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**Maxims and Opinions of  
Field-Marshal His Grace the Duke  
of Wellington, Selected From His  
Writings and Speeches During a  
Public Life of More Than Half a  
Century**

Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

# Imprint

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**MAXIMS AND OPINIONS OF FIELD-MARSHAL HIS GRACE  
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON, SELECTED FROM HIS WRIT-  
INGS AND SPEECHES DURING A PUBLIC LIFE OF MORE  
THAN HALF A CENTURY.**

With a Biographical Memoir,

**BY**

**GEORGE HENRY FRANCIS, ESQ.**

"Cujus gloriæ neque profuit quisquam laudando, nec vituperan-  
do quisquam nocuit."



## ADVERTISEMENT

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So many works have already appeared of which the Duke of Wellington has been the subject, that an explanation is due to the public on the occasion of adding one more to the number.

That explanation consists in the fact, that those works have been almost exclusively occupied with the military exploits of the Duke, which rendered him so illustrious during the first twenty years of his public life; while his political career, which may be said to have constituted a second life, distinct and different from the other, has been comparatively neglected.

To meet the want thus left unsatisfied, the Editor of the following pages has endeavoured to supply materials, by which a just estimate may be formed of the Duke of Wellington's claims as a minister and as a statesman.

The volume will be found to contain the Duke's deliberate opinions as a member of the House of Peers, and, during many years, as a minister, upon the great questions which have agitated the public mind since the commencement of the present century.

If there are those who hold the Duke of Wellington in light estimation as a politician, they will not continue to entertain that opinion, the Editor believes, after having dispassionately read the extracts of which this work is composed.

Interspersed with the Duke's more elaborate OPINIONS, will be found his MAXIMS on public policy, which, though few and unpretending, may be said to have sunk into the national mind.

The Editor has added a few remarkable sentences and passages from the dispatches of the Duke; with a cursory memoir of his life, which becomes more elaborate from the commencement of his political career; and has also attempted to portray some of his characteristics, as a soldier and as a civilian.

LONDON, *February*, 1845.



## MEMOIR

## OF

## HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, is the fourth son of Garret, second Earl of Mornington, by Anne, the eldest daughter of Arthur Hill, Viscount Dungannon. He was borne at Dangan Castle, in the county of Meath, Ireland, on the 1st of May, 1769.

As in the case of many of the chief nobility and landholders in Ireland, the ancestors of the Duke were scions of an English house—the Colleys (afterwards Cowley), two of whom, named Walter and Robert Colley, proceeded to Ireland in the reign of Henry VIII., and located themselves in the County of Kilkenny. The two brothers were lawyers by profession, and in the year 1531, were invested with the office of Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, which they were to hold jointly during their lives. Six years afterwards, we find the elder brother Master of the Rolls in Ireland, and the other Solicitor-General. In 1549, Walter was made Surveyor-General of Ireland. It was from this Walter that the immediate ancestors of the Duke of Wellington were, by the mother's side, descended.

His eldest son, Henry, acquired some distinction as a soldier in the reign of Elizabeth. He was also a member of the Irish Parliament for the borough of Thomastown. He was, moreover, a Privy Councillor, and was knighted.

Sir Henry Sydney, who was, perhaps, the wisest and most able of all the Lords Deputy whom Elizabeth sent over to Ireland, appears to have entertained a very high opinion of Sir Henry Colley's abilities; for, in recommending him to his successor in the Government, he describes him as "valiant, fortunate, and a good servant;" and speaks of him as his "sound and fast friend." But he more especially praises the "order," in which he kept his county.

Thus early did a member of this family earn praise for good service to the State; and if we compare the measure of that praise with what we know of the temper of the times, we might almost suppose that some portion of the spirit of the "sound and fast friend," the "valiant, fortunate, and good servant," had been inherited by his illustrious descendant.

The immediate descendants of Sir Henry Colley were more or less distinguished. His great-great grand-daughter, Elizabeth, married into the family of the Westleys (afterwards Wellesleys) of Dangan, in the county of Meath. This family also was of English extraction, having originally come from Sussex. Richard Colley, the nephew of the Elizabeth abovementioned, was adopted by Garret Wellesley, whose name and estates he took in the year 1728, by patent from the Herald's office. He was auditor and registrar of the Royal Hospital of Kilmainham, and a Chamberlain of the Court of Exchequer. He sat in parliament several years for Carysford, and was, in 1747 raised to the peerage by George II., being created Baron Mornington. His son, Garret, was, in 1760, created Viscount Wellesley and Earl of Mornington. He married, on the 6th February, 1759, Anne, eldest daughter of the Right Honourable Arthur Hill, Viscount Dungannon, by whom he had issue, Richard the late Marquis Wellesley, Arthur Gerald, who died in infancy, William Wellesley Pole, Baron Maryborough, Arthur Duke of Wellington, Gerald Valerian, D.D., Sir Henry, G.C.B., Francis Seymour, Anne, and Mary Elizabeth.

The Earl of Mornington, who was chiefly remarkable for his strong passion for music, in which science he acquired no slight celebrity as a composer, died in 1781, leaving his property very much encumbered. Its management was entrusted to Lady Mornington, who appears, by universal assent, to have been one of those remarkable women to whose care the world is indebted, so much more than it conceives or will admit, for its great men. Although it may have been upon severer models, and by the lessons of more pretending teachers, that the Marquis Wellesley was formed into the vigorous ruler, and the wise, far-seeing statesman; or if his scarcely more illustrious brother must, from other sources, have imbibed that stern unswerving spirit which, in his after career, insured truth to his views and certainty to his enterprises, yet one can

scarcely allow a doubt that it is to the direction given by their admirable mother to the minds of these two great men, while still in the pliant season of youth, that we owe that high appreciation of truth and honour, and that sense of the identity of virtue and duty, which, while their wisdom and prowess were spreading our military fame, and extending the sphere of our civilising influence, enabled them also, by the exaltation of our national character, to secure for their country the respect of all the world.

One of the first fruits of early lessons or of later reflection upon the mind of the young Earl of Mornington was, that he took upon himself the payment of his father's debts, an act entirely voluntary on his part.

Of Lord Mornington, afterwards the celebrated Marquis Wellesley, it is unnecessary to say more in this place than that he was in the year 1797 appointed to the Governor-Generalship of India, in which high office he was enabled to develop, without the suspicion of undue preference, the peculiar talents of his younger brother—talents which his discriminating mind would probably have discovered even without the assistance of such close proximity.

To return to the immediate subject of these Memoirs:—His education commenced at Eton, from whence he went to the military academy at Angers, in the department of the Maine and Loire, there being at that period no institution of the kind in this country.

On his return from the Continent, young Wellesley received (on the 7th of March, 1787), an ensigncy in the 41st regiment, he being then in his eighteenth year. He became lieutenant on the 25th of December in the same year; captain, on the 30th of June, 1791; major, on the 30th of April, 1798; and lieut.-colonel on the 30th of September following. These promotions were chiefly by purchase, and the lieut.-colonelcy (of the 33rd) was bought for him by his brother. He was returned to the Irish parliament at the general election of 1790, for Trim, a borough belonging to his brother.

Brilliant as was the reputation which, within a very few years, he acquired as a soldier and a politician in the East, it will not excite surprise to hear that his parliamentary displays did not in his early life excite much attention. A friend of the writer of this memoir, a gentleman who was in the habit of being present, almost daily, in

the Irish House of Commons, and who took critical notice of the remarkable men of his time, states that the Duke never made any striking impression as a speaker; indeed; there was nothing whatever to distinguish him from the herd of young parliamentary nominees, except a certain simple, straightforward, firm, though unassuming statement of his opinions; and even this took place but seldom. The recollection of this gentleman confirms the account of Sir Jonah Barrington, that—"His address was unpolished; he spoke occasionally, and never with success; and evinced no promise of that unparalleled celebrity which he reached afterwards."

The following anecdote is not inconsistent with that reputation for inflexible honour which, in successive eras of his life, procured for the Duke of Wellington the confidence of the Indian government, of the British army, and ultimately of the whole English nation. It is taken from the excellent detailed account of the Duke's military career, recently published by Mr. Maxwell:—

"The appointment of Captain Wellesley to the staff of the Earl of Westmorland, had placed him in the household of the viceroy, and as aid-de-camp required his constant attendance at the castle. The Irish court at that period was celebrated alike for its hospitality, its magnificence, and its dissipation. The princely display of the lords lieutenant of those days entailed a heavy expenditure upon the numerous attachés of the court, and too frequently plunged young men of high family and limited fortunes into very distressing embarrassments. Captain Wellesley's patrimony was small, his staff appointment more fashionable than lucrative, and it is not surprising that soon after he had come of age he found himself involved in pecuniary difficulties. At the time he lodged in the house of an opulent bootmaker, who resided on Lower Ormand Quay. The worthy tradesman discovered, accidentally, that his young inmate was suffering annoyance from his inability to discharge a pressing demand. He waited on Lieutenant Wellesley, told him that he was apprised of his embarrassments, mentioned that he had money unemployed, and offered a loan, which was accepted. The obligation was soon afterwards duly repaid; and the young aid-de-camp was enabled in a few years to present his humble friend to an honourable and lucrative situation. Nor did death cancel the obligation; the Duke's

patronage, after his parent's death, was extended to the son of his early friend, for whom he obtained a valuable appointment."

To enter into any detailed account of the military career of the Duke of Wellington, would be wholly beyond the scope of a work devoted more especially to his Grace's character and services as a civilian; but were it not so, it would be unnecessary, after the many able biographies which have appeared since the publication of the dispatches by Lieut.-Colonel Gurwood. The following is, therefore only a short summary of the Duke's proceedings from 1794, when he first entered on active service, to 1815, when his functions as a military commander in the field finally ceased.

It was in June, 1794, that Lieut.-Colonel Wellesley embarked at Cork, in command of the 33rd regiment, to join the Duke of York's army in the Netherlands. In the subsequent retreat from Holland he commanded, as senior officer, three battalions, and conducted himself in a manner that already drew on him the attention of military men.

In October, 1795, he again embarked, in the command of the 33rd, for the West Indies, on board the fleet commanded by Admiral Christian. This fleet was, however, repeatedly driven back by the strong equinoctial gales, and in the January following it returned to port. Before it could again sail, the 33rd regiment was ordered to India, and Colonel Wellesley arrived at Bengal in February, 1797. When we consider the fate of a large portion of his fellow soldiers who went to the West Indies, and at the same time look forward to the peculiar facilities which the service in India afforded for developing the great qualities of mind which lay hid under the rigid exterior of the young soldier, it may truly be said, that the moment at which the destination of the 33rd regiment was countermanded, was the point at which the fate of the Duke of Wellington turned. Nay more, if it be admitted that you rarely find in one man a combination of those peculiar qualities, which enabled the Duke to withstand, and ultimately to destroy, the military and political system established by the contrary tendencies which ruled the mind of Napoleon; if, too, it be conceded that the British government, even while the Duke was winning battles in Spain, were accustomed to resort to his counsel with regard to their more extended operations

against the common enemy; if, in fact, it is owing to the sagacity, steadfastness, and perseverance of the Duke of Wellington, that we owe the peace of Europe; then must it be admitted, that upon the accident of tempests which obstructed Admiral Christian's fleet, and upon the accident of military disposition, which altered the destination of the regiment, depended not merely the fortunes of the Duke of Wellington, but also the fate of nations, and the peace of the world.

By this time, the Earl of Mornington had been appointed Governor-general of India, and the inveterate hatred of Tippoo Sul-taun against the English name was arming the natives to resistance. The first achievement of Colonel Wellesley, that drew attention to his name, was the storming of Seringapatam, in which he commanded the reserve in the trenches. On the capture of Seringapatam Colonel Wellesley was appointed governor, and at the same time named as one of the commission appointed to dispose of the territory conquered. But an office more honourable to his character, was his selection to superintend the removal of the family of Tippoo Sul-taun. Lord Mornington in his instructions says:—"The details of this painful but indispensable measure cannot be entrusted to any person more likely to combine every office of humanity with the prudential precautions required by the occasion than Colonel Wellesley; and I therefore commit to his discretion, activity, and humanity, the whole arrangement."

In July, 1799, Colonel Wellesley was appointed to the sole command of Seringapatam and Mysore; and here his capacity for civil government, as well as in military affairs, was fully developed. He had by this time begun to feel his own strength, and to make it felt by others. The reader of his dispatches will perceive that, from the moment when he was placed in a position of independent command, his mind appears to have taken a higher stand: he recognised higher responsibilities: and one may almost detect, in the confirmed self-reliance of his judgment even in this comparatively limited sphere, a prescience of future greatness.

The year 1803 was signalised by Major-General Wellesley's conquests in the Mahratta territory, and the battle of Assaye. Passing over the details of these campaigns, in which the rising commander

displayed military genius of the highest order, we come to the more pleasing task of enumerating the honours he received. A monument was erected in Calcutta to commemorate the last-named battle: the inhabitants of that city presented him with a sword of the value of £1000: the officers of his division presented him with a golden vase, afterwards changed for a service of plate, on which the word "Assaye" was engraved: the British parliament voted him public thanks, he was made a Knight Companion of the Bath: and addresses of the warmest praise were voted to him by the inhabitants of Seringapatam, and other places, which had benefitted by his skill and prowess in the field, and his wisdom on the seat of government.

In February, 1805, having resolved on returning to England, he resigned the political and military powers that had been entrusted to him in the Deccan. On the 5th of March, a grand entertainment was given him at the Pantheon at Madras, by the officers of the Presidency, civil and military. On the 10th of September following, he arrived in the Downs; and, in the following month, he was appointed to the Staff, for the Kent District.

In the November following, Sir Arthur Wellesley, as he had now become, commanded the brigade in the expedition to Hanover under Lord Cathcart, which was withdrawn immediately after the battle of Austerlitz. In January, 1800, on the death of the Marquis Cornwallis, he was appointed colonel of the 33rd regiment; and on the 12th of April, in the same year, he was returned to the House of Commons as member for Newport, Isle of Wight.

In this year, Sir Arthur Wellesley married the Honourable Catherine Pakenham, third daughter of the second Earl of Longford.

On the 8th of April, 1807, he was made a privy councillor; and on the 19th of the same month, appointed chief secretary for Ireland, under the lord lieutenancy of the Duke of Richmond. On the 22nd, he was presented by the corporation of the city of Dublin with the freedom of that city. The address in which it was conveyed was most complimentary, and shows the high estimation in which he was already held on account of his brilliant military and civil services in India. In June of the same year, he accompanied Lord Cathcart in the expedition against Copenhagen; and in the only

important action which took place at the affair at Kioge—he commanded, and obtained distinction. The result of the action was a capitulation, which Sir Arthur Wellesley was appointed to arrange. On his return home, he received the thanks of parliament for his services. Alluding to Sir Arthur Wellesley, the speaker said:—"But I should indeed be wanting in the full expression of those sentiments which animate this house and the whole country, if I forebore to notice, that we are on this day crowning with our thanks one gallant officer, long since known to the gratitude of this house, who has long trodden the paths of glory,—whose genius and valour have already extended our fame and empire,—whose sword has been the terror of our distant enemies, and will not now be drawn in vain to defend the seat of empire itself, and the throne of his sovereign."

A new and wider field of operations was now preparing for the rising hero. Napoleon, the unquestioned despot of the rest of continental Europe, had also grasped at the Peninsula. Both Spain and Portugal were in his possession, as far as military occupation and nominal sovereignty could ensure them to him. The hostile efforts of England were suspended as far as regarded Europe; but an expedition had been fitted out at Cork against part of Spanish America, and Sir Arthur Wellesley was appointed to the command. Again a marvellous interposition of accidents prevented this his second projected service in America. Before the troops could set sail, the insurrection at Madrid on the 2nd of May, 1808, against the French under Murat, drew the attention of England to the Peninsula, where some hope of successful resistance to Napoleon began to dawn. Once more the destination of the future conqueror was averted from the West, and he was ordered in command to the South.

Sir Arthur Wellesley landed at the mouth of the river Mondego in Portugal on the 3rd of August. Here he received intimation that reinforcements under Sir John Moore were about to be sent. Moore was his superior officer, and there was also Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard on their way, the former of whom would take the chief, and the latter, the second command of the army. There was but little time for Sir Arthur to strike the decisive blow, and although he was not the man to force a battle for the sake of fame, he could not but feel anxious for distinction in this new sphere before all opportunity should be cut off, by the arrival of his superiors in

command. Fortune in this was on his side; and he had not been many days in Portugal before he was enabled to defeat the French at the pass of Roliça, and, on the 21st of August, to gain the battle of Vimeiro.

While this battle was at its height, Sir Harry Burrard arrived, but would not interfere with Sir Arthur's dispositions. The French were soon after beaten on the left, and Sir Arthur then urged on Sir Harry the advance of our right wing upon Torres Vedras, while our left would pursue the enemy: his object being to cut off Junot's retreat on Lisbon. No man now doubts that this was counsel wise as well as bold; but Sir Harry Burrard declined to take it, and the golden opportunity was lost. Sir Arthur, who carried military obedience almost to the extent of a chivalrous sentiment, submitted to the orders, though he did not acquiesce in the judgment of his superior officer; but he could not help saying to one of his officers who stood by, "well, then, we have nothing to do but to go and shoot red-legged partridges!" the common game of that part of Portugal.

Sir Arthur Wellesley's subsequent conduct to Sir Harry Burrard was highly honourable. He declared voluntarily before the Court of Inquiry that, though he still differed in opinion with Sir Harry as to the not advancing after the battle of Vimeiro, his opinion was, that Sir H. Burrard "had decided upon fair military grounds, in the manner which appeared to him to be the most conducive to the interests of the country;" and his belief, "that Sir Harry had no motive for his decision which could be supposed personal to him, or which as an officer he could not avow."

The untoward convention of Cintra, which followed the victory of Vimeiro, was received in England with one universal cry of indignation. Sir Arthur Wellesley was no farther implicated in it than that he signed it as one of the generals, although disapproving of it from the first. Pending the inquiry, instituted in England on the convention, he returned thither, and his evidence was satisfactory alike to the court and to the public.

On the 27th January, 1809, Sir Arthur received the thanks of parliament for the battle of Vimeiro. The speaker, in delivering the thanks of the House of Commons, said:—

"Amidst the contending opinions which have prevailed upon other questions, the public voice has been loud and general in admiration of your splendid achievements. It is your praise to have inspired your troops with unshaken confidence and unbounded ardour—to have commanded, not the obedience alone, but the hearts and affections of your companions in arms; and having planned your operations with the skill and promptitude which have so eminently characterised all your former exertions, you have again led the armies of your country to battle, with the same deliberate valour, and triumphant success which have long since rendered your name illustrious in the remotest parts of this empire. Military glory has ever been dear to this nation; and great military exploits, in the field or upon the ocean, have their sure reward in royal favour, and the gratitude of parliament."

Sir Arthur, in his reply, observed:—

"No man can value more highly than I do the honourable distinction which has been conferred upon me—a distinction which it is in the power of the representatives of a free people alone to bestow, and which it is the peculiar advantage of the officers and soldiers in the service of his majesty to have held out to them as the object of their ambition, and to receive as the reward of their services."

The opening allusion of the speaker to "contending opinions on other matters," was intended to mark the sense of the house that Sir Arthur Wellesley, at least, was free from blame as regarded recent transactions in the Peninsula. That the government thought so also, and had at last learned to appreciate the value of an officer whom they had so recently trammelled, was evidenced by the appointment of Sir Arthur, on the 2nd of April, to the command of the army in Portugal.

Towards the close of the previous year, complaint had been made, in the House of Commons, of Sir Arthur holding the office of secretary for Ireland while in the Peninsula. On the 14th of April, he

resigned that office, and on the 22nd, he arrived at Lisbon and assumed the command of an army, disproportioned, indeed, to the service expected of it, and still more to that which they afterwards achieved, but strong in its confidence in a general who had never made a false step, or suffered a defeat.

On the 12th of May, he carried Oporto by a *coup de main*. So complete was the surprise, that Sir Arthur and his staff sat down to the dinner which had been prepared for the French commander.

On the 28th July following, the battle of Talavera was fought, after which (on the 26th August), Sir Arthur was raised to the peerage by the titles of Baron Douro of Wellesley and Viscount Wellington of Talavera. In the February following, he received the thanks of parliament for Talavera, and a pension of £2000 per annum was voted to him and his two next heirs male.

So inferior was the numerical force of his army to that of the enemy that Lord Wellington found his operations must for some time be confined to the defence of Portugal; and he, therefore, gave orders for the fortification of the lines of Torres Vedras, by which the capital of the country was covered. They extended from the sea to the Tagus, at a point where the width of that river is such as to afford an adequate protection.

It was characteristic of the mind of the man of whom we are writing, that these works were planned and executed with a secrecy that baffled the penetration of the enemy, and equally the suicidal curiosity of the English newspapers.

Massena was now the general of the French army. Wellington, before retiring within the lines, fought the action of Busaco (ten months after the battle of Talavera), in which the French lost 5000 men, killed or wounded, and as many more disabled. After this victory, the English withdrew within the lines, to cover Lisbon. Massena took up a position at Santaren, from whence he gradually retreated towards the frontiers, several affairs occurring between his troops and the English, by whom he was closely followed. At length, he crossed the frontier, and Wellington's object was, thus far, attained. On the 26th of the same month, he received the thanks of both houses of parliament for the liberation of Portugal.

In the meanwhile, the army of Massena had been re-organized and reinforced, and on the 3rd of May he again attacked the allied British and Portuguese forces, for the purpose of relieving the fortress of Almeida, which was under blockade. The action was fought at Fuentes D'Onoro, and resulted in the defeat of the French. Massena was then superseded, and Marmont appointed in his place.

The next object of the British commander was to take Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo. The latter was stormed on the 19th January, and the former on the 9th of April. For both, the thanks of parliament were voted; and Lord Wellington, after having been created Conde de Vimeiro in Portugal, and Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain, was raised to an earldom (of Wellington) at home, with another vote of 2000 l. per annum to maintain the title.

On the 22nd of July, Marmont's army, which had been strongly reinforced, attacked the allies near Salamanca. The two armies had been watching each other for a considerable time, waiting for the favourable moment to attack. At length Marmont began, and having superior numbers, extended his left for the purpose of turning the British right. Wellington, when informed of this by one of his staff, was seated on the ground eating some cold beef; suddenly starting up, he exclaimed, "Marmont's good genius has forsaken him." He immediately attacked the French where they had weakened their line, and overthrew them from left to right. The loss of the enemy was severe, and Marmont himself lost an arm in the battle.

On the 12th of August following, Lord Wellington entered Madrid, and was appointed generalissimo of the Spanish armies—a troublesome honour which there was some difficulty in inducing him to accept. He was created a marquis at home, thanks were voted to him for the battle of Salamanca, and he received a grant of 100,000 l. to purchase land. He was also in December of the same year made Duque da Vittoria in Portugal.

In the meantime, the enormous force which had been brought together by the French, the refusal of the Spanish generals to cooperate, the failure of an attempt to capture the fortress of Burgos, and other causes, compelled the allies to retreat to Ciudad Rodrigo, with the determination of returning to Spain at a more fitting time.