


Haydon, Benjamin Robert, historical painter, was born at Plymouth, where his father was a bookseller, in 1786. He commenced his studies at the Royal Academy in 1805. His first picture was exhibited in 1807; the subject of it 'Joseph and Mary resting on the road to Egypt.' His second work, 'Dentatus,' was exhibited in 1809, and in the following year it obtained the prize at the British Institution. His 'Judgment of Solomon' appeared next; but during its progress his resources failed, and the directors of the British Institution voted him a present of 100 guineas. Previous to this he had for some time devoted ten or twelve hours a day to the study of the Elgin marbles, and he went, accompanied by Wilkie, to Paris in 1814, to study at the Louvre, and on his return continued his largest work, 'Christ entering into Jerusalem.' This picture was exhibited in 1820, both in London and Edinburgh, but found no purchaser. With all his acknowledged powers, he disdained to follow the more certain path to fame and fortune, became embarrassed, and was several times imprisoned for debt. In 1827 he gave the following melancholy account of the fate of his great pictures:—'My "Judgment of Solomon" is rolled up in a warehouse in the Borough! my "Entry into Jerusalem," once graced by the enthusiasm of the rank and beauty of the three kingdoms, is doubled up in a back room in Holborn! my "Lazurus" is in an upholsterer's shop in Mount Street! and my "Crucifixion" is in a hay-loft in Lisson Grove!' Among his successful pictures were his 'Napoleon at St. Helena,' of which he painted twelve repetitions, 'Waiting for the Times' and 'Punch,' now in the National Gallery. An ardent admiration of ancient art, and an equally ardent ambition to attain its highest excellence, ever distinguished him. The slighting of his cartoon by the royal commission on occasion of the competition for the decoration of the Palace at Westminster, was the death-blow to his hopes. He died by his own hand, June 22, 1846, aged 60; and was discovered lying on the floor of his studio, immediately in front of a colossal picture (Alfred the Great and the First British Jury), on which he had just before been engaged, his white hairs saturated with blood! It was discovered that he had long suffered from disease of the brain. The last sum of money Haydon received was a present of £50 from Sir R. Peel; whose generous interference in behalf of his widow obtained from her majesty a pension of £50 a year from the civil list; Lady Peel also assigned her a pension of £25; and a public subscription, which was afterwards entered into for the benefit of Mrs. Haydon and family, amounted to £2000. Haydon was author of 'Thoughts on the relative value of Fresco and Oil Painting' (1842), and 'Lectures on Painting and Design' (1844-46). The Life of this eminent painter was compiled and edited by Mr. Tom Taylor.

A Passage from the Life of Haydon

In the spring of 1819, considerable interest was excited in the metropolis by the exhibition of a series of drawings executed by Mr Haydon's pupils. The exhibitors were—Bewick, Thomas and Charles Landseer, Webb and Chatfield. We may here mention other distinguished pupils of Haydon. Eastlake was his first pupil; "I watched," says Haydon, "and guided his progress with the affection of a brother, in his drawing, dissecting, and painting." There were, besides, Lance and Harvey, Machise & Cope; and Haydon used to claim Edwin Landseer. "I understand," he says, "that Edwin Landseer denies his obligations— I used to deny mine to Fuseli—these are the presumptions of youth."

London April
26. 1841

1841

I can say accept my
gratitude - for the 
check -

It shall be returned
as soon as I see the
drawings - when I
hope will be long -

Your Figure & Particular
is considered the best

I remain
Yours very truly
J. Head

J. P. Hayden

Mr Carey Esq

100 Nass St New York

My dear Sir

My dear Sir / If you have not yet been to the British Gallery, take my Carey - to day - and use my name at the door - you will then see my drawings from the Cartoons, and those of my pupils, Mr Christmas and the two young Landseers - It is my belief, no such drawings have ever been made before (excluding my own of course) in England - what with the workmen say now - They call it my school, + they do it in

in firm now — they shall
do it, in earnest if
God — spare my eyes and
intellect ten years —
again I am getting

firmly — come and see
after to day —

Yours ever

W. W. Hayden

My dear Sir / I have seen the
drawings, and thought extremely
beautiful you could lay out your
money to more advantage at Sir
John's approaching sale - I would
advise you get rid of them if you
can get your price not else -

I am Dear Sir

truly yours

B. R. Haydon

May 11. 1821.

1821

The great but unfortunate Historical Painter - Died by his own hand 1846.