

**Tinted India.****Day & Son and the Color Lithographs in „Tent Life in Tigerland“.**

by Alexander Roob

In his 1888 collection of stories bearing the somewhat excessive title „Tent Life in Tigerland. Being Sporting Reminiscences of a Pioneer Planter in an Indian Frontier District“, we find former Australian Minister of Education James Inglis looking back to an adventurous stretch of his life as an indigo planter in the mangrove forests of Northern India, a region that he enthusiastically proclaims to be “probably the best place for shooting tigers in the world”.

Of much more interest than the rather tedious reports and testimonies of his obsession with trophies that also extended to other species that have in the meantime become extinct are the sixteen illustrated pages he contributed to the book. Beside scenes colonial hunting scenes they also represent the stereotypical images of travel literature on India, such as „Snake Charmer“ and „Fluvial Scenery with Elephant “.

The provenance of the photographic models for these images is not specified in the book. It therefore seems probable that they are at least in part the author’s, as well as from Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, the workshop also responsible for the translation into lithographs. Not only did they employ a great number of draughtsmen, but also worked with their own photographic department and vast archival materials.

*Day & Son* was an illustrious name in the printing business, linked far beyond the United Kingdom with the comet-like rise of chromolithography around the middle of the 19th century. It was because of

this specialization that they were able to succeed their competitors at *Hullmandel* in their leading position within the kingdom. The company had adapted the extremely difficult and tedious printing method of Godefroy Engelmann who had also served as Hullmandel's advisor for tone lithography.

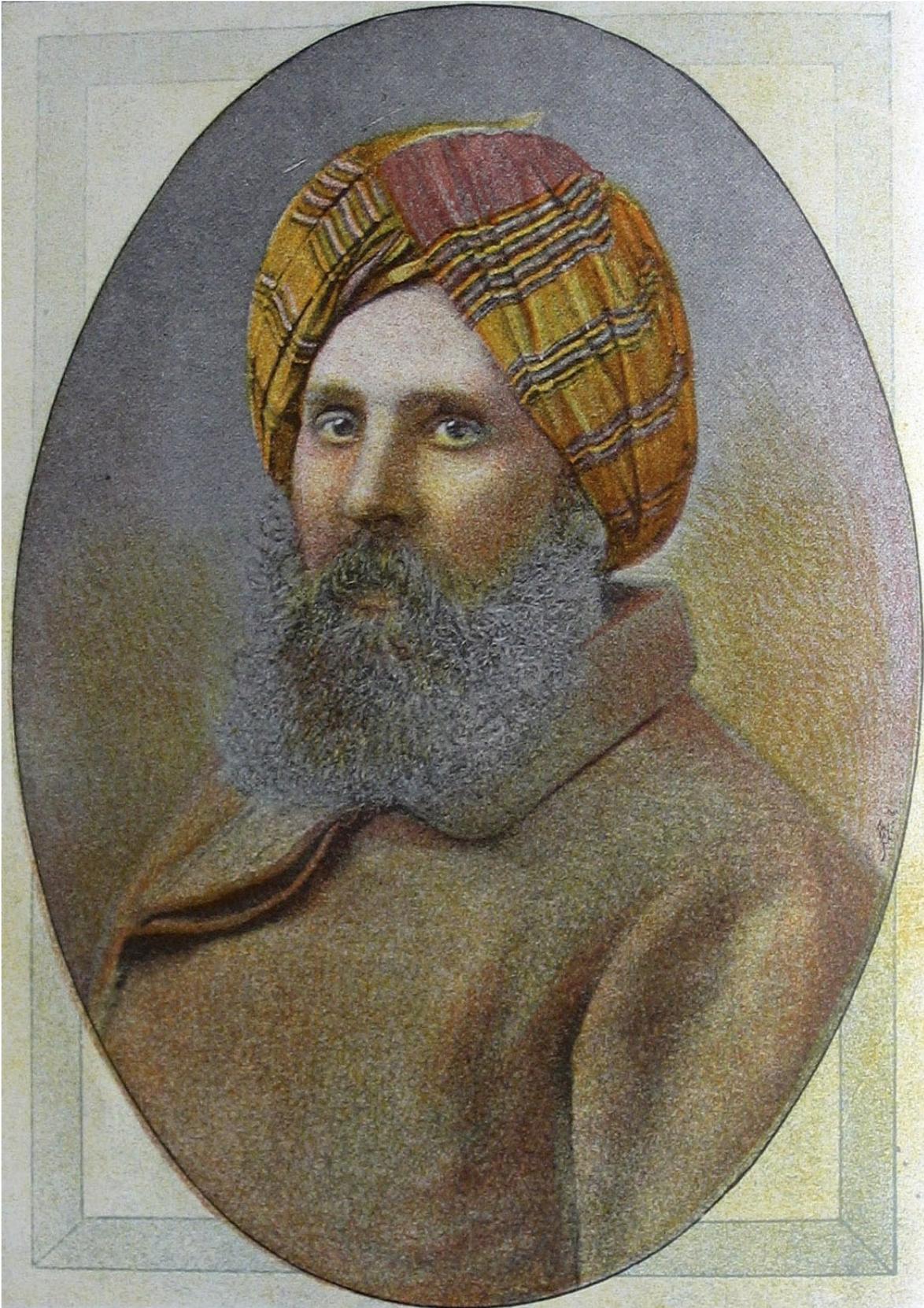
In continuation of his own experiments with this technique, Engelmann had developed chromolithography in the thirties as a printing method of its own and, in addition to that, had secured himself the right of use granted by a ten-year privilege. In 1851, five years after this license had expired, Day & Son presented the procedure to a larger public at the London World Fair.

In contrast to tinted lithography – usually limited to two or three consecutive print procedures with mostly opaque colors –, chromolithography with its clever superimposition of transparent colors in many printed layers achieved brilliant effects that were rich in nuance. Present-day techniques of artistic chromolithography bear only vague resemblance to this now extinct variety of stone printing.

In its heyday, the company that William Day, sen., had established in 1824 had its own showrooms in the heart of London City and as many as 120 employees. The workshop operated close to sixty print machines, many of which were steam-driven; their depots held around 1500 tons of limestone.<sup>1</sup>

The company owed its fame to their collaboration with the Belgian artist Louis Haghue who, through the corny picturesqueness of his image cycles of Gothic and Orientalist scenery could double as a convincing role model for generations of matte painters at Disney's. It had been another winning move of the company to send their own draughtsman to the Crimean War. He was a young lithograph by the name of William Simpson who on this occasion was to inaugurate his career as the first professional "war artist" and drawing reporter. The picture book resulting from his first appointment "Sketches at The Seat Of The War In The East," printed in a kind of tone-lithography cinemascope, published and distributed *P.& D. Colnaghi* Gallery in 1855, was hugely successful throughout the Empire. Later in that same year, competing lithographers at Vincent Brooks's answered to this by publishing a quite similar cycle of war reportage after asketches of a member of the Forces called Charles Hardinge, but not in the least approaching the former's level of acclaim.<sup>2</sup>

And it was that same William Simpson who, more than most others of the artistic staff, was to suffer from the effects of the company's financial demise in the mid-1860s.<sup>3</sup> This not only effectively shattered any prospect to produce the result of five years of toil, the monumental chromolithographic work, "India, Ancient and Modern", with its initial concept to fill four folio volumes the most ambitious enterprise in the genre of India travel literature to that date. It also resulted in the dispersal of his 250 watercolor sketches as part of the company's bankruptcy estate and ultimately led to his dismissal and to him being





William Simpson, 1874

left behind penniless.<sup>4</sup> In 1867, the remains of the company were joined in a fusion with the print shop of Vincent Brooks. The illustrations that Vincent Brooks, Day & Son produced for James Inglis' book on India provide an excellent example for the state of the art of stone printing around the end of the century.

The panorama of printing media in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was enormously colorful and varied. The most diverse techniques of recording and reproduction co-existed in many different fusions: planographic printing procedures such as lithography were combined with different kinds of gravure and relief printing like steel or wood engraving, enriched by an innumerable variety of photochemical techniques put together in all kinds of daring procedural mixtures.<sup>5</sup> It was only with the development of lithography into offset printing, and the introduction of the halftone etching process of autotypy into the preliminary stage of printing at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that has rendered the uses of printing techniques quite homologous.

Until the onset of the use of paper prints, lithography continued to be the best technique for the reproduction of photographs. Within the wide range of available chromolithographic procedures, there seemed to be few limits to experimental curiosity. Diverse photo-chromolithographic processes with often only seemingly negligible differences were patented simultaneously and coexisted under a great number of confusing names.<sup>6</sup>

To quote an example from Hamburg, lithographer and pioneer photographer Charles Fuchs, who had exported his profound knowledge of chromolithography from Strasbourg to Northern Germany, not only transposed daguerreotypy into stone printing, but also used the latter process since 1860 for the coloring of his salt paper photo prints by applying another layer of translucent color.<sup>7</sup>



(fig. 3: Charles Fuchs, hand-colored salt paper print, Hamburg ca. 1860



In the 1880s, the London-based Sprague & Company patented a printing process they dubbed “Ink-Photo” which presented a lithographic application of collotype printing (heliography). In this process, a mirror plate was brushed with a light-sensitive chromogelatine emulsion. Through light exposure with the photographic negative, a salt grain structure corresponding to the photographic image resulted. Using the “Ink-Photo” technique, this master with its relief-like structure was then transferred to the printing stone.

Analyzing the “Tigerland” illustrations in his tome “Victorian Book Illustration. The Technical Revolution”, author Geoffrey Wakeman recognizes a modified application of the Ink-Photo procedure that worked on the basis of a grid-patterned mastern instead of a net-like structure. Coloring effects were applied through overlaid printing of three manually marked tone stones. The color grading was achieved in an almost impressionist-pointillist manner.

<sup>1</sup> On Day and Son : Kathy Kajander Tidman, Art for the Victorian Household, London and Bourdeaux, 1997

<sup>2</sup> Charles Hardinge, Sketches in the Camp before Sebastopol, London 1855

<sup>3</sup> William Simpson, Meeting the Sun. A Journey All Around the World. London 1874.

<sup>4</sup> Mildred Archer, Visions of India. The Sketchbooks of William Simpson 1859-62, Topsfield 1986.

<sup>5</sup> A. Horsley Hinton, A Handbook of Illustration, New York 1894.

<sup>6</sup> George Fritz, Photo Lithography, New York 1893.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Fuchs, Mit Objektiv und Pinsel, exhibition catalogue, Hamburg 2003.

