was trying to get him another promotion. A dispatch from Secretary of State Edward Livingston to Porter, dated in April of 1831, concludes, //P.S. — You have been informed of Mr. Hodgson/s appointment as Dragoman. The office of Secretary of Legation not being provided by law ... he could not be nominated as such, but if he is willing to execute (the) duties of secretary, without any additional allowance to his salary as Dragoman, no inconvience is perceived, should

you find it convenient to give him that title." 49

The two Americans shared a //stormy// adventure in Constantinople. Porter, in a book published in 1835, described the incident which occurred as the two diplomats were being ferried in a six-oared boat.

We had got perhaps a mile and a half on our way when a cloud rising in the west gave indications of an approaching rain. In a few minutes we discovered something falling from the heavens with a heavy splash and of a whitish appearance ... Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over pavement. The whole Bosporus was in a foam, as though heaven's artillery had been discharged upon us and our frail machine. Our fate seemed inevitable, our umbrellas were raised to protect us; the lumps of ice stripped them into ribands (sic). We fortunately had a bullock's hide in the boat, under which we crawled and saved ourselves from further injury. One man, of the three oarsmen, had his hand literally smashed; another (was) much injured in the shoulder; Mr. H(odgson) received a severe blow in the leg; my right hand was somewhat disabled, and all (were) more or less injured. Balls of ice as large as my two fists fell into the boat ... One of them struck an oar and split it.50

Hodgson also weathered an outbreak of plague in Constantinople in November of 1832. Porter, in his 1835 book, said, //Deaths by the plague have been recorded at seven hundred and eight hundred per day.//

But for Hodgson, it soon became obvious that the greatest danger he faced in Constantinople was Porter. The commodore's efforts to replace Hodgson as dragoman with his nephew led to a complete and acrimonious break between the two men. The break came near the end of 1832.

The Commodore, a storied naval officer who made life miserable for the British Navy in the War of 1812, had taken President John Quincy Adams on in a verbal contest a few years earlier, and, after a celebrated court martial, had been suspended from duty for six months. Sin the words of his biographer, Archibald D. Turnbull, I/Whatever Porter may have been, he was not mealy-mouthed. I/S4

Porter, by his own admission, was not an easy man to get along with. Writing in 1835, he said, // ... They found me in the solitude which I have created for myself and where for months I had been confined by my own aversion to society, never leaving my room excepting under the most absolute necessity and never for five months leaving my house ... //

He made, as Hodgson quickly found out, a formidable enemy. Hodgson complained to the State Department that Porter's nephew was grossly unqualified to serve as a dragoman; he also fired off requests to the State Department for a transfer. And he soon found himself fending off Porter's attacks on his salary. 56

Hodgson, writing to the London banking firm from which overseas American diplomats drew their salaries, said in a letter dated Aug. 10, 1833:

I have received a note from Mr. David Porter, under date of the 3rd instant of which the following is a copy.

I (Porter) this day notified the U.S. Bankers in London,

that you had, from the 11th ult., ceased to perform the duties of 1st Dragoman of this legation, leaving it entirely to themselves whether to honour your drafts after they shall have received the notification.

If Mr. Porter intends by this to inform you that I have refused to perform the duties of my office, he asserts what is not true. I am at the post assigned me by my govt. and am ready to execute its duties.

Mr. Porter informed me by his letter of the 11th ult. that he would no longer use my services as Dragoman. He is responsible for this to the Executive, but he has no power to suspend my salary, (any)more than I have to suspend his ...

To refuse me my salary, gentlemen, would be virtually to compel me to abandon my post, and thus defeat the intentions of the Executive. And yet, I cannot abandon it, without the President's permission. ...57

Just two weeks later, on Aug. 26, 1833, Hodgson felt it necessary to write to the banking firm again. The letter was shorter, but the message was the same. //Being at my post, and ready to execute its duties (but) suspended from their exercise by Com. P/s letter of July 11, I shall have the honor to draw upon you as usual for my salary as it accrues.//

Hodgson landed at least one telling counterpunch. The pasha of the Dardanelles, in October of 1833, entrusted a horse with Hodgson to deliver to the Commodore as a gift. Hodgson instead took the horse to the local bazaar and sold it. 59

About this time Porter's son - Midshipman David Dixon Porter, who would eventually rise to the rank of Admiral of the Navy - became involved in the feud. The younger Porter belted Hodgson'in the head, and, in the ensuing struggle, tore the diplomat's coat. Hodgson tried

to have the young officer punished, but wound up settling for a reimbursement for his coat. 60

Washington could scarcely ignore such an explosive situation, but it took time to relocate people in 1833 - and get word to them about it. Finally, in October of 1833, Hodgson was granted his release from Constantinople.

He was ordered to undertake a mission to Egypt, a country the United States had no formal diplomatic relations with. Hodgson got his orders from Secretary of State Louis McLane, who wrote, //The President has deemed it proper to withdraw you from the legation at Constantinople. He is desirous to afford you an opportunity of being otherwise useful ... It has been determined to employ you as a confidential agent in Egypt for the purpose of ascertaining how far it may desirable and practicable to form commercial relations with the Pacha of that country ..., 61

The mission was secret. //Your whole service is to be treated strictly confidential, // McLane wrote, //and is to be conducted with the greatest circumspection. // 62

Specifically, Hodgson was ordered to survey Egypt's industrial and shipping capacities, to determine if the Pasha of Egypt had the authority to enter into a commercial agreement — separate from the Ottoman Empire — and whether it would be in the United States' best interests to enter into a trading pact with Egypt. 63 After gathering

lay before the Department a full and detailed report on the whole subject.

If this mission was a test to determine Hodgson's further use to the department, he passed with flying colors.

Hodgson arrived in Egypt on July 21, 1834. He stopped in Syria, Rhodes, Cyprus and Beirut en route, and, in keeping with his instructions, he was traveling as a private citizen. He stayed in Egypt through November, observing as ordered and submitting a series of dispatches to McLane and McLane's successor, John Forsyth.

Upon returning to the United States in February of 1835, Hodgson submitted a comprehensive report to Forsyth. 66 His report did not lead to a formal commercial agreement between the two countries, but it did give the United States valuable insight into Egypt. Of the Pasha (Mohammed Ali), Hodgson observed that he was still, formally, a vassal of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, The Pasha, Hodgson told Forsyth, did not pay tribute to the Sultan – but he did make large voluntary presents. 67

Hodgson delivered extensive information on Egypt's economy.

He reported that a number of Egyptian products would find markets in the United States, including opium, gum Arabic, henna, incense, salt, saltpeter, flax-seed, dates, sesame, linen and ostrich feathers. The

United States would find Egyptian markets for coal, tar and pitch, resin, turpentine, mahogany, tobacco, sugar, candles, copper, lead, iron, lumber and staves.

Hodgson also recommended the United States appoint a consulgeneral to Egypt, and he had the perfect person to man the appointment himself. Hodeson was not chosen for any post in Egypt, but his report, and the professional manner in which he went about the mission, must have done much to raise his stock at the State Department. The mission certainly won critical historical acclaim. Finnie, in Pioneers East, said, // ... Hodgson went about his assignment in Egypt Very intelligently. His excellent report, which contained much useful information about commercial opportunities in Egypt, concluded wisely that a direct treaty with the viceroy, Mohammed Ali, would be impracticable because of (Ali's) equivocal position vis-a-vis the (Sultan).// L.C. Wright, in his book United States Policy Toward Egypt 1830-1914, devotes several pages to Hodgson's mission. Wright graded Hodgson's report as //excellent and comprehensive.// Hodeson/s effort, taken as a whole, served //to point up the necessity for the United States to adopt a separate and more affirmative policy on Egypt, // Wright wrote.

· CHAPTER III

MY DEAR MARGARET

For Hodgson, certainly, the best effect of the mission to Egypt was that it took him away from Porter and Constantinople. But he was not absent from the Middle East long. In September of 1835, he was sent, aboard the USS Constitution, to Tangier. 72

The feud with Porter was buried — at least officially — by the State Department that same month. In a dispatch to Porter, Forsyth said, "If cause for censure had been perceived in your deportment towards Mr. Hodgson, you would have been informed of it by the Department: but as he was withdrawn from the legation, and all occasion of future difficulty was thereby removed, it was thought most conducive to the public interest that the matter should be dismissed without further discussion."

Hodgson, meanwhile, was fulfulling his mission //to take charge of the presents which are intended for the Emperor of Morocco and his various officers upon the renewal of the treaty between that country and the United States.// He was later directed to return to the United States with the renewed treaty.

In 1836, Hodgson served in London. The next year, he was back 76 in Washington. Hodgson published a book in 1837. Based on his mission to Egypt, it was titled <u>Biographical Sketch of Mohammed Ali, Pacha</u> (sic) of Egypt, Syria and Arabia and was published by Peter Force. 77

In 1838, he corresponded with the //Societe de Geographie//
in Paris. Writing to the society/s secretary general in November of
that year, Hodgson said, in part:

... Among other results of my continued enuiries (sic) is the Statistical Table which I have the honor now to transmit to you. It presents a list of Kabyle or Berber tribes inhabiting Mount Atlas, between Algiers, Constantinople and Gigeli. To the name of each tribe is annexed the number of warriors, or men capable of bearing arms, which it can bring into the field. There is also a list of the villages belonging to the two great tribes ... near Algiers. 78

Hodgson said it had been suggested he present the table, and an accompanying manuscript, to the society by the French ambassador to Washington, where Hodgson was still stationed. 79

In 1841 — a fateful year — Hodeson was appointed consul to

Tunis. 80 His letter of appointment came from Secretary of State Daniel Webster. It read, in part:

... The commercial intercourse between Tunis and the United States is inconsiderable and the principal object of your mission will therefore be to cultivate and preserve the friendly relations of the two governments ... The leisure you will enjoy will afford you ample time for prosecuting the study of Oriental languages and for making researches into the antiquity with which the interesting region whither you are sent abounds ... 81

Hodgson's salary was set at \$2,000 a year. 82

Webster also instructed Hodgson that he should — in accordance with newly formed policies — tell the Bey of Tunis that the United States was getting out of the gift-giving business. The annual budget for //occasional presents and gratuities// was set at \$800. //This

sum being deemed abundantly sufficient for all necessary purchases. 1183

Hodgson would protest this new policy during his brief tenure in Tunis.

But the career diplomat, by now a well-confirmed bachelor, had something else on his mind — he had been smitten by love.

In November of 1841, Hodgson had //accidentally// met Margaret Carnes Telfair in Paris. 84 Hodgson was in Tunis in early 1842, but his thoughts were elsewhere.

Nonetheless, he was a professional diplomat, and he did keep up with his professional correspondance. Writing on Feb. 15, 1842, he told Webster of his initial reception by the Bey of Tunis.

... The Bey, who is a young man, received us with much grace and cordiality. Mr. Heap (Hodgson's predecessor) presented me as his successor and announced his transfer to Constantinople. I then delivered to the Secretary who acted as interpreter, my letter of credance as Consul for the Kingdom of Tunis, in which capacity his Highness expressed his satisfaction to receive me ... 85

At the conclusion of this meeting, Heap asked the Bey if he would like to see the firearms which Hodgson had brought with him. ⁸⁶ Hodgson said he would send the firearms over for the Bey's inspection. The weapons, Tunis' new consul said, 'rwould also give him (the Bey) an idea of the great perfection to which the people of the United States have arrived in the useful arts.', ⁸⁷

Hodgson, in closing this missive, told Webster, //The abolition of all Consular presents for this Regency will form the subject of a separate dispatch which I shall have the honor immediately to transmit.

By May, Hodgson and Miss Telfair had decided to wed. But there was a catch — he must resign from the diplomatic corps. ⁸⁹ Hodgson, though, seemed to hedge his bets in his first dispatches to Webster on the subject. Writing on May 16, 1842, from Malta, Hodgson said:

... I have the honor to report to you my absence from Tunis. The great distance of Washington from my post, and the impossibility of obtaining your (next word is illegible) in time for the object which imperatively demands my absence, have determined me to throw myself upon your indulgence. I beg to assure you, that I am sensible to the responsibility which I incur, and to the necessity of returning to Tunis as early as I can. 90

Hodgson told Webster whom he had left in charge of the consulate - //Mr. W.R.B. Gale, a young American of promise and address// - but nowhere in the dispatch does he mention marriage or Miss Telfair.

Six weeks later, Hodgson thoroughly explained his absence to Webster in this dispatch from London:

... I have now, sir, the honor to inform you, that unexpected events have compelled me to come to London. Those events are connected with my (next word is illegible) nuptials with an American lady. They were to have been solemnized in Switzerland, but as the code civil which rules in the Swiss Confederation, besides other formalities, requires residence of six months, we were compelled to come to London.

I have not been allowed to take this important step in the career of life, without accepting the condition of resigning my present appointment. I, therefore, very respectfully, sir, submit thru you to the President, my commission as Consul of the United States for the Kingdom of Tunis ... I beg, sir, that the President and yourself will be pleased to regard my resignation as an alternative upon which I feel that my happiness depends ... 92

Hodgson did leave the door open to futher service, but with a condition. //I should be happy to serve my country at this (London) or a Continental Consus ... The objections (by his bride) to my present office (Consul to Tunis) would not apply to that.//93

Hodgson married Margaret Telfair - a wealthy 35-year-old native Savannahian whose father was a Revolutionary War hero and a two-term governor of Georgia - on July 11, 1842, 94 at St. George's Church in Hanover Square in London. 95 The newlyweds promptly set off on a tour of England and the Continent.

If a private journal kept at this time is any indication, Hodgson was deeply in love with Margaret Telfair. On May 29, he recorded in this journal:

... Arrived at Naples. Called immediately on my (next word word is illegible) friend (next word is illegible) who placed in my hands a letter which he had received from my dear Margaret at Florence. What conflicting emotions did it excite (career vs. marriage?)! After a long and anxious absence of two months I again have intelligence of the gentle being who is the sole object of my thoughts as she is of my affections. 96

Apparently writing of an earlier meeting with Miss Telfair. Hodgson wrote in his journal, //I was in the gallery of the Vatican with Margaret, but I did not see the (next word is illegible) Apollo nor that wonderful group of Statuary ... Such is the blindness of Lovers://97

During the period covered by this journal - evidently while he awaited Miss Telfair - Hodgson constantly wrote and thought about her. Struck by the resemblance of an Italian countess to Margaret, Hodgson penned, //when shall I again and embrace my Countess of Syracuse.//

Soon, after their European honeymoon was over, the Hodgsons headed for his new home — Savannah — and a mansion on St. James Square that truly was worthy of a countess.

CHAPTER IV

GENTLEMAN PLANTER

Hodgson, the career linguist and diplomat, now settled down in the antebellum good life of the gentleman planter.

The centerpiece of the Telfair holdings was the elegant mansion on St. James Square, built by William Jay. But that building was just the tip of the Telfair financial structure. Mary and Margaret, before Hodgson's arrival, had been running business enterprises that included three plantations, rental properties throughout Savannah and extensive wharf property along the Savannah River. 99 Hodgson, as Margaret's husband, became an active partner in this structure.

Hodgson served on the boards of directors of several major companies, including the Bank of the State of Georgia, 100 the Charleston and Savannah Railroad Company, 101 the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad Company and Gulf Railroad. 103 His holdings in the Bank of the State of Georgia were considerable. In an 1855 listing of stockholders, Hodgson and his wife (by trustee) were listed as having shares worth \$93,000. In his own name, Hodgson had 212 shares, worth \$21,200.

Although his wife's money helped get him a start in many of these companies, Hodgson was certainly more than a silent shareholder. At an 1851 meeting of the shareholders of the Augusta and Waynesboro Railroad Co., Hodgson made a motion, which passed, to build the remainder of the road to Augusta when a '/bone fide (sic) subscription

of not less than one hundred thousand dollars is secured. 1 Hodg-son, in 1856, involved the city of Savannah in a business project. The city agreed to subscribe \$200,000 to the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad 1/so long as they (the mayor and alderman) are assured that the sum of four hundred thousand dollars has been subscribed, bone fide (sic), to said road by other parties. 1/106

The family certainly benefited from these, and other business dealings, but the heart and soul of its financial empire were the three plantations — Mills Plantation, Retreat Plantation and Sabine Fields. A November, 1860, letter from the overseer at Retreat Plantation, located in Jefferson County, gives some insight into the system. Items listed as being sent down included, //One coops (sic) of turkeys (seven) and one box of 38 dozen eggs. Also (75) seventy five bags of Negro ground nuts ranging in size. I sent you the total amount or total weight 4907 lbs. These bags is to go down as soon as possible by freight train. Bags marked W.B.H.//

Retreat also regularly shipped meal and grits, cracked corn, corn, wheat, rye and bacon. The plantation, of course, also contributed its share of //King Cotton.// The 1860 letter said Retreat had produced some 225 to 250 bales of cotton.

Mills Plantation, located in Burke County, listed similar bills of lading. But there was one difference. Mills shipped its products, which also included timber, down the Savannah River on a boat called

the Swan. 109

The tone of the letters collected from several overseers leaves no doubt that Hodgson was running the plantations. The letters are addressed directly to him. There also seems little doubt that Hodgson was a hard taskmaster. In 1860, the overseer from Mills Plantation wrote Hodgson, // ... I am sorry to see that you are dissatisfied with me. I try to do everything I can to give you satisfaction .../

The ledger books for the Hodgsons and Miss Telfair, religiously kept by the accounting firm of R. Habersham & Son, show that Hodgson often docked his overseers for sick days. 111

Ledger and account books also show that life was pretty comfortable at the Telfair Mansion. An 1850 household account book lists purchases of oysters, champagne glasses, lobsters, strawberries and cakes. Recipies listed in the back of that household book include partridges, chocolate meringue, angels food cake, French cake, plum pudding and ginger bread. 112

Hodgson - who had a personal account at R. Habersham - enjoyed many luxuries, as would benefit a man of his station. He was a member of the Savannah Club and the Jockey Club; he bought //segars// often, especially //La Rosa Segars//; and he bought a lot of liquor - purchases of brandy, wine, champagne, rum and sherry are annotated at various 113 times. He also enjoyed reading. His personal account book lists

several newspaper subscriptions, 114 and an account ledger with a book store for 1860 lists purchases of Harpers Weekly, Blackwoods Magazine, Eclectic Magazine, Millers and the American almanacs, volumes five and six of Hamilton's Republic, Edinburgh Review, Westminister Review and Habits of Good Society. 115

Hodgson had certainly joined good society, and he was certainly living the good life, but he also kept in touch with aspects of his previous career.

CHAPTER V

NOBLE INTERESTS

Hodgson remained an ardent //Orientalist.// James Cowles Prichard, an English ethnologist, wrote Hodgson in November of 1844, telling him:

... I had the pleasure of receiving your very interesting Brochure on the ethnology of Northern Africa, which I had seen before at the (Royal) Geographical Society. Pray accept my best thanks ... I am very glad that you sent your Berber MSS. to England. I was the instrument of getting the printed copy of St. Luke put into the hands of Mr. Newman. Having read your Memoir in the Philos(ophical Society). transactions; I was induced to inquire into the subject, and persuaded Mr. Newman to undertake the examination. 116

Prichard, in this letter, is referring to two separate works by Hodgson. While in the diplomatic service, he and a native North African translated several chapters of the Bible into Berber. This work was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1833. Then, in 1844, Hodgson wrote Notes on Northern Africa, the Sahara and Soudan, a work which was published in 1844.

In 1845, Prichard published his second edition of The Natural 119
History of Man, and Hodgson received prominent mention in it. Prichard refers to Hodgson as //the learned author of an excellent memoir on the Berber race, which was one of the first publications that drew the attention of the world to that interesting subject.//

Hodgson, about this time, began also to branch out into other tields of academic endeavor. He took his linguistic abilities and put

put them to work at home. In 1848, the Georgia Historical Society published Volume III of its <u>Collections</u>. Hodgson paid for this publication, and he contributed heavily to the material it enclosed. ¹²¹ The <u>Collections</u> centered on manuscripts written by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, an early American Indian agent. These manuscripts, Hodgson wrote in the <u>Collections</u>, Introduction, included //vocabularies of aboriginal languages, and invaluable records of the manners, customs, rites and civil policies of the tribes.// ¹²² Writing of Hawkins, Hodgson said:

... A legitimate curiosity prompts me to trace the public career of a man, who, on the highest authority, rendered efficient and valuable services to his country, for a long series of years. ... From the several volumes of correspondence, offical and private, of Colonel Hawkins, I have made some extracts which very forcibly pourtray (sic) the high qualities of his mind, for the government and control of unlettered, semi-civilized tribes. ... 123

Hodgson wrote a six-page analysis on the Creek Confederacy as a preface to the actual writings of Hawkins. He quoted extensively from other authors on Indians tribes and their descent, and Hodgson then ventured some opinions himself:

... To my mind, it is evident, that the whole Atlantic coast, from the Mississippi to the country of the Six Nations, in the North, has for centuries past been the theatre of constant revolutions among the aborigines of the soil. Wars, conquests, subjugations, extinctions and productions of new races, migrations and new settlements, I do not doubt have marked the life of the western as well as of eastern

nations. On this continent there are no Persepolitan, Etruscan, Egyptian or Runic inscriptions, to attest the rise and decay of nations, their wars, conquests and migrations; and where no records have been made of such movements among races and tribes, the modern science of comparative philology has detected, by speech, the far distant emigration of tribes of men, with as great certainty, as the comparative anatomist detects congeners, among fossil mammals. ... 124

Hodgson was active in Savannah's business and social circles, but the Georgia Historical Society obviously occupied a special place in his heart. He joined the Society in January of 1843, 125 and by 1844 was on the committee organizing the Society's fifth anniversary celebration. The celebration included a procession from the Cotton Exchange to a church on South Broad. The procession was to be escorted by the Phoenix Riflemen and was to include ''mayor and aldermen, consuls and officers of the U.S. government, officers of the Army and Navy, Georgia Historical Society, Union Society, Savannah Library Society, Hibernian Society, St. Andrews Society, German Friendly Society, Strangers (and) Citizens.''

He served as a curator of the Society for many years and was active in it until his death. In 1856, at a special meeting of the Society (held to pay respects to John M. Berrien, its recently deceased president), Hodgson made a motion to commission a portrait of Berrien and //that it be suspended in this hall to perpetuate reverence for exalted character./ 127 The Historical Society was then located on

Bryan Street, just off Johnson Square. 128

Hodgson also made forays into other fields. In 1846, he delivered an address entitled Memoir on the Megatherium and Other Extinct Gigantic Quadrupeds of the Coast of Georgia, with Observations on its Geological Features. 129 And, in 1857, he presented //a collection of specimens from the Mineral and Floral Kingdoms// to the Savannah Medical College. 130 The collection included some three thousand rocks and one hundred dried flowers. In turning over the collection, Hodgson said, it was //classified with Latin and German nomenclature, by an eminent naturalist, of a German University.//

In the pre-Civil War years, Hodgson, his wife, and Mary Telfair made regular trips to the East Coast in general and New York
City in particular. His nephews — Telfair and Joseph Hodgson Jr. —
both graduated from Princeton, and Hódgson took great interest in their
education. Telfair Hodgson — who would become dean of the Theology Department at the University of the South at Sewanee and who was the
132
founder and managing editor of the Sewanee Review — wrote of a visit
the Hodgsons and Miss Telfair paid to him while he was attending Princeton. The Hodgsons and Miss Telfair stayed at the Clarendon Hotel in
New York City, and invited Telfair to visit them.

133
His diary entry
for that visit includes:

... Sent my card up to Aunt's room but she was out. Uncle (was) in the reading room where he saluted me with sundry questions concerning the lenght of my shoes and if I wore

suspenders or if I kept a toothbrush, etc. Together we went down Broadway and he purchased a vest and dress coat for me ... Went to the Clarendon where I saw Aunt and Miss Telfair and at five we dined ... We then went to our several rooms and prepared to make a fashionable call. So when dressed we took a Bowery car and went down to Broad Street and called on Mrs. and Miss Barclay, the wife and daughter of the British Consul ... 134

For the next day, Sunday, Telfair recorded, in part:

... I awoke at nine considerably rested, dressed and went down to breakfast at ten. Then immediately went to the 9th Street Church with Aunt and Miss Telfair ... About two I fixed up some things and went to Uncle's room where he examined me in Demosthenes and Horace. We conversed for some time. I went to bid Aunt and Miss Telfair goodbye. ... 135

In 1858, Princeton again recognized Hodgson. This time the institution bestowed upon him an honorary L.L.D. degree.

But letters from his nephews about this time were filled with references to and questions about the overriding topic of the day — slavery. It was a question that would greatly change Hodgson's world.

CHAPTER VI

THE LATER YEARS

There seems little doubt that Hodgson was a staunch backer of slavery. The Telfair plantation-system was based on slave labor, and Hodgson apparently owned slaves of his own. 137 Hodgson did enjoy an advantage over — in all likelihood — every other slave owner in the South: He could converse with many of them in their native languages. He could distinguish between many of the tribes and found one, the 13g Foolahs, to be a //powerful warlike nation.// He devoted special study to a couple of slaves in Savannah, one a Mandingo (who belonged to the Maxwell family) and the other a Foolah.

The Hodgsons and Miss Telfair appear to have been benevolent owners. Letters from overseers refer to blankets, supples and medical supplies being bought for the slaves.

Hodgson, in the 1850s, was an active participant — as a representative of the city of Savannah — in what were called Commercial Conventions. The Southern Commercial Convention of 1856 was held in Savannah, at the Athenaeum on Chippewa Square. 140 Delegates from throughout the South attended the Convention which had as its announced intention:

... For years past the necessity of some action on the part of the South with a view to establish the commercial equilibrium and to relieve our section from its ruinous and humiliating dependency upon the North has been discussed ... It is to be hoped the Convention which assembles today will

develop some practicable plan for the accomplishment of this end. ... 141

Once war broke out, there was no doubt where the Hodgsons stood.

Hodgson, in 1861, was listed as a member of the Savannah Artillery. 142

While there is no indication he ever served in the Confederate Army,

his nephews certainly did. Telfair enlisted in the Army as a private

and eventually rose to the rank of major, while Joseph Hodgson Jr.

was a Confederate colonel, the commander of the 1st Alabama. 143

Hodgson and his family — according to the account books — did not suffer greatly during the Civil War. Entries for February of 1863, for example, show that Hodgson bought four dozen casks of sherry and a dozen casks of rum. His supplies of //segars// was certainly reduced by the blockade of Savannah, but an entry for May of 1863 shows that he was still able to purchase 200. 144

Hodgson also gave money to the Confederate cause. In March of 1863 he bought a \$2,000 Confederate bond, and in October of 1863 he sent \$200 to be distributed to the wounded soldiers of General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. 145

Once the war was over, Hodgson worked to help heal the wounds. On April 21, 1865, he was one of the leaders of a meeting called to publically denounce the assassination of President Lincoln. That assemblage first met at the Cotton Exchange, but the building proved too small to hold the crowd. The meeting was moved to Johnson Square,

where, after a motion by Hodgson was acted upon, the mayor was called upon to preside. 147 Hodgson was appointed to a committee that was /appointed to draft suitable resolutions expressive to the sense of the meeting. 11 Other committee members included Andrew Low, Noble A. Hardee, Robert Habersham and Francis Sorrel. 148

The committee report said, in part:

... We regard with deepest pain and sorrow as a calamity to the whole country the assassination ... We sincerely trust, for the honor of human nature, that investigation may prove these horrid acts to have been perpetrated by a madman, whose loss of reason has made him irresponsible for his deeds ... 149

This episode was typical of Hodgson after the Civil War. He never became a politician, but he was often at the forefront of public meetings and movements.

On March 25, 1868, a meeting was held at Johnson Square //for the purpose of organizing for the approaching municipal election.//

A stand was built to accommodate 500 people, partly for officers of the meeting, which were to include a president, secretaries and 25 vice presidents. 151 Hodgson was one of the vice presidents. 152

A speaker at the meeting warned the //colored men to beware how they exercised the right of suffrage, which an unconstitutional power had placed in their hands.// The result of the meeting was the formation of a 42-man committee — of which Hodgson was a member — to //nominate suitable candidates for the offices of mayor and alder-

men at the next municipal election. $^{\prime\prime}$ It seems safe to assume that none of these candidates were, as one speaker at the meeting put it, members of the iscaliway and refugee party. $^{\prime\prime}$

Hodgson, in 1868, submitted his last published work. The

Science of Language. A Lecture. Sanscrit and Hebrew, the Two Written,

Primitive, Languages, Compared was published in Newport, Rhode Island.

Its lofty, and lengthy, title was somewhat deceiving: the work was a pamphlet.

In 1869, Hodgson was elected a manager of the stock and lot

157
holder's organization for the Evergreen Cemetery of Bonaventure. His
term was to have lasted three years — but he didn't live through it.

Margaret and Hodgson left for their annual sojourn to the North in June of 1871. Hodgson was suffering from a severe cold, but they decided to make the trip anyway. By the time they reached New York, the cold had developed into pneumonia. 159 It proved fatal.

William B. Hodgson died June 26, 1871, in New York City.

His body was brought back to Savannah on June 30 aboard the steamship Leo. 161 Margaret, who had also fallen ill, was forced to remain in New York. 162 She was unable to attend the funeral, held July 2 in the Telfair Mansion. 163

The funeral services were conducted by the Rev. I.S.K. Axson

of the Independent Presbyterian Church, of which Hodgson was a member.

His pallbearers included generals Joseph E. Johnson, Henry R. Jackson 165 and Alexander R. Lawton. He was laid to rest in the Telfairs; tomb in Bonaventure. Margaret erected a large obelisk in his honor at the family plot.

The grieving widow — as she described herself on the obelisk — also decided to build a hall — Hodgson Hall — to honor her husband's memory. She bought the property, Lot 14 of Forsyth Ward, in June of 1873 from the Diocese of Savannah. She also purchased lot numbers 8, 9, 11, 12 and 13 at the same time, paying \$4,900 for the entire parcel. 167 But Margaret did not live to see the project through. She died in 1874. Mary Telfair, at her sister's bequest, made a deed of trust and turned the property and Hodgson Hall over to the Georgia Historical Society. 168

Fittingly, the hall sits across from Forsyth Park. Hodgson was greatly instrumental in the development of the park. He was the first to envision it closed to development and the first to have it 169 enclosed as a park. That too, should be summarized, and it would be most fitting in stone.

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- 15. Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. III, s.v. //Carnahan, James, // p. 498.
- 16. DAB, Hodgson, p. 412.
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- 20. Ibid., pp. 109-141.
- 21. Ibid.
- 22. David H. Finnie, <u>Pioneers East</u>, <u>The Early American Experience in</u> the <u>Middle East</u> (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1967)
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- 25. Ibid.
- 26. Secretary is quoted in <u>Georgia Historical Quarterly</u>, March 1928, 1/Notes and Documents, 1/ p. 75.
- 27. North American Review, pp. 55-56.
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- 29. Ibid., p. 60.
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- 31. Thomas A. Bryson, //William Brown Hodgson's Mission To Egypt, 1834, // West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences (June 1972) p. 12.
- 32. Thomas A. Bryson, //William Brown Hodgson and U.S.-Egyptian Commercial Relation,// Middle East International, September, 1974, p. 27.
- 33. Finnie, Pioneers East, p. 65.
- 34. James A. Field Jr., America and the Mediterranean World 1776-1882 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1969) pp.

143-150.

35. Ibid., p. 150.

36. Ibid., p. 151.

37. Ibid.

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39. Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906, Turkey, Vol. 1, April 2, 1823 to July 9, 1859, No. 77, Roll 162, p. 227, East Point (Ga.) Field Branch of National Archives.

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41. Ibid.

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43. Field, America and the Mediterranean World, p. 193.

44. Dispatches From United States Ministers to Turkey, 1818-1906, Vol. 6, April 25, 1831 to March 2, 1835, No. 46, Roll 8, East Point (Ga.) Field Branch of National Archives.

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47. Ibid., p. 90.

48. Ibid.

49. Diplomatic Instructions, Turkey, Vol. 1, No. 77, Roll 162, p. 246, East Point Field Branch of National Archives.

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51. Ibid., vol. II, p.29.

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53. Archibald Douglas Turnbull, Commodore David Porter 1780-1843,

(the Century Co., New York, 1929) p. 279.

54. Ibid., p. 271.

55. Porter, Constantinople, Vol. II, p. 144.

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67. Ibid., p. 14.

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- 74. Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906, The Barbary Powers, Vols. XIV XVI, July 1, 1834 to July 30, 1906, No. 77, Roll 18, East Point (Ga.) Field Branch of National Archives.
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- 80. Diplomatic Instructions, Barbary Powers, No. 77, Roll 18.
- 81. Ibid.
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- 85. Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 144, Item 575 (Hodgson's Journal at Tunis).
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- 87. Ibid.
- 88. Ibid.
- 89. Telfair Papers, rough draft of letter to the president.
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- 99. There are many references to finances throughout the Telfair Papers; the wharf properties are shown in Vincent's 1854 Map of Savannah (also at the Georgia Historical Society).
- 100. Savannah Daily Morning News, May 7, 1856, p. 2, col. 1.
- 101. Savannah Daily Morning News, Jan. 19, 1856, p. 2, col. 2.
- 102. Savannah Daily Morning News, April 3, 1856, p. 2, col. 2.
- 103. Savannah Daily Morning News, Jan. 7, 1862, p. 1, col. 1.
- 104. Savannah Daily Morning News, Sept. 7, 1855, p. 2, col. 4.
- 105. Savannah Daily Morning News, Feb. 13, 1851, p. 2, col. 4.
- 106. Savannah Daily Morning News, May 15, 1856, p. 2, col. 2.
- 107. Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 5, Folder 42, Items 134-143.
- 108. Ibid.
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- 111. Ledgers are in several boxes and folders in the Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society.
- 112. Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 5, Folder 74, Items 292-301.
- 113. Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 9, Folder 76, Item 304.

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116. Letter written by James Cowles Prichard to Hodgson, dated Nov. 13, 1844. Quoted by MacKall, <u>Georgia Historical Quarterly</u> (December 1935): pp. 338-339.

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- 120. James Cowles Prichard, The Natural History of Man (London, Hippolyte Bailliere, 1845, 2nd edition), as quoted in MacKall, Georgia Historical Quarterly (December 1935); pp. 331-332.
- 121. <u>Collections of the Georgia Historical Society</u>, Vol. III, (Savan-nah, 1848) Introduction.
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- 123. Ibid., p. 5.
- 124. Ibid., p. 16.
- 125. MacKall, Georgia Historical Quarterly, December, 1935, p. 325.
- 126. Savannah Daily Georgian, Feb. 12, 1844, p. 2, col. 6.
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- 128. Vincent's 1854 Map of Savannah (at the Georgia Historical Society).
- 129. Floyd Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 46, Folder 623, an unpublished manuscript on Hodgson by Dolores Colquitt (This manuscript was referenced with care. Some of its material seems well researched, but parts of it are quite inaccurate. It will be referred to in other footnotes as the Colquitt manuscript.).
- 130. Savannah Daily Republican, April 1, 1857. (A copy of the article is in the Telfair Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Box 17, Folder 148.)
- 131. Ibid.
- 132. The Princeton University Library Chronicle, Vol. VIII, No. 2, Feb. 1947, (A copy of this edition, which includes an article on Telfair Hodgson, is in the Hodgson Vertical File, Georgia Historical Society.).
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159. Ibid.
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167. Chatham County Courthouse, Superior Court, Deeds Records, Book

40, p. 391.

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