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WELLINGTON THE BEAU

The Life and Loves of the Duke of Wellington

PATRICK DELAFORCE

Wellington the Beau

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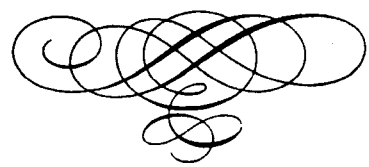
Wellington the Beau

THE LIFE AND LOVES OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON



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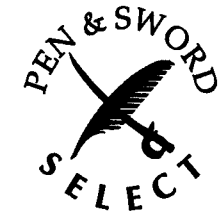

To Jill

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INTRODUCTION

The day after he had been gazetted Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley rode on a white horse into Paris, dressed modestly in a plain blue frock-coat and wearing a round top hat.

By May 1814 his fame as the conqueror of all the French armies in Portugal, Spain and southern France had made him a hero to the British public. Admired and envied by one sex, he was shortly to be courted and loved by the other.

During his long life he earned many nicknames. His veterans referred to him as 'Arty' or 'Atty', even 'Nosey' for obvious reasons. His Iberian officers called him the 'Peer' and sometimes 'Old Douro' after his audacious crossing of that river. To the Spaniards he was known as the 'Eagle', and later on his favourite niece's children would call him 'Dukey'. His two closest women friends were later to refer to him as the 'Magician'. The public, for a variety of reasons, would eventually name him the 'Iron Duke'. But many of his close friends in the army and in the 'bon ton' had already christened him 'Beau'. During the Peninsular campaign an excited Guards officer early one morning rushed into army HQ asking 'Has anyone seen Beau Douro?' A recumbent figure on the ground swathed in a black boat-cloak rose quickly and replied, 'Well! by God, I never knew I was a Beau before!'

The definition of a beau is that of a man who is either a fop, a ladies' man or a lover. Wellington certainly was not a fop.

His mother, Anne Hill, the Countess of Mornington, was mainly instrumental in forming his attitudes to the opposite sex. She was a lady of strong character with high principles and a very strict sense of duty. She treated her younger son Arthur (Richard was the more brilliant eldest son) as dunce of the family. According to Sir Herbert Maxwell, the Duke's earliest biographer, Arthur annoyed his mother with 'his slow thick speech and dull manner which gave him an air of stupidity'.

His father Garret Wesley, 1st Earl of Mornington, died when the boy was aged twelve, and a few years later his mother is reported (by Sir

Herbert Maxwell again) as having said 'I vow to God I don't know what I shall do with my awkward son Arthur, he was food for powder and nothing more.' Not content with this, she wrote of him in 1787 when, aged 18, he had proudly shown her his first scarlet army jacket, 'Arthur has put on his red coat for the first time today. Anyone can see he has not the cut of a soldier!'

No wonder he grew up with very distinct views on women!

What did the Beau look like? Many portraits have been painted of him by John Hoppner, Robert Home, Francisco Goya, by Lady Burghersh (his niece), Sir Thomas Lawrence and others. In addition there are several very detailed descriptions of his physique. He had a robust frame with broad shoulders, strong chest, long arms and a height of 5 foot, 10 inches. He rode considerable distances, hunted into his seventies and walked in the parks and countryside, often with an elegant lady on his arm. His long-sighted eyes were a dark violet blue-grey colour and were often described as 'piercing'. He had a long grave face in repose, with a not very high forehead, straight and prominent eyebrows, a long Roman nose (responsible for one nickname), a broad underjaw and a strongly marked chin. His hair was plentiful, curly and black in his youth, cropped short for his campaign, and went white as silver in his old age without a trace of baldness. He had a loud booming distinct laugh and was always quick to take or exchange a joke or anecdote.

On campaign he wore a blue or grey frock-coat, a cocked hat covered with oilskin and grey 'trowsers'. He had several cloaks; grey, for nightwork and sleeping rough. His low cocked hat rarely had a plume. The boots known as 'Wellingtons' were his own invention: outside his trousers he wore gaiters of strong leather which overlapped and were fastened with straps and buckles. He rarely wore a sash except on the occasions of reviews and balls when he wore his full red uniform with decorations. He preferred to wear the Order of the Garter under his left knee, the Golden Fleece suspended round his neck, and seldom wore his full collection of ribbons, medals and orders.

He kept to simple and severe habits; rising early, retiring late, eating very little and drinking still less, which was quite remarkable in his time and age. Arthur Wellesley spent most of the years of his youth from 27 to 36 campaigning in India, and in the Iberian Peninsula, aged 39 to 45, so that it was as a middle-aged man that he took the hearts of the beautiful ladies in London and Paris by storm. The magnetism of this handsome conqueror even affected Bonaparte's mistresses, although all remarked on his simple modesty, at odds with his military fame. No matter where he went – to India, to Portugal, to Spain, to France and

Belgium and back in England – it was the young, beautiful, *married* ladies who succumbed.

'Colonel Wellesley had at that time a very susceptible heart particularly towards . . . married ladies.' After his romantic conquest of Brussels and Paris he was asked if he had received much female adulation and he answered honestly 'Oh yes! Plenty of that! Plenty of that!'

Throughout his life he kept portraits of his '*inamorata*' in his office or study wherever that happened to be. In Apsley House a portrait of pretty Mrs Freese once had pride of place. In Paris Wellington kept portraits of Napoleon's ladies (now *his* ladies) on view: the singer La Grassini as well as a print of Pauline Borghese (Napoleon's youngest and most beautiful sister), with ironically the Pope in the centre, presumably keeping the peace. Portraits of the American Mrs Patterson and the lovely Lady Charlotte Greville were also to be seen by those privileged to penetrate into the Duke's private sanctuary at Stratfield Saye – but pride of place was later given to Harriet Fane, Mrs Arbuthnot, with whom the Duke had his longest and most steadfast relationship of all. It is clear that the Wellesley family marital relationships were usually, if not always, disastrous!

Richard Wellesley, later Lord Wellesley and the Earl of Mornington, lived for many years with a beautiful French actress-courtesan named Gabrielle Rolland who bore him five children. He eventually married her and then commenced a series of notorious affairs with the courtesans, Harriette Wilson and Moll (also known as Sally Douglas). His second and final marriage in 1825 to his brother's early and long-lasting flame Marianne Patterson née Caton, infuriated the Duke beyond measure.

The other brothers fared little better. Henry and Gerald Wellesley had each married daughters of Lord Cadogan who were, in turn to desert them.

When Wellington was in Paris at the height of his fame as the conqueror of Waterloo, the whole city was at his feet but Madame de Staël, who in the last three years of her life came to know the Duke very well, wrote 'Never has God created a great man with less expenditure . . . he has "*pas de coeur pour l'amour*".' Lady Granville wrote in June 1817:

> The Duke of Wellington in Paris with neither love nor hatred to display, his wife being at Cambray and his loves dispersed over the earth so '*il se laisse admirer*' as a great hero with very simple unaffected manners.

Spring

Chapter One

A YOUNG MAN IN IRELAND

1769 was a vintage year for heroes.

The most famous pair of protagonists the world has ever seen were born in that year: a Corsican called Napoleon Bonaparte, and in the Anglo-Irish society of Dublin, young Arthur Wesley. The former shot like a meteor to fame, to immense power, and finally fell to ignominious defeat, captivity and isolation on a small Atlantic island. The latter, a very slow starter indeed, climbed steadily and tenaciously to middle-aged military fame. But, unlike Napoleon, the future Prince of Waterloo, went on climbing until he was entrenched in British folklore as the Iron Duke, the Peer, the Dandy, Nosey, Old Douro and the Beau. To the end of his long distinguished life the Duke of Wellington was loved by many beautiful ladies, by dozens of small children and, after Waterloo, was respected throughout Europe as a professional politician and diplomat.

Arthur Wesley was born on May Day at No. 5 Merrion Street, Dublin. He was the sixth child (the first Arthur and the first William had already died) of cultured and distinctly non-military parents. His father was the eccentric Garret Wesley, Lord Mornington, who, for a gentleman, was a remarkably good musician and amateur architect. Mornington had married Anne Hill in 1759, the strong-minded eldest daughter of the future Lord Dungannon.

Young Arthur was born and bred an aristocrat among the essentially frivolous Anglo-Irish society. The young sprigs of gentry and nobility raced their horses, drank their claret, hunted, danced and gambled. They went to balls, concerts and genteel picnics against a background of rural poverty, impoverished tenant farmers and a great deal of urban misery. The barons, privy councillors, bishops, members of the Irish parliament, and the untrained non-military young captains, majors and colonels lived off rents, mortgaged their Palladian-style mansions, follies and temples in their estates – and lived for the morrow. It was a thoroughly irresponsible and amusing life.

One aspect of this cheerful upbringing was that young Arthur, when he grew out of his moody introspective adolescence, became the boisterous centre of social activity wherever he went, whether he was campaigning in India or the Peninsular, or taking part in the sophisticated lifestyle of society in Paris, Brussels, Vienna, Madrid and later in London. Although he had but one sister and an unfriendly mother his formative years in Dublin society taught him how to behave with the Fair Sex. He was able to talk to them, to flirt, to dance with them, and to behave in a courteous, civilised manner. Many contemporary diarists noted how frequently he was 'in good spirits' and how his loud characteristic laugh boomed above the jollity and the chit-chat of society.

The Wesley family had a town house in Dublin and a sumptuous mansion known as Dangan Castle set in an estate with lakes, ponds, trees and follies. So although money flowed for the Wesley parents and for their beloved first-born Richard it was less plentiful further down the line – and became even more so – on Lord Mornington's death when Arthur was twelve. To the fourth surviving child, the 'dunce' of the family, came curtailment of his time at public school, no prospects of university, only second-rate tutoring, temporary exile (with his mother in Brussels), a rather time-wasting year in France and, above all, little money for purchase of army rankings. Young officers were rarely promoted on account of efficiency or by luck – progress depended on deployment of capital. No capital meant no promotion. Of course, once above a certain rank battles won meant promotion, honours, grants of money and often loot.

Arthur's education had been undistinguished. The Diocesan School at Trim near Dublin which was known as Talbot's Castle, was followed by a short spell at a preparatory school called Brown's establishment in Chelsea. He entered Eton in 1781, the year his eccentric father died and Richard succeeded to the title as Lord Mornington. Outshone by all his brothers, including the two young ones, Arthur was removed in 1784 from Nayler's house to allow the scanty family funds to be deployed on Gerald and Henry. A few months followed with a tutor in Brighton, before the impoverished Lady Mornington whisked him away to Brussels for a year. Arthur had learned little at any of his schools, and he learned nothing in Brussels apart from a little French language and some violin playing. He made few friends at any of his schools – perhaps he was not at any one of them long enough to nourish friendships. He played no games – no cricket, no fives. This sad, lonely and forlorn child was seen to observe but never to participate. Derided as 'awkward and

backward' by his family, his mother and eldest brother decided arbitrarily that he was not worth spending money on to keep him at school. In class Wesley major (Arthur) was classified in 53rd place, and Wesley minor (Gerald) a year or so younger sat in 54th place (out of 79).

Trivial anecdotes abound about Arthur's schooldays. He was seen to be 'lounging and watching'. He engaged in fisticuffs with 'Bobus' Smith at Eton (and won) and with a young blacksmith (and lost). He was seen jumping over a wide black, boggy ditch. He played childlike tricks in various gardens. Later he reminisced about the maids at Eton, and was quoted as making up a laborious jape about a mythical elopement. Nothing of consequence emerged from his schooldays.

In later life he admitted to his biographer Glieg, that he had been a 'dreamy, idle and shy lad' who refused to take part in any games and he was observed as being 'quiet, dejected and observant.' His inertia was partly due to ill-health, throughout his life he was subject to heavy colds, and in his campaigning days in India and the Peninsula he suffered from rheumatism, lumbago and ague. As his frame grew in height and weight, he remained spare and lean. He dismissed his frequent illness as 'something to be got the better of.' The subject of health was to become of great importance to him, because without healthy soldiers in his armies, he would lose battles. The care and cleanliness of his soldiers' feet and legs was vital – no marching soldiers, no campaigns.

Once he laboured through the difficult stages of adolescence his energy grew apace. Soon he was able to ride up to a hundred miles a day and was to hunt all his life. His shooting was haphazard although his eyesight was superb until his late seventies but his hearing suffered in later life due to a remarkably stupid ear-surgeons's treatment. He ate sparingly and in a hard drinking era, drank relatively little. He believed in unusual medicaments such as vinegar rubbing to stimulate the limbs. In short he took as much care of himself and his troops as was compatible with the everyday risks (riding in the rain for five hours, bivouacing in the open on a windswept slope). His tall strong figure on his horse 'Copenhagen' looming on the horizon was worth ten thousand, twenty thousand, or more, troops in a tight-run battle. In the field his stamina and tenacity became proverbial. He needed but a few hours sleep each night and his energy taxed the resources of officers and men half his age.

After a year of inactivity at Brussels with his mother chez M. Louis

Goubert, it was decided '*faute de mieux*' that her awkward son 'food for powder and nothing more' should be speeded on his way to a military career. In the late nineteenth century there were no military colleges such as Sandhurst. Provided a gentleman could ride and occasionally charge, then he was thought to be perfectly suited to become an officer. So in 1786, to Angers on the Loire went 'Young Arthur' to attend the Royal Academy of Equitation. With a Scots governor by his side (later to become General Sir A. Mackenzie), with several boon companions (Messrs Walsh, Fortescue and Wingfield), and under a degree of supervision from the director, Marquis Marcel de Pignerolle, the seventeen-year-old youth was set to work. His riding skills were polished up. He became a hard-riding, practical and ungraceful horseman, which was to stand him in great stead in the next twenty years. He took lessons in fencing, basic mathematics and dancing. But he was still ill and listless much of the time, playing rather defensively with his small dog Vick. His allowance must have been very small but he and his friends gambled for small stakes under the eye of Madame de Pignerolle. The 'groupe des lords', as the Wesley group were called (there were 116 British students out of the 334 youths at the Academy), were encouraged to meet the local society. In their pretty uniforms of scarlet coats, sky-blue facings and yellow buttons, the cadets were an amusing *divertissement* for the Dukes of Praslin and Brissac and their ladies. Arthur met and liked the Duchesse of Sabran (and greeted her most warmly in Paris no less than twenty-eight years later). The storming of the barricades at the Bastille was three years ahead and some of the Angers gentry, including the Duc de Brissac and M. de Pignerolle went to the guillotine.

There are conflicting views on Arthur's performance at Angers during 1786. M. de Pignerolle claimed that his Irish '*pensionnaire*' had promise. His governor Mr Mackenzie remembered him as lacking in physical endurance. Later as general he ventured to ask Arthur, after Waterloo, to explain the great change that had occurred in that period. 'Ah, that is India' was the answer, referring to the hundreds of miles ridden and marched on dusty plains under hot skies fighting not only Indian armies but also constant disease, illness and alcoholic hospitality.

The Beau was growing up although he had made few friends at Angers and learned nothing of military techniques. Later he was described as speaking the language '*bravement*', the way he fought the French.

On his return to London at the end of 1786 his mother noticed him at the Haymarket Theatre. 'I do believe there is my ugly boy Arthur,' she is quoted as saying of him. Richard promptly solicited a commission for

him from the Duke of Rutland, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Richard described his young brother as 'perfectly idle . . . it is a *matter of indifference* to me what commission he gets, provided he gets it soon.' The relationship between the two brothers is perfectly illustrated by this request. The Wesley family managed to purchase for his eighteenth birthday the first step in what was destined to be a famous career. Not that the position of ensign in the 73rd Highland Regiment, then serving in India, was much to boast of! Richard had previously declined for him a commission in the artillery, possibly because mathematics were known not to be one of Arthur's strong points. Wellington's formidable rival to-be across the Channel was coincidentally being commissioned into the French artillery.

Richard was now twenty-seven and had been given a seat on the English Board of Treasury. He and Lady Mornington had persuaded his temporary patron Lord Buckingham, the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to take young Arthur on as one of his ADCs for ten shillings a day. Arthur was thus gazetted lieutenant in the 76th Regiment (the Highlanders in India were forgotten) on Christmas Day 1787. By now his total income was £300 per annum, just sufficient for a young blade to support himself. There is no doubt that Richard as head of the family was taking his duties towards the younger children seriously. Sister Anne was being 'finished' for society and groomed for marriage in two years' time. The younger boys were still at Eton and Richard, despite his French mistress and children, found the money for their school fees. And yet another military transfer took place in the New Year to the 41st Foot to enable Arthur *not* to go on service to the East Indies. *Mirabile dictu* Lady Mornington had decided that her eighteen-year-old son was now presentable.

> I must do everything for him . . . as he is really a very charming young man, never did I see such a change for the better in any body, he is wonderfully lucky, in six months he has got two steps in the army and appointed Aid de Camp to Lord Buckingham which is ten shillings a day.

Moreover his mother's eccentric friends at Llangollen described him as 'a charming young man. Handsome, fashioned, tall and elegant.'

The viceregal court in Dublin taught Arthur all he needed to know about Society. He fetched and carried for Lord Buckingham and the vicereine; ordered their supper and tidied up after their guests. He attended many parties, rode, danced at St Patrick's Hall, gambled, and predictably was soon in debt. There was some time for reading, which enabled him to catch up with part of his lost education. He had time to

play the violin. Richard's patronage was repaid by some estate business and management in Ireland. He exchanged yet again into the Twelfth Dragoons – a rather smarter regiment.

Several anecdotes survive from this period. One young lady refused to go on a picnic if Arthur 'that mischievous boy' was also included. Not listless now! Another beauty, Lady Aldborough, was bored with him at a ball, abandoned him to the musicians and went home with another beau called Cradock. Arthur was living on Lower Ormond Quay and was probably behind with his rent since his landlord, a friendly bootmaker, kept his more pressing creditors at bay.

Mrs St George, a notable journal-keeper, was loaned Dangan Castle for her honeymoon and wrote of Arthur that he was 'extremely good humoured,' and the object of much attention from the female part of what was called 'a very gay society'. He was fined for brawling with a Frenchman. Colonel George Napier thought he had the makings of a great general but other Napiers disagreed and thought him a 'shallow saucy stripling'. A visitor to Dangan Castle found him reading 'an Essay Concerning Human Understanding' by Locke. Arthur became a freemason of the Trim Lodge No. 494, County Meath and thought and talked about local politics. Richard had been an MP since 1784 and younger brother William, now aged twenty-six, was found an English seat. Mr Henry Grattan, the great Irish orator, praised Dublin's first *independent* parliament and criticised the British aristocracy entrenched at the castle who fought to keep the *status quo*. In March 1790 Arthur made his first political speech in Trim and lambasted Mr Grattan before an audience of eighty. Richard wrote approvingly from Westminster and when the Irish parliament dissolved that spring Arthur was returned for Trim which was a good safe Westminster-sponsored seat. Next year he was promoted to command a company in the 58th Foot in the Irish establishment but soon exchanged into the 18th Light Dragoons. His life was very much of a pattern. On duty at the castle, living in Grafton Street, rare speeches in the House of Commons, managing the mortgaged Dangan Castle estates to provide part of Richard's income. Music and concerts (he still played the violin), riding, walks for wagers, occasional hunting, dances and balls and picnics. An ideal life for a young man without a care in the world and little thought for the morrow. One doubts whether the French Revolution conjured up possible thoughts of war. Arthur just changed one handsome scarlet uniform for another.

In 1792 France was in turmoil and had become a republic. The family mansion at Dangan Castle was for sale. Richard was spreading his wings

in Westminster, making his way under William Pitt. The young ADC was now twenty-three and had just met a pretty young woman called Kitty Pakenham.

Chapter Two

Pakenham Hall on the outskirts of Castlepollard is sixty miles due west of Dublin. It had been the home of the Longford family for over three centuries. 'Lady Longford's Lily' was the sobriquet for the Hon. Catherine Dorothea Sarah Pakenham, one of the belles of Dublin in 1792. She was the second child of the 2nd Baron Longford, an Anglo-Irish Royal Naval landowner. Her mother was born Catherine Rowley, a strong-willed Protestant lady related to the Edgeworths, so that young Catherine, or Kitty, grew up with young Maria Edgeworth, destined to become an author of repute. The Longfords were a family of substance and they expected, indeed demanded, that their daughters married men of equal substance.

Kitty was born in 1772 and was three years younger than Arthur Wesley, she was an attractive girl: small, slim, with grey eyes and a lovely rosy complexion, who soon became one of the Dublin beauties. Maria Edgeworth, her closest friend, was also small, but darker, perhaps more intellectual and less attractive. Both girls were lively and gossipy and enjoyed reading and painting, but Kitty was more religious, wrote poems in a romantic style, and her generosity to the needy was praiseworthy. Like most Anglo-Irish families the Pakenhams and the Wesleys were connected by marriage. The two families owned town houses in Dublin and Dangan Castle was halfway between Pakenham Hall and Dublin so that it was inevitable that the 'Longford Lily' would meet Arthur Wesley, the dashing young ADC to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Indeed they probably met, and possibly played together as children at Summerhill, home of her cousins the Langfords, adjacent to Dangan Castle.

Although Arthur Wesley and Kitty Pakenham met and soon fell in

love the auspices were unfavourable. The young man now a captain in the 58th Foot and local member of parliament for Trim, was on the face of it a reasonable match. They had at that stage many friends, family and interests in common, including music, and perhaps even books and literature. She was certainly one of the most attractive young women at the Dublin Castle revelries. Unfortunately her brother Tom was dead set against any understanding. On Tom's grandmother's death he was due to become an earl, and he made it clear that a debt-ridden captain of the Foot with no prospects was no match for his sister. Nevertheless, Arthur persisted and made an official proposal for Kitty's hand in the spring of 1793. The penniless captain was soon refused by the family and he was given a homily by Kitty's father. In those days the girl's feelings were rarely considered and Lord Longford and his son Tom next turned down Arthur as a captain in the 18th Light Dragoons, then as a major and finally as a lieutenant-colonel in the 33rd Foot. Richard had been quite easily persuaded to pay for these new promotions during the year. Kitty's brother was a major at seventeen and friends of Arthur's were colonels at twenty-one since no military skill was needed, just money and influence.

In January 1793 Arthur made a speech in the Dublin parliament in which he defended Lord Westmorland the viceroy, deplored the imprisonment of Louis XVI and the invasion of the Netherlands by the French. Prime Minister Pitt said there would be peace for fifteen years. The next month the French king was dead and France declared war on England, and Arthur rather half-heartedly started his military career in earnest. He burned his violin and vowed to give up or reduce his gambling at cards, he even set aside a couple of hours a day for study. News of the Terror in France swept England. His future friend Madame de Staël was one of the refugees from Paris to escape the 'September massacres', but his French acquaintances in Angers perished. Danton rallied, Marat died and Captain Bonaparte soldiered with his battery of guns at Avignon.

The young man of twenty-four was described by Sir Jonah Barrington the lawyer and wit as being of 'juvenile appearance and unpolished address but frank, open-hearted and popular'. His occasional speeches in parliament were not successful and rarely on important subjects. Rejected by the Pakenham family Arthur drifted along. He drilled his men of the 33rd Foot and made an efficient job of the regimental accounts. He asked brother Richard to request Prime Minister Pitt and Lord Westmorland to put him in the flank corps (to see some action) for the proposed military campaign to Flanders.

The protocol of the day insisted that the suitor, once rejected, could not continue to make visits to Pakenham Hall and pay court, so as to leave the coast clear for other possible swains. Tom Pakenham and his mother bullied timid little Kitty in this way. Letters between the two were officially proscribed! Arthur was still ADC at the castle and continued to meet Kitty, almost certainly chaperoned, at balls and other festivities. The viceroy, Lord Westmorland, rather approved of Arthur's attempted match.

For Kitty the year of 1793 must have been the most traumatic in her life. The horrors in Paris and the awful final chapter for the French royal family must have been the first shock. Shortly after Lord Longford's refusal to allow her courtship by Arthur to continue, her father died. Despite the parties and balls for her twenty-first birthday another tragedy loomed. She was a great favourite of her grandmother Elizabeth, Countess of Longford, who died in January 1794, and the countess had favoured a match between the two young lovers and with her death, Arthur's hopes receded. Just before the Duke of York took his famous 30,000 men to climb a hill in the flat Low Countries, Arthur wrote a despairing and final letter to Kitty. With his new rank and commanding an annual income of about £500 he made a second unsuccessful proposal to the implacable Tom Pakenham, now the earl, and his widowed mother.

> If this letter should reach you I hope you will impute my troubling you this second time to the fear I have that my first letter may have offended. It never was intended to offend and if any expression it contained could at all tend to give offence, I hope that the determination I have just received is, in your eyes, a sufficient punishment for a crime of much greater magnitude.
>
> As Lord Longford's determination is founded upon prudential motives and may be changed should my situation be altered before I return to Ireland, I hope you will believe that should anything occur which may induce you and him to change your minds, *my mind will remain the same*. In the meantime with best wishes for your happiness, believe me your most obedient servant A. Wesley.

So, Arthur on his way to his first campaign in Holland had committed himself, in his opinion, for ever. The 33rd Foot sailed in June and spent nineteen days at sea before reaching Ostend, where Arthur soon found himself commanding a brigade of three battalions. The Duke of York's little army and the Dutch troops now endeavoured to keep the French invaders at bay. It was an ignominious campaign. The French seized the

ports and after a series of minor actions at Boxtel, Nijmegen and Arnhem the British troops retreated through Germany and eventually re-embarked at Bremen in April 1795. Arthur had mildly distinguished himself in the Boxtel skirmish and learned a certain amount of the hardships of war in the long Dutch winter. Illness, disease, the winter ice and snow killed many more British troops than fell to French shot and bayonet. Back at HQ Prince Adolphus reported that 'the life was not the most amusing: we are however now pretty well off for girls and this renders it less tiresome!'

In rather cavalier fashion Arthur abandoned his regiment in Bremen, and when they were next stationed in Essex left them behind again. In the meantime his elder brother Richard had eventually made an honest women of his French mistress and married her in London. They had already produced five children and this scandalous relationship had shocked the rather prudish Pakenham family and further reduced Arthur's chances.

During 1795 Arthur spent his time mainly in Dublin, still as MP for Trim and ADC at the castle. He continued to make occasional speeches in parliament and from time to time visited London to see his brother Richard and ladies of the town. He soldiered half-heartedly with the remnants of his 33rd Foot, who had suffered heavily on the retreat from Holland to Germany the previous winter.

He met Kitty on many occasions at the usual festivities, dinners, theatres, concerts and balls, but the embargo remained on writing to her and visiting her at Pakenham Hall. In his frustration he decided to leave the army, and applied to the lord lieutenant and to Richard for a post in the Irish Revenue and Treasury Boards. After all he had made a good job of the regiment's account books – but he had no luck. He was not at all well that autumn and winter: unhappiness and frustration can be debilitating, and his strong physique was always prone to colds and fevers. Orders to sail to the West Indies with his regiment were thwarted by intense gales in November, December and January.

Shortly after the New Year of 1796 he was made full colonel of the 33rd and, although an invalid convalescing in Dublin in April, sailed for India in June. His regiment had already sailed and he expected to rejoin them at the Cape, having settled most of his debts and said farewell to his constituents at Trim. As the ill, unhappy and frustrated twenty-seven-year-old soldier sailed south, his Gallic rival across the Channel had already won spectacular victories at Lodi, Mentenotte and Mondovi.

And pretty little Kitty, the 'Longford Lily', was left behind in gay Dublin.

Chapter Three

'THAT IS ALL INDIA'

The young pink-faced bachelor left Portsmouth in the summer of 1796 on the S.S. *Rockingham* with a large library and high hopes. Nine years later he returned with a smaller, more frivolous library, a small fortune, loaded with honours and still a bachelor – a middle-aged bachelor. The innocent young colonel of the 33rd Foot returned as a 'Sepoy' general, a less innocent sun-tanned major-general, with the Order of the Bath and a different name. He went as Arthur Wesley and returned as the Hon. Sir Arthur Wellesley KB, the victor of Assaye and of half-a-dozen lesser battles. He also left behind several attractive young matrons who were most reluctant to see him depart. His first port of call *en route* for India was Cape Town. He was accompanied by a shrewd young officer called Captain George Elers of the 12th Regiment of Foot, who also kept an interesting diary.

Arthur Wesley was described as 'all life and spirits', a man about 5 foot 7 inches tall (he was in fact a few inches taller), with a long pale face, a remarkably large aquiline nose, a clear blue eye and the blackest beard necessitating two shaves a day. He was noted as extremely clean in his person and bearing a resemblance to the well-known actors John Philip Kemble and Charles Young.

Among his companions on board ship were two sisters, daughters of the second-in-command of the Madras Council. One of them, nineteen-year-old Miss Jemima Smith, was described as 'a most incorrigible flirt, very clever, gay, very satirical with a pretty little figure, lovely neck and bosom, who had made a conquest of the young Colonel Wesley'; her sister Miss Henrietta Smith, aged seventeen also had her charms.

George Elers, a very particular observer, noted in his diary that Arthur Wesley spoke very quickly with a very slight lisp. He had a very narrow jaw-bone, with a peculiarity in the shape of his ear similar to Lord Byron, the lobe of his ear uniting to the cheek, and a habit of pursing up his mouth when he was pleased and when he had been thinking abstractedly. Arthur had obviously told his junior shipmate that he had left debts behind in Dublin. A small tradesman in Dublin had been of great assistance to him with a loan of £500 – equivalent to

a year's pay – which on his arrival in India he duly repaid. Elers recounts how on his return to Dublin, Arthur walked into the tradesman's shop, a boot and shoemaker, and asked if the trader remembered him. 'No,' was the answer. 'Well can I be of service to you?' 'I want nothing for myself but I have a son . . .' 'Give me his name, you did me a kindness once and I do not forget it.' Arthur obtained the shoemaker's son a 'place' at £400 per annum. Elers was delighted with this anecdote which proved that the returning hero 'had a very tender and feeling heart.' Elers was a cousin of Maria Edgeworth but may not have been aware of Arthur's attachment to Kitty Pakenham.

The final half of the voyage, from September to mid-February 1797, was on the S.S. *Princess Charlotte* – a 'most tedious' voyage to Madras with no recorded ship-board romances. From Madras they sailed to Calcutta where another diarist was in residence. William Hickey was on the payroll of the East India Company – a *bon viveur*, interested in acquiring a fortune as soon as was convenient and to return to England as a rich Nabob.

The society in Calcutta was in many ways reminiscent of the Dublin Castle environment; the race meetings, supper parties, mess dinners, governor-general's levée, morning rides and social calls. But there was one main difference: the British in India were dominated by the male sex, of whom many were bachelors (like William Hickey), either on the make or in the midst of their career with John Company or the army. As a consequence there were few unattached ladies, and married ladies were very much in demand. The gallant young colonel of the 33rd Foot met many such married women, among them a Mrs Mitchell and wrote a letter to commend Captain Mitchell to Richard, Lord Mornington, who was soon to appear on the scene. He met Mrs Floyd ('to whom a thousand thanks') who arrived on Choultry Plain, Mrs Lewis, Mrs Walker and many others, and he was a wedding witness in 1798 to 'Belle' Johnstone's marriage.

The others included a certain Mrs Sturt, and we are indebted to Captain George Elers for this story. She was a beautiful woman on the establishment of a notorious madam living in Berkeley Street, London. The lady had married a Major William Ashley Sturt of the 80th Regiment. Attractive London courtesans frequently did make good matches. Mrs Sturt arrived at Madras in 1801 without a sixpence to her name. She knew Arthur Wesley who was then serving at a palace of Tipoo sahib's outside the fort of Seringapatam. She enquired his whereabouts on arrival and wrote to him – her old friend Wesley – who by return of post sent her a draft for £400. A few years earlier this had

represented a year's income. But then she was a very beautiful woman. George Elers noted in his diary that Arthur Wesley had a very susceptible heart, particularly

> I am sorry to say, married ladies and his pointed attention to Captain Macintire's young pretty wife gave offence not to her husband but to his ADC Captain West, who considered it highly immoral and indecorous.

The pale elegant ladies of Calcutta, according to Hickey, smoked cheroots with grace, went to theatres or, together with the colonel of the 33rd Foot, organised their own theatricals. The regimental messes produced lavish meals with the best of claret, Champagne, Madeira and brandy, followed by songs, catches and glees, billiards, horseplay and severe hangovers. The morning races helped to clear the officers' heads – after all there was no war on. They also played backgammon, known as trick-track, most mornings.

Arthur had few letters from Ireland and once went for a year without news. When Richard arrived in 1798 as governor-general and promptly changed the family name, to Wellesley, the pace of social '*ton*' grew more frenetic. Richard not only lived 'like a lord', he lived like a 'King-Emperor'. Nothing was spared, no expense omitted to ensure that his court was as near regal as money could make it. His cavalry bodyguard was increased four-fold to 300 men and two guns, and a year later to 400 men, two guns *and* a band with sentries everywhere.

There were three more ladies with whom Arthur Wellesley was involved at this time. The pretty young wife of Colonel Stevenson was to be seen daily in 1801 in the fashionable Dowlaut Baug in Calcutta. Arthur was in nearby Bombay and the lady's husband was commanding in Mysore during the governor's absence. She was presented with rose trees and vegetable plants such as cabbage and celery from Arthur who was now a keen gardener having realised the dietary value of green vegetables. He also stood godfather to Mrs Stevenson's son.

Amateur theatricals were taken very seriously. Arthur purchased for his account '1 Book plays', '8 plays', Schiller's *Robbers* and Davies' plays written for a private theatre. His reading reflected his interests at that time, French novels and the *Novelists Magazine*. Mrs Gordon of Bombay was another of Arthur's favourites. She was the wife of his paymaster and for a time the Gordons lived in Arthur's house while their own was being built. His correspondence from Chinchore during 1804 included requests for her to send pickled oysters at their best and safest, when the rains commenced.

> Don't send them by Coleman as he will eat more than his share before he reaches camp, nor by any of your great eaters or I shall get none of them. Tell Colonel Gordon (the lady's husband) that I see that all the offices of a subordinate Collector (of Taxes) in Malabar are filled up and that his brother in law has no chance. But as a recommendation from a Great Man is always a good thing, I wrote this day to Lord William Bentinck to recommend Captain Watson to him.

Mrs Gordon had had a tiff with the colonel because he had been too busy to pay her proper attention. Soon she wrote 'Since your absence, Seringapatam has not been half so gay, no dinner parties at least I have been at none'. Luckily the oysters were received and everybody liked them. Arthur continued:

> As for your susceptible youths, I consider three days full enough for them at Bombay particularly when I want them elsewhere. But whenever you have a mind to detain one of 'my champions' as you call them, you have my permission to do so, and I shall not be the 'Deaf Adder' of the reasons which you will give for detaining them, provided that you don't allow them to marry. After that they would not answer my purpose. We get on well, but we want you to enliven us. Allow me to prevail upon you. If you'll come I'll go and meet you with my servant at the top of the Ghaut, so that you will only have 24 miles to travel in a palanqueen. There is excellent galloping ground in the neighbourhood of camp and the floor of my tent is in a fine state for dancing and the fiddlers of the Dragoons and 78th, and the Bagpipes of the 74th play delightfully.

Later on he wrote from Bombay to Mrs Gordon of his 'great dinners daily, sufficiency of dances together with the general's (i.e. himself) gallant wishes for her return to Bombay in high health and beauty, to be again its ornament.' He was godfather to her child born in 1802.

Towards the end of his stay in India, he sat to a painter, Mr R. Home, for a head and shoulders portrait at the modest price of 500 rupees and other portraits were painted for his lady friends. He purchased for one of them '1 Brilliant hoop Ring and 2 pearl guards, to ditto for 150 Rupees', and also a pearl necklace with some bracelets and a silk-worked shawl.

Which of his beautiful ladies received the paintings and the rings and necklaces? Was it Mrs Stevenson, Mrs Macintire or Mrs Gordon? Most certainly one other lady would have received tributes from the new major-general with 'strange and penetrating clear blue eyes.' The pretty Mrs Macintire's husband was a brave and active officer but unfortunately had indulged in entrepreneurial activities by stealing saltpetre.

Two colonels, Saxon and Mandeville, and the latter's wife, were caught and convicted at a court martial and disgraced. The young Captain Macintire 'must inevitably be ruined' as his colonel, Wellesley put it. His successor was Captain John William Freese, of the Madras Artillery.

The new Commissary of Stores at Seringapatam, in July 1802, had a pretty young wife whose portrait still hangs proudly at Apsley House, the Duke of Wellington's town mansion. She was the daughter of General Stuart, and gave birth to a son that same month. Arthur Wellesley stood godfather and the infant was given his name, in all by the time he left India in 1805 he had acquired three godchildren. The brown-haired Mrs Freese and Arthur fell in love and several people were deeply shocked, including again his ADC, Captain West. The romance continued until the major-general returned to England. Many of his Indian friends, Colonel John Malcolm and Captain Barclay wrote to Arthur in England and always gave him news.

> I never saw Mrs Freese better and your accounts of Arthur which she read today have made her mad with joy. Why do you shave the poor boys eyebrows and endeavour to alter Gods works? In Scotland red hair is a Beauty at least it was five centuries ago.

Arthur Freese had been sent back to a healthier climate in England but on his arrival the boy found his aunt dead, so his godfather (and his new wife) took him in to live with them. Mrs Freese's three other sons were sent to an uncle in England. The biographers note a trifle anxiously that Captain Freese and the young son Arthur Freese both had *sandy* hair.

Captain George Elers describes the colonel's dining habits,

> He kept a plain but good table. He had a very good appetite, favourite dish was roast saddle of mutton and salad. Very abstemious with wine: drank four or five glasses with people at dinner and about a pint of claret after [hardly little or no wine]. He was even in his temper, laughing and joking with those he liked, speaking in his quick way – talking about the campaign plans was the usual topic of conversation after dinner. He was severe upon any neglect by the commissariat department.

Elers played billiards frequently with his colonel and usually beat him. The colonel's dress was a long coat, uniform of the 33rd Regiment, a cocked hat, white pantaloons, Hessian boots and spurs, a large sabre with a handle of solid silver with gilt mounting on the scabbard. His hair was cropped close, but not powdered as being prejudicial to health. The Beau also purchased eight pieces of the finest lush linen to make dazzling new shirts and to impress the desirable young matrons. He also told

Elers that his highest ambition was to be major-general in Her Majesty's service. That was in May 1801 and within the year his 'highest ambition' was achieved. One feels some sympathy for poor Captain Elers who had neither the capital to purchase a majority nor the patronage to further his career. Four years of campaigning in the Mahratta wars turned Arthur Wesley into a professional army commander. Victories at Seringapatam, the defeat of Tipoo sahib, the bloody battle of Assaye, the siege of Gawilghur and many other sucessful battles all ensured Arthur's promotion in April 1802 to major-general.

He was now richer with a small fortune of £42,000, but his health had deteriorated with his campaigning and he suffered from rheumatism, lumbago, ague and constant fever. He was cheered however by the award of the Order of the Bath on 1 September 1804 and by a presentation in Mysore; 'We, the native inhabitants of Seringapatam have reposed for five auspicious years under the shadow of your protection . . .'

For a variety of reasons – the end of campaigning, his health, the advancement of his career and for one important romantic reason – a return home to England and Ireland was deemed essential. To Richard he said 'Send me all your commands to England. I shall have nothing to do excepting to attend them and I will exert myself to forward your views.'

Farewells were made to the officers and men of his successful army – particularly to Sir John Malcolm, Colin Campbell, 'Beau' Cradock and, of course, Colonel Stevenson. Suitable farewells and gifts were made to the array of beautiful young matrons as, on 10 March, Sir Arthur Wellesley sailed on HMS *Trident* with Captain Page. Part of his luggage included an amazing array of romantic fiction, *The Rival Mothers*, *Love at First Sight*, *Illicit Love*, and a dozen others including *Fashionable Involvement*. He also took with him ten pairs of ladies' shoes! To Mrs Wilks who was on board ship on the voyage, he confided that he now had scarcely any rheumatism or lumbago. 'If I had not quitted India I shall have had a serious fit of illness. I was wasting away daily and latterly when at Madras, I found my strength failed.' The ship reached the island of St Helena on 9 July 1805, from where he wrote to Colonel Malcolm back in India. He also wrote to Mrs Stevenson and to Mrs Freese 'a full account of all our adventures.'

Chapter Four

MARRIAGE

The *Trident* sailed from India towards home waters in company with a fleet of forty ships described as 'Indiamen and Chinamen' in the summer of 1805. The major-general had been partaking for the last four years in a stately quadrille, or perhaps even a pavane, an equally slow, delicate and infinitely sad musical lament. It had started with – on the face of it – an innocent letter from Colonel M. Beresford to Arthur Wellesley written in January 1801. After tributes about the recent military successes in India, he gets to the point:

> I don't know what your objects at home may be, but I am certain that you will not take amiss what I say. I know not if Miss Pakenham is an object to you or not – she looks as well as ever – no person whatsoever has paid her any particular attention – so much I say, having heard her name and yours mentioned together. I hear her most highly spoken of by Mrs (Olivia) Sparrow. She lives so retired that nobody ever sees her. One night, Tom Pakenham took me to sup to Lady Longford's – I could not avoid looking with all my eyes at the lady and thinking of you and former times. I happened on this just as your letter from the banks of the Nevbruda reached me – but I had not nerves to say anything about you . . .'

The crafty colonel enclosed for the recipient a letter from Mrs Sparrow, a young matron, wife of General Sparrow, a born matchmaker and Kitty's most intimate friend. That was the first step in the slow, inevitable sequence of events that led to Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley's marriage.

At the time that this letter was conceived and wended its way very slowly across the oceans to India, little round-faced Kitty was embroiled in a second courtship with Galbraith Lowry Cole, son of the Earl of Enniskillan, who commanded a regiment at the age of twenty-two. He was an old friend of the Pakenham family and now commanded in the Coldstream Guards after distinguished service in the West Indies. Although a second son, and the same age as Kitty, he was on the staff of the commander-in-chief, Lord Carhampton, and in many ways was an