
THE LATE
SIR PERCIVAL MARLING,
Bart., V.C., C.B., D.L., J.P.

THE OLDEST LIVING V.C.

A DISTINGUISHED CAREER

Soldier : Sportsman : Public Servant

VALUABLE WORK FOR COUNTY

HIS MILITARY SERVICE



SIR PERCIVAL MARLING.
From an Oil Painting.

A second edition of the "Stroud News" published at 9.30 a.m. last Friday announced, with profound regret, the passing at 8.45 that morning, of Colonel Sir Percival Scrope Marling, Bart., V.C., C.B., D.L., J.P., of Stanley Park, Stroud. Sir Percival Marling, whose death followed an illness of about three months' duration, was 75 years of age, and his passing has removed not only a gallant officer, but a gentleman who had rendered invaluable service in many spheres in the County, and particularly in Mid-Gloucestershire, in which the early and later portions of his life were spent.

For accuracy and attention to details being features which added not a little to the value and effect of his widespread public service, while his friendliness and his love for seeing others enjoying themselves earned for him not only the esteem but the affectionate regard of all with whom he became associated. By the passing of Sir Percival, Gloucestershire, and the Stroud district in particular, has lost a friend whose place will be extremely difficult to fill.

In this hour of great sorrow the heartfelt sympathy of all will be extended to Lady Marling, who has so graciously and wholeheartedly supported her husband in all his work for the locality, and also to Sir Percival's brothers, Mr. Stanley S. Marling, of Littleworth House, Amberley, and Major W. J. Paley Marling, of Great Rissington Manor, Bourton-on-the-Water.

Sir Percival Marling was a soldier, and sportsman, besides an ardent public worker, and any record of his career must necessarily be incomplete. He had experienced so much warfare in the service of first his Queen and then his King, and the country, he had touched life at so many points, and his social and public activities had been so numerous and widespread that a whole volume would be required to refer adequately to them.

He belonged to an old Gloucestershire family, members of which settled in the County in the early 16th century, although the baronetcy, of which he was the third holder, only dates from 1822.

Sir Percival, the eldest son of Sir William and Lady Marling, and the grandson of Sir Samuel Marling, was a member of a family who had done much to add lustre to the reputation of the West of England woollen cloth manufacturers. His mother, Lady Marling, was a daughter of Mr. John Abraham, of Whittingham, Lancashire, and he was born on March 6th, 1861, at Stanley House, King's Stanley.

Here his childhood was happily spent, and probably among his earliest conscious memories was that of being taken to the new Church at Selsley, erected in 1862 by his grandfather, at the edge of his Stanley Park Estate—an exact counterpart on a smaller scale of a church in the village of Marling, near Meran, in the Austrian Tyrol. Here, on Thursday afternoon, Sir Percival was laid to rest with his forebears in the Church in which he had served so long not only as patron, but also in the more humble capacity of Churchwarden.

MILITARY SERVICE.

In January, 1875, Sir Percival went to Harrow, entering Rendell's House, and here Smith-Dorrien and the future Lord Horne, who commanded an Army in the Great War, were among his contemporaries. "The House"—Sir Percival wrote in "Rifleman and Hussar," the delightful story of his life, published in 1931—"was then about the best House at Harrow, and was full of Gordons, Grenfells, Cunliffes and Hamiltons."

Forsaking the cloth industry, Sir Percival in 1878 entered Sandhurst, and was gazetted Second Lieutenant in the 60th (The King's Royal Rifle Corps) in August, 1880. Thus began his exciting military career, and in October he sailed for Cape Town to take part in the first Boer War, in which he participated in the Laings Nek and Ingogo battles.

Hardly had this war been concluded than Lieut. Marling was again on active service, this time in Egypt, where the 3rd 60th was with Wolseley in the campaign that crushed Arabi Pasha. Lieut. Marling served throughout the Egyptian campaign, participating in the actions around Alexandria, and the affair at Tel-el-Mahuta, the action at Kassassin, and the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. In 1884 he was attached to the Mounted Infantry in the Suakim campaign, and was present at the battle of El Teb and the relief of Tokar.

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

For an Act of Great Bravery.

Then followed the battle of Tamaï and the affair at Tamanib, for his gallantry at which, on March 13th, 1884, he was awarded the Victoria Cross, besides being twice mentioned in despatches.

The details of the exploit which earned for him the award "For Valour," which is graphically illustrated in Giles' painting which was hung in the Royal Academy, and which is now at Stanley Park, were as follows:

"At the risk of his life he went into the zone of a death-dealing rifle fire and brought out the badly wounded Pte. Morley, of the Royal Sussex Regt. Lieut. Marling saw the man lying prostrate, rode to him, dismounted, placed him on his charger, mounted and rode off. But the soldier was so weak that he fell off, whereupon Lieut. Marling again dismounted, and amidst a hail of bullets, carried him to a place of safety."

Sir Percival's further military service included the Khartoum Expedition of 1884-5, in which he took part in the battles of Abou Klea and El Gubat.

Accepting a transfer to the 18th Hussars, he was promoted captain in 1886, and in 1891 he left India, where the 18th was then stationed, to become adjutant of the Somerset Yeomanry. In 1896 he obtained his majority, and was given command of the depot squadron.

In May, 1899, he married Beatrice Caroline, eldest daughter of Mr. F. H. Beaumont, of Buckland Court, Surrey, and had intended to retire from the Service when rumours of war in South Africa led him to rejoin his regiment, which was then in Natal. With the 18th Hussars he fought at Talana Hill, in the retirement from Dundee, and at the action of Lombard's Kop. After being shut up in Ladysmith during the siege he was invalided home when the town was relieved. He returned to South Africa, however, and was with his regiment during operations in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and on the Zululand frontier of Natal, commanding the 18th in the field from April, 1901, until the end of the war, and being created C.B. for his services.

When his period of command expired he was appointed, in June, 1905, G.O.C. York Garrison and District until February 1906. He was promoted colonel in February, 1907, but was not employed again until January, 1909, when he went out to South Africa for the fourth time to become Brigadier-General commanding the Potchefstroom District. Before the end of the year, however, he was invalided home and retired.

Lady Marling and Ladysmith.

Sir Percival was accompanied to Ladysmith for the second Boer War by Lady Marling, and Lady Marling, who left on Nov. 1st, 1899, was one of the last ladies to leave. She returned to the town on Saturday, March 3rd, 1900, and

was thus also the first woman to return to the town.

When the Great War came Col. Marling as he then was, was anxious for employment. First he had a staff appointment on the East Coast, but was later attached to the Indian Corps headquarters in France until 1915 when his health obliged him to forego any thoughts of further active service.

Besides receiving the Victoria Cross, and the C.B., Sir Percival possessed the Queen's Medal with five clasps, the King's Medal with two clasps, besides the 1914 Star with clasps and the General Service and Victory medals. Sir Percival Marling is Hon. Colonel of The Gloucestershire Regiment.

End of Military Service.

Writing in "Rifleman and Hussar" under the date Feb. 18th, 1906, Sir Percival refers to the ending of his command as follows:—

"My command was up. I had a real lump in my throat at leaving. They gave me a farewell dinner in the mess, and the next night a farewell dance for my wife in barracks, and I had several other farewell dinners. . . . Pollok, who succeeded me in the command, and most of the officers came to see me off at the station, and also 30 of the sergeants. I broke down at having to say good-bye to them all.

"We went straight down to Stanley Park to my father's and stayed hunting there till the middle of April, when we went to settle ourselves at Sedbury Park, which my father had kindly allowed me to live in."

At Sedbury, Sir Percival soon plunged himself into a vortex of public service. In April, 1906, he was elected to the Gloucestershire County Council and made Chairman of the Lydney Bench of Magistrates. He was also, in the same month, appointed one of the Commissioners of the Severn Fishery Board, and next year became a Commissioner for Boy Scouts for the Forest of Dean.

With a good deal of travel, and much public work, the pre-war years passed quietly and happily until War again broke out, and Sir Percival once again entered the service of his country.

His subsequent retirement was followed by a quiet period at Sedbury, and then on Feb. 14th, 1918, came a great tragedy.

Sir Percival's diary states:

"My poor mother died at 9 a.m. this morning. The saddest day of my life. It is the first real break in our home circle."

AT STANLEY PARK.

A GREAT RECORD OF SERVICE.

Within two years there was another deep bereavement, for on October 19th, 1919, Sir William Marling passed away at Stanley Park, at the age of 84, and Sir Percival succeeded to the title. He decided to sell Selbury, and take up residence at Stanley Park, and so he renewed close association with the district of his boyhood.

At once Stanley Park became the social centre of the district. Sir Percival and Lady Marling loved to share

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Lord Plumer's Tribute.

“DURING more than thirty years' service in the Army he took part with distinction in no less than six campaigns in various parts of the Empire; and in the Sudan campaign of 1884 he gained the highest honour a soldier can win — the Victoria Cross.

“It is men like Percy Marling who, during the past century, have established and helped to consolidate our Empire, and have maintained throughout their service our prestige, by setting an example illustrating the highest and best features of our national character, and it is to be hoped that there will be many young men who will endeavour to follow that example in the difficult times to come.”

From “*Rifleman and Hussar.*”

their beautiful home with others, and it was constantly thrown open for various good objects and social events. Garden parties, fetes and entertainments in the summer, and delightful parties in the winter became regular features, and numerous very happy events were held there, with Sir Percival and Lady Marling as the charming and gracious host and hostess.

A keen rider to hounds, Sir Percival indulged freely in this sport, and the meets at Stanley Park have been, throughout his residence in the district, a feature of every season. Christmas parties for the nurses and for the children were held regularly at Stanley Park, and as each Armistice Day came round, Selsley ex-Service men were entertained at the Park, and Sir Percival's passing will be a specially heavy blow to the village in which he was regarded not only as the squire, but as the personal friend of every man, woman and child.

Political Activities.

friend of every man, woman and child.

Political Activities.

Meanwhile much public work in other directions was absorbing a good deal of the time of Sir Percival. In politics he was a staunch Conservative. As long ago as 1906 he was invited to stand as Conservative candidate for the Forest of Dean, but this he declined, and in 1911, he also took a similar course when asked to stand for the Stroud or Mid-Gloucestershire Division. His support of the Party, however, was unstinted, and in March, 1928, he became President of the Divisional Association, an office in which he did invaluable service, and which he held at the time of his death. In election contests he was tireless in his efforts for the Conservative candidates, and Sir Frank Nelson and later Mr. Robert Perkins owe much to his efforts. The Junior Imperial League, too, claimed his enthusiastic support, and he has been President of the Mid-Gloucestershire organisation since its inception. For several years past the J.I.L. fetes at Sir Percival's residence, have been a feature of the local Whitsuntide holiday. Arrangements for the holding of a similar function this year were well in hand, but owing to Sir Percival's illness, the event was cancelled a few weeks ago.

In February, 1923, Sir Percival was "pricked" County High Sheriff.

He was a firm friend to the Boy Scout movement, which he had served as a Commissioner for the Forest of Dean, and in 1923 he undertook similar duties in the Stroud district.

The British Legion.

In the next year Sir Percival became President of the County British Legion, an organisation which naturally aroused his sympathy and loyal support. He was instrumental in the inauguration not only of the Selsley branch, but of several other local branches, including



SIR PERCIVAL AND LADY MARLING,
A happy photograph taken at Stanley Park.

that at Stroud of which he was president. Many local branches possess standards which were his gifts, while he was also interested in the Stroud Detachment of the British Red Cross Society. Lady Marling is also a keen supporter of these movements, and besides being County Vice-President of the Red Cross, is deeply interested in the Stonehouse Women's Section of the British Legion, of which she is President.

Silver Wedding Celebrations.

The year 1924 marked the silver wedding of Sir Percival and Lady Marling, an event which was happily celebrated, and of which there is the permanent memento in the form of two ornamental gates leading from the Park grounds to All Saints' Church.

That year was also a particularly busy one for Sir Percival, who, besides becoming President of the Gloucestershire Branch of the British Legion, was elected President of the Gloucestershire Society and of the Gloucestershire Society in London. He also became Chairman of both the Stroud and Whitminster Petty Sessions, and President of the Stroud Hospital.

The latter office was one that gave Sir Percival particular pleasure. He held it for the customary three years, and was succeeded by Lady Marling, who became the first lady president, and who, after four years in office was succeeded by the present President, Mr. Stanley Marling.

Prince of Wales' V.C. Dinner.

In the following year Sir Percival accepted the Presidency of the Stroud and District Nursing Association, an office to which he was re-elected six days before his death.

November, 1929, witnessed the holding of the Prince of Wales's Victoria Cross Dinner Party at the House of Lords.

Writing of this in "Rifleman and Hussar" Sir Percival stated:—

"On Nov. 9th I attended the Prince of Wales's Victoria Cross Dinner Party at the House of Lords. H.R.H. made an extremely good speech. We sat down to dinner 317. We were each of us given the British Legion Book.

"On Sunday we went to a service at Westminster Abbey, and on Sunday night to a performance of 'Journeys' End,' to which we were invited. Monday was Armistice Day, and all the V.C.'s marched in procession from Wellington Barracks at 10 a.m. to the Cenotaph, and in the evening I went to the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall, which was a wonderful show, and the Prince again made an excellent and touching speech. As the oldest V.C. present I had to lead the officers' procession into the hall as the two older V.C.'s before me were too ill to take part."

Last Year's Events.

The summer of 1935, Jubilee Year, will be remembered by all those who were privileged to take part in the various events held at Stanley Park. One of the most notable was the dual celebration on May 18th of the Royal Jubilee and the 36th anniversary of the wedding of Sir Percival and Lady Marling.

On this occasion the parishioners of Selsley took the opportunity of shewing the regard in which both Sir Percival and Lady Marling were held, and at 10.30 a.m. there was a surprise visit to the Park and Mr. Sidney Hague, the oldest inhabitant, on behalf of 300 parishioners, asked Lady Marling to accept a diamond bracelet watch, while Sir Percival received a collector's set of Silver Jubilee spoons.

Sir Percival was one of the recipients of the King's Jubilee medal, and in commemoration of his Majesty's Jubilee, and the 36th anniversary of his wedding day, he remitted two months' rent to all the tenants of the Park estate. There are ap-

proximately 50 tenants on the estate, and the concession represented a gift which in the aggregate amounted to several hundreds of pounds. At the same time Sir Percival presented four senior members of the staff at Stanley Park with special Jubilee medals.

Later in the summer several parties for Conservative workers were held, as well as the J.L.L. fete, and in the winter came the usual parties, the last occasions on which Sir Percival joined in entertaining at the Park being at the Nurses' and Children's Christmas Parties held shortly before he and Lady Marling left on their last winter tour.

A Great Sportsman.

As already stated, Sir Percival was a great sportsman. Hunting was a special hobby, and as recently as last year he rode to hounds. He was a member of the Hunt Committee of Lord Berkeley's Hounds and a steward of the Berkeley Hunt Point to Point races. He was very fond of racing and had won a good many events both across country and on the flat in England, Egypt, Africa and India.

In his younger days Sir Percival joined in all kinds of sport. While at Harrow he used to play for the Stroud Rugby Club while on holiday in company with his brother, the late Sir Charles Murray Marling, who was then at Wellington.

Later he captained the 18th (Queen Mary's Own) Royal Hussars Polo team, and played for the King's Royal Rifles.

Another sport in which Sir Percival found recreation and no small degree of success was cricket, at which he played for the M.C.C. and the King's Royal Rifles team, and captained the 18th Hussars for many years. In Gloucestershire he took a prominent part in connection with the game, and held the Presidency of the Gloucestershire County Cricket Club in 1922, and the Presidency of the Stroud and Selsley Clubs.

Sir Percival had shot big game in most parts of the world, especially Africa and India, and had a very fine collection of heads and sporting trophies at Stanley Park. He was a member of a number of clubs in London, including the Carlton, Cavalry, Bath, M.C.C. and Ranelagh, and also held a number of company directorships which included the Chancery Lane Safe Deposit Company and Gloucester and Sharpness Docks Company and Birmingham Canal Company.

Many Offices.

An indication of the valuable social and public work which Sir Percival Marling had performed may be gauged from the large number of offices he held. Besides being for many years a magistrate, Sir Percival had held the office of County High Sheriff (1923). He was Honorary Colonel of the 5th Batt. The Gloucestershire Regiment (Territorials), President of the Gloucestershire British Legion, the Gloucestershire Boy Scouts' Association, the Mid-Glos. Conservative Association, the Mid-Glos. Junior Imperial League, the Gloucestershire Miniature Rifle Association, the Stroud and District Nursing Association and Stroud Show, Selsley British Legion and Kingscote British Legion. He was a past President of the Gloucestershire Cricket Club, the Stroud General Hospital, the Gloucestershire Society, the Gloucestershire Society in London, the Berkeley Hunt, and Agricultural Society.

He was the first chairman of the Gloucester County Playing Fields' Association, a Governor of the Marling School, the Lydney Secondary School, and for sixteen years was a member of the Gloucestershire County Council. He was also an Income Tax Commissioner. Sir Percival was a Freemason, being a member of the Sherborne Lodge.

The Last Illness.

Early in March it became known that

Sir Percival was unwell, and gradually the seriousness of his illness became known. Throughout the County anxious inquiries were made daily, and on Thursday, when he was reported to be holding his own, hope was sustained.

Then on Friday morning came the sad news that Sir Percival had passed away in the presence of Lady Marling and other relatives.

Thus ends a life in which service to his country and his fellows had played an unusually large part. The district will be much the poorer by the loss it has suffered, and the present generation will always remember with gratitude the life and example of a fine English gentleman and a brave and courageous soldier.

"A Rare Good Time."

At this point it is fitting to quote the passage with which Sir Percival concluded his memoirs in "Rifleman and Hussar."

"I have had a rare good time myself, anyhow. I've been nearly everywhere and done most things, and in my humble way I've always tried to play the game. . . . And above all I thank God for a good wife."

Sir Percival is succeeded as fourth baronet by his nephew, Mr. John Stanley Vincent Marling, lieutenant, 17th/21st Lancers, who was born in 1910, the son of the late Sir Charles Murray Marling, G.C.M.G., of the Diplomatic Service, who after the War was British Minister at Copenhagen and at The Hague. Sir Charles died in 1933.

LOCAL COUNCILS' TRIBUTES.

At Friday's meeting of the Stroud Rural District Council, the Chairman, Mr. B. Hudson, said no doubt they had all heard with regret of the death that morning of Sir Percival Marling. The name of Marling had been associated with that Council through Sir Percival late father, and through his brother, Mr. Stanley Marling, for a very long period, and he was sure they would all deeply regret the death of Sir Percival. He and Lady Marling had been very prominent in the social life and activities of the district for many years, and Sir Percival would be greatly missed because there was no phase of social work in which he had not taken a deep and practical interest.

The members acknowledged the Chairman's remarks by standing in silence, and it was agreed that the Clerk should send letters of condolence to Lady Marling and to Mr. Stanley Marling in their great loss.

At Wednesday's meeting of the Stroud Urban District Council, Mr. T. Langham, the chairman, said all the members were aware of the great loss Stroud and the district had suffered by the death of Sir Percival Marling. The desire and willingness of Sir Percival to render service on behalf of the district for any object were well known to all of them, and they all realised what a great asset to the district Sir Percival had proved himself.

On behalf of the members of the Council, added the Chairman, he had written a letter of sympathy to Lady Marling, while arrangements had also been made for four representatives of the Council to attend the funeral.

The members stood for a moment in silence.

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