

THE LIFE OF  
ARTHUR *Duke of*  
WELLINGTON  
By G·R·GLEIG

EVERY  
MAN  
I WILL  
GO  
WITH  
THEE  
BE THY  
GUIDE



IN THY  
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SIDE

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## INTRODUCTION

THE vital thing to remember about Gleig, the biographer of Wellington, is that he was also the author of *The Subaltern*, which is decidedly one of the very best of the Wellington novels. That story, whose second edition was dedicated (by a characteristic half-granted permission) to the duke, opens in May 1813, and it brings us, later in that year, to a direct impression of Wellington. The great duke is there sketched from the life and without any fictive colours by the subaltern, who was G. R. Gleig himself. The background is Spain, the hill foreground the top of the Quatracone, which the battalion has just reached, when four mounted officers appear, one of them riding a little ahead of the rest.

"He who rode in front," says the autobiographical novelist and chronicler, "was a thin, well-made man, apparently of the middle stature, and not yet past the prime of life. His dress was a plain grey frock, buttoned close to the chin; a cocked hat, covered with oilskin; grey pantaloons, with boots buckled at the side; and a steel-mounted light sabre. Though I knew not who he was, there was a brightness in his eye which bespoke him something more than an aide-de-camp or a general of brigade; nor was I long left in doubt. There were in the ranks many veterans who had served in the Peninsula during some of the earlier campaigns; these instantly recognised their old leader, and the cry of 'Duro, Duro!' the familiar title given by the soldiers to the Duke of Wellington, was raised. This was followed by reiterated shouts, to which he replied by taking off his hat and bowing, when, after commending the appearance of the corps, and chatting for a moment with the commanding officer, he advised that a halt should take place where we were, and rode on.

"As I had never seen the great captain of the day before, it will be readily imagined that I looked at him on the present occasion with a degree of admiration and respect such as a soldier of seventeen years of age, devoted to his profession, is likely to feel for the man whom he regards as its brightest

ornament. There was in his general aspect nothing indicative of a life spent in hardships and fatigues; nor any expression of care or anxiety in his countenance. On the contrary, his cheek, though bronzed with frequent exposure to the sun, had on it the ruddy hue of health, while a smile of satisfaction played about his mouth, and told, more plainly than words could have spoken, how perfectly he felt himself at his ease. Of course I felt, as I gazed upon him, that an army under his command could not be beaten; and I had frequent opportunities afterwards of perceiving how far such a feeling goes towards preventing defeat."

George R. Gleig was born at Stirling in 1796, son of the Bishop of Brechin. He went to Balliol College, Oxford, as a Snell exhibitioner, in 1811; and soon showed his military ambition by leaving the 'varsity to enter the army. He served in the Peninsula in 1813 and 1814 and was thrice wounded there, and thrice again in America. Following Waterloo, he returned to Oxford, took his B.A. and M.A., and was eventually ordained in 1820. Six years later appeared *The Subaltern*; and thereafter the story of his life as a country parson and army chaplain must be read between the lines of his multifarious books. In 1834 Gleig was made chaplain of Chelsea Hospital, whose popular record he wrote afterwards; in 1844 he became chaplain-general of the queen's forces, and in 1846 inspector-general of military schools. He was, as this book of his shows, very much of the duke's political faith, —a sound Tory and a hearty and orthodox churchman. He died in July 1888 at Stratfield Turgis.

Brialmont's *Life of Wellington*, on which Gleig's is closely based, was published at Paris in 1856-7. The English Brialmont-Gleig originally appeared in four volumes in 1858-60. Two later editions followed, in each of which Gleig's hand becomes more apparent. The present volume is a reprint of the third, or People's, edition of 1864.

1909.

The following are his chief works:—

Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, 1821; *The Subaltern* (*Blackwood*), 1825; *The Chelsea Pensioners*, 1829; *The Country Curate*, 1830; *A History of the Bible*, 1830-31; Allan Breck, 1834; *The Chronicles of Waltham*, 1834, 1861; *Sequel to same*, *Things Old and New* (*The Novel Times*, vol. i.), 1845; *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, 1830; *Lives of Military Commanders* (Lardner), 1830, etc.; *History of the British Empire of India*, 1830-1835; *The Hussar*, 1837; *Chelsea*

Hospital and its Traditions, 1838; Germany, Bohemia, and Hungary visited in 1837, 1839; Life of Warren Hastings, 1841; Memoir of Major-General Craufurd, 1842; Sketch of the Military History of Great Britain, 1845; Sale's Brigade in Afghanistan, 1846; The Story of the Battle of Waterloo, 1847, 1907; Life of Lord Clive, 1848, 1907; The Light Dragoon, 1851; The Leipzig Campaign, 1852, 1856; India and its Army, 1857; Essays: Biographical, Historical, and Miscellaneous, 1858; Life of Arthur, First Duke of Wellington (Founded on Brialmont's Work), 4 vols., 1858-60; revised ed., 1862; People's ed., 1864; The Soldier's Manual of Devotion, 1862; Life of Sir Walter Scott (from the *Quarterly*), 1871; History of the Reign of George III., to the Battle of Waterloo, etc., 1873; The Great Problem: can it be solved? 1876; Personal Reminiscences of the First Duke of Wellington, ed. by Mary E. Gleig, 1904.

The author's works include also two volumes of sermons. *The National Library* was conducted by him, and he edited a series of school books, to which he contributed a History of England. He was for many years a contributor to *Fraser*, *Blackwood*, the *Edinburgh*, and the *Quarterly*.

## ADVERTISEMENT

IN this revised edition of the *Life of the Duke of Wellington*, I have kept two objects steadily in view: first, to paint the duke himself exactly as he was; and next, to meet the possible wishes of readers, and they are not few, to whom the minute details of military and political operations are not very attractive.

To describe the career of the foremost general of his age, without telling how he carried on war and achieved great successes, is indeed impossible. And as little possible would it be to speak of a statesman and a politician, leaving unnoticed the stream of public affairs, the course of which he contributed to guide, or by which he was carried along. But writing as I now do for others than professional soldiers and statesmen, my endeavour has been so to handle these points of history, as that as little as possible they shall stand between my readers and the true subject of my narrative, the duke himself. It seems to me, having now accomplished my task, that neither the continuity of the narrative, nor its value as a record of great public events, is damaged by the process. And I am willing to believe that on others the same impression will be produced. But however this may be, one thing is certain, that by following no other course could I hope to achieve the ends which I had set before me: namely, while lightening my story, to produce a portrait of my hero, such as shall do full justice to his great qualities, without seeking to hide or to explain away the weaknesses which he shared in common with his fellow-men.

It will be seen that in following up these designs, I have made freer use than I formerly ventured to do of sources of private information that were open to me. Of the duke's remarks upon men and things, many, which were originally given in substance only, are here set down as he delivered them. Some of the peculiarities in his strongly-marked character are now for the first time brought forward; and stories are told, which on former occasions might have fitted in but indifferently with graver matters then under discussion. I am confident that neither the most sensitive of the duke's personal

friends, nor the bitterest of his political enemies (if any such still survive), will see the smallest reason to be dissatisfied or offended at this change of plan. On the other hand, it appears to me that multitudes whom the record of his glory, in wars and political contests long passed away, might repel, will be attracted by the new arrangement to their own great gain. Wherefore "the People's Edition" of the Life of THE DUKE passes out of my hands without any misgivings or hesitation on my part; first, because I persuade myself that "the people" will certainly read it; and, next, because I feel that there is not a man among them "so high, so low, so rich, so poor, but that he will be benefited by the exercise, if it only stimulate him to follow in all things, as the great duke did before him, the guiding star of duty through life."

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ARTHUR DUKAKIS  
WELLINGTON  
BY G. R. GLEIG

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# THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

## CHAPTER I

### HIS PEDIGREE AND EARLY LIFE

ARTHUR, first Duke of Wellington, was the fourth son of Garret, first Earl of Mornington, by the eldest daughter of Arthur Hill, Viscount Dungannon. He derived his descent from Walter Colley, or Cowley, a Rutlandshire Esquire, who settled in the county of Kilkenny, during the reign of Henry VIII., and a descendant of whom, Richard Colley, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, took the name of Wesley in consequence of his adoption by Garret Wesley of Westmeath, who had married his aunt and made him his heir.

The first rather noticeable incident in the history of the great duke occurs, therefore, so to speak, previously to his birth. A Colley by right of lineage, he becomes a Wesley by adoption, a name which is subsequently changed to Wellesley, though at what precise time, and for what special reason, there is nothing on record to show.

Richard Colley Wesley, after sitting for a while in the Irish House of Commons, was raised to the peerage, and became Baron Mornington of the kingdom of Ireland. His eldest son, Garret, succeeded him in the title and in his estates, and was advanced in 1759 to the dignity of an earldom. But this elevation in rank brought with it no addition to his fortunes, which, on the contrary, he appears to have considerably reduced by electioneering and other extravagances. Garret, first Earl of Mornington, distinguished himself as a musician, and became the composer of many chants, anthems, and glees, which have been much admired. It is said of him also that he was a good deal addicted to political intrigue. This may or may not have been the case, but if it were, one thing is certain, that, so far as his own interest was concerned, he intrigued to little purpose; for he died in 1781, leaving a widow with nine children, in what

may fairly be described, looking to their social position, as very straitened circumstances.

The next curious circumstance which we are called upon to notice, in glancing over the career of the great Duke of Wellington, is this, that both the time and the place of his birth are hidden in obscurity. The register book of the parish of St. Peter in Dublin would make it appear that he was baptised in that parish on the 30th of April, 1769. An old Dublin newspaper states as a fact that he was born in the Irish capital, on the 3rd of April, whereas the woman who nursed his mother through her confinement always declared that his birth occurred on the 6th of March, at Dangan Castle, in the county of Westmeath. This latter assumption was formally taken up and affirmed by a vote of the Irish House of Commons; yet what avail even votes of parliament when people are determined not to be controlled by them? The late duke's mother persistently asserted that her son Arthur was born on the 1st of May. The duke himself kept the 1st of May as his birthday; but neither mother nor son, as far as I have been able to discover, ever decided the question of place between Dublin and Dangan. We are thus thrown upon conjecture in reference to points which, though not perhaps of much importance in themselves, become important through their connection with one who was destined in after life to fill so wide a page in history. Nor must I forget, while upon this subject, to point out that the same year brought into the world the two most remarkable men of their age, whether as warriors or as politicians: Napoleon Buonaparte, and Arthur, Duke of Wellington.

Few tales, and none of them very important, are told of the childhood and early youth of the latter of these heroes. Childhood and early youth were stages in the duke's existence of which he seldom spoke; and never except abruptly, and as it were by accident. But enough escaped him from time to time to show that he did not look back upon them with much pleasure. There is reason to believe that, from some cause or another, he was not a favourite with his mother till his great deeds in after life constrained her to be proud of him. She seems to have taken it into her head that he was the dunce of the family, and to have treated him, if not harshly, with marked neglect; and being herself a woman of great ability and strength of character, she gave the law in this as in other respects to her own household. While the utmost pains were taken with the education

of his brothers, Arthur was sent, being very young, to a preparatory school in Chelsea, where he learned little, and to which the only references which he was ever known to make were the reverse of flattering. Where this school stood, and who was at the head of it, would have probably remained to the end of time unknown, had not the publication of a former edition of this work attracted the attention of a gentleman, whose father happened to be a fellow-pupil of the great duke at the school in question. He kindly wrote to me on the subject, inclosing a communication from his father, from which I learn that the school in question was kept by a Mr. Brown, that it was not an expensive establishment, and that "Lord Wellesley called upon Arthur Wesley one day, and gave him a shilling." A shilling tip to a schoolboy betokens no superabundance of this world's wealth in the donor, and the donor on the present occasion was Arthur's elder brother.

From the Chelsea school, young Wesley was transferred to Eton, where he remained only long enough to make his way into the remove. He was indifferently instructed when he arrived, and he never by such diligence as the case required succeeded in taking a good place among his class-fellows. His habits, on the contrary, in school and out of school, are stated to have been those of a dreamy, idle, and shy lad. The consequence was, that besides achieving no success as a scholar, he contracted few special intimacies among his contemporaries, and laid the foundation of no lasting friendships. His was indeed a solitary life; a life of solitude in a crowd; for he walked generally alone, often bathed alone, and seldom took part either in the cricket matches or the boat-races which were then, as they are now, in great vogue among Etonians. As was to be expected, after he attained to eminence, attempts were occasionally made to connect these habits with an imagination so busy in devising schemes for the future as to leave the boy neither time nor inclination to live, like other boys, in the present. And in corroboration of this theory, a tradition still survives, that when he took his sons to Eton he showed them a tree, amid the branches of which he had laid out, as upon a map, the whole of his own military career. But this is a mere romance founded upon an entire misconception of the character of the man. It is in direct contradiction likewise to the history of his life, for we have good reason to believe that, had the choice of a profession been left to him, he would not have selected the army. It is therefore simply impossible that visions of military glory

could have filled his mind to the exclusion of other and more pressing subjects, while as yet the career which he might be called upon to run was uncertain, and his own wishes pointed in a direction opposite to that on which in due time he entered.

There seems some reason to believe that Arthur Wesley, though dreamy and reserved, was, as a boy, of rather a combative disposition. He fought at least one battle at Eton, and had for his opponent Robert, better known as Bobus Smith, the elder brother of the witty Canon of St. Paul's. It happened one day that while Smith was bathing in the Thames, young Wesley passed by, and, child-like, threw a small stone or clod at the swimmer. A threat to come ashore and thrash him if the insult were repeated, led, as a matter of course, to its repetition; and Smith, being as good as his word, scrambled up the bank and attacked the culprit. The blow thus received was immediately returned, and a sharp contest ensued, which ended after a few rounds in favour of him who on that occasion had certainly not the right upon his side. But Wesley did not always come off victorious from such encounters.

He was in the habit of spending some of his holidays with his maternal grandfather, Lord Dungannon, at Brynkinalt, in North Wales. Here he managed to establish both a friendship and a feud with a young blacksmith, from whom, though not till both had suffered severe punishment, he received on one occasion a sound thrashing. The victor in that fight, whose name was Hughes, and who died in 1849, at an advanced age, used to tell the story with extreme glee. He was very proud of having beaten the man before whom Napoleon and all his generals went down; and never forgot to end his narrative by observing "that Master Wesley bore him not a pin's worth of ill-will for the beating, but made him his companion in many a wild ramble after the fight, just as he had done before."

On the death of her husband, Lady Mornington removed to London, where she struggled for a while to keep her place in society, upon a jointure which was by no means equal to the strain. The strain became however too great in the end, and she withdrew her son Arthur from Eton, and carrying him to Brussels, took up her abode, in 1784, at the house of a French avocat, named Goubert. There accompanied them to Brussels a youth of about the same age with Arthur, John Armytage by name, the second son of a rich Yorkshire baronet, between whom and Lord Mornington a friendship had subsisted for many years. It was an arrangement which, whether designedly or not,

proved of mutual advantage both to Lady Mornington and John Armytage; for the former received a handsome board with the son of her husband's friend, and the latter enjoyed the prestige of Lady Mornington's protection.

Arthur Wesley and John Armytage thus brought together, pursued their studies in a desultory way under the gentleman at whose house they lodged. They were neither of them much given to hard work, but they mixed in the gaieties of the place, and, if I may judge from Mr. Armytage's MS. Journal, lived with each other on the best terms. "Arthur Wesley," says the document in question, "was extremely fond of music, and played well upon the fiddle, but he never gave indication of any other species of talent. As far as my memory serves, there was no intention then of sending him into the army; his own wishes, if he had any, were in favour of a civilian's life."

Having touched upon the early acquaintance of these two men, it may not be amiss if I show in this place how it went off for a season, and how it came to be renewed. After residing for about a year at Brussels, Lady Mornington returned home, sending her son to the military school at Angers. John Armytage was at the same time appointed to a cornetcy in the Blues, with which regiment he continued to serve till marriage with an heiress enabled him to retire from the army and to settle as a country gentleman in or near Northampton. There he gave himself up to such pursuits as were in those days fashionable among men of his class. He hunted, shot, drove four-in-hand, and patronised the turf, being a regular attendant, among other meets, at Doncaster races. It happened one day in 1827, when he stood upon the grand stand beside the race-course, that a voice which struck him as not unfamiliar, exclaimed, "I'll be d—d if that isn't Jack Armytage." Jack immediately turned round, and found himself face to face with his old companion and fellow-student of other days. There was a cordial grip of hands, followed by questions as to what each had been doing since they parted forty-two years before. "You know pretty well what I've been about," said the duke, "but how have you employed yourself all the while?" "Well, sir," replied Mr. Armytage, "while your grace has been driving Buonaparte and his marshalls up and down, and all over France, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium, I have been driving four-in-hand almost every day from Northampton to Barnet and back again.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He used to meet the mail regularly in its course up and down, and handled the ribbons.



Yours has been the more glorious career of the two, but mine I suspect has not been the least agreeable." The duke laughed, and went on to speak about Louis Goubert their tutor, adding this anecdote: "As I rode into Brussels the day after the battle of Waterloo, I passed the old house, and recognised it, and pulling up, ascertained that the old man was still alive. I sent for him, and recalling myself to his recollection, shook hands with him, and assured him that for old acquaintance' sake he should be protected from all molestation."

Mr. Armytage, who never wearied of describing this little scene, died at Northampton, in 1861, at the advanced age of ninety-two. It does not appear that the duke and he ever met afterwards. They took leave of each other on the grand stand at Doncaster, equally resolved to renew their intimacy elsewhere; but their courses in life lay wide apart, and in politics they differed. How far this latter circumstance may have tended to keep them asunder, must be left to conjecture. All that is certainly known on the subject amounts to this, that their first and last greeting, subsequently to their Brussels' intimacy of 1785, began and ended as has just been described.

I should be glad, if I possessed the requisite information, to give some account of the duke's manner of life while a pupil in the military school at Angers. If any memorials of him were ever established there, the avalanche of the first French Revolution must have swept them all away. But none would appear to have been set up. His early friends, of whom not one now survives, used indeed to say that he made better use of his time at Angers than he had done either at Chelsea or Eton, and he himself stated that he formed some agreeable acquaintances in the neighbourhood, from whom he learned to speak French with the accent and precision of the days of the old monarchy. But here our materials for narrative fail us. We know nothing more than that he pursued his studies at Angers for about a year and a half or two years, and then returned home.

Arthur Wesley entered the army on the 7th of March, 1787, on which day he was appointed to an ensigncy in the 41st regiment of foot. On the 25th of the following December he became a lieutenant. That he was still a shy and awkward lad, in whom the fair sex, in particular, saw nothing to admire, the following anecdote, for the authenticity of which the late Lady Aldborough is responsible, seems to prove. He was at a ball one night, and as usual could not find a partner. Inheriting his father's taste for music, he consoled himself by sitting



down near the band, which happened to be a remarkably good one. By and by the party broke up, when the other officers present were taken home by their lady friends, while young Wesley was by common consent left to travel with the fiddlers. Old Lady Aldborough on one occasion put the duke in mind of the circumstance, after he had become a great man, at which he laughed heartily, while she added with naïveté, "We should not leave you to go home with the fiddlers now."

Mr. Wesley attained the rank of captain on the 30th of June, 1791, and on the 30th of April, 1793, he was appointed to the 33rd regiment of the line as major. His subsequent promotion was rapid, for on the 30th of September he obtained the lieutenant-colonelcy of his regiment. He then fell into the seniority groove, from which, in those days, no one could escape; and spent in consequence half as many years in the rank of lieutenant-colonel as had been required to raise him to that rank from an ensigncy. Colonel in 1796, he became major-general in 1802, and general with local rank in 1811. His last and final step to field-marshal was taken in 1812, under circumstances which shall be more fully detailed when the proper time comes.

Though Mr. Wesley owed his rapid advancement partly to political influence and partly to money, and though it be perfectly true that till he arrived at the command of a regiment no opportunity was afforded him of earning distinction in the field, a very erroneous inference will be drawn if it be assumed that because he had been so successful, he was therefore an ignorant or even a careless regimental officer. The very reverse is the fact. He never neglected a duty, or went through with it as if it were irksome to him. He read a great deal, in a desultory way no doubt, but still to good purpose; and he addicted himself from the outset to a habit which remained with him to the last, that of acquainting himself in all manner of odd ways with everything worthy of notice which passed around him. No exhibition of a new discovery, no display of ingenuity or skill, however absurdly applied, failed to number him among its investigators, and he was not only quick in calculating and drawing inferences, but took special delight in both practices. I have often heard him say that the power of rapid and correct calculation was his forte, and that if circumstances had not made him what he was, he would probably have become distinguished in public life as a financier.

Mr. Wesley still lacked a month or two of completing his