

A BATTLE-PAINTER AT HOME:

MR. STANLEY BERKELEY
AND HIS WORK.



MR. STANLEY BERKELEY IN HIS YEOMANRY UNIFORM.

FEW pictures, probably, win their way into "the great heart of the British peoples" more speedily or more surely than those depicting some brilliant military exploit or another; but, unfortunately, the artists who are able to infuse the necessary spirit and fire into such conceptions are few and far between. Thus it is that those stirring paintings, "The Victory of Candahar," "The Charge of the French Cuirassiers at Waterloo," "For God and the King," "Gordons and Greys to the Front," "The Charge of Scarlett's Three Hundred," and those two more recent pictures, "Atbara" and "Omdurman," commemorating incidents in the recent Egyptian campaign, have aroused widespread admiration, though of the artist who painted them comparatively little is known.

Mr. Stanley Berkeley has a deep-rooted abhorrence of notoriety, but, like many other well known men who prefer to live and work in retirement, possesses an interesting history. As befits an artist in whose work the noblest of animals plays so important a part, Mr. Berkeley dwells amid distinctly horsey surroundings, for his Surrey home overlooks one of our most noted racecourses, Sandown Park, in the picturesque little Surrey village, Esher. When you remark upon his reclusive life among his dogs, pigeons, and poultry, Mr. Berkeley smilingly replies, "I love the country; it is so quiet and peaceful." This keen admiration for rural England is well borne out by the fact that more than one of this popular artist's Academy successes have been landscapes, purely and simply.

"I am now at work upon a large oil painting, six feet in length," remarked Mr. Berkeley, as we entered his studio, the walls of which are covered with proofs of his most famous landscape, battle, and animal pictures. "Last year I completed three military subjects—'Dargai,' depicting the Gordon Highlanders storming the heights of Dargai, and the heroic piper playing on his pipes though brought to

earth by having his ankles shot through; 'Atbara,' with the Scottish Highlanders charging and tearing up the zareba; and 'Omdurman,' showing the gallant charge of the 21st Lancers, and the death of Lieutenant Grenfell. These three commissions followed rather closely one after the other, and kept me well employed for a period. Even when not engaged upon these special large canvases, I am busy with black-and-white work for magazines and books, as I turn out dozens of black-and-white drawings in the course of the year."

Mr. Berkeley's career has been most remarkable. He has not had those brilliant opportunities for educating his artistic faculty that have fallen to so many of our leading artists in their younger days. Mr. Berkeley was intended for the law, but when he was twenty years of age he had grown so tired of forensic business that he threw it up and turned his attention to the brush. This was rather a bold step, inasmuch as he had never interested himself in art before, except, as he facetiously remarks, "by covering the diaries of the office with crude and hastily executed sketches." Still, there was the inward feeling which urged that art was his proper bent. At any rate, he determined to give his abilities in this direction a thorough test. At first the struggle was very hard, for his attempts were necessarily very small—designing labels

and other trifling things of that description; in fact, as he says, "Anything, so long as it kept me alive, for I was solely dependent upon what I could earn for my livelihood. In the evening I attended an art school at Lambeth, where I obtained my first real instruction in art. The curriculum here was confined to the designing of wall-papers, studies from life, and so forth—a very useful course, no doubt, to students, but I can assure you not calculated to appeal very strongly to my ambitions. It was all too monotonous and lacked movement or excitement. Still, I kept at it, feeling confident

London News and the *Graphic* were among my earliest patrons. Gradually, however, I turned my attention to more ambitious work, and in 1883 succeeded in gratifying my highest aspiration by having one of my canvases hung in the Royal Academy."

Since that picture was hung upon those honoured walls, sixteen years ago, Mr. Berkeley has been a conspicuous exhibitor at the Academy. Many of his greatest successes first arrested attention while hanging on the walls of Burlington House. In last year's Academy "Gordons and Greys to the Front" was exhibited, but for some reason or other



THE CHARGE OF SCARLETT'S THREE HUNDRED OR HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALAKLAVA, OCTOBER 25TH, 1854.
(Scots Greys and Inniskillens.)

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

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that I should succeed in time. My first success was the winning of the National Gold Medal. You cannot imagine how pleased I was with myself on this occasion." Curious to relate, in the same year in which Mr. Berkeley won the gold medal, the charming lady who is now his wife—they were art students together at the same school—won the National Silver Medal, and in the following year followed up her success by carrying off the coveted gold trophy.

"By this time," continued Mr. Berkeley, "I began to do a little work for the illustrated papers—nothing great, it is true, but yet sufficient to spur me on. The *Illustrated*

it did not arouse the wide interest it has gained since its appearance in the more popular photogravure form.

But, notwithstanding his well-earned success, Mr. Berkeley has never severed the close association with the illustrated press which was formed in his struggling days and placed him on the first rung of the ladder of fame. We publish a wash drawing of his which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in the early part of last year. It depicts an incident during the terrible gale which raged at Margate in March, 1898. While the horses were hauling the lifeboat trolley into the water they were caught and



PRINCE RUPERT: THE LAST CHARGE AT EDGEHILL.

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

By permission of Messrs. Hildesheimer & Co.



THE CHARGE OF THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS AT DARGAI.

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

By permission of Messrs. Hildesheimer & Co.

buffeted with terrific force against the sea wall by the storm-tossed sea and were all killed. In this picture, completed within a few hours, the frantic terror in the eyes of the horses, and their mad struggle with the cruel waves, have been touched off with a truthfulness that is eminently characteristic of the artist's work.

It is a leading article of Mr. Berkeley's



A LIFEBOAT DISASTER.

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.
Originally published in the "Illustrated London News."

artistic faith that one of the greatest obstacles against which an artist has to contend is the public taste. What delights an artist often fails to arouse the slightest enthusiasm in the public mind. This is necessarily a condition, he says, "which curbs an artist's ambitions very considerably."

Upon this question of the public's demands Mr. Berkeley is in a fair position to speak,

for, despite his peculiar popularity, one or two of his pictures have signally failed to draw the public. Some years ago he completed a picture called "Might is Right," the theme of which was a huge tiger devouring an antelope, while close around crouched two other smaller beasts, snarling and hungry, but withal afraid to dispute possession of the victor's prey. This picture has met with

great success in many galleries in which it has been exhibited, but no publisher has yet been induced to accept it. "On another occasion," remarked Mr. Berkeley, "I painted a landscape with a cloudy effect. Although it satisfied the Hanging Committee of the Academy, I was perfectly well aware that it would not be appreciated by the general public; so directly it was returned to me I replaced the cloudy sky with a bright one, and introduced a huntsman and his hound, in order to bring a little life into the picture. But I never completed the canvas, and there it now hangs on my studio wall waiting to be finished whenever the inclination shall seize me."

In the black-and-white room at the Academy a year or two ago there was a picture by this artist, entitled, "Cornered at Last," an incident of lynch law. The idea, as will be seen from our reproduction, is a stirring and vivid one, yet is considered too painful a subject to suit the popular taste, and though the printsellers, like *Oliver Twist*, are always "asking for more" from Mr. Berkeley's brush, they will have none of this subject. The artist has always cherished a fancy to paint "Hypatia," but for the same reason has so far refrained from committing his desire to the canvas, so closely

doomed has he become to the two fields of battle and of sport.

"What induced you to devote your energies to battle-field subjects?" I inquired.

"Strange to relate, it is only within recent years that I have taken to this class of work so enthusiastically. Formerly I went in largely for sentimental, animal, and hunting



FOR GOD AND THE KING: MARSTON MOOR.
From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

By permission of Messrs. Hildesheimer & Co.]

subjects, such as 'The School of Repentance,' 'Fair Sailing,' 'Caught in a Squall,' 'The Survival of the Fittest.' My reason for devoting so much attention to animal subjects has lain entirely in my love of animals and birds. I used to ride with the hounds, and was a member of a Yeomanry corps, so that I became intimately acquainted with horses, their movements and habits. Then the study of natural history brought me into touch with the fiercer and more formidable beasts of the forest. The public, however, appear to greet my military pictures with the keenest appreciation, so that all I can do is to oblige them. But I do not confine my energies to any

life, or some mediæval romance, with the picturesque costumes of the period. Then, again, although the majority of his work is quite serious in tone, yet he can at times, especially where dogs are concerned, impart a distinctly humorous touch to his idea, notably in his pictures, "Completely Routed," "The Survival of the Fittest," and "When We were Pups Together."

Bearing in mind the fact that several of our leading artists have developed their artistic faculty to an appreciable extent in Continental *ateliers*, I asked Mr. Berkeley whether he had ever studied abroad, and had thus obtained many of his impressions and ideas.



"THREE TO ONE."

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

particular choice of subject. Any work with plenty of life and go in it is congenial to me, and, as far as my own taste goes, I may say that it affords me the greatest pleasure to portray stirring incident of any kind upon my canvas."

The versatility of Mr. Berkeley's work is certainly remarkable. In his younger days, when commissions were few and money was necessary, Mr. Berkeley was not in a position to select a special class of work and devote his whole attention to it. Although, as he himself admits, his *forte* is animal studies, yet he is perfectly at home with almost any class of work, be it a landscape, an incident from cowboy or backwoods

"No!" he replied. "While staying in Paris for a short holiday, many years ago, however, I, of course, visited the Luxembourg, and was much impressed with a picture by Aimé Morot, delineating a charge of French and Prussian cavalry. The magnificent dash and spirit of that canvas so inspired me that I determined to make another effort, and 'For God and the King' was the result. One of my earliest military pictures was 'Prince Rupert at the Battle of Edgehill.' In connection with this painting a curious incident occurred. When finished I sent it to the Academy in 1884. When the examination of the submitted pictures was concluded I received



ORIGINAL PENCIL SKETCH FOR THE PAINTING, "FULL CRY."

a communication to the effect that my picture, of which I was proud, had been rejected. At this information I can tell you I felt rather glum, but imagine my astonishment, when visiting Burlington House a few days afterwards, to see my painting

hanging on the wall! It subsequently proved that the letter had been sent to me in mistake, but I can assure you that that clerical error robbed me of more than one night's sleep."

"When you have decided to illustrate a



PAINTING INTENDED FOR "THE CUIRASSIERS AT WATERLOO," BUT DISCARDED AT THIS STAGE.



By permission of Messrs. Hildesheimer & Co.]

GORDONS AND GREYS TO THE FRONT AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.

From the pictures by Stanley Berbeley.

certain event, do you make a complete sketch of your ideas first?"

"It is only on very rare occasions that I make sketches. I start straight away on my canvas. In my opinion the making of detailed rough sketches is a waste of time, and in a measure destroys the freshness of the work, so that one loses all interest in the picture almost before one has taken up the brush. I always make rough sketches of a particular gun, sword, or some other accoutrement or detail of clothing, to serve as shorthand notes, as it were. I only recollect having made a complete sketch of a picture once in my life. This was in connection with my quartette of paintings illustrating a fox hunt—'The Meet,' 'Full Cry,' 'Gone Away,' and 'The Death'—published last year. In this instance I made a detailed sketch of each picture before I began upon the actual canvas. Then, again, I never use models. I depend entirely upon observation and inspiration for the success of my paintings. Take the picture of 'The Charge of the French Cuirassiers at Waterloo.' It would be absolutely impossible to pose the horses in many of the positions there adopted, especially in the case of the horse falling over the precipice. For the animal pulled on to its haunches by its frantic rider, when I had nearly completed my picture, I got one of my own horses, and rested its jaw on the head of my groom, in order to see whether I had some details correct about which I was a little anxious. Again, with regard to the Wellington boots the riders are wearing, you will recollect that the field of Waterloo was almost a quagmire on the day of the conflict. Well, while hunting one wet day, and galloping over ploughed fields, I got my top-boots liberally splashed with mud. When I arrived home I carefully examined those boots to see how the spatters of mud fell upon them, and then compared those natural mud splashings with those which I had painted upon the boots of the cavalymen in my picture. The precipice was obtained by a visit to some sandhills in this neighbourhood; but when I had completed this part of the picture I made a fresh start upon another canvas and transformed the original into another subject altogether. I may say that I expended a great amount of trouble and time upon this canvas. Many of the figures and horses were painted over and over again before I was satisfied with it. If, when I have finished a picture, I entertain any doubts concerning the veracity of any of the figures, I arrange a model so far as I can and com-

pare it with my idea on the canvas. When I painted the picture, 'Cornered at Last,' I was rather doubtful about the tattered shirt of the desperate fugitive, torn to shreds by the revengeful lynchers, so I procured a shirt and tore it all to rags while on the model before I could hit upon a satisfactory ideal. Of course I think out my subject before I commit brush to canvas, but directly I have grasped the run of the conception I start straight away, if necessary introducing new features as they occur to me."

"What is the average length of time you occupy in completing a picture?" I asked.



"THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST."
From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.

"That all depends upon the subject and the circumstances under which I labour, though I like to take as much time as possible over my work. 'Atbara' was finished in less than a fortnight; 'Dargai' in about the same time; and 'Omdurman' in less than ten days; but then these were intended to be 'topical studies.' Well do I remember working upon the last named. With the thermometer at ninety-two degrees in the shade I almost imagined myself in Egypt. I began upon the canvas the morning after the news of the English victory was received in London. Of course,

it had been pretty generally anticipated that sooner or later there would be a great battle between the British and the Mahdi's troops, so I had followed the events of the campaign up to that point very closely. I had gathered together a good deal of material regarding the country, fighting tactics of the Dervishes, offensive and defensive, and similar details essential to the correct rendering of such a subject. I cull my material from every available source—museums, books, the War Office, from military men, and in one or two cases I have even obtained it from the war correspondents themselves. I had a very unique experience in connection with my picture 'Dargai.' When the news of the Highlanders' charge reached this country it was asserted that Milne was the piper who had continued playing his instrument though shot in both ankles, and I accordingly conveyed Piper Milne to my canvas. When the picture was almost completed it was suddenly announced that the heroic piper was not Milne at all, but Findlater. I was now in a quandary. Milne was minus a moustache, and I was in ignorance whether Findlater was clean shaven or not. I hunted all over the country for a photo of

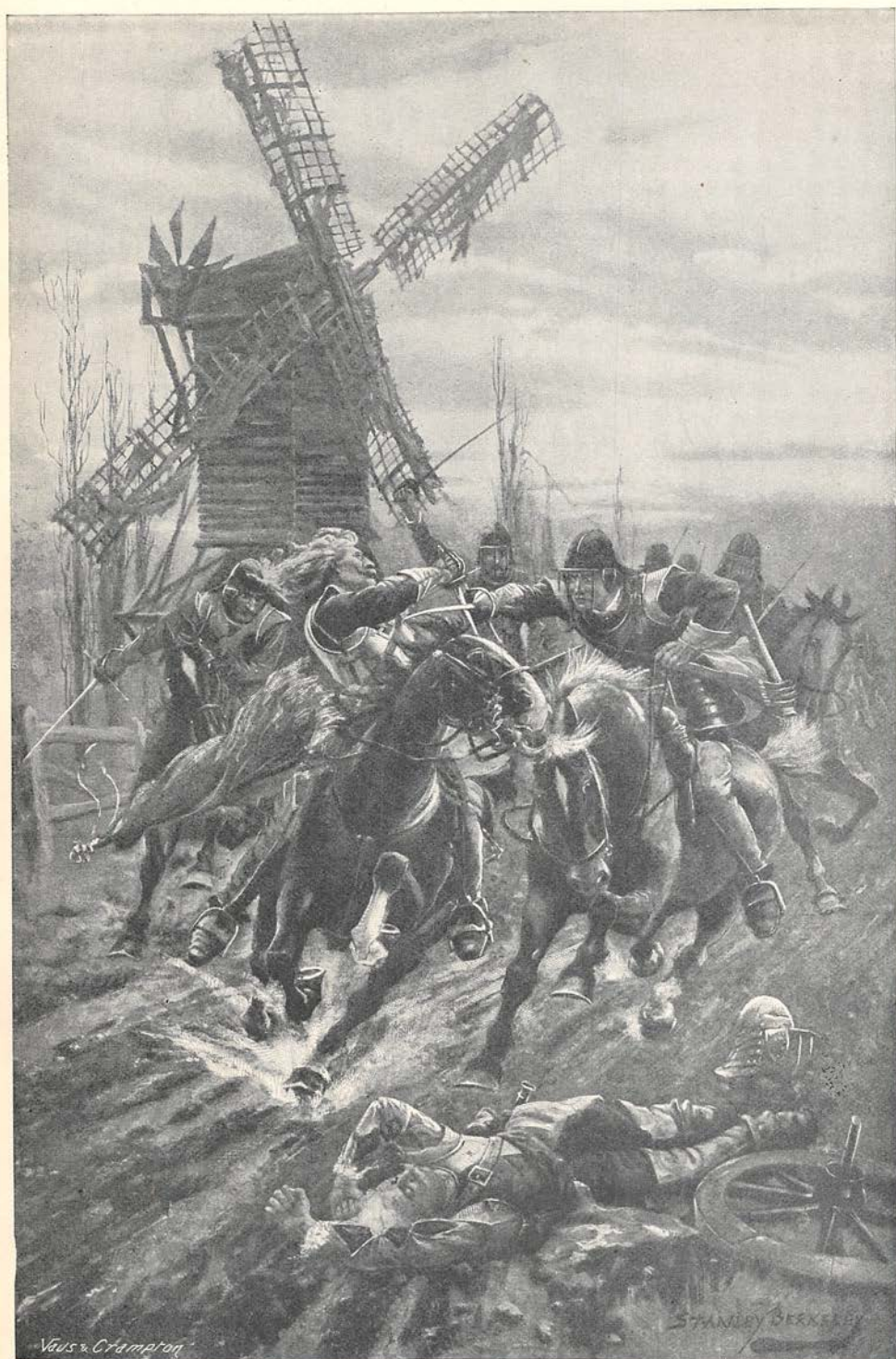
Findlater, and almost gave up the quest in despair, when I succeeded in securing a small faded photograph, sufficient for the due conversion of Piper Milne into Piper Findlater."

That the appreciation accorded to Mr. Berkeley's work by a patriotic public is well merited is beyond a doubt. It is almost an impossibility to select one particular picture from his list as being the most successful. Perhaps the one of "The French Cuirassiers at Waterloo" has enjoyed the largest sale. All the *remarque* proofs of this picture were sold immediately on publication, and two hundred proofs signed by the artist went off almost as quickly. The original canvas was subsequently purchased by an American syndicate—the Americans are keen admirers of Mr. Berkeley's work—and now adorns a large hall in New York. The popularity of the painting, "Gordon and Greys to the Front," has been almost as great, for the stamped and signed proofs have doubled in value. The three more recent paintings, "Dargai," "Atbara," and "Omdurman," have also been well received, and the Queen was so impressed with that of "Dargai" that she commanded a copy to be hung in her Highland home at Balmoral.



"CORNERED AT LAST."

From the picture by Stanley Berkeley.



Voss & Crampton

STANLEY BERKELEY

DESPERATE ODDS.

FROM THE PICTURE BY STANLEY BERKELEY.

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