

CLARKSON FREDERICK STANFIELD

(Sunderland 1793 - London 1867)

Castello di Rovereto

signed and dated 'C. Stanfield RA 1851' (lower right)

oil on panel

39 x 60 cm (15½ x 23½ in)

Provenance: Thomas Agnew & Sons, London.

THIS HITHERTO UNDISCOVERED WORK IS A version of Clarkson Frederick Stanfield's important *The Battle of Roveredo* in the Royal Holloway College Collection, Egham, Surrey (fig. 1). *Castello di Rovereto* depicts a rugged and idyllic mountain landscape caught in the early evening light. The bright ice-capped mountains beyond lead us down into the darker valley below, the Alps fortifying the valley and framing the composition. Perched on the cliff, overhanging the little party of travellers on the track, is a picturesque fortified dwelling. The original foundations seem to be from a Roman tower, architecturally evolving over the centuries into a medieval turret, this physical reference to antiquity thereby evokes an ancient landscape. The castle, in fact, thirteenth century in date serves as the backdrop for another version of this landscape, *The Battle of Roveredo*, also of 1851, this time recording a fierce battle beneath its ramparts.

The Battle of Rovereto, also known as Battle of Roveredo, was waged on 4 September, 1796 during the French Revolutionary Wars between French and Austrian forces. It was fought near the town of Rovereto, thirty miles south of Trent in northern Italy, ending in a French victory. The engagement between the advance formations of the Italian forces commanded by Massena and the larger part of Davidovitch's Austrian troops. General Wurmser had entrusted Davidovitch to defend the area around Trent, while the main Austrian forces

headed south east in an attempt to relieve besieged Mantua. The Austrians deployed 14,000 men between the road junction of Rovereto and the village of Marco but the French captured the main position by sending one brigade to outflank them. During the battle the French took 6,000 prisoners as well as 20 artillery pieces, all for the loss of a few hundred men.

Stanfield spent time travelling extensively throughout Italy and was renowned for his paintings of various topographical scenes. Much of his work, such as *Castello di Rovereto*, was directly informed by his many travels abroad, since whilst travelling Stanfield would make an extensive number of sketches. He was meticulous in organising his sketches keeping them numbered and ordered. Later he would refer to these sketches in his studio to produce oils and watercolours, but rarely did he paint them from life. His first tour was to Italy in 1824 with fellow artist William Brockedon, then, in 1830, after several short trips to France he embarked on a major trip to Venice, via Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The next ten years included more trips to Germany and Italy. In 1843 he toured Holland and in 1851, the date of the present painting, he toured France and Spain with his wife, Rebecca. He built up an extensive collection of sketches from these trips and would often take delight in using them to recount his journeys to visitors.



Clarkson Frederick Stanfield, *The Battle of Roveredo*, 1851, Royal Holloway College (Figure 1)



Photograph of Castello di Rovereto today (Figure 2)

