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Richard Colley Wellesley, second Earl Mornington and Marquess Wellesley, played a prominent role in Irish and British politics between 1781 and 1835. His career, marked as it was by some brilliant achievements and some dismal failures, has been overshadowed by that of his younger brother Arthur, the Duke of Wellington. Wellesley's accomplishments as viceroy in India, Foreign Secretary, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland have been studied with varying degrees of thoroughness in isolation; they have not been treated as part of the remarkable career of public service which Wellesley constructed over the course of six decades.

In this study special emphasis has been placed on Wellesley's role in British politics from 1806 to 1812. Detailed attention has also been directed to Wellesley's tenure as Irish Lord Lieutenant and to his efforts to construct a Wellesley family interest at Westminster. The Indian years, treated in some detail elsewhere, are examined here in the context of the light they cast on Wellesley's outlook towards British political and social institutions. This study suggests that commitment to reform and innovation within the context of Britain's ancient social and political institutions constitutes a consistent theme in Wellesley's public career, as do certain unattractive personal characteristics which served to frustrate his highest ambitions.

Manuscript materials consulted in preparing this biographic study include Wellesley's extensive private correspondence in the British Museum, public papers housed in London, Dublin, Calcutta, and Madrid, and the numerous and valuable collections of Wellesley's acquaintances and contemporaries. Several hundred secondary sources have been examined.
DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at Trinity College, University of Dublin, or at any other university.

This thesis is entirely my own work.

Edward Paul Brynn
1 September 1977
The Marquess Wellesley lived a very long time and he remained active in the affairs of the nation to almost the very end of his life. For sixty years he wrote copiously and the traces of his work extend from depositories in California to Dublin, London and Madrid and on to India and Ceylon. I have made an effort to inspect all substantial collections open to the academic community. It is possible, nonetheless, that some important material still lies buried somewhere in Europe or Asia.

My research was well under way when in 1973 Iris Butler published an important study of Wellesley. I was in India at the time and awaited receipt of a copy of her book with great excitement and some dread: every researcher's nightmare is to have his area of investigation preempted by another's publications. I was relieved and then delighted to read her book, for she offered not only vicarious access to material otherwise not available to me but she provided an analysis of the personal dimension of the man Wellesley which strikes me as accurate, sensitive, and extremely incisive. I have made a conscious effort not to direct my attention to those aspects of Wellesley's personal life which in my judgement she has provided a definitive analysis.
Since I commenced my own work in 1972 there have been several scholarly publications in which an important reference has been made to one or another aspect of Wellesley's life and work, and I have made every effort to incorporate the fruits of these analyses into my picture of the Marquess. Included in this category are two important scholarly dissertations and several useful articles in professional journals. More such studies are likely to appear from time to time. This is to me a healthy sign that Wellesley's importance in British, Irish, and British Empire history is now appreciated more widely than was the case for too long a period.

Perhaps it is ironic that Wellesley's footsteps are most difficult to trace in his native Ireland. During his early years correspondence was scanty and much of it was treated carelessly. In his later years Wellesley was painfully aware of this and laboured to rectify the deficiency by inviting contemporaries to record their reminiscences. This produced little of value and much that is highly suspect. Because of a dearth of evidence in other depositories, Wellesley's correspondence with William Grenville, printed in the Fortescue MSS, takes on added importance, perhaps too much importance. Perhaps some material still exists which can shed more light on Wellesley's early career in the Irish house of Lords or in the family borough at Trim. Of all the
significant phases of Wellesley's life this one perhaps best deserves further scrutiny. The framework is in place, but there are dark corners of the structure still to be illuminated.

A study which encompasses a chronology and a geography as extensive as this reflects the contributions of many generous people and the institutions to which they are attached. I am indebted in the first instance to Dr. R. B. McDowell, whose knowledge of the milieu which nurtured and shaped Wellesley's first years enriches the student's work. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the staffs of the following libraries: Trinity College; the Royal Irish Academy; the Public Record Office, Dublin; and the National Library of Ireland; the county depositories of Derbyshire, Surrey, and Staffordshire; the British Museum and the Public Record Office, London; the University of Sri Lanka at Colombo and Peradeniya and the Centre for Social Science Research at Calcutta; the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; the Huntington Library at San Marino, California; and the university libraries at Stanford, Columbia, Georgetown, and Denver. I owe a special debt to the staff of the Library at the United States Air Force Academy, who assisted so generously in obtaining copies of important materials in the United States and Canada through their interlibrary loan service.
During my travels Mrs. Helen Foster kept track of additional items which came to the Air Force Academy. My good friend Major Carl Reddel extended himself handsomely on numerous occasions, and his enforced introduction to Irish history, coupled with his established expertise on Imperial Russia, makes him something of a universal scholar. In Ceylon Mrs. Corinne Ragell typed and translated from documents in Dutch, Portuguese, Sinhala and Tamil with wonderful ease.

During my periods of residence in Dublin I owed much to the kind hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hughes, who saw me through the first draft of the paper. To my mother Mrs. Walter Brynn I owe an enormous debt of gratitude for typing the entirety from a draft which with its corrections and amendments verged on the indecipherable.

I benefitted from the advice readily tendered by many fine scholars, including the following: Professor Barun De, Director of the Centre for Studies in the Social Sciences, Calcutta; Professor Norman Gash of St. Salvator's College, St. Andrews; Mr. James Rutnam of Colombo; Professor Michael Roberts and Professor Kingsley de Silva of the University of Sri Lanka at Peradeniya; Professor Ainslee Embree of Columbia University; Mrs. Beryl F. E. Moore, M. B., of Trim; Professor Thomas Hachey of Marquette University; and others whose timely help was much appreciated.
My wife Jane Cooke Brynn will understand why I owe my greatest debt to her.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION
Undertaking a biographical study demands as one incentive a conviction that the subject is important. The absence of a "definitive" interpretation and the availability of suitable material may also encourage one to shoulder the burdens of analysis. In the case of Richard Colley, second Earl of Mornington and subsequently Marquess Wellesley, there would seem to be adequate reason for further biographical investigation. His importance has been obscured by the transcendent fame of his younger brother, Arthur, the Duke of Wellington. Arthur's reputation as a stern hero and "pillar of state" has often been compared to the Marquess Wellesley's alleged frivolous mannerisms, excessive vanity, incontinence and undependability.¹ There is no dearth of research material for a study of Wellesley; the British Museum alone houses several hundred volumes of his personal and official correspondence.²

Wellesley's relationship to Wellington, as shown so effectively in a recent study which focuses its attention on Wellesley's private life, has certainly detracted considerably

¹This image is reinforced in the most recent major study of Wellington, Elizabeth Longford's two volumes, Wellington: The Years of the Sword (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), and Wellington: Pillar of State (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

from Wellesley's historical reputation. There remains the question whether Wellesley is sufficiently important and interesting a biographical subject to warrant this study, which by concentrating on his role in Irish and British politics seeks to complement major work already in print concerning his personal life on one hand and his accomplishments in India on the other.

Wellesley himself would be distressed to discover that scholars have not paid more attention to him over the last century and a quarter. Late in life, when deteriorating health and political isolation at last forced him into retirement, Wellesley devoted much of his time to preparing compilations of his despatches and public correspondence. Assisted by his amanuensis Montgomery Martin, he produced a multi-volume collection of his India correspondence covering the years 1797 to 1805. A smaller work contains his correspondence while special envoy to Spain in 1809. He took care to see that his official correspondence housed in the India office was as complete as possible, and today it

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4 Montgomery Martin, ed., Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley during His Administration in India (5 vols.; London: John Murray, 1836); Edward Ingram, ed., Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801 (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970).
constitutes one of the most voluminous collections of those archives. \(^5\) He also preserved virtually all private correspondence addressed to him, as well as copies of his most important private letters. His correspondents (in that age of greater attention to the preservation of letters and other memorabilia) also seem to have held on to what Wellesley sent them. \(^6\) While his published Indian and Spanish despatches reveal that he could not always resist the temptation to suppress the publication of certain embarrassing and uncomplimentary passages and paragraphs, Wellesley unlike his brother Wellington seems not to have consigned anything to the fire; if some published items are suspect, the archives are not.

Thoughts of posterity extended beyond a careful preservation of correspondence. In the final decade of his life Wellesley undertook the somewhat pathetic task of soliciting reminiscences from Eton schoolmates and even from a few survivors of the late eighteenth century Irish scene. The useless panegyrics thus accumulated were incorporated into an outline of his youth. \(^7\) Wellesley also drafted a

\(^5\) Hutton, Wellesley, p. 7.


\(^7\) Ernest Law, ed., "Notes on the Early Years of the
genealogical sketch of his family which contrived to incorporate a royal pedigree. He appreciated the chance to donate a bust of himself to the East India company to mark their belated reconciliation. By his own request he is commemorated at Eton. A fine portrait hangs in Windsor castle.

Wellesley died in 1842 just as early Victorian biography was establishing a tradition of producing multi-volume works in which the subject was invited and indeed forced to speak for himself. Wellesley's noble and elegant style attracted attention. His penmanship, bold and well-formed, was easy on the eye. Against this were the twin embarrassments of vicious descriptions of Wellesley's enemies and the sheer bulk of his literary remains. Biographers willing to brave the dangers inherent in quoting Wellesley on his antagonists or to spend the time exorcising such passages were overwhelmed by the immensity of the research material. They discovered, moreover, that there were several Wellesleys, each capable of sustaining a lengthy dissertation: the Anglo-Irish politician; the Indian viceroy; the Foreign secretary; the Irish Lord Lieutenant; the classical scholar; the out-of-office Marquess Wellesley Extracted from a Memoir Written by Himself, British Museum, Wellesley MSS 37416, f. 341.

\[8\] Wellesley's correspondence in the British Museum (MSS 37315) contains a large number of items concerned with genealogical investigations. It constitutes an interesting exercise in constructing a worthypedigree from limited materials.
curmudgeon. India excepted, no single phase of his life seemed to merit the arduous work required to revive this most complicated man. Despite the best efforts of Montgomery Martin, the compiler R. R. Pearce, and the professional literateur William M. Torrens, there emerged in the nineteenth century no work which offered a portrait of Wellesley both incisive and comprehensive enough to be called a full-scale biography.  

Instead, Wellesley became a footnote in almost every book devoted to his period. There was virtually no one of mark or distinction who had not met the man. There were few who could not recall at least one of his witty characterisations or biting retorts. Wellesley emerged from this vast and unsorted collection of fragments a most unattractive fellow, a frivolous and haughty Regency politician, a clever but lazy administrator, a dangerous enemy and undependable ally. Wellesley's own correspondence, even where he had taken pains to delete certain portions of it, "revealed him in his petulance as well as majesty" and probably hindered rather than

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9 Of Torrens effort it was said that he had accumulated "a good deal of curious information . . . which attracts the reader for amusement and lightens the labour of research to the more serious student of history." Wellesley by Torrens was featured in the Quarterly Review, April 1880, p. 395.

10 Quarterly Review, Vol. CLXIX, features many references to Wellesley as a conversationalist. See number 298 of that volume.
helped to secure him a reputation as a leading statesman of his age. Wellesley was easily explained away as a promising young leader ruinously corrupted by India, where access to virtually unlimited authority and vast personal power conquered his better qualities and shaped him into an oriental despot. The nineteenth century portrait was reinforced when in 1914 Lord Roseberry produced a compilation of Wellesley's private correspondence. As one reviewer put it, the letters illustrated "the failings of a man in many respects entitled to admiration." Wellesley's vices obscured his considerable talents.

The first study of Wellesley which succeeded in evaluating Wellesley as a statesman without at the same time implicitly condemning him for personal failings was Paul E. Roberts' India Under Wellesley, published in 1929. Roberts undertook for the first time to make a thorough examination of the immense collection of official papers related to Wellesley's India viceroyalty. Roberts satisfied himself that his researches, although concerned with only a portion of

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12 W. Hunt, review of The Wellesley Papers, printed in The English Historical Review, XXIX (1914), 587-89.

Wellesley's public career, had succeeded in taking the measure of the man and that nothing was "likely to emerge which would fundamentally alter our view of it." Roberts intended that his remarks apply only to Wellesley's Indian years. But by asserting that a biography "on a scale commensurate with his importance" would "probably be unrewarded by any very valuable results" he seems to have discouraged further inquiry. As a result, Roberts' biography tended to inflate the importance of Wellesley's Indian years and to diminish other aspects of his career. He became more than ever a man identified with India. His achievements, although more clearly appreciated in the wake of Roberts' industry, seemed more than ever the cause of his alleged subsequent failure as a British politician. For a quarter century no substantial study of Wellesley appeared in scholarly circles. He returned to the footnotes.

Since World War II interest in Wellesley has steadily increased. A new generation of Indian scholars has emerged. Their studies have focused in large measure on the British administrative achievement in South Asia and have led them to look once more at Wellesley's accomplishments. In many respects their conclusions have been surprisingly laudatory.

14 Ibid., p. v.
In some quarters, indeed, Wellesley stands in danger of emerging as an architect of Indian nationalism by virtue of the sweeping territorial annexations he effected at the expense of the "anti-national" princes. His opposition to the East India company has sometimes been treated as an attempt to restrain economic exploitation by avaricious British entrepreneurs. His judicial reforms and efforts on behalf of a training college at Fort William have also made a favourable impression.

A book presenting a full and carefully edited compilation of the correspondence between Henry Dundas, president of the board of control, and Wellesley between 1798 and 1801 has shed new light on the relationship between Calcutta and Whitehall in the aftermath of Indian reforms enacted under Pitt. It has also made accessible to a wider audience some of Wellesley's most striking observations on public affairs during his time. Almost every year of the last decade

has witnessed the publication of dissertations, articles, monographs and books on Wellesley's Indian years, with topics ranging from his high-handed treatment of the press to his grand strategy against France.16

Against the backdrop of a vigorous reevaluation of Wellesley's Indian years, it would seem almost that the balance of his public career would have been ever further obscured. This has not happened. Wellesley's achievements as Foreign secretary remain very much in the shadow of Canning and Castlereagh, who flanked him. Some timid efforts, however, are underway to test Professor Howard Temperley's longstanding verdict that Wellesley's years were barren of achievement.17 Wellesley is also frequently mentioned in monographs on early nineteenth century Irish history, and there has been a trend of late towards attributing to him part of the credit (and blame) for the conduct of Irish policy during the crucial decade of the 1820s.18


17 The most elaborate although by no means entirely satisfactory study of Wellesley's foreign policy initiatives is John Kenneth Severn's recent study of "Richard Marquess Wellesley and the Conduct of Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy, 1809-1812" (Ph. D. Dissertation, The Florida State University, 1975).

The most important recent contribution to an understanding of Wellesley has come from an unexpected quarter. About 1970 Field Marshall Sir Michael Carver for the first time released a large and valuable collection of letters which passed between Wellesley and his wife, the former Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland, while Wellesley ruled India. Iris Butler, invited to prepare a study of Wellesley based in part on these papers, published in 1974 an impressive volume dedicated to presenting Wellesley "as a human being and not only as an imperial symbol, a marble statue gathering dust."\(^{19}\) The Carter manuscripts, spiced with an often violent and acrimonious correspondence between Wellesley and Hyacinthe, provide a portrait of the Marquess in which vanity, frustration, and the painful effects of Hyacinthe's jibes did much to darken the years immediately following his return from India. The biography, as Butler concedes, is neither "definitive" nor "academic," and Wellesley the politician takes second place to his role as an ill-tempered husband.

There remains, therefore, no definitive life of Wellesley. The contributions of recent scholars lend more rather than less credence to Roberts' observation that the effort would be so monumental as to make its utility a matter of debate. Fortunately for the historian Wellesley

\(^{19}\)Butler, Eldest, p. 7.
was a man of autonomous parts. His role in India has been studied in detail and in isolation from the rest of his career. We have a clear picture of his domestic life and some understanding of the dynamics of his personality.

There does not exist a comprehensive portrait of Wellesley the politician, either in Britain or Ireland. His career as Foreign secretary also calls for more detailed analysis.

Wellesley shared the values and standards of an age which produced some of Britain's greatest statesmen and many prominent but frivolous personalities. He demonstrated qualities of leadership not inferior to those of most of his peers. Wellesley's frailties were easily detected: intense personal feelings, positive and negative alike; a conviction of intellectual superiority which, while undoubtedly correct, made him unsuitable for cabinet politics; an expensive and ultimately ruinous penchant for ostentatious display which the age often encouraged but seldom forgave when funds ran out; a love of the classics which prompted speeches too long and too ornate for an increasingly business-minded parliament; a passionate devotion to the objective of promoting the Wellesley family's prestige, occasionally undermined by bitter intrafamily feuds; a dedication to public service so intense that frustration in his objectives made Wellesley morose and
bitter. Wellesley's involvement in British and Irish public affairs from 1781 to 1842 can be seen as a study of the dynamics of the politics of the era.

II. Scope and Objectives

This study of Wellesley's role in Irish and then British politics may be divided into three phases. The first, which begins in 1781, closes with his departure for India late in 1797. The second, brief but tumultuous, spans the years 1806 to 1812, when an unsuccessful bid for the premiership sent him into a partly inevitable and partly self-imposed decade of isolation and frustration. The third period, including two stints as Lord Lieutenant in Ireland, finally terminated with retirement from public affairs in 1835. Two factors, age and a nation perhaps eager to enlist the services of younger men, far more than a disposition on Wellesley's part to play the role of elder statesman, determined that he devote his final years to the classics and to conversation.

In each of the three major periods of his involvement in British and Irish politics Wellesley demonstrated a capacity to repair his political (but not his financial) fortunes and to play important and different roles in the life of the nation. Until 1797, as the Earl of Mornington,
he struggled to secure the approbation and affection of William Pitt, to make himself a member of the inner circle of Pitt's disciples, and to appropriate to himself the offices and honours which Pitt could bestow. His participation in the Irish house of Lords was cut short by an ambition to make his mark in the British house of Commons. His impact on the deliberations at Westminster was modest, but his close friends the Grenvilles constituted an almost inexhaustible reservoir of timely assistance, encouragement, and admonition for this ambitious Irish politician. Mornington was more successful in laying the foundations of a parliamentary interest comprising family and a few friends, and he developed to a dangerous degree those habits of lavish expenditure for public and private purposes which would place him at the mercy of creditors for most of the remainder of his life. Office hunting became a device to satisfy personal ambition and to meet financial obligations; but higher office required ever greater expenditures.

In 1797 Pitt extended an offer for the governorship of Bengal to Mornington in order to settle rash commitments and perhaps to silence his young client's intemperate and incessant petitions: Mornington accepted the offer and set sail for India to vindicate his conviction that he could wield immense authority in the east for the
good of the empire. He returned to Britain solvent and supremely confident that the home islands should share the benefits of his leadership capabilities. Under the "pinchbeck" Irish title of Marquess Wellesley he bid for leadership of the Pittites. His ambitions were foiled by Pittite disintegration in the wake of Pitt's death in January 1806. This disintegration was only one factor which made Wellesley's life miserable. The emergence of a series of impeachment charges related to his alleged defiance of the regulations and wishes of the East India company and a gradual erosion of support on the part of influential politicians who claimed to see in Wellesley's behaviour an ill-concealed conviction of their inferiority and incompetence also contributed to his isolation.

Adversity on this scale might have induced many men to retire from public life. Wellesley was determined to vindicate his reputation. His inflated self-esteem and his sense of missionary zeal on behalf of his opinions, however, confounded his remaining friends and his family. Bouts of despair, inept tactics, and outburst of vituperation directed against even his closest associates delayed Wellesley's return to parliament and unwittingly abetted the pro-impeachment lobby. In 1808 he finally committed himself to two policies which would in their turn dominate the remainder of
his public career: vigorous prosecution of the war against Napoleonic France; and vindication of Catholics' demands for full civil rights. The first objective was pursued energetically during Wellesley's brief tour as envoy to Spain in 1809 and during his longer tenure as Foreign secretary from late 1809 to early 1812. The Catholic issue predominated thereafter.

A serious and almost successful attempt to become Prime minister in May 1812 brought to a premature climax Wellesley's career as politician. Thereafter his influence ebbed. His financial condition waxed calamitous and London celebrated with ill-disguised glee Wellesley's spectacular bankruptcy in 1816. He was separated from his wife. His parliamentary interest gradually evaporated; he could not afford to sustain a coterie of followers and his diminished political prospects undermined its viability. The Wellesley of Barrackpore was overshadowed by the Wellington of Waterloo. Wellesley was frequently ill and often depressed. The public was led to anticipate his early demise and Wellesley himself set to work on an epitaph.

Wellesley did not die. He astounded most observers and perhaps himself by being recalled to public service at the end of 1821 as Irish viceroy. In the nineteenth century few men of his age could expect to marry again, hold high public
office for extended periods on two occasions, again contemplate the possibility of becoming Prime minister, direct the publication of voluminous despatches and memoirs, receive an invitation to return to India as viceroy or to take a prestigious embassy, and participate actively in the study of western and oriental classical literature. He assumed the role of statesman, moving from Tory to Whig circles and back. His enemies were gradually thinned out by death and retirement, and a younger generation, although skeptical of the value of his services as a septuagenarian, came to appreciate the scope of his achievement in India. The biographer is pleased to note that in Wellesley's case longevity was instrumental in turning an embittered and isolated politician into something approaching a respected sage, if not quite the beloved "nobleman who may justly be considered as the first statesman of the present day."  

III: Wellesley's Public Career

Impressed by Wellesley's triumphs in India, most historians who have examined his career have felt compelled to ask why he was not more successful in British and Irish politics. The easiest and perhaps therefore the most popular

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20 Pearce, Memoirs, II, 404.
answer has been that the experience of quasi-dictatorial rule in India warped Wellesley's political habits and made him unsuitable for the collegiate nature of domestic politics. This study will suggest that Wellesley's problem involved more than this and that Wellesley might well have failed to prosper even if he had enjoyed the prominence derived from his Indian viceroyalty without the attendant exposure to heady authoritarian rule. It is true that Wellesley returned from India a different man. His habits had become more expensive to maintain. His marriage was in trouble. He expected high praise and was subjected instead to the harassment of impeachment proceedings. The King found him unbearable. Beyond all this, however, was Wellesley's inability to adjust to the development of party government during the early part of the nineteenth century. Eighteenth century cabinets, it has been observed, "existed to govern rather than to legislate, and parties to sustain government rather than legislation." This was certainly the case in Ireland, where Wellesley made his political debut. Even in Great Britain, when a minister brought in legislation he quite often did so on his own initiative, and indeed sometimes without the full support of his colleagues in government. In the same way elections evolved around questions of adminis-
tration rather than legislation.21

The situation in Ireland elevated the concept of support of an administration to such a degree that there could be no room, as Mornington himself observed in 1792, for the luxury of government responsible to parliament. Mornington was trained in a system where a majority of members of parliament offered or were persuaded to offer their support to the incumbent government exclusive of the government's party affiliation. Such support was closely identified with loyalty to the Crown. The government of the day in turn proceeded to sustain itself by avoiding as far as possible innovative legislation or provocative policies. It was a difficult enough task to administer Ireland's dissatisfied and occasionally tumultuous majority by relying on a narrow Anglo-Irish class which alone enjoyed the prerequisites of political power. In the first year of his career in politics Mornington declared himself loyal to the King, opposed to the petty distinctions of ideology, prepared to serve in any honourable capacity, and hopeful that such service would be duly rewarded. Mornington never abandoned this position; he never became, even in the context of the era, a party man.

When Mornington shifted his venue to Westminster in

1784 the existence of the Pittite group temporarily solved for him the painful cunundrum of political affiliation. His attachment was to the Grenvilles, and throughout most of Mornington's public life this family was to share Mornington's inability to cope with the emergence of more highly disciplined political parties. The Grenvilles afforded Mornington a natural entree into the select and exciting world of Pitt's friends. Mornington ceased to worry about his position in the Irish political system. Pitt's friends, nonetheless, did not constitute, nor conceive themselves to be, a party. Indeed the dynamism of this group, with its abundant talent, its corps of youthful and ambitious politicians and its effervescence, worked to delay development of the idea that government comprised a party dependent on the house of Commons rather than the Crown. Pitt himself came to power in the first instance by relying on the strength of the Crown, which in turn defied the somewhat inarticulate sentiment of the house of Commons and installed him in office.22 Pitt's subsequent successes obscured this embarrassing beginning. He remained loyal to the King, and the King in turn reposed such trust in him that he survived

two decades in office, an almost unprecedented feat. Mornington was the King's man by virtue of being a Pittite, a convenient status for one who kept a hand in British and Irish affairs during this most confusing period.

Pitt's death confirmed that his disciples did not constitute so much a popular party as a group of talented individuals recruited by their leader to superintend a program of national recovery. Even before Pitt died his colleagues had begun to move in different directions. The Grenvillites reemphasised their role as a family interest. The Portland Whigs, who had joined Pitt in 1794 in support of a policy of prosecuting the war against France with vigor, attempted to supply an ideology to complement the professional administrative expertise of the veteran Pittites. As early as 1802 George Canning had sought to create a cohesive political interest which would incorporate Pitt's policies, whether Pitt himself adhered or not. After Pitt's death in January 1806 all of these elements moved in the direction of constructing a political party based on the support of parliament rather than on that of the aging King. 23

Wellesley's return from India coincided with Pitt's demise and with the resulting disarray of his disciples. Grenville,
Wellesley's closest Pittite friend, had already forged an alliance with the Whigs and some Foxites. By doing so he had demonstrated opposition to Pitt's wishes to maintain the royal connection even at the cost of suspending the campaign for Catholic relief. He had also identified himself indirectly with those most eager to press impeachment charges against Wellesley. Canning, whose talents Wellesley had come to appreciate prior to departing Britain, also declared his independence from the Crown. Another colleague, Addington, had stumbled into the unpopular treaty of Amiens. Wellesley's primary objectives isolated him as a result from all Pittite factions; vigorous prosecution of the war, service to the Crown, and defence of his Indian achievements made difficult a political liaison with Addington, Canning and Grenville respectively.

Wellesley's career after his return from India was dominated by a restless and far from satisfying search for a group of potential leaders willing to coalesce on the principle of service to the Crown. Unlike many others, Wellesley never attempted to conceal his desire to hold office, and perhaps his campaigns to become Prime minister so alienated others that he was bound to be disappointed. When in office he often ignored the cabinet and acted upon the principle of accountability exclusively to the King. Unfortunately
neither George III nor George IV was inclined to subvert the principle of collective cabinet responsibility, although Wellesley was encouraged in 1811 and early 1812 to believe that the Prince Regent would commend to him the management of political affairs, even if he could not construct a cabinet adequate to guarantee parliamentary support.

The year 1812 proved decisive. On two occasions it appeared that Wellesley would be invited to form a government. When Spencer Perceval was assassinated in May Wellesley and Canning tried desperately to construct a government which would draw from both Whigs and Tories and dedicate itself to serving the Crown. But Wellesley lacked friends and the Regent himself proved a weak reed. Lord Liverpool survived, to his own and Wellesley's astonishment.24 Thereafter the chance that a coalition of Wellesleyites and Canningites supported by gentlemen of independent principles could take office inexorably declined. The crown's attenuated influence made increasingly remote any prospect of an alternative to legislative support. "Broadbottom" ministries invited aspiring and talented younger political figures to compete for a limited number of spaces at the top.25 Unable to endure


the restrictions inherent in a cabinet government increasingly dependent on parliamentary opinion or to settle for an inferior position in any government hierarchy, Wellesley disqualified himself from party activity.

The hiatus in public service between 1812 and 1821 saw Wellesley in his most depressed condition. His faction in parliament, assiduously constructed over the course of thirty years and composed entirely of family and a few close friends, became a buffer, along with similar groups, between the two principal party coalitions. As they became more cohesive Wellesley's leverage decreased. By 1816 Wellesley's group had virtually disappeared. Canning disbanded his interest. Thereafter independent groups such as the Huskissonians from 1828 to 1830 and the Peelites from 1846 to 1859 attempted to function as an alternative to the Whigs and Tories. They failed and the crown was denied an independent role. Waiting in the wings to serve the nation by remaining above the clamor of partisan politics, Wellesley instead became an anachronism.

The flaw in Wellesley's perspective did not prove fatal to his career. Wellesley misunderstood or chose to resist the implications inherent in the development of

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legislative groups based on a shared ideology. He had, however, a clearer idea than most of the role of the Crown as the executive and legislative agent of the body politic. In the final decade of the eighteenth century he warned Pitt that the King was none other than the agent of the public will, and that the King's government must inevitably draw its legitimacy from the will of the legislature.27 There was the danger that a profound split between Crown and people might develop. By 1812 it was clear to Wellesley that in Ireland the Catholic majority could not forever be denied the right to serve as ministers of the Crown. If the Crown would not see that a split with the people could be resolved in the final instance only by concessions on its part, then some force must be applied to secure that end. Wellesley warned Liverpool that "the duty of loyalty and affection towards a British sovereign does not consist in submissive obedience even to the honest prejudices or errors of the royal mind, but rather in respectful endeavours to remove these prejudices, by free advice in council, and by temperate remonstrance in parliament."28

27 Foord, Opposition, pp. 450-51.

In 1821 he was called to the office of Irish Lord Lieutenant. He set out to reconcile King and people, paying rather less attention to the dynamics of politics in a ministry in which "Catholics" and "Protestants" competed for ascendancy. He continued to view himself as the servant of the Crown and not necessarily its principal ministers. In an Ireland vexed by tithe agitation, periodic famine, agitation for full political rights and a new class of Catholic leaders, Wellesley's self portrait as administrator rather than legislator was perhaps the best that could be devised. Neither religious faction was pleased; high expectations on one side and fear of reform on the other guaranteed this. Wellesley claimed to see the way clear to a pacified Ireland and devoted much time to blaming Whitehall for all his failures. He endured, none-theless, and even returned under the Whigs as a septuagenarian to make one final attempt to still the Irish waters. His incessant complaining must be balanced by noting that when Melbourne and the Whigs returned to power in 1835 Wellesley was mortified to be denied the Irish post. He never forgave Melbourne the insult and eventually returned his proxy to the Tories.

Resignation and reconciliation marked Wellesley's final years. So long a life in the public limelight left
him remarkably little time for that type of introspection which a man who reaches his eighty-second birthday can normally expect to enjoy. He never ceased to petition for higher honours, although he refused to accept them in a moment of pique in 1827. Apart from the pathetic correspondence concerning all this, the evidence related to Wellesley's final years attests to the truth of the axiom that all comes to him who waits or who lives long enough. The East India company eased financial pressures by assuming his debts. His wit became a subject of happy commentary. His second wife supplied comfort, understanding, companionship, and a ready access to the crown. His illegitimate children ceased to pester him and his brother Arthur and he were reconciled. Above all, he retained an acumen and zest for learning and vindicated a judgement of seventy years' vintage which held him to be one of the finest classical scholars of the age.

Wellesley, the man of many parts, left an uncertain impression on the political developments and institutions of his age. This mark was far from negligible, but its parameters are not yet clearly defined. This study is a contribution to the task of refurbishing Wellesley's political image, warts and all.
CHAPTER II: THE WELLESLEY HERITAGE
I. Parents and Pedigree

The family into which the future Marquess Wellesley was born in the spring of 1760 constituted part of the Anglo-Irish gentry which traced its origins to England and Norman roots. Towards the end of his life the Marquess constructed a pedigree supporting claims that the family was descended from King Edward I. Wellesley secured authentication of this from Ulster King of Arms.¹ More likely the Wellesleys accompanied Henry II to Ireland, perhaps with their head of household as standard-bearer to the King.² In 1339 one Sir William de Wellesley was summoned to parliament as a baron. He and his offspring, by dint of royal service and profitable marriages, gained large estates in Kildare and Meath. By the early eighteenth century the system of marriages had secured for the Wellesleys a respectable niche in that cluster of families which comprised an untitled but prominent gentry identified with the English connection yet separated from England by centuries of permanent residence.


in the Irish countryside. In 1728 Garrett Wesley, as the surname was frequently spelled at the beginning of the eighteenth century, died without issue.\(^3\) Richard Cowley (or Colley) succeeded to the whole of his cousin's estate, including Dangan castle and large Meath properties, and to control of the borough of Trim. This patrimony comprised fertile lands along the gentle Boyne situated less than twenty-five miles from Dublin and shouldered the burden of sustaining the fiscal extravagances of the future Marquess.

The Colley family came into the Wellesley inheritance by virtue of ancient marital connections. During the Stuart era the marriage of a Wellesley heir to Elizabeth Cowley of Castle Carberry was only the most recent of several marriages involving both families. The Colley pedigree was much the same as that of the Wellesley clan itself. By assuming the Wellesley name and crest upon succeeding to his cousin's properties, Richard Colley did little violence to genealogy. He confirmed the happy

\(^3\)A tradition has persisted that the Wellesleys of Ireland and the Wesleys identified with Methodism in England were connected. During the late nineteenth century such a relationship was sanctified by an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography. A copious footnote on p. 6 of Vol. I of Elizabeth Longford's biography of the Duke of Wellington provides convincing evidence that there was no such connection. Her conclusion is based in large part on a fine piece of historical detective work by Charles Evans, published in Notes and Queries, June 1948.
union by siring as heir Garret (or Garrett) Wellesley, father of the Marquess and himself destined to become first Earl of Mornington. 4

Not a great deal is known of Richard Colley Wellesley, who as heir to the Wellesley properties set in motion the spectacular subsequent augmentation to the family's store of fame and the equally impressive diminution of the ancestral properties. A graduate of Trinity college, he represented the borough of Trim from 1729 to 1746. In that year he entered the Irish peerage as first Baron Mornington. The honour need not be attributed to any particular contribution to the nation on his part. As heir to the Meath properties and owner in his own right of the Colley estates in Kildare, the new Baron was a man of some weight in the provinces. He may have earned the gratitude of the Crown by steady support of government. The evidence, however, is scanty. Baron Mornington apparently did establish a reputation as an improving landlord. The undulating terrain of Dangan, well watered and fertile, invited improvement in the mode appealing to eighteenth century landlords. Between

hillocks whose sharp ridges had invited the Normans to lay the foundations of the first Dangan fortress the new landlord straightened the stream, drained and expanded the grazing land, constructed ponds, and planted trees in stately rows. Reconstruction of the castle itself was soon begun and the lovely land eventually hosted gay groups from Dublin; they found the opportunity to avail themselves of Wellesley hospitality too enticing to resist. The Baron's grandson would condemn these expenditures as frivolous, but he proceeded to reproduce the environment on the banks of the Hoogly.  

To Richard Colley Wellesley must also go credit for a social conscience. In 1748, perhaps to commemorate his peerage, he constructed in Trim a charter working school for some fifty children.  

To his son Garret, on the other hand, he may not have bequeathed much more than a highly developed appreciation for music. The image of the first Earl Mornington, as Garret Wellesley became in 1760, has been prejudiced by Marquess Wellesley's characterisation.


of his parents as "frivolous and careless personages." Yet the first Earl was not without talent. Certainly there was a "touch of musical genius" in him; even as a young child he entertained his parents' guests by playing the violin in Corelli concerti and by writing a minuet, duet, and andante. His passion for music led him to compose sonatas. His glee "Here in Cool Groot" and "Gently Hear Me, Charming Maid," are still known to cognoscenti of this type of music. He was also proficient at the harpsichord and organ and composed some church music still played today. In 1764 he received the degree of doctor of music. He became a prominent patron of the arts in Dublin at a time when the capital was establishing a reputation as a cultural center, and he dedicated a portion of the family's assets to founding a musical academy. The Oxford Companion to Music records Mornington to have been a man of cool courage, "the first member of the British aristocracy who dared to walk through the streets of London openly and unashamedly

7 Muriel Wellesley, Wellington, p. 4.
9 DNB, XX, 115.
carrying a violin case."  

Some confusion surrounds the second Baron Mornington's elevation to an earldom in 1760. The peerage has often been described as a gift of George III in appreciation of Mornington's musical talents. This is not correct, for the peerage was bestowed shortly before George II died in 1760. George II also enjoyed chamber music, and there is a temptation to retain the explanation and simply to exchange monarchs. More likely the peerage was not connected to music at all.

At the death of his father in 1758 the Baron Mornington's income was estimated at £10,000 per annum. His wealth did not compare favourably to the Conollys of Castletown or to peers such as Leinster and Downshire, but it did place solidly in the second rank.  

He was, moreover, very active in parliament between February 1758 when he took his oaths as a

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12. An illuminating comparison is invited by examining A. P. W. Malcolmson's "The Earl of Clermont: A Forgotten C. Monaghan Magnate of the Late Eighteenth Century," Clogher Record, VIII (1973), 19-72. Malcolmson notes that with an income from Irish estates of some £10,000 to £15,000 per annum Clermont "undoubtedly" ranked "among the richest men in Ireland." (p. 47). Others were richer than he, but even such men as Thomas Conolly and the Second Duke of Leinster usually experienced short term financial embarrassments which led to enforced sales of land or the shouldering of an uneconomic volume of debt.
member of the Irish house of Lords and the grant of the peerage two years later. In a later period Mornington would play a moderately active role as an opponent to the Irish portion of certain Tory ministries of the early part of the reign of George III. During the first two years, however, he seems to have been active in support of the government of the day and to have attended the house of Lords fairly steadily. In an age when such attendance was limited to a relatively small number of peers perhaps Mornington made a mark in the world of public affairs which advisors to George II considered worthy of some reward. And in the context of a system in which stable administrations in Ireland depended upon a liberal dispensation of pensions and honours, the elevation of Baron Mornington to an Irish earldom may not have been considered too high a price to pay to encourage expressions of sympathy and demonstrations of support from the aristocratic musician.

Another factor may have influenced the grant of the earldom. In February 1759 Mornington married Anne Hill, daughter of Arthur Hill of Belvoir, county Down. Hill took the surname Trevor upon succeeding to the estate of his grandfather Sir John Trevor. Hill-Trevor was also declared

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13Journal of the Irish House of Lords, IV (1758), 110.
heir presumptive in the absence of offspring to the title of his nephew, Will Hill, who had been created first Viscount Hillsborough in the Irish peerage in 1751. For all his excellent connections and favourable prospects Hill-Trevor was reported to be a man of limited resources. A story was told by a frequent visitor to Dungannon castle that when Baron Mornington learned that Anne's father was not in a position to provide a dowry he resolved to supply one himself. This appears apocryphal. A deed from Hill-Trevor to Mornington suggests that Anne's father succeeded in pledging some £10,000 to provide an income for Anne. Two years later Mornington leased certain of his own estate lands to the Hill-Trevors; perhaps this was connected to the dowry settlement. Whatever the state of his own finances, Hill-Trevor was entrusted with the care of the Irish exchequer in 1755 and 1756 and was raised to the rank of first Baron Dungannon in the second creation in 1766.

Hill-Trevor's nephew Hillsborough was a man of considerably greater importance, an influential Irish landlord

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14 DNB, IX, 878.


16 DNB, XIX, 1144
and even in the 1750s a prominent British and Irish politician. Newcastle thought highly of him, and he passed rapidly through a series of lesser posts between 1750 and his elevation to the British house of Lords in 1756. Subsequently he served as president of the board of Trade under Grenville and the elder Pitt. Of more immediate relevance was Hillsborough's importance on the Irish political scene. His family's estates made Hillsborough a dominant force in the populous county of Down; his preeminence was confirmed when on the death of his father in 1743 he succeeded him as Lord Lieutenant of the county. His improvements to his Irish landholdings were widely applauded at the time and have recently been analysed in detail.17 His prospects were clouded when George III succeeded to the throne; the new King mistrusted Hillsborough's judgement.18 But his parliamentary interest, estimated by the second Earl of Mornington in 1783 to include ten seats in the Irish house of Commons, was such that he remained an important force in Irish politics even when out of office.19 In a series of expensive parliamentary


18 King George III to John Robinson, 15 October 1776, printed in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Tenth Report, Appendix VI, p. 15.

19 Richard Colley Wellesley, Second Earl of Mornington, to
contests he subdued, at least temporarily, a group of county families in Down, including the Trevors, the Rawsons of Moira, and the Stewarts of Mount Stewart. In May 1790 Hillsborough had to be satisfied with a sharing the county representation with the Stewarts in an election which may have cost more than £36,000.²⁰ There were members of the Hillsborough clan who strongly opposed compromising with the Stewarts whatever the financial considerations involved, but by taking a less forward position the Hillsborough interest maintained both its financial vitality and its position as one of the largest landowners in the British Isles.

There is no evidence in the papers of Marquess Wellesley that the Hillsborough connection played an important role in his political career in Ireland after 1781. His mother, nonetheless, maintained an attachment to the Hill-Trevors and to the larger Hillsborough clan, and it was the future Marquess who in 1789 helped to rescue his grandmother Lady Dungannon from her debts. It is possible, moreover, that Hillsborough, perhaps assisted by Hill-Trevor,


played a discreet role in the advancement of the Wellesley family's fortunes. He may have assisted Mornington in securing the earldom in 1760; at any rate he fulfilled the ceremonial requirement of introducing the new Earl to the Irish house of Lords on this happy occasion. Later he would help Mornington and his wife place the young Viscount Wellesley at Eton after a scrape at Harrow. The same connection would facilitate an introduction to the Cornwallis family and a place for Arthur in India.

Mornington's choice for wife was a very young woman, sixteen at the time of marriage and only eighteen when she began to deliver children on average one every second year. In later years her eldest son referred to her as an old fossil. This characterisation was unattractive and unwarranted. Mrs. Delany rendered an early favourable verdict: "a fine young woman ... with a great deal of modesty and good humor." She added, on a second acquaintance, that Anne was likely to suffer from the consequences of an incomplete education. Her training, she observed, was "not finished enough for her to make any considerable figure, nor her

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judgement sufficient to get the better of some disadvantages he has had in his education."\textsuperscript{23} That her education was defective in a formal sense is apparent in her correspondence. She was neither frivolous nor impulsive, however, and it was not she who lacked a capacity for clearheaded thinking. Indeed, her most serious complaint was the lack of judgement displayed by her husband, whose dedication to music steadily decreased the family's resources. To her certainly belongs much of the credit for producing a family of five brilliant and four highly successful sons and two daughters who contracted respectable (if not always happy) marriages in their own right. This disciplined woman would not only survive the evaporation of her husband's fortune and even the permanent alienation of all the remaining Irish property under the calculated disendowment practiced by her eldest son, but she would live long enough to see Wellington Prime minister and be hailed as mother of the Gracchi.\textsuperscript{24}

Her letters belie any signs of fossilisation. Occasional but often decisive initiatives were calculated to affect her children's lives, but there were also letters

\textsuperscript{23}Llanover, ed., Memoirs, I, 545.

\textsuperscript{24}Brashares, "Wellesley," p. 6; Mary Granville, Life and Correspondence, entry for 3 February 1759, printed in Henry Wellesley, Baron Cowley, Diary and Correspondence (ed. P. A. Wellesley), London: Hutchison, 1930, p. 12.
"racy and full of affection and gratitude," at least until her eldest son married dangerously and disastrously.\footnote{Paul E. Roberts, India Under Wellesley (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1929), p. 304.} She can be seen driving the children, especially Richard, to overcome their various infirmities, the defects of their Irish tutoring, and the family's financial problems. She secured for Richard the best education available at the time; after all this that Wellesley should complain that she had been "frivolous" seems quite unfair.\footnote{Muriel Wellesley, Wellington, p. 4.} One can only hope that she found comfort in her advanced age in being held up to the nation as matriarch of one of its most famous families.

In comparison to his strong-willed spouse, the first Earl of Mornington indeed strikes one as frivolous. His tenure as M.P. for the busy provincial town of Trim was cut short by the death of his father in 1757, and he took his seat in the house of Lords for the first time in February 1758.\footnote{DNB, XX, 1115.} During the first decade of Mornington's participation in the deliberations of the Irish parliament the ancient relationship which bound together the College Green parliament,
Dublin castle, and Westminster were changing perceptively. The first half of the century had witnessed the institutionalisation of certain priorities and objectives designed to maintain Ireland's anomalous system of government and to sustain at the least possible cost the nation's relationship to Great Britain. At all times the first duty of the Irish executive was to create sufficient political cohesion in the Irish parliament to secure a majority for the administration's programme. In return for cooperation here the executive sustained the narrow elective basis upon which the Protestant ascendancy rested. The Irish parliament was reluctant to sunder the English connection and thus to invite a popular assault at home against its pretensions, and the Crown and Westminster as the fountainhead of honours and pensions exerted a persuasive influence over the conduct of most Irish politicians. The nation did produce leaders who looked for a dramatic reconstruction of Ireland's domestic political system and independence from Westminster. At mid-century they were few in number, and even they were reluctant to comprehend the larger consequences of their objectives. Political and economic autonomy, cultural nationalism, and religious pluralism enjoyed sufficient popularity to encourage a certain number of politicians to vindicate their honour by declaring on occasion their independence from the government.
of the day. The government could view with some equanimity this periodic exercise in non-conformity because the reservoir of those who supported was always large. The more mischievous opponents were usually silenced by a further patronage programme. The executive strove to maintain parliamentary control with the smallest possible distribution of offices, honours and pensions. Politically active peers and M.P.s sought to extract as much as they could by opposing occasionally. 28

The patronage system inevitably militated against the development of durable and viable political parties. Other factors also discouraged efforts to divide peers and M.P.s into large groups on controversial questions. Constituency politics were governed by a few predominant personal interests; the Irish house of Commons in large measure was the creation of the politically active and powerful element of the Irish peerage, assisted by Westminster through the medium of the Irish executive. Because the Irish and English privy councils enjoyed the right to veto Irish legislation, parliament and the Irish executive were often safe in supporting controversial legislation which appeared from time to time in the wake of a

groundswell of public opinion. They were confident that such measures would be put to rest by a veto cast in London.  

Prior to the amendment of Poyning's law in 1782 the house of Lords sat for approximately six to eight months every second year. This chamber was only rarely the theatre of high political drama. Attendance was usually light and a permanent government interest was constructed by a liberal dispensation of honours and offices through the undertakers' clearing house. The chamber's powers were circumscribed not only by restrictions on parliamentary activity placed on the Irish legislature by virtue of the Declaratory act of 1720 and Poyning's law, but by the fact that until 1789 the Irish house of Lords also lacked the juridical jurisdiction of its British counterpart. The opposition was almost always numerically insignificant. This opposition, as has been seen, included a few spirited peers of an independent frame of mind who pressed their demands for financial reform, legislative independence and reduction of pensions and sinecures with a zest which did something to compensate for the lack of numerical strength.

When the second Baron and later first Earl Mornington entered the Irish house of Lords in 1758 there were few in-

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dictions that the system would soon be subject to demands for radical change. Management of parliament for the first decade during which he was present continued to be entrusted to a group of prominent and skillful politicians who pledged parliament's support to government measures in return for traditional favours in the way of places, pensions and patronage. In 1761, however, the undertakers proved unable to neutralise pressure from constituencies for enactment of a bill designed to subject the house of Commons to the discipline of periodic elections. The septennial bill passed and was approved by the Irish executive; to the relief of most Irish legislators it was duly opposed by the English privy council. If the affair demonstrated the limitations of the undertaker system, however, it did not dampen the undertakers' enthusiasm for further emolument. In 1769 Charles Townshend as viceroy decided that the Irish executive should attempt to control parliament by a direct application of force and favour and should dispense with the intolerably expensive parliamentary brokers. In retaliation the undertakers secured rejection of the government's money bill, but Townshend gradually dismissed them anyway. In doing so he was forced to distribute patronage on a scale ever greater than that previously demanded by the undertakers. In

30 Ibid., p. 136.
his drive to stem the tide of patronage corruption Townshend became identified with it to a degree previously unknown. 31

Wellesley's father entered parliament, therefore as the confrontation between legislature and executive began to build dangerously. In some respects his own role in politics presaged that of his son; he was an independent whose impact on his contemporaries was rarely made through the medium of debate, and whose attendance served as a barometer of the intensity of feeling prevailing in the country. His inclination to support "efficient" government, religious toleration and measures which might in some way ameliorate the poverty of the masses carried forward to the Marquess. The father's friends and allies became those of the younger man when he entered the house of Lords in 1781. Had not the son's ties to Eton and Oxford been so strong these relationships might have played a more important role in shaping his career as an Irish politician.

Who were the reformers of the 1760s and what was the role of the first Earl of Mornington in their programme? From 1758 to 1765 Mornington is scarcely visible at all in the proceedings of the house of Lords. We know that he sat regularly during the spring of 1758 and during the session which extended from 1759 to 1760. His attendance was

31 Ibid., p. 145.
less constant in 1761 and 1762, and he played no role in debates on the septennial bill. He resumed regular attendance thereafter. Finally in December 1765 Mornington came forward to help secure passage through the house of Lords of a bill to prevent export of grain until a domestic shortage had been alleviated. The bill was certainly not an invitation to rebel against the British connection. It left to the English privy council the responsibility for determining the need for implementing restrictions and in doing so generated resistance by reformers under the direction of Earl Charlemont. This proved to be something of a watershed for Mornington, for after this time Charlemont was destined to be a close friend of Mornington and much of what Mornington probably held as a political creed was reflected in Charlemont's bolder prescription for the reform of the Irish polity. 32

Charlemont's rise to prominence in the Irish house of Lords coincided with Mornington's entry into parliament. 33 For his success in reconciling Irish parties during the great eighteenth century conflict against France from 1756 to 1763 and for his mobilisation of support for the empire

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32 Lords Journal, IV (1765), 359.

33 The DNB does not advert to the first Earl of Mornington's career in the Irish House of Lords and information from those few sources which refer to him is extremely fragmentary. The Marquess would be careful to leave a complete record.
he was awarded an earldom in 1763. He was alienated from the
government immediately thereafter and spent considerable time
in London. He continued to take an active interest in Irish
affairs, however, and at length returned to Ireland about
1770. His return coincided with Mornington's most active
period in the Irish house of Lords. The two events are almost
certainly connected even if the degree of interdependence cannot
be established with any certainty. Mornington, who had tended
to plow his own furough, became part of the small band
dedicated to pressing for thoroughgoing reform in Ireland.

Well before this Mornington made a firm decision to
abandon the idea of constant residence at Dangan. In 1761
he moved the family from Grafton Street, where they had
resided during their Dublin visits, to a large house on
Upper Merrion street. In 1764 he leased a large lot in
College green to build a "grand and ornamental house."
Dangan benefitted throughout this time from a program of
substantial improvements to the acreage but not to the
house. When Arthur Young visited Ireland in 1776 he was
impressed by the management of the lands at Dangan.34 For
Mornington, however, Dangan had become a source of income
and not much more. The scheme established in the 1730s and

34C. C. Ellison, "Notes on the Rise and Fall of a Great
Meath Estate: The House of Wellesley," Riocht na Midhe,
III (1966), 324-25.
1740s in which the castle was surrounded by islands graced by waterfowl, pillars and monuments, was allowed to decay. Mornington preferred Dublin, where he had responsibilities in the field of music. Perhaps proximity to the parliament in College green heightened his interest in the great events of the nation in this exciting period.

Until Charlemont determined to return to Dublin permanently he assisted the Earl as the occasion permitted. In 1766 he assisted Charlemont on some procedural matters debated in the upper chamber. He supported enactment of an Octennial bill and attended constantly during the spring of 1769 when the undertakers demonstrated the extent of their power. He betrayed unhappiness when Townshend began to defy the undertakers by recourse to the creation of several new peers and to his own extravagant increase in places and pensions awarded. At first it appeared that Townshend would have his way; after all, the undertakers were no body upon which to construct a new era of reform. But the viceroy rescued Charlemont, Mornington and their friends from the danger of a futile minority status by insisting that the journals of both houses reflect his considered opinion that rejection of the privy council's money bill constituted a

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clear violation of the appropriate provisions of Poyning's law. Townshend had gone too far, and Mornington joined sixteen other peers in signing a protest against the alleged breach of the privileges of the house of Lords.\textsuperscript{36}

For the next five years Mornington's name was frequently attached to protests against viceregal assaults on the prerogatives of the upper chamber and against Townshend's flagrant efforts to corrupt the Irish legislature. Parliament was prorogued for successive three month intervals until early 1771. On that occasion he joined Charlemont and others in condemning Townshend for having prorogued parliament during a period of national crisis and for clinging to office in defiance of Irish public opinion.\textsuperscript{37} The protest was sharp in tone. Townshend, whom they accused of acting "in contempt of all forms of business and rules of decency" demonstrated indirectly that his lavish patronage policies had worked: a complimentary address carried. But majorities were small and public indignation mounted steadily. Mornington supported the attack on the viceroy until Townshend was forced to retire in September 1772.

Townshend's return to England also marked the end of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36}Irish Lords Journal, IV (1771), 551.
\item \textsuperscript{37}Ibid., pp. 545-46.
\end{itemize}
the most active phase of the first Earl of Mornington's career in politics. Viscount Wellesley, by this time aged twelve and subject to the hazards and vagaries of Irish grammar schools, would have been old enough to understand only imperfectly the great controversies generated by Townshend's behaviour. It appears that Lord Mornington for his part now began to betray symptoms of serious illness. He took his seat in the house of Lords only occasionally, apparently did not speak at all, and failed to affix his name to the protests fashioned by his allies of the recent past. He never sat again after parliament was prorogued in May 1776.

II: Family Finances on the Eve of Wellesley's Majority

Mornington's ill-health, if that is what explains his retirement from a modest but useful role as a patriot peer, may well have been acerbated by the family's seriously diminished financial reserves. The Wellesley family was not bankrupt by 1775, but the large income of earlier years had been diverted for the most part to Mornington's numerous creditors. It is useful to examine with some care the fiscal situation of the family on the eve of the first Earl's demise. The need to cope with the prospect of bankruptcy was to force Wellesley to abandon his studies at Oxford, or at least the
young man would explain his sudden return to Ireland on these grounds. Wellesley was destined to devote considerable time to coping with financial embarrassments during the remainder of his life. Despite the immense pecuniary advantages afforded by his tenure in India, Wellesley never escaped that nightmare of financial collapse which he claimed he had first faced in 1781. One of the saddest incidental features of his Irish connection was the steady and inexorable diminution of the Wellesley properties. This would culminate in the sale and destruction of Dangan castle after 1808 and in the liquidation of all the ancient Wellesley properties in 1816.

When the second Baron Mornington inherited his father's estates in 1758 it was reported that they produced an annual income of slightly more than £7,000. There were few encumbrances and the young nobleman could dismiss from his mind such unpleasantries as undue financial restraint. Between 1758 and 1780 the income extracted from the Meath and Kildare estates seems to have changed little. Mornington's agent declared in 1780 that the total revenue was some £7821, or some £500 higher than a quarter century earlier. The increase, although modest, was satisfactory in terms of

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38 Mornington to Lyndon, 7 October 1780, printed in Anon., "Some Letters of the Mornington Family, 1780-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue," County Kildare Archaeological
of contemporary standards. By this time the first Earl lived almost constantly in Dublin and rarely visited either his Meath or Kildare properties. He mustered, therefore, be considered an absentee landlord especially in the context of his disinclination to business. The great expansion in the Irish economy which attended Irish legislative independence was just beginning and had not yet made a decisive impact upon the income potential of many Irish estates. The great expansion in the Irish economy which attended Irish legislative independence was just beginning and had not yet made a decisive impact upon the income potential of many Irish estates. 39

Unfortunately for the family's future comfort, Mornington began to borrow heavily against his properties about 1765. His family was growing rapidly and his decision to reside constantly in Dublin prompted the purchase of the large house on Merrion Square. In June 1767 he assigned to his creditors two townlands near Trim, a small transaction affecting perhaps less than ten percent of his Meath holdings. The lease of the town and lands of Tankardstown, county Kildare, in October 1769, was much larger and constituted a transfer of the revenues of the bulk of his Kildare estates to parties who had extended personal loans to him earlier

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Society Journal, XII, 32. All sums are computed in English currency unless otherwise noted.

39 Ibid., p. 67.

40 Leases of County Meath Lands in Clonmahon and Clondogan in June 1767, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland MSS D778, f. 197.
in the decade. Between 1769 and 1780 Mornington mortgaged all but a small portion of his Kildare estates to Richard Fairfield to meet annual interest payments of £1250. The remaining income was an insignificant £90, but there were prospects that some of the leases would fall in at an early date and that the income of the Kildare properties could be increased.

Nor were the larger Meath estates unencumbered by 1780. Mornington's diligent agent estimated in 1780 that he had incurred more than £16,000 in debts on his master's behalf, and that the interest must be paid out of the annual receipts of the Meath properties; these revenues were estimated at £6,300. An additional £2,500 in interest due on personal loans was covered by an equivalent income from notes, securities and scattered minor investments. In effect, therefore, Mornington bequeathed to his survivors in 1781 an annual income of £8,800, from which were made annual deductions of £2,500 in personal obligations, £800 to meet the interest on £16,000 in secured debts, and £3,000 in estate costs and miscellaneous personal expenses. This left an annual net in-

41 Lease of Town and Lands of Tankardstown, County Kildare, 5 October 1769, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MSS 23, n. 37.

come of £2,500. 43

The second Earl Mornington did not, then inherit a bankrupt estate. His own subsequent financial embarrassments encouraged him to suggest that he had, and twenty years later he had probably convinced himself that this was the case. Indeed, as the agent Mr. Lyndon wrote to the new Earl upon the occasion of the death of his father, there was every hope of restoring financial viability. Prospects for substantial increase in income from the Kildare properties were good. The house on Merrion square was likely to produce £4,300 upon sale. If applied to the debts outstanding, and with the expenses of the first Earl now at an end, this would reduce total annual obligations to £3,100 against an annual income three times that amount. Lyndon saw no reason why £1,800 could not be applied annually to a sinking fund, with every prospect of extinguishing the secured debts in six years. After deducting estate expenses, the family would enjoy an unencumbered income of slightly more than £3,000. 44

Lyndon's formula neglected to accommodate the family's


capacity to spend money. Lyndon should have realised that the young heir would find the income too small; the first Earl shortly before his death complained loudly that the prospect of surviving on a similar amount was "impossible unless absolute necessity compels it." In addition to the £800 which Richard received while at Eton and Oxford and the £400 pen money conceded to Lady Mornington, Mornington doubted that he could survive on less than £3,000 for himself. On a smaller amount he could not contemplate how "to live genteely and to be able to educate my six younger children, one of them a girl between 12 and 13 who will require many masters, which is expensive but must be done." His wife and he had "been very much stinted" and were "not able to appear in any degree as we ought." 45

These were the complaints of the first Earl less than a year before his death. Richard's tastes if anything were far more extravagant. It is clear that he abandoned Oxford not only because of the danger of bankruptcy in the family's finances but because his own ambitions, now about to manifest themselves, required resources far in excess of anything the family's long suffering estate agent planned to make available. In 1761, when Richard came home to claim his title,

the Wellesleys were no more than one of many Irish families who comprised the aristocracy and gentry who participated in the government of Ireland without at the same time enjoying access to the highest ranks of society represented by the great magnates. The second Earl Mornington was determined to force entry into these higher circles, not only in Dublin but in London as well. To do this he would need money, the cooperation of his family, and friends in the right places.

III: Wellesley's Youth

"I don't think," wrote Richard's father to his estate agent in 1780, "I can give my son who is likely to make a figure in the world from his great abilities a less allowance than what I have mentioned." This allowance of £800 was far less than that enjoyed by many young noblemen at Oxford. It represented, nonetheless, more than a quarter of the Wellesley family's disposable income at that time. It suggests, contrary to the Marquess' aspersions against his parents later on, that a considerable and even heroic effort was being made to launch the eldest son in a promising public career.

Richard Colley Wellesley, the oldest of a family of five sons and three daughters, was born 20 June 1760 at

46 Ibid., p. 32.
the family residence on Grafton street in Dublin. He spent such time as was not devoted to Dangan or to school at the family's larger residence on Merrion square, a fine house which contributed its share to his father's comfort and pecuniary embarrassments. Richard was sent off to boarding school in Portarlington at age five. Portarlington had long been a rendezvous for French Huguenot refugees. The school comprised some twenty-five children of all ages. It was probably better than the average institution of its type, and the grounding it promised to give in the French language and French literature may have been its chief recommendation. For the Countess of Mornington its primary attraction was probably the distance from Dublin and Trim; she was understandably eager that young Richard not be infected with his father's ruinous fondness for music.

When the daughter of the headmistress married an Anglican clergyman and proceeded to establish a school of her own, Wellesley transferred there.

Did young Richard's education encourage that combination of decisiveness, addiction to the classics, and vanity which governed the Marquess in later years? We know from accounts

47 Guedalla, Wellington, p. 79.

of his earliest years in school contributed at Wellesley's invitation at the end of his long public career that he was seen to be someone quite special very early in his life. He displayed a ready command of the fine points of grammar and simultaneously filled the role of class leader and teacher's favourite. He was addicted to pranks which played heavily on human foibles and tended to shy away from sports. We know that he pursued reading, composition, geography and French, studied the bible and took the leading part in simple plays. The regimen was far from frivolous, judged by the product. By the time he left school at age eleven he claimed to have been exposed in a meaningful way to Shakespeare, to the novels of prominent Irish and English writers, and to the Arabian Nights, the favourite book of his youth. Because he was quick to learn, he was permitted to teach others. Wellesley's contemporaries would remember his playfulness, his fine penmanship, his poise, and his imagination. He does not seem to have been exposed to the classics in a meaningful way during this period. His


50 Wellesley, Memoir, BM, Wellesley MSS 37416, f. 349; Rev. D. Willis and Family to Wellesley, n. d., BM, Wellesley MSS 37316, f. 51; Dan Webber to Wellesley, 20 December 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37316, f. 45.
early education, in sum, was not distinguished by an exposure to exceptional techniques and subject matter. But the young scholar seems to have found in it sufficient stimulus for his academic inclinations and adequate preparation for Eton.

Viscount Wellesley entered Harrow at age eleven. It proved to be an unfortunate choice but it was made on that basis of personal connections which inevitably determined one's access to so many institutions and offices in that age. Lord Mornington somewhere had made the acquaintance of the Reverend Robert Carey Sumner, D. D., a friend of Samuel Johnson and author of several obscure tracts. Under Sumner's headmastership Harrow was a rapidly expanding institution, but it lacked the prestige of Eton and some other schools. Wellesley was installed in Dr. Sumner's house, no doubt a mark of special attention. Sumner died shortly after Wellesley arrived, and his passing precipitated a succession crisis in which the student body took an active and inelegant part on behalf on an unsuccessful contender. In a memoir written many decades later Wellesley claims that the students, acting as an ad hoc government controlling both town and school at the height of the dispute, placed the young Irishman in a carriage, terrorised the

51 Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 5-6.
townspeople and destroyed another carriage. He was rescued from unimaginable consequences by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Frederick Cornwallis.  

Cornwallis secured Wellesley's admission to Eton. No greater favour was ever done on Wellesley's behalf. The intervention of the Archbishop was facilitated by that complex network of family ties which in other areas guaranteed the durability of Ireland's minority ruling class. The Archbishop was a friend of the Earl of Hillsborough, cousin to the Countess of Mornington. The young Wellesley had met Hillsborough on several occasions. Hillsborough in turn had introduced Wellesley to the Archbishop. The student therefore was translated from Harrow to the quieter pastures of Eton. It was the Archbishop's kind recommendation against the child's rather disturbing record at Harrow. Cornwallis emerged victorious of course and was splendidly vindicated.

Wellesley remained seven years at Eton and in many respects never quit it. He returned to haunt its halls and meadows time and again after India and lies buried under the

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53 Wellesley, Memoir, BM, Wellesley MSS 37416, f. 348.
floor of the ante-chapel. Wellesley's years at Eton were crucial. His fine mind was challenged beyond anything his previous educational experience had done. There he made the most enduring and politically most important friendships of his entire life. Wellesley later claimed that Eton provided the core of his training for citizenship: "to be the subject of a limited Protestant monarchy, and to be a dutiful member of the Protestant episcopal church," tempted neither by the despotism of St. Petersburg nor "any fantastic fabric of visionary and impractical self-government" such as America. He mastered the standards of prose and declamation, and he developed a mode of thought and expression which impressed India and often exasperated Westminster. "My whole fame, my whole character, whatever success has attended my life," he wrote in retrospect, "whatever I can hope to be hereafter," were "drawn from that . . . sacred and hallowed spring."

What made Eton so "sacred and hallowed" to Wellesley? During the eighteenth century Eton was perhaps the only public school to rise steadily in prestige. It grew steadily and often rapidly in size as well and became increasingly a

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54 Wellesley to Henry Richard, Baron Holland, 13 November 1839, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 181.

preserve of aristocratic families. The patronage of George III encouraged the influence of the Tory element, which "fought for the privilege of paying many times what a good education was worth," or so one observer has put it. It was also distinguished from other public schools by the strength of the students' system of self-government. Older boys ruled like "feudal oligarchs" and the prefects had unlimited power to inflict physical punishment. Thus the system could be extremely harsh. On the other hand, because of its size and its genteel traditions there was a "certain spaciousness of life" at Eton which allowed eccentrics to escape "the ordinary tyrannies of a public school." Undoubtedly because of the influence of alumni such as Wellesley, Eton remained well into the nineteenth century the champion of looser organisation and greater student autonomy. Even the "Dames houses" at Eton were notoriously lax and were not brought under the control of the school until the next century.

Wellesley entered Eton in 1772 and enrolled in the lower school, second division, as a nobleman. He moved to fourth form, first division, in 1774, to fifth form in 1775, and to sixth form in the summer of 1778. Because of his

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56 Ibid., p. 74.
57 Ibid., pp. 44, 77.
delicate health (on a dozen occasions during his life he feared he was dying) he took part in few sports. He excelled in the classics instead and he excelled in an age when Eton produced a triumphal succession of scholars in this field. Public schools placed a great deal of emphasis upon the classics, following John Locke's dictum that Latin was "absolutely necessary to a gentleman." The classics were considered to be "full of incitements to virtue and discouragements from vice," as Swift had observed. Nonetheless, aristocratic Eton, where learning was sometimes despised more than celebrated, demanded of the student a special inclination towards the classical past were he to absorb the lessons of Greece and Rome. And Wellesley was so inclined. The ancient Greeks became surrogate companions to him and Latin became for him a second and indeed almost the primary language. His last years were to be spent reading and rereading the classics. Even in old age he exceeded all contemporaries in the art of writing Latin verses; he astounded acquaintances by repeating whole swatches of Dante "in a pure and classical pronunciation" as if to prove that the great literature of other periods had not escaped

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58 Ibid., pp. 49-50.

59 His epitaph at Eton testifies to this; apparently he composed it late in 1841, and the first two lines capture the stately cadence of the whole: Fortunae rerumque vagis exercitus undis in gremium redeo serus Etona tuum.
him. 60 Forty years after Wellesley left Eton he was recom-

mended to the members of the education committee of the house
of Commons as the finest classical scholar of his day. 61 His

contributions to volumes of Musae Etonenses revealed an

ability to employ Greek and Latin in exhorting Britain to
destroy the French, Dutch and American conspiracy. 62

Wellesley made his first political speeches at Eton,
spicing aphorisms with the fruits of his pungent wit. The
effect was not always elevating, but there were some signal

triumphs. In 1778, his final year at Eton, Wellesley
delivered two extended recitations. One, Lord Strafford's
speech before his execution, was rendered with such pathos

as to bring the entire audience to tears. The King attended
and was deeply moved. Garrick complimented Wellesley for having

succeeded where the greatest actor of the day had failed:
to move the King to tears. Wellesley replied that Garrick

had failed because he "never spoke before him in the character

of a fallen favourite." 63 The observation was not without

60 Philip Henry Stanhope, Fifth Earl Stanhope, Notes of
Conversations with the Duke of Wellington (London: J.
Murray, 1889), pp. 169-70.


63 Butler, Eldest, p. 30.
some relevance to Wellesley's subsequent career.

Eton invited Wellesley to forge friendships with a wider circle of friends than Ireland could offer. The school's student body contained some of the most prominent politicians of the upcoming generation. For Wellesley the relationships established here were to prove central to his public career. Wellesley's shift from Harrow to Eton, prompted as it was by a prank, was nonetheless engineered by his mother. The supersession of maternal will over paternal arrangements had the effect of inviting Wellesley to join the extended Grenville clan and through it the young but promising William Pitt. They were to be his first and most intimate attachments of the early phase of his public life. At this time as well Wellesley fell under the influence of John Newport, subsequently a pillar of the Whig interest in Ireland.

Newport's relationship to Wellesley at Eton was very close indeed. Sixty years later Wellesley described Newport, whose fag he was, as "the founder of my public character. You found me an idle boy, and by your instruction and example I was made diligent and studious, and inspired with that glorious passion for solid fame ... which has raised me to a station impregnable by slander, malice, or faction."64

64Wellesley to Sir John Newport, 28 February 1840, printed
Wellesley credited Newport with teaching his parents in the course of visits to Dangan to recognise Wellesley's talents and to respect his literary pursuits. 65 Newport for all this did not remain close to Wellesley, a victim perhaps of some defect on Wellesley's part which made it difficult for him to maintain friendships at less than the level of "immoderate enthusiasm." 66

The more important close associate was William Grenville who with Newport and Wellesley established a "brotherhood" under "Mrs. Young's great tree at Eton." 67 This extraordinarily close friendship would also suffer from the strains of early nineteenth century politics; this would eliminate any incentive in later years to revive those memories of Eton which Wellesley and Newport shared. There is no doubt, nonetheless, that Grenville was the most important influence on Wellesley at Eton and later at Oxford. Grenville preceded Wellesley at Eton by two years. He was fascinated by this Irish land with his mordant wit, quick intelligence, and


65 Ibid.


67 Newport to Wellesley, 23 March 1840, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 133.
infectious vitality. Wellesley could offer Grenville nothing but congenial companionship and an invitation to visit his father's mortgaged estate. Grenville, however, could promise the immense advantages that his politically powerful family enjoyed. No one outside the clan would receive more handsome treatment from them than Wellesley.

Who was William Grenville? His relations answered for much. Grenville himself was born in 1759, the son of George Grenville, a prominent eighteenth century politician of an independent cast. The father's narrow-minded policies negated his industry and independence and the American rebellion owed much to the duties he imposed as chancellor of the exchequer in the 1760s. William inherited his father's industry, his parents' relationship to the Wyndhams and Temples, and the family's unsurpassed talent for accumulating offices, sinecures and parliamentary seats. By the time Wellesley made Grenville's acquaintance at Eton the Grenville-Temple-Wyndham clan had advanced its claims for public office to the point where it was universally recognised as a powerful independent political force. It is difficult not to conclude that Wellesley sought to emulate the Grenvilles' success as a family interest when he turned to the task of advancing the claims of his own family after abandoning his

68 DNB, VIII, 558.
The Grenvilles clearly preferred the company of each other to that of anyone else. Wellesley succeeded in securing the affection of not only young William but of the entire clan, and until his return from India they were assiduous in promoting his political claims. Fortunately for the Wellesley family's interest Grenville married Ann Pitt and thus fortified his connections with his cousin William Pitt the younger. No less important was the longtime involvement of the clan in the destinies of Ireland. William's elder brother George, Earl Temple, served as Irish viceroy in 1782 and 1783. In that capacity he favoured Wellesley and assured his inclusion in the original membership of the order of St. Patrick. Under the title of Marquis of Buckingham he returned to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant in November 1787, and presided over the Regency tumult. Through William and Buckingham Wellesley entered Pitt's circle of friends, secured office in Ireland and England, and at least indirectly put himself in a position where Pitt felt obliged to grant him office in India to satisfy claims made by the Grenville interest on Pitt's behalf. 


The entree provided for the young Wellesley by William Grenville's friendship distracts attention from the factors which originally promoted their affection for each other. At Eton the two shared a passion for the classics. Their correspondence in the two decades subsequent to the Eton and Oxford years is richest when one or the other compares the events of the day to the triumphs and calamities of Republican Rome. At Oxford Wellesley and Grenville assisted each other in their successful bids for prestigious awards. They seem to have collaborated in their amusements to an extent quite beyond the normal for two students who were two years apart in terms of seniority.

Wellesley quit Eton for Oxford at the end of 1778. The shift did not sever Wellesley's ties to Eton. Throughout his long life he remained active in Eton's affairs. He recommended faculty appointments to the Crown. He often attended school functions, awarded prizes, and as already noted

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reserved a final resting place for himself. Wellesley matriculated as a nobleman at Christ Church on 24 December 1788, his admission made smooth by a fine academic record and his useful contacts. At Oxford many of the Eton friendships and much of the same lifestyle must have been sustained, but information is slighter. Wellesley never discussed Oxford in great detail, perhaps because he abandoned his formal studies before obtaining a degree. His acquaintances recorded that the thin dormitory partitions betrayed Wellesley's recitations of Demosthenes, and his tutor William Jackson thought much of Wellesley's command of the classics. At Jackson's urging Wellesley tried for the university prize for Latin verse and triumphed in July 1780 with an elegy on the death of Captain Cook.

Wellesley remained at Oxford less than eighteen months but he widened his circle of acquaintances and broadened his knowledge of public affairs. Jackson, at that time a young classicist, later became Bishop of Oxford and remained a close friend. From Christ Church came George Canning, one

74 Maxwell-Lyte, Eton, pp. 448-49.
76 Wellesley, Primitiae, passim.
of Wellesley's closest political associates after 1805, and Robert Peel, one of his staunchest opponents. Edward Littleton, his future son-in-law and a sympathetic force in Wellesley's declining years, also attended Christ Church. None of these were Wellesley's contemporaries, however, and life revolved instead around the family and friends of William Grenville. With them Wellesley must have debated and discussed Britain's deteriorating prospects for quelling the rebellion in America and the growth of agitation for legislative independence in Ireland. The period was too brief to cause Wellesley to find in Oxford the attachment he felt to Eton. Grenville later became chancellor of the university, and upon his death the post was offered to Wellington, who had never matriculated at Oxford at all. Wellesley cannot have been amused to hear about his brother delivering a speech in Latin which he admitted having acquired in the space of a few days.

Viscount Wellesley was destined to grapple with developments on the Irish scene earlier than he had anticipated. On 24 May 1781 the first Earl of Mornington was placed in a "larger and strong inside elm coffin" and carried to the cemetery.

77 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 20.

in a hearse decorated with the appropriate ostrich feathers and velvet coverings. He was only forty-six. His eldest son was one month short of his majority. The family's finances were confused and a large collection of siblings remained to be placed in the world. The second Earl of Mornington, as he must be styled until after the triumph at Seringapatam in 1799, abandoned Oxford and returned immediately to his native land.

CHAPTER III: YOUNG POLITICIAN
After Wellesley returned from India and had overcome efforts to impeach him he must have been quietly pleased to hear his enemies complain that the Wellesley family was likely to become the most powerful in the kingdom. The alarmism reflected in this observation testifies to the dramatic difference in the prospects of the Wellesley family in 1780 and again about 1810. During his period Richard Colley Wellesley was clearly in command not only of his own destiny but of the family's fortunes as well. New glories would come to the Wellesleys after 1810 when the eldest brother's personal reputation and prospects began to fade. These later triumphs have tended to obscure the contribution made to the family's rising influence prior to 1810 by the eldest brother. Succeeding chapters of this work study the rise of the head of the family and his role in introducing the family to a fuller political life. Much therefore depended upon the strengths and weaknesses of Richard himself.

Few public figures in modern British history have suffered as much as the Marquess Wellesley from having so much of the limited attention paid to them focused on their foibles and faults. Easy explanations have too often been
treated as an adequate analysis: Wellesley was corrupted by service in India into a vain, arrogant man unfit for the collegiate character of British cabinet politics. In part the right conclusions have been drawn from the wrong premises. The premises themselves, nonetheless, are terribly important. In this chapter some of those premises are reassessed. Until 1810 the family's destiny was directly related to Richard's fortunes. It is appropriate to assess the resources at his disposal, his defects and his relationship to the rest of the Wellesley family.

II: Finances

The despatch with which Mornington abandoned Oxford and assumed the entire burden of his father's debts has always attracted favourable comment and it is no doubt well deserved. The new Earl never shirked his responsibilities, and if in meeting them he took the high road of noblesse oblige he deserves credit for bold action nonetheless. If news of the first Earl's death precipitated the rapid return to Dublin, the second Earl had other and subsidiary reasons for returning as well. A seat in the Irish house of Lords raised the attractive prospect that Mornington could perhaps play an important if yet undetermined role in the mounting constitutional crisis there. Perhaps he tired of Oxford some-
what when William Grenville finished his work there in 1780. It is clear at any rate that he was already sufficiently acquainted with his father's financial situation to know that although the patrimony was in some disarray, there was no cause to anticipate immediate bankruptcy. Mornington's financial decisions, many of them taken without a couple of months of his father's death, suggest that he was interested not only in satisfying the family's patient creditors; he was determined to appropriate additional resources to his own use. The pattern supports the view that while he was not unhappy to see his mother and his siblings disciplined by the grant of small allowances during the immediate future, he was eager to construct a base for political activity which would promote the family's interests in Ireland and even in Britain. In this perhaps Mornington was strongly influenced by the achievements of the Grenville clan. Perhaps it was a plan of long gestation. At any rate Mornington wasted no time in making it clear that he had no intention of submitting to a regimen of half-pay until the debts had been extinguished.

On one occasion the first Earl revealed a healthy skepticism of his son's objectives whenever the estates should pass to him. Writing from London to his agent Lyndon in October 1780 he betrayed some uncertainty about Richard's
approaching majority. He told Lyndon that he would not want
to grant to his son any part of the estate without at the
same time insisting that he undertake a share of the burden
of debt. "I have seen examples," he observed, "where parents
by putting everything out of their power have only procured
themselves to be ill-treated by their children." Perhaps
the Viscount would marry a woman with a good fortune, part
of which could go to clear the family's debts and another
part to provide small dowries for the two girls. Meanwhile,
he would purchase lottery tickets on some good Irish horses
and hope for a miracle.

Of course the horses failed to rescue the Wellesley
family finances. As the first Earl lay dying Lyndon launched
a campaign to persuade Richard to discipline himself to a
style of living which would not cost more than £1,500 per
year including expenses incurred on that inevitable con-
tinental tour. "I am of opinion that a young nobleman of
your Lordship's prudence," Lyndon ventured, "would not be
disposed to go into any of the fashionable vices and follies
which ruin so many young men," but would "bring home a know-

1Garret Wellesley, First Earl of Mornington to Mr. Lyndon,
7 October 1780, printed in Anon., "Some Letters of the Mor-
nington Family, 1780-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue,"
County Kildare Archaeological Society Journal, XII, 30-31.

2Ibid., p. 33.
ledge of the different constitutions and policy of the several states he visits [rather] than that of superficial parade which we find to be too often all that many young men have to show that they have traveled." Wellesley had no plans for an immediate visit to the continent, which must have relieved Lyndon. But Lyndon also seems to have worried that Wellesley would be reluctant to assume his father's debts, and he was reassured on that point as well. Unfortunately Lyndon's carefully drawn plan for six years of relatively abstemious living while the principal debts were extinguished was perfectly alien to Richard.

At the risk of some violence to the chronology of Richard's emergence as an Irish politician it is worthwhile to trace financial developments up to the point when Mornington returned from India temporarily a wealthy man. Mornington apparently conferred with his estate manager after the funeral and proceeded to Ireland immediately. Lyndon had already urged Mornington to part at once with such of the family's personal possessions as could be sold "with propriety" so as to reduce the number of "clamorous creditors." He did not think it necessary, however, to enter at once into a large-

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scale alienation of the family's properties. Mornington chose to ignore this advice; Lyndon was to be astonished to see the young Earl's capacity to spend money. Undoubtedly Mornington was under pressure to take steps immediately to silence the Irish creditors who were making life uncomfortable for the Countess. At least for the moment Lady Mornington seems to have despaired that anything could be salvaged, and she was making plans for a life of penury and perhaps even flight abroad to escape the many embarrassments. By early July, however, Mornington had inspected Dangan, assessed its potential, and decided to assume responsibility for the entire estate. On 4 July 1781 he mortgaged some of the best Meath properties for £8,000. He raised another £2,000 by sale of the Kildare properties which had been mortgaged earlier and by lease of the remaining. Part of this was used to silence the most vociferous creditors. Mornington's mother was allocated about £1500 per annum from the estate's remaining revenues to meet her expenses and those of the children. This was not a generous settlement, as the Countess was quick to tell Mornington, but it was steady

Ibid.

income and she was thankful enough for it. The remainder, in excess of £3,000, Mornington reserved to himself.

Mornington planned to retain Dangan castle and perhaps even to reside there. He embarked upon improvements to the demesne and the castle itself and advertised the great house in a short time as possessing "every appendage of ancient munificence" outside and "every article of modern luxury" within. The library and the fine chapel were refurbished. But Mornington spent little time there when ambition began to direct him towards London. His friends were apparently more impressed than he with the joys of country living, for many of them used Dangan for holidays and even honeymoons. Mornington eventually found the expense intolerable, and after 1786 Dangan began that progressive decay which terminated in a ruinous fire several decades later.

Mornington's financial burdens included more than the cost of maintaining Dangan. His plans to create a family interest in politics required money, as did two extended visits to the continent. By 1788 it was clear that

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6 Anne, Countess of Mornington, to Mornington, 13 July 1781, British Museum, Wellesley MSS 37416. Iris Butler produces the correspondence in some detail on p. 36 of Eldest.


8 Ibid.
far from arresting the alienation of the family's lands, Mornington was forced to accelerate the pace of disendowment. In that year he mortgaged most of the remaining Meath properties. In 1791 he sold the family house on Upper Merrion street for £8,000 (a good price, by Lyndon's count) and two years later sold 900 acres of Meath lands, raising £25,000 in doing so. Despite these successive alienations Wellesley's debts exceeded £26,000 when he sailed for India in late 1797.

The process continued while he was governor general. His brother William arranged to sell Dangan castle in 1803 to one Roger O'Connor. O'Connor, the leader of an anti-Orange secret society, opened Dangan to various political refugees and outlaws. He was allegedly involved in the seizure of the Galway mail coach in 1812 and was tried for the crime at Trim in 1817. He was acquitted through the efforts of Francis Burdett, but Dangan had already been ravaged. A fire, perhaps set to secure insurance proceeds,


subsequently destroyed Dangan. By this date the Wellesley connection with all Meath properties had been extinguished. In later years the Marquess referred only rarely and in disparaging terms to Dangan. His own extravagances, however, had contributed more to the destruction of both house and estate than had any other single factor.

In 1805, one the eve of his brother's return from India, William finally succeeded in extinguishing all debts. To do so he was forced to apply the £15,000 derived from suppression of the borough of Trim under terms of the act of union in 1800, Wellesley's Indian prize money, which exceeded £30,000 per annum, and a portion of his salary.\(^{13}\) It is probable that between 1781 and 1797 the second Earl of Mornington contrived to spend at least £160,000. His father had blushed at having accumulated debts one tenth as large. Despite all his expenditures he possessed almost no real property or other investments upon returning from India.\(^{14}\) His personal extravagances aside, where had Mornington spent so much money in the first phase of his career in public life? It was devoted, of course, to the ambitious but expensive objective of constructing a political interest for

\(^{13}\)Ibid.  
himself and for his family in Ireland and in Britain.

A portrait of the young ambitious politician and of the family suggests that the attempt to translate the Wellesley name from a provincial Irish peerage to a powerful force in the councils of the British nation was a formidable one. It demanded that Mornington demonstrate leadership and determination to a high degree; it required that the family remain united and subordinate to the eldest brother.

III: A "Socially Unsuccessful Temperament"

Detractors of the future Marques Wellesley, and they constitute a majority of all those who have studied the man, agree that he combined a truly first class mind with the discipline provided by an incomparable education in the classics. In 1781, when Mornington forsook the sheltered life of Oxford, his record certainly suggested that an impressive career as politician and statesman might be his. The deficiencies were apparently either modest enough or well-obscured. Many writers have professed to discern a fundamental difference between the young Mornington who begged Pitt to recognise his talents and the imperious Wellesley who returned from India half-expecting an invitation to form his own government. A closer look suggests, however, that characteristics established by the young Earl Mornington
governed the older Marquess. The portrait of the man, young and old, is dominated by tones of excitability, strong but temporary bonds of affection, and violent and irrational antipathy towards men of mediocre ability. He displayed a profound appreciation for the dynamics of institutional behaviour and human motivation. He understood power and was most comfortable when given an opportunity to exercise it. He managed men effectively and often stimulated them to perform on a level above what even their own self-esteem had seemed to suggest what they could do. On the other hand he consistently over-emphasised his own indispensability and displayed a disorienting tendency to obscure real achievement behind a frivolous pomposity. His involvement with mistresses and syncophants probably excited the mirth and venomous comments of his opponents more than they distracted him from work, but such behaviour certainly hindered his career.

Wellesley's most recent biographer, in a study which emphasises the personal rather than the political dimensions of the man, has concluded that Wellesley lacked a "socially successful temperament." His pastimes excluded heavy drinking, gambling, hunting and horseracing, and indeed all of the diversions considered socially acceptable or at least easily forgiven in his age. His frustrations were too
often relieved in a series of fulminations against his opponents. He alienated colleagues by voicing too loudly his genuine conviction that he was a superior person. His condemnations of people, policies and even institutions were sweeping. They were also devastating and often dangerously accurate. Nothing contributed more than this to his unpopularity, and such unpopularity created obstacles to advancement.

Wellesley was distressingly formal and condescending even towards the best of friends. This was not so much the case at Eton and Oxford, at least within his small circle of close friends. Later on, however, his polished prose and flattering comments, which he lavished on those he loved and trusted, were too often liable to misinterpretation as insincere. Slights on his honour, even unintentional ones, provoked a condemnation thunderous beyond reason.

When his wife, coping with accumulated debts, urged Wellesley not to refuse a share of the immense bounty obtained from the surrender of Tipu Sultan’s dominion of Mysore in South India in 1799, Mornington twisted the request from the practical one that it was into a direct affront to his

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integrity:

Don't you realise that I would never sell my name and my power for money, or for jewels, and indeed you must forgive me if I am ridiculous enough to think myself able to judge how and when I shall enrich myself, and when I am likely to be dishonoured by enriching myself at the expense of my principles.17

As if to settle the question permanently in Hyacinthe's mind, Wellesley added that women were always prepared to betray the public trust for private gain.18

Public integrity, as Wellesley thus defined it, was central to his thinking, and his conduct, tested by even a strict interpretation of this principle, "can stand the most searching light."19 Unfortunately for his career and for his private happiness, his special weakness in the area of sex was not included in his definition of morality. Even in the early 1780s his concessions to certain ladies were sufficiently notorious to prompt a strong rebuke from his closest friends about the deleterious impact of all this on his public career. Finally in 1786 the Marquess of Buckingham, William Grenville's eldest brother, took

17 Wellesley to Lady Wellesley, 7 May 1801, Carver MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 264.

18 Ibid., 15 September 1800, Carver MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 229.

19 Butler, Eldest, p. 164.
advantage of an opportunity presented by a friendly exchange
of correspondence on political matters to warn Mornington
of the need "to reconcile his private life to the public
character appropriate to his ambitions." Buckingham almost
certainly was referring in particular to the young politician's
liaison with Hyacinthe Roland, and he wondered why Mornington
should have allowed himself to veer so far from common sense.

Buckingham's warning was timely but it went unheeded.
The age tolerated extra-marital relations; if handled
properly they were even quietly celebrated. Mornington
had probably already established casual relationships at
Oxford, and this carelessness is what bothered Buckingham.
Hyacinthe was held in low esteem; her mother was thought
to be an actress. Mornington certainly did not take
Buckingham's warning seriously; five children were born of
Hyacinthe before they were married, the first one a year
after Buckingham's letter.

There were children by at least one other woman as well.
The two most remembered were raised under the name of John-
stone. Several mistresses were summoned to distract Wellesley
when his marriage to Hyacinthe collapsed after 1805. These

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21 Ibid., 10 September 1786, Fortescue MSS, I, 267.
mistresses and children burdened his time, depleted his funds, and so enraged his wife that Wellesley found himself immersed in an exceedingly acrimonious and expensive separation on the eve of his best chance to become Prime minister. At length Wellington voiced his quiet wish that his brother had been castrated. He attributed Wellesley's alleged failure as Foreign secretary to his preoccupation with ladies of low birth. From this distance, one is indeed amazed that Wellesley advanced as far as he did considering the burden these affairs imposed on his time and on his somewhat fragile constitution.

IV: Talent, Ambition, Vanity and the "Double Gilt Potato"

Apart from his problems with women, Wellesley's principal distraction stemmed from his pervasive self-esteem. The solace of attentive mistresses and the soothing advice of friends and syncophants did nothing to diminish the intensity of Wellesley's bitter conviction that his transcendent talents were constantly being circumscribed by the petty and conspiratorial actions of jealous and inferior colleagues. Wellesley's sensitivity to slights, real and imagined, has frequently been identified with his tenure in India and in particular with the ministry's decision to ask on his behalf for nothing higher than an Irish marquisate as a reward for
services rendered in directing the defeat of Tipu Sultan and the annihilation of his kingdom. No single incident in Wellesley's career has attracted so much attention and none has contributed more directly to an instinctive personal prejudice against him in the historical literature of the past one hundred fifty years. It deserves, therefore, to be reviewed in the context of its value as an expression of Wellesley's drive for recognition.

In May 1799 the defeat of Tipu Sultan was completed by the capture and sacking of Seringapatam, the capital of Mysore. This event established British paramountcy in south India, denied the French a base from which to harass the East India company, and nearly doubled the size of British possessions in India. By his preemptory demands upon the Sultan Mornington had done much to precipitate the war, and it cannot be doubted that he went to India eager to expand the size and increase the wealth of the eastern empire. For his services Mornington was given an English earldom and an Irish marquisate. The Marquess Wellesley complained violently at the time and periodically for the remainder of his life that he had been treated shabbily.

Nothing is so striking in Mornington's preparations than his reference to the chance presented to become famous. His career in Irish politics in the 1780s and in British
politics in the 1790s is dominated by petitions for office and protests that he had been neglected and his services undervalued. His appetite was insatiable; each office and honour was scarcely digested before he sought a higher place. India, when it came his way, offered a chance to bid for the highest honours that the nation could bestow. By virtue of Seringapatam Mornington thought he deserved a dukedom. The gap between his self-assessment and his reputation in the world became irreconcilable. The "double gilt potato" as he called his Irish marquisate became to him a symbol of a conspiracy to deny him that recognition he deserved.

What factors contributed to his tendency to value his services so highly and to bear his Irish marquisate as a cross for the remainder of his life. The easiest explanation is simple vanity, and most commentators have been content to treat the marquisate episode as only the clearest instance of unbridled hubris leading to ridiculous and puerile behaviour. This formula may be unjust to Wellesley for his pride was in some respects the product of certain conditions closely identified with the Irish scene. The marquisate was to him an honour unworthy of his achievements not merely because he was vain but because his milieu emphasised prejudice against his native land, the honours and offices associated with it, and the implicit and invidious comparison with
English titles. Sensitivity to these factors prompted some of Wellesley's contemporaries to emphasise their Irish background and to support an Irish nationalism. Others such as Wellesley tried to escape their Irish past. In Wellesley's case what has almost always been treated as one of Wellesley's idiosyncracies was in fact also a reflection of a desire to be identified as an Englishman.

The double gilt potato episode which illuminates all this dated from the summer prior to Mornington's departure for India. In 1797, after several years during which Mornington continued to pester Pitt for an office suitable to his abilities and his expensive tastes, Pitt offered him the governorship of Madras with first claims on Bengal when it became vacant. This vacancy at Calcutta materialised almost immediately and Mornington even pressed Pitt to apply to the King for an English peerage on his behalf. 22 This was conceded immediately, to Pitt's surprise. 23 Mornington would have been disappointed had the King refused, for his correspondence during the six months which preceded his departure for India is burdened with exhortations to his


23 Portland to Mornington, 5 October 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 51.
Irish relatives and agents to illuminate dark corners in the Wellesley genealogical history. His highest aspirations at the time appear to have been an Irish marquisate and he confidently expected that someday this would be his.  

He was quite right. Pitt wrote in a pleased and confident manner two years later to offer an Irish marquisate "as an ostensible mark of approbation" and promised a "further provision" later. Why, then, did Mornington react with such hostility and rank ingratitude at the news? In the first place, of course, he had risen to a height of fame which even he had not envisioned two years earlier. The office of governor general was to him, even before he left England, the most prestigious in the empire after that of Prime minister. But he had no prior acquaintance with power such as came to him as the result of the triumph at Seringapatam. He must have wondered whether he was not, in terms of prestige and prospects, the equal or even the superior of anyone except Pitt himself. He did not realise or he refused to concede that in England his Indian exploits were not so highly con-

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25 Pitt to Mornington, 6 November 1799, printed in Roseberry, Pitt, p. 211.

26 Mornington to Fortescue, 5 July 1797, cited in Guedalla, Wellington, p. 75.
sidered; his brother Arthur was horrified to discover that his own vast conquests in India were rated inferior to the minor British victory over the French at Maida in Calabria. Mor-
ington became the vain Wellesley, not only because he believed his Indian administration had indeed vindicated his claims to fame, but because at home his successes were rated too low to produce the honours he merited.

One certainly also detects an aversion of the Irish element of the marquisate. He felt keenly that an Irish honour at any level was distinctly inferior to the equivalent English title, and in some respects he considered the entire Irish hierarchy unworthy. On this point there was probably a sincere difference of opinion between Mornington and Pitt. Pitt affected to be genuinely surprised when he came to know Mornington's true sentiments, but perhaps he should not have been. Irish honours had been granted at an extraordinarily rapid pace after Townshend decided to dispense with the undertakers between 1767 and 1769. Fifty new peerages were granted between 1767 and 1785, mostly as compensation for supporting the government. Lecky perhaps reflected Mor-


Mornington's prejudices: "as a result of the lavish distribution of peerages in payment for support] the majority of Irish titles are historically connected with memories not of honour, but of shame." 29

Well might Mornington treat his elevation in the Irish peerage with some disdain. The marquisate enjoyed a particularly suspect reputation; none of this rank had existed in Ireland until 1789, when George III acquiesced in creating them in order to cope with patronage demands. "I feel for the English earls and do not choose to disgust them" said the monarch in trying vainly at one point to avoid creating Irish marquesses. 30 Once the barrier was breached, they came in a flood, nine of them before 1800 and four more than year alone. 31 The new Marquess Wellesley forever demeaned his own title; it was the single most unpleasant development of his career. Pitt's able response availed little. Pitt pointed out among other things that this was only part of a packet of honours bestowed on him by the Crown, the country and the East India company, that the difference between English and Irish marquisates was


30 Johnston, Great Britain, pp. 13-16.

"little more than nominal," and that surely such trifles would not distract the governor general of India. Such things obviously mattered a great deal.

Wellesley's contemporaries celebrated his discomfort on this occasion for many years. By losing his temper and by proclaiming that he had been humiliated he went far to insure that he never advanced further in the peerage. It would have meant everything to have done so and upon returning from India Wellesley immediately launched a campaign for further honours. He demanded the garter as partial recognition for his services. This he received, in the process angering others whose own expectations were postponed so that Wellesley could be satisfied at once. The King betrayed his anguish, criticising Wellesley's addiction to display and ceremony while in India, where he took "exclusive merit of all that had been done in the east." Undeterred, Wellesley tested two succeeding sovereigns by making a request for a dukedom in 1827 and renewing it in 1840. Both efforts were marked by the preparation of long memoranda detailing

32Pitt to Wellesley, 27 September 1800, printed in Roseberry, Pitt, pp. 213-17.


34George Rose, The Diaries and Correspondence of the Rt.
all his services to Ireland, Britain and the empire.  

There was another and equally unattractive side to this vanity. Wellesley could not endure criticism. His probity in the conduct of public affairs was never questioned before India and his conduct in retrospect seems to have been of a very high order. Any suggestion that he worked from other than disinterested motives not only angered him but drove him to conclude that the acuser was himself guilty of these very transgressions. Always eloquent when he wished to defend policies fashioned by others he could never defend himself without impugning his critics' motives. He further injured his cause by holding on many occasions that to defend his own record was demeaning. For two and one half years he refused to take his seat in the house of Lords while he waited for others to vindicate his record in India. Such delicacy in confronting his enemies certainly delayed the recovery of his reputation and influence after 1805. Later he translated policy disagreements with Perceval into


35Wellesley, memorandum, August 1840, BM, Wellesley MSS 37317, f. 80; Rose, Rose, II, 209; Wellesley to George Lyall, 20 December 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS 37313, f. 117.
questions of personal honour. He gradually encumbered himself with a reputation for irascibility which was perhaps undeserved; those who handled him with some understanding of his idiosyncrasies found him perfectly agreeable.\textsuperscript{36}

It is perhaps an exaggeration to hold, as has one of his biographers, that in India Wellesley "fed on the obedience which had been freely rendered to every utterance, until he had come to stand in need of such condiment." In part, however, it is true. The impact of his six years in India must be acknowledged, but it strengthened and refined rather than originated his unattractive and eventually self-defeating traits of character.\textsuperscript{37}

When did these salient weaknesses first appear? The young man learned early the technique of living beyond his income; he never stinted on his clothing or retinue; his papers are full of exercises for rationalising expenses and were rarely pressed beyond the stage of abstract propositions. Some of the expenses, such as an elaborate mode of dress which especially in later years ran counter to the more modest tastes of the early Victorian

\textsuperscript{36} Henry Goulburn to Robert Peel, 1 January 1823, British Museum, Peel MSS 40329, f. 3.

\textsuperscript{37} Malleson, Wellesley, p. 151.
period, excited considerable unfavourable attention. His jewelry, heavy facial rouge, painted lips and artificially blackened eyebrows betrayed extravagance even in small things.  

In later years Wellesley often stated and no doubt believed that the trappings of power were essential to the exercise of power. He travelled heavy with baggage whether crossing the Irish sea on a short mission for Pitt or Grattan or embarking on a three month embassy to Spain. It was reliably reported that his transport for India was so heavily laden with his personal effects that had an enemy ship approached Mornington would have suffered the loss of £2,000 in the process of clearing the decks. It may be that the compulsion to effect a magnificent display was in part related to the self-imposed requirements of the class from which he sprang. Certainly the Indian experience raised this to the level of a fine art. This and his amorous activities generated financial burdens and permanently alienated many of his colleagues. Only a man of arresting talent could overcome the obstacles posed by Wellesley acting as his own worst enemy.

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V: Promise and Potential

Had there not existed these substantial compensations there would be no need to discuss the career of the Marquess Wellesley at all. His abilities superbly suited him to a life of public service: confidence; a capacity for decisiveness and management of men; a sense of perspective and historical movement; a reverence for tradition balanced by an appreciation of the need for change. His contemporaries in Britain admired his oratorical powers and were often disappointed to see that his nervousness and reluctance to speak detracted from his effectiveness in parliament.

He was never successful as an impromptu debater; he was too proud to expose himself in public to the possibility of committing an error. His only unrehearsed foray at Westminster appears to have been his first effort, when he skirmished briefly with Lord North. He failed in this bid to cover himself with glory; it was perhaps not entirely fortuitous that he was tempted to debate extemporaneously on a question dealing with India.39 Thereafter he never rose unless very well prepared, perhaps even too much so. Because he laboured so long beforehand, nothing was ever omitted; as a result, he was often too elaborate in defending and ex-

39Brashares, "Wellesley," p. 34.
plaining actions rapidly undertaken. This exposed him to the taunts of the opposition. The unkindest description was supplied by William Hazlitt, who heard Wellesley speak in 1813. Wellesley's speeches, Hazlitt concluded, produced "a degree of dull vivacity, or pointed insignificance, and impotent energy, which is without any parallel but itself . . . soaring into mediocrity with adventurous enthusiasm, harrowed up by some plain matter of fact, writhing with agony under a truism, and launching a commonplace with all the fury of a thunderbolt."

Hazlitt's picture is overdrawn. Wellesley was capable of speaking very well indeed and on occasion certainly influenced the course of events with an effective contribution. Too often, however, he failed to speak at all, even when all ears were turned to hear him. This annoying and sometimes catastrophic silence prompted Lord Eldon to describe Wellesley's oratory as that after the mode of Tacitus. On balance then, Wellesley did not reproduce in parliament his stage successes at Eton and Oxford. The environment differed; the art of declamation which drove the King to tears prompted no

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41 Brashares, "Wellesley," p. 36.

42 Henry Edward Fox, Baron Holland, Further Memoirs of the
enthusiasm at Westminster.

In India Wellesley exhibited a capacity for administration equalled by few other viceroys. His knowledge of Indian affairs proved to be immense, even from the time of his arrival in India. His self-education in Indian affairs has often been treated as something of a mystery. On close examination, it is clear that he consciously prepared himself for this important assignment by extensive reading and conversation. The key to his grasp of the complexities of Indian affairs, however, lay in his ability to choose as his lieutenants men who were young, loyal, industrious, and extraordinarily confident of their own fitness to govern. He trained an entire generation of administrators whose contributions to the intensification and expansion of British rule in India constitute the core of the nineteenth century imperial achievement. His own enthusiasm must have been infectious, for these men of limited previous experience rarely disappointed Wellesley. He demanded much from them, and rewarded those who carried out his instructions accurately and rapidly with unstinting praise and the highest  

rewards in his power. In his own context he was in this respect much like Pitt himself.

No subsequent position afforded Wellesley the same opportunities for independence and leadership. Contemporaries were surprised that the man who ruled India with such ease should fail to cope with the bureaucracy of the Foreign office. In fact, of course, there was no similarity between India and Whitehall. Cabinet office demanded that cooperation with colleagues which Wellesley despised. His analytical abilities did not fail him, however, and perhaps his accomplishments as Foreign secretary have been underestimated. The remainder of his public career followed much the same pattern: stormy relations with many of his colleagues obscured his generally highly informed analyses and his superb grasp of the factors which determined the course of events.

His private company and conversation was thought by many to be among the most stimulating of the age. He was perceptive, witty, and extraordinarily well-informed. Walter Scott, who apparently met Wellesley only once, came away reminded of the statesmanship of that fabled Roman emperor "accustomed to keep the whole world in his view,"

dividing his time between affairs of state and the world of the intellect. Of course this was the maturer man, but even as the young Earl of Mornington he was much sought after as a reservoir of good conversation and perceptive analysis.

Can so complicated a man be compressed into a brief but illuminating paragraph? Brevity was never a strong point in Wellesley, and those who have attempted to describe him have almost always found the inherent contradictions too much to be summarised neatly. Perhaps a contemporary, Lord Holland, fashioned the most accurate short portrait: he wrote that Wellesley had more genius than prudence, more spirit than principle, and manifestly despised his colleagues as much as they dreaded him. Unlike most English politicians, he was rather a statesman than a man of business, and more capable of doing extraordinary things well than conducting ordinary transactions with safety or propriety. . . . There was a smack, a fancy of greatness in all he did, and though in his speeches, his manners and his actions he was very much open to ridicule, those who smiled and even laughed could not despise him.


46 Curzon, British Government, I, 180.
VI: Mornington and the Wellesley Family

When the first Earl of Mornington died in 1781 the Wellesley children ranged in age from twenty-one to eight. Richard was the eldest. William, who added Pole to his surname when he inherited property from a cousin, was eighteen. Anne was thirteen and Arthur twelve. Gerald Velarian, destined for a career in the church, was ten, and the future diplomat, Henry, was the youngest. In 1781 it would not have seemed possible that this band of fatherless young people would contribute the next generation's foremost national military hero, a prominent Irish politician and sometime member of the British cabinet, the nation's future ambassador to Madrid and subsequently an intimate friend to Metternich, and a viceroy of Ireland and India. The less exciting record of Gerald, whose quest for a bishopric involved the family's most audacious bids for patronage, was untracked by a particularly unfortunate marriage. The respectable accomplishments of Anne's husband Charles Culling Smith would have seemed to be more appropriate for this Irish family of modest background and diminished finances. The second Earl Mornington's decision to leave Oxford in June 1781 and to assume command of the family's

47 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 21.
destinies contributed substantially to raising most of them to positions they might otherwise have not attained.

Perhaps no other family so augmented its power and influence in the realm of national affairs during the reign of George III. During the same period other Irish families of modest rank contributed leaders to the British and Irish nations. None, however, moved forward so rapidly on so broad a front. The second Earl Mornington was already living when his father was granted an earldom. Unlike the Stewarts of County Down, for instance, who produced one man of the first rank, the Wellesleys could boast two of the first rank and two of the second.

This advance was aided by several factors both fortuitous and calculated. In India Richard temporarily recovered the costs of his own extravagances and the investment he had made in promoting the careers of younger brothers. The Grenvilles were to provide timely and sustained assistance. Ireland's domestic ferment, both social and political, may have encouraged its more talented sons to seek a role on the wider British stage. In Britain itself the calamities which attended the loss of the American colonies were identified with an aging, uninspired and perhaps incompetent ruling class, and the recovery of Britain was entrusted to a group of younger men under the aegis of William Pitt. Richard and his
siblings arrived on stage at the right time.

In themselves these conditions hardly sufficed to guarantee the Wellesleys a brilliant future. The conscious decision on Richard's part to dedicate the family to public service and politics limited the opportunities available to any of them to grow wealthy quickly. Their electoral base in Ireland, the borough of Trim, was never of much importance in the eighteenth century Irish configuration and at any rate was abolished in 1801. The revenues which they might have expected to derive from their Irish estates had already been reduced by heavy mortgages and other liens and would disappear under the weight of demands which the two Earls placed upon them. Perhaps equally important was the Wellesley penchant for unsuccessful marriages: Richard married far below his rank. Henry and Gerald were involved as innocent parties in Regency scandals.

Balancing these deficiencies was the family's extraordinary talent for gaining and retaining office. The family never demonstrated a sense of cohesiveness based on ideological considerations, but this did not much matter when in times of pressure on the family its members could be expected to assist one another. Until 1810 this was invariably the case. Beyond this the members individually contributed their own talents to creating places of some importance in the
political pantheon of early nineteenth century Britain.

Next to Richard, the eldest of this generation was William. His talents were modest enough but his strong dedication to the ideal of family cohesion counted for much. He was careful in his behaviour and fate responded kindly. In 1781, at age eighteen, while serving as an ensign off the coast of Portugal, he was informed that an uncle had bequeathed him his name and estate. William abandoned his modest career in the navy, to the consternation of friends, his patron Admiral Cornwallis, and, it was alleged, his mother. William's decision certainly upset the Cornwallis family and may have featured in Mornington's subsequent unhappy relationship to the Earl. But there was good reason for William to hasten. Waiting for him in the barony of Maryborough in Queen's county was property consisting of twelve hundred acres of fertile land, timber and lake, as well as what was believed to be the largest deerpark in Ireland. A magnificent house in a modified classical style,

48 Captain Longford to Capt. William Cornwallis, 3 March 1782, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections (Dublin: John Falconer for HMSO, 1909), VI.

49 Elizabeth, Countess Cornwallis, to Hon. William Cornwallis, 28 May 1782, printed in Various MSS, VI, 336.

50 William Wellesley Pole to Admiral William Cornwallis, 29 June 1795, printed in Various MSS, VI, 390.
subsequently improved, awaited him. His independent income made it possible to place him in parliament as representative for the family borough of Trim between 1783 and 1790, where he could protect the family interest. He sat at Westminster as Mornington's ally from 1790 to 1795, but made the Queen's county his seat for the long period 1801 to 1821, when he received a peerage. Few men have filled so many offices and made so little impression on them. From 1807 to 1812 he served from time to time as clerk of the ordnance, secretary of the Admiralty, Irish chief secretary, chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, and junior Lord of the (United Kingdom) Treasury.

Wellesley Pole devoted much of his life to maintaining, or attempting to restore, cohesion in the family. He was financial independent of his eldest brother but followed his lead in politics. He defended Richard during the impeachment proceedings with the limited resources at his command. He skillfully orchestrated Wellesley's entry into the Perceval cabinet as Foreign secretary in October 1809 when it appeared momentarily that Canning might succeed in his somewhat self-serving efforts to keep Wellesley out. He supported Richard

51 J. C. O'Hanlon et al., The History of the Queen's County (2 vols.; Dublin: Sealy, Bryers and Walkers, 1914), p. 627.

52 Journal of the Irish House of Lords, VIII (1784), 450-51; XI (1784), 248, 250-52, 286.
even to the extent of going into the political wilderness when Wellesley proved unable to form a government in the spring of 1812. This action angered Wellington, who got on well with him and who according to Lord Colchester owed William a great deal for helping to secure a peerage for him in 1809. Wellesley Pole quickly concluded that he preferred office to isolation and in September 1814 accepted an invitation to return to office, this time in the cabinet, as master of the Mint. The appointment was manifestly intended to reinforce Wellington's identification with the Liverpool, now that Wellington was the hero of Spain and of all Europe.

In July 1821 he received a peerage as Baron Maryborough. He expressed great pleasure when Wellesley returned to office at the end of the same year. Wellington and Wellesley inevitably disagreed on the Catholic issue, and Maryborough attempted to mediate. Wellington professed a willingness to enter into a dialogue with the Marquess, but Wellesley never responded and Maryborough satisfied his conservative instincts by reinforcing Wellington's position. He resigned his post as master of the Mint in August 1823 in a shuffle which strengthened the Canningite interest. Neither Wellesley nor Wellington seems to have protested against those who exerted pressure on Maryborough to resign, and William considered
himself "shamefully deceived, ill-used, and abandoned."\textsuperscript{53}

Maryborough lived for another twenty-two years, sharing that capacity for longevity enjoyed by his brothers. He served as Postmaster general in Peel's short ministry of 1834-35.

Maryborough's son William Pole Tynley Long-Wellesley was born in 1788 and is best known for having diminished his wife's vast fortune in a few years of marriage. His wife Catherine Tynley-Long possessed in abundance those financial resources which the Marquess would have dearly enjoyed, but young William's scandalous behaviour tested the cohesion, stamina and fortitude of the entire Wellesley clan during the 1820s and 1830s. He was deprived of parental rights in an adultery case and threatened in turn the "most sandalous expositions of family secrets" unless the children were restored to him. Wellington was not frightened and continued as guardian for the children. The Maryborough heir quieted down after the affair had tintillated the Regency social set for some time.\textsuperscript{54}


He sat in parliament on three separate occasions and his violent ultra-Toryism expressed itself in 1830 when by joining the Whigs he helped to bring down Wellington's ministry. This defeat indirectly led to a resuscitation of Wellesley's political fortunes and his return to Ireland at the invitation of Lord Grey's government. In Long-Wellesley's son the earldom of Mornington became extinct.  

Richard and his brother William maintained a generally cordial relationship over their long span of life. Wellesley-Pole was his brother's first ally in the construction of the family's political interest. While traveling on the continent in 1791 Mornington complained bitterly on one occasion of William's apparent lack of attention to Mornington's children. Later Richard was "happy to be able to retract" this criticism inasmuch as William had "materially altered his conduct." No such criticism surfaced again. Until Richard abandoned hope of becoming Prime minister William seems to have conducted himself as a dependably ally, strongly conservative by instinct and less

55 DNB, XX, 1134-36.
56 Mornington to Grenville, 18 January 1791, Fortescue MSS II, 18.
57 Ibid., 3 July 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 120.
prone than Richard to fits of dangerous excitability.
With good reason Richard could entrust his personal affairs to William "with the most implicit confidence and the most perfect tranquility of mind" when he set off for India. 58

Wellesley-Pole's most important contributions to the effectiveness of the family's influence were made in Ireland. Of the brothers he alone maintained a viable and continuous interest in Irish affairs. His success in expanding his influence in the Queen's county prompted on occasion an unsympathetic response from Dublin castle, but his support for successive conservative ministries was duly appreciated. Wellesley-Pole in turn was not slow to exploit the value of his family connections. He would have agreed heartily with the commentary on his reputation which appeared in the Dublin Evening Post when he stood for election in the Queen's county in 1814: the Wellesley family

in point of talent and of splendour, is perhaps the first in the empire. All the weight which the Marquess can lend, by his great mind - all the authority which the Duke's great services can bestow, must be arrayed in the person of Mr. Pole... 59

There was a large element of truth in this; certainly

Wellesley-Pole's principal contribution to the family

59 Dublin Evening Post, 9 August 1814, p. 3.
interest outside the parameter of Irish affairs was his incessant efforts to heal rifts between Wellesley and Wellington. During the early years he often acted as an intermediary and he viewed the estrangement between his brothers after 1812 as a personal and national calamity. Late in life, aided by Wellesley's second wife, he successfully promoted a reconciliation. Unlike Wellington he was deeply affected by Wellesley's death in 1842. He held the Mornington peerage for three years until he died in 1845.

The claim of the Duke of Wellington to a special place in the gallery of British heroes is not disputed. If not brilliant Arthur certainly demonstrated that industry, discretion, common sense and persistence were virtues which Britain admired and rewarded. His military record was the envy of the age. His role as "pillar of state" in reinforcing traditional institutions during a period of rapid economic and social change may have been decisive; it was certainly substantial. The nation demanded a hero and in Wellington encountered the ideal specimen. If he was more attractive when viewed from a distance, then so too is that type of enormous monument whose blemishes can command attention only

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on close inspection.

Most aspects of Wellington's public career are already perfectly known. The Duke chose not to treasure embarrassing memorabilia and the first steps on his road to fame are part of the public record established by his eldest brother. Arthur served in India under Richard and represented him in England prior to the return of the viceroy. He contributed ably to Richard's defence during the impeachment controversy and served as Irish chief secretary for brief periods when military duties did not intrude. After his rise to fame and while in Spain he took on the mantle of statesman and sage. He improved his properties and as master general of the Ordnance with a seat in the cabinet he supported the pronounced Tory wing of Liverpool's bifurcated ministry after 1819. He represented Great Britain at the congress of Verona and spoke with force in support of a policy of strict non-intervention in the affairs of other states. He helped persuade George IV in 1822 that Canning should become Foreign secretary and then opposed Canning's policy of recognising the independence of the Latin American states. He became commander-in-chief of the armed forces upon the death of the Duke of York in early 1827, resigned this and the command of the army when Liverpool suffered a stroke, and served as Prime minister from 1828 to 1830.
For a decade after 1826 Wellington's political views, which had long been more conservative than those of Wellesley, expressed themselves in as strong an adhesion to the Tories as Wellesley's did to the Whigs. Briefly in 1834 and 1835 and from 1841 to 1845 he lent his prestige to Peel's ministries; his reputation rather than his active participation constituted his principal contribution. He was reappointed commander-in-chief in 1842 and in that capacity favoured a policy of strict conservatism and opposition to innovation. He was buried "with unexampled magnificence" in November 1852, ten years less one month after Wellesley's death. Richard would have conceded much to have had a similar funeral and indeed after 1812 much of Richard's life was dominated by an aversion to Wellington in which envy was an important ingredient.  

The personal relationship between Richard and Arthur has been reviewed in some detail elsewhere. From Wellington's point of view the evidence is fairly consistent. Wellington held firmly to the view that by resigning from the Perceval ministry in February 1812 Wellesley forfeited his claims to continue to fashion a political strategy to

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61 DNB, XX, 1081-1115.

62 Butler, Eldest, passim.
which all members of the family could subscribe. In Wellington's view Wellesley had already damaged his prospects by virtue of his lassitude in the conduct of the Foreign ministry and by virtue of his tempestuous marital and notorious extra-marital relationships. Wellington never respected Wellesley's judgement or supported his claims for cabinet office after 1812.

Family stresses of the period 1809 to 1812 reflected Wellington's growing independent claims to influence as much as alleged deficiencies on the part of the Marquess. Prior to India, Arthur's destiny lay almost entirely in Richard's hands. Richard's capacity to assay potential in others was married to that most admirable trait, a readiness to praise talent unstintingly and to labour to have it rewarded handsomely. Arthur's early years were undistinguished; Richard's many interventions in behalf of his younger brother certainly reflected a commitment to family ties and Mornington's desire to create a powerful political interest. But Richard never suffered incompetence, even in his own family. He tested Arthur by entrusting to him the management of the family interest at Trim from 1790 to 1796. Here Arthur's conduct met Richard's exacting standards; his display of "excellent judgement, amiable manners, admirable temper, and firmness," to quote him, restored completely the family's pre-
He secured for Arthur a series of appointments in the army and on the Irish viceroy's staff which reflected a strong desire to assist Arthur in every way possible. He dismissed Arthur's efforts to repay money owed to him by declaring that "no consideration" would induce him to demand repayment from a brother. 64

In India Richard displayed an almost excessive interest in Arthur's career and there appeared in this theatre the first hints of future estrangement. Arthur preceded Mornington to India; upon the latter's arrival Arthur was taken into the viceroy's complete confidence. 65 Soon he demanded from London recognition of Arthur's martial exploits and identified any tardiness on the ministry's part with opposition to his own India policies. 66 In 1803 the Marquess informed the Prime


65 DNB, XX, 1082.

minister, Henry Addington, that his brother's conduct in war and peace in India "must place the name of General Wellesley among the most bright and distinguished characters that have adorned the military history of the British power in India."67 On another occasion he informed his friend Grenville that Arthur had conducted the army "through a succession of triumphs never surpassed by the British arms in any quarter of the globe."68

The younger brother could not complain here. Well might others murmur that the Marquess had adopted expansionist policies in India in order to create opportunities for Arthur to distinguish himself.69 This is farfetched but Wellesley certainly promoted him with a "diligence and a rapidity that the directors [of the East India company] thought resembled jobbery."70 Arthur however was far from overwhelmed by his good fortune. When he was superseded by General Baird as


68 Wellesley to Grenville, 1 January 1804, Fortescue MSS, VII, 382.


head of the Red Sea command in January 1801 Arthur inter-
preted it as a mark of humiliation rather than as an effort
on his brother's part to parry charges of favouritism towards
his brother. The humiliation was quickly relieved: Arthur
was granted full command in the Deccan and proceeded to secure
some of his finest victories.

Wellesley was sensitive to slights but he never
barred talent. Although he was once "disgusted" by Arthur's
dilatoriness in calling on him after reaching Calcutta in
1798, he overcame the coldness by recognising Arthur's immense
talents and providing him every opportunity to excel.
After India the same attitude prevailed. He was displeased
when Arthur accepted an invitation to join Portland's ministry
prior to full resolution of the impeachment controversy.
But in the same year when Arthur's achievements in Spain
prompted Hyacinthe to suggest in her own peculiarly undiplo-
matic way that Arthur's fame would soon eclipse his own,
Wellesley declared that these triumphs simply reflected
"the lessons that I taught him" and that his brother's
triumphs would therefore add to his own reputation. 71

Arthur's growing fame did not dissuade Wellesley from
continuing to assist him after both had returned from India.

71 Carver MSS, printed in Butler, Eldest, p. 396.
It was to Richard's advantage to secure Arthur a seat in successive parliaments. He also tried and failed, fortunately for Arthur as it transpired, to promote Arthur to the governorship of Madras. In December 1809, when the new viscount's fortunes in Spain appeared exceptionally bleak, Wellesley apparently bid once again to place him at the head of the Ordnance. Wellesley rejoiced publicly and privately when Arthur gained his peerage and continued to do so as successive elevations raised him higher than the Marquess.

Wellington's successes in Spain and later in France and Belgium made unnecessary any mediation on Wellesley's part. Relations between the two men became strained; even then Wellesley denounced all stories prejudicial to Wellington as "calumnious, slanderous, and base." He condemned Wellington's politics and his conduct in the house of Lords, but maintained that they were a testimony to sincere ignorance.


73 Arthur Wellesley to Wellesley, 21 February 1807, enclosure in Wellesley to Grenville, 21 February 1807, printed in Fortescue MSS, IX, 51-52.


75 Pearce, Memoirs, III, 327.
alone.\textsuperscript{76} He hoped, however, that Wellington would be measured and remembered for what he was: a military man.

After a long estrangement Wellington went to see Richard in 1838, "the first time in some years." They met "most cordially" and a dignified correspondence ensued until Wellesley's death four years later.\textsuperscript{77} Wellesley surrendered all pretensions to preeminence; in a philosophical observation to the Countess of Blessington two years before his death he observed that "military laurels by common consent of mankind occupy the pinnacle of the temple of living fame, and no statesman should envy a living hero, particularly if the great captain should happen to be his own brother."
The page of history "is wide enough to contain us all, and posterity will assign the proper place to each. . . ."\textsuperscript{78}

Unfortunately this view came late in life. There was another, less gracious side to the Wellesley-Wellington relationship. The Marquess sincerely believed that Arthur owed him much. The record of Wellesley's support for his brother in terms of promoting his fortunes in the army has


\textsuperscript{78}Wellington, ed., \textit{Selections}, p. 94.
already been adverted to. There was another dimension to this assistance as well. Mornington was prescient enough to see that Arthur's indifferent record at Eton was not proof positive of his unfitness for great accomplishments in other fields. More timely, and extremely generous, was Wellesley's support when Arthur in a catastrophic error of judgement affixed his signature to a document at Cintra in Portugal conceding to a defeated French army terms so generous as to appear to an astonished court and country something closer to a British surrender. In Spain between 1809 and 1812 Wellington's only consistent influential friend in the cabinet was the Foreign secretary. The Iberian strategy, of which on occasion Wellington himself despaired, reflected Wellesley's confidence in himself as a strategist and in his brother as a tactician. The concept was vindicated at the very moment when Wellesley was sinking into relative obscurity. These impressions must have molded Wellesley's perceptions when he told his son-in-law Edward Littleton that Arthur had "been my evil genius; when I fall he rises, to adorn himself with the plumes which I have shed."  

79 DNB, XX, 1081.  
80 Glover, Britannica Sickens, passim.  
81 Hatherton MSS, quoted in Butler, Eldest, p. 547.
As Wellington's reputation and influence waxed, Wellesley tended to cast on him the blame for any setbacks in his own campaign for reward and recognition. William, who usually avoided any appearance of animosity towards either brother, lent credence to Wellesley's prejudices by complaining that Wellington was fully impressed with his own power. Wellesley somehow convinced himself in 1833 that his brother had managed to block his application for a dukedom or a place in the Whig cabinet; he was quoted as complaining that Wellington was "the greatest ass that ever lived." This was not the vocabulary of brotherly love.

A comparison between Wellesley and Wellington becomes more feasible as Wellesley's accomplishments attract increased scholarly notice. Wellington's practice of burning most of his private correspondence was healthy for his historical reputation but disastrous for scholars; despite all the studies of the great Duke there is much we do not know about the private man. Wellesley on the other hand seems to have preserved almost everything and the recent study undertaken


by Iris Butler demonstrates that a substantial book can be shaped from what is essentially his most private and most candid correspondence. A comparison of recent analyses of the two men unfortunately reinforces the old impression that "the most remarkable contrast that history affords is between the Duke of Wellington and Lord Wellesley - one scorning all display, the other living for nothing else." Their roles in the construction of the Wellesley family interest in Irish and British politics, a project vital to the fame of both men, may offer a different perspective.

The fourth-born brother, Gerald Velarian, played virtually no role in the political life of the Wellesley family. He figures only infrequently in Wellesley's correspondence, which is generously endowed with contributions from almost everyone else in Wellesley's copious circle of family, friends and enemies. He was a good scholar at Eton; to some he showed promise of following Richard, an impression reinforced by comparing Gerald's academic record to that of Arthur. He accompanied Mornington on his tour of the continent in 1790 and 1791 but his conduct and activities do not appear at all in Mornington's letters. Subsequently he

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entered the church. While in India Wellesley occasionally heard from or about Gerald, then no more than a parish priest in rural England. In 1804 Gerald wrote to Wellesley that he was proceeding "in the old parsonic way," accumulating children and debts on a steady schedule.

Gerald's modest career in the church intrudes here only because his brothers were determined that he not remain in ecclesiastical obscurity. In June 1802 Gerald married Emily Mary, daughter of the first Earl Cadogan. She brought a small dowry to the marriage. Unfortunately she also brought bad luck, for she was detected in a damaging extra-marital relationship which finally induced Gerald to separate from her in 1821.

On two occasions Wellesley and Wellington attempted to secure Gerald a bishopric and both times their efforts were blocked by Lord Hawkesbury, subsequently second Earl Liverpool. The first instance came in 1807 when a vacancy appeared on the bench of the Church of Ireland. The government's candidate was an Englishmen, and he proved reluctant to deliver himself over to the Irish church. The two Wellesley

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85 Sylvester Douglas to Mornington, 29 July 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 245.

86 Gerald Wellesley to Wellesley, 24 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 27.
brothers contrived an elaborate scheme whereby he might be bought off with Gerald's stall at Westminster, a position to which Gerald had recently succeeded in the course of his flight from rustic exile.  

On the face of it Gerald's prospects were good. Arthur was Irish chief secretary and a great favourite of the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Richmond. Richmond's ecclesiastical patronage policies, moreover, reflected modest enough regard for the spiritual requirements of the Irish church. But Hawkesbury determined that either the government's first choice should fill the vacancy or it should go to "the next fittest man," by which he certainly did not mean Gerald. The Wellesley family suspended its agitation. Gerald was in part comforted by becoming canon residentiary at St. Paul's in October 1809.

In 1826 Wellington was in the cabinet, Wellesley was Irish viceroy, and Liverpool by now had been Prime minister for fourteen years. The time for a second bid seemed auspicious and the objective once more was an Irish bishopric. By this time Gerald had compiled a list of credible achievements of a modest type; he was a pleasant man who elicited widespread

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sympathy because of his wife's irregular conduct. Gerald refused to divorce her although their separation was permanent, and this painful state of affairs left him at a singular disadvantage in terms of patronage considerations.

The episode which followed demonstrated the inherent cohesive instincts of the Wellesley family interest when patronage opportunities presented themselves. On 12 August 1826 Henry Goulburn as Irish chief secretary warned Robert Peel, the Home secretary, that Wellesley contemplated recommending Gerald for the vacant see of Cloyne. Wellesley petitioned London, as Goulburn predicted, and Liverpool thereupon opposed the nomination. Wellington weighed in. He pursued the interesting argument that it was Wellesley's exclusive prerogative as viceroy to nominate a candidate and that if Liverpool's scruples bothered him he need only remember that the King and not he was empowered to pass on any nominee's qualifications for ecclesiastical office.

Liverpool bravely held his ground with a ringing denunciation

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89A. Wellesley to Richmond, 5 July 1807, printed in Wellington, Despatches: Ireland, p. 107, and National Library of Ireland, Richmond MSS 58, f. 32.

90 Henry Goulburn to Robert Peel, 12 August 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 84-87.

91 Liverpool to Wellesley, 19 August 1826, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304, ff. 177-79.

92 Wellington to Wellesley, 20 August 1826, 21 August 1826, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304, ff. 181-88; Wellington to Liverpool,
of traditional patronage practices in the Irish church. Wellington's friend Charles Arbuthnot contrived to convince Liverpool that Wellesley had misrepresented the case to the Duke in order to enlist his support. Gerald lived until 1848 but never received his bishopric. Liverpool for his part vented his long suppressed frustrations against the whole Wellesley clan by listing for Arbuthnot's benefit all the favours he had extended to the family since he became Prime minister in 1812: a pension for the Countess Mornington and Anne; a place for her husband Charles Culling Smith, "one of the best offices I ever had to dispose of"; and a peerage for Maryborough, who strenuously opposed Liverpool until his administration was firmly established. The Wellesley interest, at least for the moment, retreated and resumed its internal feuding.

30 August 1826, 1 September 1826, BM, 37304, ff. 189-95, 203-206.


94 Charles Arbuthnot to Liverpool, 5 September 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 394.


96 Liverpool to Arbuthnot, 8 September 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 392.

97 Arbuthnot to Bathurst, 1 September 1826, printed in
Far different was the career of the youngest brother, Henry, subsequently first Baron Cowley. Henry was his eldest brother's favourite. He served the Marquess well, was richly rewarded, and demonstrated his gratitude in ways which Arthur never found it possible to do. There was almost no tension in the relationship between Richard and Henry and they were destined to work as a team in India and in Spain. Richard consistently supplied pressure to advance Henry's career and personally instilled in Henry a sense of discipline and commitment to sustained hard work which Richard himself never really mastered.

Thirteen years younger than Richard, Henry reached his majority well after Richard had established himself as a friend of the Grenvilles and a disciple of Pitt. He suffered from a haphazard education in large part because the Wellesley clan could afford nothing better at the moment. He was sent to Brunswick at age fifteen to begin training in languages with an eye towards diplomatic service; in his imperious but uncanny way Mornington had declared this the most appropriate employment for Henry. Henry returned to England in 1789. Once more he devoted himself to learning languages, this time concentrating

on French. He circulated among the French émigrés in Belgium in 1790. His studies in Brunswick and Brussels gained for him a solid training in German and a more precarious comprehension of French. At the close of his European tour in 1791 Richard summoned Henry to Spa and it was firmly settled there that the youngest brother should enter the diplomatic line.

This proved to be a sound decision, but such wisdom did not in itself provide employment at the Foreign office. Mornington's mother intervened to get Henry into the guards, which relieved his immediate financial embarrassments. Mornington himself, working all the time from continental watering places, finally secured Henry a position at the Hague in January 1792. William Eden was his supervisor, and Grenville's good word was decisive; he had acted on the basis of "a long and sincere friendship" for Mornington and hoped Henry would prove a dutiful assistant. To Mornington's relief

98 Mornington to Grenville, 3 July 1791, BM, Fortescue MSS, II, 120.


100 Mornington to Grenville, 3 July 1791, 14 August 1791, printed in Fortescue MSS, II, 120-165.

101 Grenville to William Eden, 19 August 1791, printed in Fortescue MSS, II, 168; Mornington to Grenville, 4 January 1791, printed in Fortescue MSS, II, 10.
Henry performed well and was transferred to a higher post at Stockholm the same year. In 1793 he was presented at court and earned the rank of chargé d'affairs. He resigned from the army and thus signalled his intention to make the diplomatic service his career.

At every stage Grenville's influence was evident. He secured for Henry access to those who could promote his pretensions and he volunteered sage advice based on his own acquaintance with diplomatic method. Mornington had no grounds for complaint; indeed, he could note with satisfaction that henceforth the family was to be represented, often illustriously, in the ranks of soldiers, diplomats, churchmen and statesmen.

In sharp contrast to the labours of Arthur, Henry's work never involved a steady contribution to constituency affairs at Trim or elsewhere. Instead we soon find him accepting a position as a précis writer at the Foreign office. In July 1797 he was appointed secretary to Lord Malmesbury when he went to Lille to negotiate with the new French directory.

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103 Mornington to Grenville, 4 August 1793, printed in Fortescue MSS, II, 411.
104 Ibid., 18 December 1793, Fortescue MSS, II, 479.
105 Ibid., 27 December 1793, Fortescue MSS, II, 486.
He apparently took some part in the negotiations. Malmesbury was unhappy to lose his services when at the end of the summer Mornington recalled him to London to invite him to go to India as his personal secretary. 107

Henry was constantly ill on the voyage and Richard, who pampered himself but tolerated no such habits in others, complained loudly of his younger brother's indisposition. 108 In India Henry quickly recovered, and when he returned to England late in 1799 to convey details of the pacification of Mysore the Marquess conceded that next to himself Henry was the best informed observer of Indian affairs to be found on the subcontinent. Again he sailed for India in 1801 (one can only hope that he had found his sea legs by this time). In opposition to the wishes of the court of directors Henry was appointed lieutenant governor of the ceded territory of Oudh. He returned to England once more in 1804, this time to meet the criticism of East India officials face to face. His name was subsequently linked with Wellesley's in several impeachment charges, especially those dealing with Oudh, and Henry's ambitions for higher office were temporarily

107 Grenville to James Harris, first Earl Malmesbury, 27 July 1797; Malmesbury to Grenville, 14 August 1797, printed in Fortescue MSS, III, 335, 354.

108 Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 31; Carver MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 106.
From 1804 until 1809 Henry's dependence on his eldest brother was almost complete. The shadow of Wellesley's impeachment problems rendered suitable employment for Henry almost impossible. He was appointed a Lord of the Treasury in 1804 but hopes faded for an appointment as a commissioner of the India board. Henry compounded his problems by a bout of illness which left him "entirely devoid of all energy."  

In July 1804 he was nominated to succeed Bartholomew Frere as envoy to Spain but this was canceled by an outbreak of war between Britain and Spain. Having already resigned his place on the Treasury board, he was completely unemployed.  

Henry further burdened himself by contracting an unhappy marriage. On his first return visit to England he met and married Charlotte, daughter of Charles Sloane, first Earl of Cadogan, and sister of Gerald's wife Emily. The marriage displeased the dowager Countess Mornington immensely, whose priorities reflected as lively a commitment to the advancement of the Wellesley family as did those of her eldest child. She suspected, quite rightly as it turned out, that

109 Arbuthnot to Hawkesbury, 21 May 1804, BM, Liverpool MSS 38241, f. 17; Gerald Wellesley to Wellesley, 24 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 27.

110 Harrowby to the King, 26 July 1804, printed in Aspinall, ed., Later Correspondence, V, 217; Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 43.
Emily and Charlotte were potentially troublesome spouses. She blamed Emily ("a second duchess of Zorn for enterprise") for arranging the match, predicted Henry would be miserable, and refused to attend the wedding. Hyacinthe monitored all this from a safe distance, her glee scarcely concealed. She noted that "the new bride will have the same lot in life as I do," a most uncomfortable thought indeed.

Henry's diplomatic career did not resume until 1810. He entered parliament for Eyre in 1807 in order to help combat impeachment charges. Wellesley underwrote his expenses and secured for him the post of secretary to the Treasury.

In 1809 he was also returned for Athlone but continued to sit for Eyre. An effort to secure for him the governorship of Madras failed. Until Wellesley returned to full public life little was possible. Later in 1809 when the Marquess was nominated to be envoy plenipotentiary to Spain Henry was appointed secretary to the embassy with an informal

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111 Anne, Countess Mornington, to Wellesley, 3 February 1804, printed in Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 15.


113 Henry Wellesley served as secretary to the Treasury from 1 April 1807 to 5 April 1809.

114 Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 36.
commitment to remain permanently as envoy after Wellesley's departure.

Personal considerations prevented Henry from accompanying the Marquess to Spain in the summer of 1809. His wife Emily confirmed all of Lady Mornington's suspicions by transferring her affections to Henry William Paget, afterwards the Marquess of Anglesey. Henry became ill in reaction to this development, rallied, divorced his wife, and obtained a settlement of £24,000 against Paget in 1810. The settlement provided Henry an adequate independent income for the first time, and to this was soon added an emolument as envoy extraordinary in succession to the Marquess.115 Henry was admitted to the privy council and became permanent ambassador to Spain in October 1811. He further improved his prospects by marrying Georgina Cecil, eldest daughter of the first Marquess of Salisbury. She was "a witty and animated woman" with substantial financial resources, proper connections, and approved morals.116 Henry Wellesley superintended British interests in Spain until 1822.

115 Wellesley to the King, 17 December 1809, Windsor MSS 14839-40, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, V, 473.
116 Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 15.
Henry owed much to Wellesley's assistance and during the latter's tenure as Foreign secretary, Henry contributed valuable service to the cause of destroying Napoleon's armies in Iberia. With his assistance the Marquess could claim subsequently that the policies pursued by the three Wellesley brothers in Spain established the necessary pre-conditions for the defeat of France. Wellesley continued to maintain affectionate ties with Henry during the long years of political isolation which followed 1812. In 1822 Henry surrendered his post in Madrid and in 1823 became ambassador to Vienna. Wellington secured him a peerage in 1828 after Canning, who may have thought him too sympathetic towards Metternich, had tempted him with the offer of the governor generalship in Bengal. 117

After 1830 Baron Cowley of Wellesley, as he styled himself, identified his fortunes with the Tory party. At Peel's invitation he served as British emissary to Paris from 1841 to 1846 and died in Paris the following year. 118 His eldest son by Charlotte, the second Earl Cowley, distinguished himself as ambassador to France under Napoleon III. He was

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117Curzon, British Government, II, 89; Charles Abbot, Baron Colchester, Diaries and Correspondence (3 vols.; London: Murray, 1861), III, 468; DNB, XX, 1116-17.

118 DNB, XX, 1117.
considered by many to be the finest diplomat of his day.\footnote{119} Another son, Gerald Valerian, became dean of Windsor and a close friend of the royal family. He was Victoria's private chaplain from 1849.\footnote{120} Henry's daughter by Georgiana married Lord Alling, chargé at Paris during his embassy and himself later ambassador at Madrid.\footnote{121}

In all, the Marquess' decision that Henry should establish his mark in the field of diplomacy was vindicated in impressive fashion in two generations. Perhaps Baron Cowley was not unmindful of Wellesley's beneficial influence on the occasion of his brother's death: "I can only say that I have lost the best and kindest friend and the most affectionate brother that man ever had."\footnote{122}

Wellesley's sister Anne played a peripheral role in the development of the family's political interest. There was, nonetheless, one early and spectacular incident which involved Richard. In 1790 Anne married the Hon. Henry Fitzroy, son of the Earl of Southampton. He died suddenly in Lisbon in 1794. Henry Wellesley volunteered to accompany Anne to

\footnote{119} Ibid., XX, 1118-21. 
\footnote{120} Ibid., p. 1117. 
\footnote{121} Henry Wellesley, Diary, p. 207. 
\footnote{122} Roberts, India, p. 307. 
Lisbon to bring her husband's body to England. On their return journey they were captured by a French warship and detained by the committee of Public Safety, whose violent inclinations were certainly aggravated by Richard's panegyrics against the revolution. Mornington frantically attempted to arrange ransom or exchange to ward off plans for their execution. They were recovered by exchange after the Terror subsided but the drama must have deepened Mornington's hatred of France. 123

Anne subsequently married Charles Culling Smith. Lady Bessborough said of him that he was "remarkably pleasant and gentlemanlike." 124 He was indeed a gentleman, better equipped perhaps to enliven a dinner conversation than to work industriously. He possessed a considerable reservoir of common sense and helped to moderate some of the Marquess' rages when in his company. Wellesley liked him. As Foreign secretary Richard secured for Culling Smith an office of rank in his department. It demanded or at least received little attention and sufficed only to prove that Anne's husband did not excel in negotiating the flood of reports


and memoranda generated by Britain's agents overseas; he graced the halls while one William Hamilton did the work. Culling Smith was more at home in serving as Wellesley's confidential envoy during the abortive negotiations of May and June 1812. Wellesley's critics often pictured this "fine civil gentleman" as one man patient enough to serve as an audience while Wellesley practiced delivering his long speeches which he failed to share with the world at the critical moment. After Wellesley's isolation from political developments was confirmed Wellington intervened to secure Culling Smith an honourable pension.

Of course Wellesley entertained high hopes for his own children and sought for them a role in the family interest along lines of those secured for his brothers. His initial contribution was socially unfortunate: all five children born to Hyacinthe Roland predated their marriage, which barred them from inheriting Wellesley's titles. Wellesley's marriage to Hyacinthe, albeit tardy, removed much of the stigma attached to the children and their parents' indiscretion did not apparently constitute an insuperable bar to their own advancement.

Wellesley also sired a certain number of illegitimate

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125 C. Jackson to G. Jackson, 4-10 January 1810, printed in Sir George Jackson, The Bath Archives: A Further Selection from the Diaries and Letters of Sir G. J. from 1809 to 1816 (ed. Lady Jackson; 2 vols; London, 1873), I, 67.
children whose status could not be ameliorated subsequently. The number of them is unknown and the identity of only one or two has been determined with any degree of certainty. The pretenders, as it were, inevitably pressed Wellesley to provide them places and income. In his later years Wellesley's energies were often dissipated by their claims at the very moment when his ability to assist them was least.

In Wellesley's time men were not inclined to pen affectionate letters to their children. Yet in his letters from India Wellesley employed a warm and loving language to his children. He told Grenville before finally marrying Hyacinthe in 1794 that his five children were as dear and as sacred "as if they had been born under the most solemn engagement." On reaching India he wrote to Henry Dundas that only the pain of being separated from his family clouded the prospect of servi... in India. He made elaborate arrangements for the care of his family when he went to the continent in 1790 and before he sailed for India. His happiest letters were addressed to those of his friends who braved the social consequences of extending assistance to Hyacinthe.

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126 Mornington to Grenville, 18 January 1791, printed in Fortescue MSS, II, 18.

during his absences. And though he was quick to find fault in almost everyone, even those closest to him, he was generous in his evaluations of his children's potential and he was most eager that they receive the best education available.

The Marquess placed great hopes in his eldest son, Richard, born in 1787. Richard was affectionate, loyal, and weak in constitution. His relationship to the Marquess brought out in the father a mixture of genuine affection, anxiety for Richard's welfare, and a fond hope that the eldest son would buttress the father's ambitions for the family. The early evidence was encouraging. Richard entered Eton as Mornington left for India. Bathurst celebrated his poise and talents in a letter to Mornington at the beginning of 1798. Grenville echoed these sentiments as did Henry Wellesley and others. Richard's letters from Eton, stiff in keeping with the manner of the day, reveal a budding wit,

128 Mornington to William Eden, First Baron Auckland, 25 November 1797, printed in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 44.


130 Bathurst to Wellesley, 3 January 1798, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 80.

131 Auckland to Wellesley, 10 January 1806, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, f. 38; Mornington to Addington, 27 July 1794, printed in Pellew, Sidmouth, I, 123.
some maturity and a relatively happy disposition 132

For his part Wellesley confided in Richard with a candor not encountered in most of the remainder of his correspondence. Judging from Richard's replies these letters were rich in details of Indian life and in explanations of his policies. Richard was urged to study diligently in preparation for a career of public service. When, after the Maratha wars, Wellesley was mementarily overwhelmed by the criticism expressed by the East India company and disappointed at the failure of his friends to support him, the Marquess advised Richard, now approaching the end of his formal education, to be prepared to take up his father's burden. The labour would be great, Wellesley warned, and "the peril worthy of your courage."133 Wellesley's melodramatic style contained a seed of truth. In the wake of Seringapatam and his "pinchbeck" honours Wellesley urged Bathurst to close the gap between his earlier expectations and the King's modest generosity by securing a peerage for young Richard. This overture was firmly but politely parried by Bathurst in a masterly exercise in diplomatic phrasing.134

132 Richard Wellesley to Wellesley, 10 June 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 29.


Wellesley did manage to secure reversion to Richard of the office of remembrancer of the Exchequer previously held by Wellesley for life.\textsuperscript{135}

Richard's career of public service was closely tied to his father's triumphs and disappointments. In 1803 Wellesley assured Grenville that young Richard would be found "an useful instrument in the preservation of our country."\textsuperscript{136} This was one of those manifestations of Wellesley's soaring imagination which never materialised. Richard's prospects suffered at least a temporary postponement while Wellesley wrestled with the impeachment issue, and it was not until October 1809, when Wellesley had accepted an invitation to enter Spencer Perceval's cabinet, that Wellesley first urged his friends "in the most strenuous manner" to find a seat in parliament for Richard.\textsuperscript{137}

He sat for Queensborough from June 1810 until December 1811, for East Grinstead for two months in 1812, for Yarmouth from 1812 to 1817, and for Ennis from 1820 to 1826.

Richard's public career proved to be an undistinguished

\textsuperscript{135}Portland to the King, 27 September 1800, Windsor MSS 9451-2, and 9821, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, item 2250.

\textsuperscript{136}Wellesley to Grenville, 16 February 1803, printed in Fortescue MSS, VII, 145.

\textsuperscript{137}Wellesley to Arbuthnot, 30 October 1809, printed in Charles Arbuthnot, Correspondence, Camden Third Series (A. Aspinall, ed.; London: Royal Historical Society, 1941), p. 6.
one. He was invited by Perceval to second the address at the opening of the first session of parliament convoked under the auspices of the Prince Regent. Wellesley urged Richard "to make the greatest and most rowing effort that ever was roared by any Rorator." The speech made only a slight impression. His other contributions were also modest. Richard's talents included a functional facility in Spanish and Wellesley employed him to assist in organising an expedition which was instructed to sail to Spanish America in 1811 in an effort to bring these areas under British commercial control. The expedition never sailed. Instead Bolivar came to London and Richard translated for him.

These duties were hardly sufficient to attract wide attention and they did not. Richard refused his father's invitation to take up a position as undersecretary in the Foreign office. He did however become a Lord of the Treasury in December 1811, but resigned it when his father surrendered the seals of his office in February 1812.

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139 Wellesley to Richard Wellesley, 10 May 1811, Carver MSS, printed in Butler, Eldest, pp. 453-54.

His own exile from politics was exceptionally trying because his income depended on the generosity of his impoverished father. Eventually he was rescued by an appointment as commissioner of the Stamp duties. 141

Richard was in ill health much of the time before 1821 and all of the time thereafter. A falling out in 1817 between his father and the proprietor of Richard's borough prompted Richard to resign his seat. All of this makes sad reading and yet there is evidence that Richard, despite his poor health, straitened finances and the frustrations of politics, was among the happiest of the entire clan. He had many friends and his correspondence included letters from such luminaries as Madame de Stael and such rising politicians as Peel. Lord Grenville's friendship endured until the end of Richard's life. As a leader of the Grillions Club he moved in an attractive group of younger politicians. Would that his father had done as well in this area. 142

Richard accompanied his father to Ireland in 1821 as comptroller of the household. The entrenched castle interest in Dublin deeply resented the size of the viceroy's retinue and its appetite for patronage, but Richard posed no danger.

141 Ibid.
142 Butler, Eldest, pp. 477-78.
His health deteriorated steadily in Ireland and he soon returned to England.\textsuperscript{143} Wellesley duly applied to all the right persons for a place for his slowly dying son; finally Richard returned to the Stamp office.\textsuperscript{144} The duties here were not onerous, but even these proved more than Richard could manage. He died in 1831, perhaps from tuberculosis.\textsuperscript{145}

He had proven a disappointment to the Marquess in terms of the family's political fortunes, although he can hardly be blamed. In 1831 at any rate Wellesley was still suffering from what he conceived to be a conspiracy involving Wellington and even the nation, and he had not the energy to resent his son's failures. The final years of great pain (which prompted Richard on two occasions to attempt to commit suicide), the debts and the melancholy left their mark on the Marquess. He assuaged the pain by transferring to his son-in-law Edward Littleton his affections and even his dependence.

A second son, Henry, was Wellesley's favourite. "The Tiddler" never featured in Wellesley's political dreams.

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Dublin Evening Post}, 18 December 1821, p. 2; Earl of Harrowby to Bathurst, 22 December 1821, Bathurst MSS, p. 526.

\textsuperscript{144} Wellesley to Robert Wilmot Horton, 4 January 1825, Derby, County Record Office, Catton MSS.

\textsuperscript{145} Richard Wellesley to Wellesley, 13 June 1828, BM, Wellesley MSS 37316, f. 7.
Perhaps his scholastic success at Eton and his flair for the classics saved him from this fate. He entered the church, gained a reputation as a diligent scholar, received a doctorate in divinity from Oxford the year of Wellesley's death, and was curator of the Bodleian at the time of his own demise. The third son, Gerald, proceeded to India, held the residency of Malwa long enough to save some money, and died on his return to England in 1833, again probably of tuberculosis. Wellesley took little interest in this generous fellow who left his considerable fortune to Richard's orphaned children. Had he returned in good health perhaps he would have tried to enter parliament, a profession much narrowed in the wake of the great reform bill. Everything had depended on Richard.

There were two daughters, Anne and Mary Hyacinthe. Both made their mark on Wellesley's public career. In 1806 Anne married Sir William Abdy, the last baronet of Felix Hall in Essex. He was inattentive to her and she was venomous by nature. She moved in the society of the Prince Regent and left her submissive husband at home. On one occasion in 1814 she failed to return; Charles Bentinck, third son of the Duke of Portland, took her off in his new gig. The marquess adopted a high and injured tone. The scandal was widely advertised and
caused Wellesley much embarrassment. The other children, especially Richard and Hyacinthe, attempted to buffer the full shock by urging Anne to return to Sir William. This failed and divorce proceedings, including a bill in the house of Lords, were called for. This requirement revealed the bankruptcy of the Marquess' influence at that time. The family was forced to fall back on the resources and influence of the Duke of Wellington. This galled Wellesley but he recovered some dignity by persuading an acquaintance of his, Henry Brougham, to defend Bentinck and Anne. From these distressing circumstances several more pleasant developments can be traced. Wellesley began his friendship with Brougham; it would evolve into a deep and profitable one for both. Wellesley's wife Hyacinthe, who after 1810 had devoted her energies to making herself comfortable under the wing of her son-in-law Edward Littleton, expired. It prompted Wellesley, who was forced at last to face the sad state of his financial affairs, to admit bankruptcy abandon all hope for independent influence in parliament, swallow his pride and commence a rapprochement with Liverpool and his colleagues. And finally, by Bentinck Anne became

146. Longford, Pillar, p. 43.

pregnant. In 1881 a granddaughter made possible in part by this pregnancy married an obscure Scottish peer, the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne, and their fourth daughter, born in 1923, married the Duke of York, father of Queen Elizabeth II. By this troubled path Wellesley became a great-great-great-grandparent of the current sovereign. Perhaps only a dukedom would have pleased him more.

Wife Hyacinthe had the presence of mind to die at Teddlesley, Edward Littleton's comfortable country house in Staffordshire. She had with her her jewels and letters and son Henry intervened to insure that they did not revert to Wellesley. Would Wellesley have destroyed a correspondence so damaging to his private reputation? Perhaps not, but this way its survival as a separate source of information was insured and Butler's study of the personal side of the man became possible.

Teddlesley was also significant in other ways, for Littleton was a notable specimen of that wealthy, improving landlord class which constituted the backbone of the county interest in parliament at least until 1832. Mary Hyacinthe married Littleton in 1812. His wealth and sober habits


149 Edward John Littleton to Wellesley, 1 November 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 147; Mary Hyacinthe Wellesley to Wellesley, 4 November 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 151.
prompt an invidious comparison with those of the Marquess. Littleton inherited an annual income of £18,000 and the Marquess virtually completed the dismemberment of his own ravaged fortune to insure her a dowry worthy of the groom.

The investment was well worth the effort. Littleton was a disciple of George Canning, whose penchant for plowing his own political furrow was similar to that of Wellesley. But Canning was more successful at it. In his own right Littleton was heir to a valuable Staffordshire political patrimony. He proved to be a model son-in-law to Wellesley as well, and Hyacinthe was an attractive complement to this good man. Too late on the Wellesley scene to be of much assistance while the Marquess was competing for the nation's highest political office, Littleton nevertheless served as a confidant and advisor when Wellesley returned to public life in 1821. He genuinely admired Wellesley and forgave him his many faults. Wellesley's later years were enriched and made happier by Littleton.

This was perhaps the only marriage entered into by any of the Wellesleys which was both extremely happy and politically advantageous. Littleton sat in parliament as M.P. for Staffordshire from 1812 to 1832, and in the reformed parliament he represented South Staffordshire for three more years. He was defeated for the speakership in 1834
served as Irish chief secretary in 1833 and 1834 when Wellesley returned to Ireland as viceroy and sat in the house of Lords for almost thirty years after 1835. Hyacinthe as his wife monitored the Wellesley family's incessant demonstrations of mutual incivility, superintended arrangements at weddings and funerals, and after 1816 did much to restore her father's equilibrium. Without the intervention of Edward and Mary Hyacinthe Wellesley's later years would perhaps have been miserable and barren of achievement. "Until the end of their years together," Iris Butler has rightly observed, "nothing but good came of their combined lives."  

Wellesley married twice and the place of his wives in his career as politician and statesman has been left to last. His wife Hyacinthe proved a distinct disadvantage to his fortunes, but the blame was largely his. Butler's book is essentially the story of Wellesley's tempestuous marriage to Hyacinthe Roland, and it tells all. They met in 1786, apparently when Mornington made a brief visit to Paris. Hyacinthe's mother was an actress; her father may have been Irish. It was said that "she had not been

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150 Butler, Eldest, p. 473.

151 Ibid., pp. 50-51.
particularly well brought up, and that her associations were unlike those of her lover.¹⁵² Thomas Creevey and the Prince Regent's mistress Lady Yarmouth (of all people) bewailed the folly which induced Mornington to marry such a woman.¹⁵³ Henry Brougham reported that Mornington had been "tricked" into marrying her in 1794 because her confessor had said she could not return to the church until her marriage was solemnised; her physician's prediction of imminent death proved inaccurate.¹⁵⁴ The tale is not credible. Even her enemies conceded that Hyacinthe had wit and beauty and her correspondence reveals brains and determination. Hyacinthe and Mornington appear to have been happy until he went to India. She was, however, also devoted to the children and refused to join him in Calcutta.¹⁵⁵ This seems to have disturbed him greatly and she, alone in London, had the unpleasant task of coping with a hostile social environment in addition to rearing the children. Wellesley gradually


¹⁵⁴ Mrs. Creevey to Thomas Creevey, 6 November 1805 (John Gore, ed.; London, 1934), p. 44.

concluded that it was better that she not come, but this may have been simply a rationalisation. Their correspondence, tender at first, became increasingly acrimonious. He waxed angry and hurt when she began to question the wisdom and need for staking so much on his touchy sense of honour. Wellesley came to hate Hyacinthe but he could never despise her. Butler, the best qualified to pass judgement on this score, holds that Hyacinthe "was the key to her husband's personality and had it in her power to make or break him." Eventually they maimed each other and separated.

Wellesley loved his children but undoubtedly they constituted a heavy financial burden at the very time he was trying to establish himself at Westminster. Hyacinthe's conduct, excluding their shared transgression in formalising their marriage so tardily, was irreproachable before India and while her husband was away. Hyacinthe's mother-in-law, however, never reconciled herself to her son's choice, which increased the strain for everyone concerned. Beyond this, Wellesley's realisation at the conclusion of his viceroyalty that his vaulting ambitions required more funds than even India

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156 Ingram, Two Views, pp. 112-13, 256-61.
157 Butler, Eldest, p. 25.
158 William Dardis to Buckingham, 18 September 1809, San Marino, California, Huntington Library, Stowe MSS, Political, ff. 178; William Wilberforce to Wellesley, 7 June 1809, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, ff. 287-89.
could give must have burdened their relationship. He undoubtedly regretted that she was not a source of wealth or proper connections at a time when he needed them so desperately.

Their venomous exchanges after 1806 certainly made their mark on Wellesley's career. Hyacinthe taunted him for refusing to take the immense boon of £100,000 granted by the East India company to mark the victory at Seringapatam and reminded him too often of his alleged abuse at the hands of the government and Crown. Wellesley sought comfort in a succession of mistresses, which ravaged his pocketbook and goaded his wife. She retaliated by barricading herself in Apsley house and maltreating Wellesley's friends, including those vital to his public career. In February 1810 they parted forever and in doing so they sealed Wellesley's financial ruin and lowered his reputation in those circles which mattered most. His energies, which might have been better employed in keeping abreast of the paperwork at the Foreign office, too often went into venting his anger on her. His fine mind and considerable talents were distracted at the most critical time in his entire career, and he was still ranging against her when she died in 1816.

159 Butler, Eldest, pp. 404-405.
160 Ibid., pp. 448-50.
161 Ibid., pp. 487-90.
It can never be known whether the distraction, the confusion and the damage to his reputation which these troubled years of life with Hyacinthe entailed denied him the ultimate political triumph he wanted so much.

Hyacinthe's temper was not Wellesley's only distraction. His sexual indiscretions, apart from the deleterious impact on family and finances, constituted a serious obstacle to Wellesley's advancement. Curzon somewhat sanctimoniously declared that "one of the main sources of weakness in Wellesley's career upon which commentators appear uniformly to have turned a blind eye was his relations with women." His philandering at this crucial time revived memories of advice tendered twenty years earlier by the Marquis of Buckingham. It angered the aging King, who suffered without sympathy the sexual improprieties of leading politicians, and who identified people such as Wellesley with his own unpalatable son and heir. Wellesley's behaviour upset his closest friend Canning, who was pressed by Hyacinthe on one occasion to intervene to bar Wellesley from selecting a mistress to accompany him to Spain. Canning "told all" to the King, whose own prejudices must have been reinforced. 


163 Canning to Charles Bagot, 10 June 1809, printed in Joceline Bagot, George Canning and his Friends (London; 2 vols.; J. Murray, 1909), I, 308.
Between 1810 and 1812, whenever Wellesley was absent from town and was pleading illness, it was widely assumed that Wellesley's time was being taken up with women of the lowest reputation. For the most part this was not the case. Hyacinthe's departure and the settlement which attended it left him so improverished that he was forced by his own admission to abandon his current mistress and thoughts of future ones. Some time elapsed before London would begin to believe that Wellesley could have brought himself to adopt new norms of behaviour in this area. Inevitably when Wellesley reached for the premiership in 1812 it was asked how a man who could not maintain a household with decorum could manage a country. Wellesley's lassitude in office was quickly identified with alleged private affairs, and these affairs with his alleged general moral turpitude. This was a vicious punishment for one who had always prided himself on following principles of conduct higher than those of other public men.

Even in old age Wellesley was unable to escape the sins


165 Dardis to Buckingham, 25 April 1810, Stowe MSS, Political, 178.

166 Butler, Eldest, pp. 500-502.
of his youth. Apparently two illegitimate sons were born of a Devonshire lady, probably during the course of visits to his constituency in Beer Alston in 1784. One of these, Edward Johnstone, began to appear as a member of Wellesley's household staff about 1815. When Wellesley became Lord Lieutenant in 1821 Edward arrived in Dublin as Wellesley's private secretary. Johnstone made no friends in Ireland. At first Wellesley showed excessive favouritism to the young man, who in turn intruded on the jurisdiction of castle officials. When Wellesley's friends attempted to dislodge the fellow the viceroy ranged "like an aging and jealous actress." Unable to cast off Johnstone himself, Wellesley unintentionally moved to solve the problem by marrying for a second time in 1825. Wellesley's new wife took an instant dislike to Johnstone, appealed to Liverpool to have him removed from Ireland, and finally forced him out of the country. When he attempted to intrude on

167 Mornington to unnamed correspondent, 9 October 1783, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 163.

168 Norman Gash, Mr. Secretary Peel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 372-73; Goulburn to Peel, 15 December 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 300-301.

169 Gash, Mr. Secretary, pp. 372-73.

170 Goulburn to Peel, 2 January 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 1-3; Peel to Goulburn, 6 January 1826, 9 January 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 10, 14; Goulburn to Peel, 27 January 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 267.
Wellesley during his second viceroyalty, Littleton intervened to stop it.

In October 1825 Wellesley surprised his friends, Irish officials, Westminster and the King by marrying Marianne Patterson, an American lady from a distinguished Maryland family and a friend (perhaps onetime mistress) of the Duke of Wellington. Widow of a wealthy Baltimore merchant, she and her sisters quickly made their mark on the European scene. One sister married the Duke of Leeds and a second Lord Stafford. Another sister married Jerome Bonaparte, Napoleon's youngest brother. The wedding for Mrs. Patterson and Wellesley took place in Dublin. It excited considerable interest and some consternation inasmuch as she was a Roman Catholic. Wellesley's adversaries enjoyed the chance to take cheap shots at the elderly viceroy. But Wellesley's better-mannered political opponents such as Henry Goulburn came to the conclusion that the marriage was a good thing. Lady Wellesley exerted a moderating influence on the Marquess and her wit, discretion

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171 Longford, Pillar, p. 46.
and intelligence earned for him all the encomiums denied him in the case of Hyacinthe. William IV found her fascinating and Creevey, who had criticised Hyacinthe so sharply, conceded that there never was a more agreeable companion than the second Lady Wellesley.

She must have brought Richard great happiness. At the close of his days he wrote on the flyleaf of a copy of a compilation of his poems prepared in her honour four lines from Dryden's Fables which rank among the most touching descriptions of happy marriage. One wonders what difference it might have made for Wellesley's career if she rather than Hyacinthe had been his first spouse.

The emergence of the Wellesley clan, its triumph over several substantial obstacles, its shift from a narrow Irish stage to the wider British forum, and its cohesiveness for at least twenty years, must be attributed in large measure to the Marquess. The Wellesleys in many respects were not an attractive family and intra-family relationships were often governed by motives more selfish than charitable.

174 A biography of this most interesting lady has, apparently, never been attempted, although several archives in her native Maryland contain important material.

175 Curzon, British Government, I, 179; Creevey to Mrs. Ord, 9 September 1832, printed in Creevey (Maxwell, ed.), II, 248.

Wellesley's contribution to the emergence of the family as a significant force in British politics was vital between 1781 and 1798, and close to decisive between 1798 and 1812. The first period saw the foundations laid for an effective family interest in both the Irish and British parliaments. During the second phase the family moved from comprising merely one of many small and aspiring parliamentary groupings to a position of considerable stature in determining the composition of successive ministries and the direction of British politics.
CHAPTER IV: THE ANGLO-

IRISH CONNECTION 1780-1783
I. The Irish House of Lords in the Late Eighteenth Century

The second Earl of Mornington took his seat in the Irish House of Lords for the first time on 9 October 1781. An aura of excitement and anticipation permeated the chamber and the whole parliament. Popular pressure was mounting for revision of the constitutional ties which bound Great Britain and Ireland. There was talk of a peaceful revolution in progress and of the danger of violence if Westminster denied Ireland the political and economic demands it saw fit to make. After decades of languid subservience to England punctuated from time to time by temporary and short-lived attempts at revolt, it now appeared that a concerted effort was underway to vindicate Ireland's demands for parliamentary autonomy. The Irish parliament considered itself more potent than it had been for two centuries, and indeed it was. As Professors Beckett and Donaldson observed, the comprehensiveness of Williamite confiscations three quarters of a century earlier, reinforced by assiduous application of the penal codes, had virtually destroyed prospects of a challenge from the Catholic majority. On the other side, the hereditary revenue of the Crown had ceased to be adequate for normal expenses, and thus the executive was forced to apply to parliament more frequently in order to secure funds for its requirements. The Irish parliament was now wise enough
to make only temporary grants, and thus increased its leverage.¹

Of course the Irish parliament in large measure viewed prospects for thoroughgoing reform with as much horror as did the British government. The character of Ireland's legislative and executive institutions was not such as to instill a large measure of confidence among the population as a whole or among those of the ruling classes committed to seeking change. As the large disenfranchised Catholic segment of the Irish population could not avoid noting, occasional manifestations of defiance of the government of the day rarely lasted long. The government's allies might succumb to popular pressure and even join the opposition; as Beckett has observed, even office holders sometimes deserted in a moment of panic. But the viceregal had only to wait until the excitement subsided: "the Irish house of Commons consisted of a government party, fluctuating and unreliable, which might be defeated, but could never be put out of office, and an even more unstable opposition which might occasionally be victorious, but could never come in."²

Things were less exciting in the house of Lords, but even here hints of change were in the air. By 1781 the house of Lords had changed perceptibly from what it had been even when Mornington's father retired from active politics in 1776. The impact of a large-scale creation of peerages could already be felt. In 1779 the incumbent viceroy, John Hobart, second Earl of Buckinghamshire, complained that "the peerage has been augmented to a degree that will render the house of Lords, of which until recently the bishops used to make a majority, difficult to conduct. ... Every man I see solicits peerage, privy council, or pension."³ This rapid expansion of the Irish peerage would continue until after 1800. Politically accommodating elements such as the bench of bishops gradually became a minority of the working membership even though they laboured heroically to retain the initiative.⁴ The creation of new peers encouraged the participation of many prominent men for whom titles represented rewards for various services to the government in the past but from whom there were no guarantees of support in the future. Majorities became more difficult to


secure. The number of politically active peers rose from the two dozen who attended regularly during the early years of the first Earl of Mornington's participation to some 60 or 70 by the end of the 1780s. By 1800 the Irish peerage would exceed 200 in number, with a larger percentage attending parliament than ever before.

In 1789 the house of Lords was still much less lively than the Irish house of Commons. In some respects the upper chamber in Dublin was also only a "pale reflection" of its British counterpart, in part because its powers were circumscribed. Many peers continued to be regular absentees and the organised opposition, led by the incorruptible Earl Charlemont, remained for the most part a small minority. On the face of it one could draw the conclusion that the house of Lords made a slight impression either on behalf of or in opposition to the government of the day; few bills originated in the upper chamber and Porritt has noted that between 1782 and 1800 no important bills which originated in

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5 Buckinghamshire, BM Add. MSS 34532, f. 180, cited in Porritt, Unreformed, II, 453.


house of Commons were rejected by the house of Lords. But all of this could be misleading. Peers as great landlords inevitably wielded great power in the county representation. Their control of borough representation was also substantial; when 200 seats were disenfranchised by the act of union in 1801 120 members of the temporal peerage received compensation. And if the house of Lords failed to serve as an effective forum for debating the great issues of the period, this was not the case in the house of Commons. Henry Flood, Henry Grattan and others combined to make the late eighteenth century the most exciting era in Irish parliamentary history.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century witnessed prolonged and impassioned debates within and without parliament on a number of issues central to Ireland's relationship to Great Britain and to its own aspirations for national identity. Debate sharpened with the advent of the American revolution but the grievances involved were longstanding. In

8Porritt Unreformed, II, 453.

9Johnston, Great Britain, p. 16.
some respects Mornington found himself addressing questions which at any earlier stage had attracted his father's attention. But in 1781 the Crown, through the government of the day, could no longer rely on the Irish parliament to support supinely or to acquiesce in government policy. Indeed, the rise of an extra-legal but popular parliament in the name of the volunteer movement made it clear that if parliament refused to press for reform, the nation might seek vindication of its grievances in another forum.

II: The Anglo-Irish Connection

Central to the demand for reform in Ireland after 1750 was the question of Anglo-Irish constitutional relations. Until 1782 this relationship was governed in part by the power to legislate for Ireland as asserted by the Westminster parliament in the declaratory act of 1720, Poyning's law, and the privy councils of Ireland and England. Poyning's law was enacted in Ireland during the reign of Henry VIII originally, it appears, to guard the rights of both the Crown and the Irish parliament from encroachment by over-mighty viceroys. Later it was modified by custom to serve as a limiting mechanism on possible independent Irish legislative initiatives. Before the Irish parliament could meet, according to the original form, the viceroy and Irish privy
council had to inform the Crown why parliament was to be summoned and to transmit any bills to be laid before it. The King and the privy council in London would respond by approving the summons and by returning the bills along with whatever changes they saw fit. These amended bills were duly submitted to the Irish parliament for their approval or rejection without amendment. Further bills could be transmitted during the session, following the same process.

As Beckett and Donaldson have observed, these procedures were so cumbersome that the eighteenth century requirements on parliament for increased productivity would have been compromised if such conditions persisted. A new procedure evolved. At the beginning of the session the Irish house of Commons would appoint a committee to consider what measures were desirable. These "heads of bills" were subjected to amendment and debate in the normal legislative context before they were presented to the viceroy for transmission to England. The Irish parliament was required to accept the bills without amendment or reject them upon their return.¹⁰

The role of the declaratory act was to reaffirm the supremacy of the Westminster parliament. In

1671 the English parliament claimed the right to legislate for Ireland when parliament could not be called to session in Ireland. This unilateral right was not universally acknowledged in Ireland and as one way to reinforce its claims the united parliament reaffirmed and extended its claims in 1720 ("the sixth of George the First") "for the better securing the dependency of the kingdom of Ireland on the crown of Great Britain." There matters stood for the next half century.

The wide powers claimed in this declaratory act excited less consternation than might have been anticipated because they were used sparingly. No attempt was made to levy taxes directly from London and the possible use of the Westminster parliament to enact into law for Ireland measures which the Dublin parliament opposed was "rarely considered seriously." Nonetheless, from the point of view of those who cherished the concept of an independent Irish legislature Westminster's pretensions on this score were obviously unpalatable.

Other devices were more commonly used to insure compatibility between the Irish and British parliaments. Perhaps most important was the assumption shared by all parliamentary

\[11\text{Ibid., p. 23.}\]
parties and factions in England that legislation was of secondary importance and administration was primary. Occasional eruptions of opposition in the Irish parliament prompted a similar response by the dominant interest in the Westminster parliament, whether that interest at the moment be Whig or Tory: dissatisfaction was dampened by the dispensation of patronage in the proper places and at times suffocated by vetoes in either the Irish or the British privy council. Day to day affairs were superintended by experienced bureaucrats such as Edward Cooke, who by virtue of their experience and their willingness to serve successive viceroys of various persuasions were in fact civil servants.

In addition to the permanent bureaucracy there was the Irish privy council. The council, as Mornington noted on one occasion, was certainly not an embodiment of Irish public opinion and not in any fashion an efficient instrument for the conduct of Irish legislative responsibilities. Its great size - there were 70 privy councillors in 1771 and 89 in 1784 - encouraged the viceroy to summon only those members whose advice and consent were likely to fit in comfortably with such legislative guidelines as Westminster and the Crown saw fit to convey to the viceroy. The inner core of the privy council, a putative cabinet of sorts, was an informal
and rather homogeneous group; no man was summoned to it by virtue of the office he held, and this flexibility in membership permitted the viceroy to play a decisive role in fashioning legislative proposals. The bills thus fashioned as the result of its deliberations were transmitted to the British privy council where they were considered by a committee especially appointed for each session of parliament. Approval was normally guaranteed by the fact that the viceroy could rely on compliant Irish privy councillors to draft legislation in an agreeable form. If parliament as a whole or public opinion pressed too hard there remained the veto power of the British privy council.

There were also informal devices for maintaining the Anglo-Irish constitutional connection. After Poyning's law was amended in 1782 and the declaratory act was renounced in 1783 the tattered constitutional connection rested in large measure upon supplementary instruments. There remained in the first instance the power of the British privy council as principal advisor to the Crown to reject Irish bills


13 Johnston, Great Britain, p. 89.
which threatened to undermine the connection between the two
kingdoms. This was a potentially dangerous weapon. London
preferred to avoid if possible the unhappy prospect of
vetoing Irish measures. Prior to 1782 agreement depended
upon exchanges of unofficial correspondence between Dublin
and London.\(^{14}\) King George III exploited this practice to
keep himself informed on Irish matters; he demanded to see
even private correspondence thus generated and this embarrassed
successive viceroys and British officials.\(^{15}\) Gradually the
confusion which resulted from parallel exchanges of corres-
pondence between British and Irish officials at the same
level was eased by tightening administrative procedures and
by augmenting the power of the Irish chief secretary.
These reforms, however, only sharpened the central con-
stitutional problem: was the Irish government responsible
to parliament at Westminster or in College Green? Was Ireland
a separate kingdom under a shared Crown or was it an adjunct
to the Southern department or (after 1782) the Home office?

If there was a reluctance on Westminster's part prior
to 1760 to exploit their prerogatives as defined under Poyning's
law and the declaratory act this was certainly even more so
after 1760. As Professor Beckett has observed, "the fear of


arousing parliamentary opposition in Ireland by too open use of British power had become much stronger, and between 1775 and 1782 special British legislation for Ireland was confined almost entirely to measures either repealing restrictive statutes, about which Ireland had complained, or conferring positive benefits. ¹⁶ Nor did the Irish privy council continue to exercise its superintending authority as established under Poyning's law. The British privy council was also reluctant to amend these bills and to exercise its veto.

Nonetheless, the subservience of the Irish legislature to Britain continued to rankle. And when in 1779 a desperate effort to end the American rebellion saw Lord North despatch a mission to Philadelphia conceding virtually every American demand short of complete independence, Ireland thought it deserved at least commensurate generosity for its loyalty. In 1781 when Mornington took his seat in parliament events in Ireland has progressed to the point where a new system of government, whether it be independent from or subservient to Britain, was desperately needed.

The ancient practice whereby successive British ministries superintended Irish affairs by depending largely on purchasing a malleable Irish parliament and by insulating Ireland from

partisan politics thus came to an ignominious end. Even before the advent of the American revolution the undertakers had been dismissed. But after 1775 it was necessary to contemplate the possibility that Ireland might also raise the standard of revolt. Nor could the process of devising concessions be considered a matter divorced from party policies in England. At Westminster Lord North's opponents, "eager to embarrass him by every possible means," fashioned their own Irish policy as the American war drew towards its awful climax. Their policy towards Ireland indeed differed rather little from that of North, for they loathed the prospect of an independent Ireland and their allies in Ireland dreaded the thought of conceding political rights to Catholics. But the Whigs soon found themselves committed to the entirety of the program being put forward by the patriot party, and the consequences for Ireland were enormous.

What were some of these ramifications as they involved the young Lord Mornington and his colleagues in Irish politics after 1780? The first and most important was the task of maintaining the continuity of British government in Ireland and guaranteeing a permanent connection between the two

17 Ibid., pp. 128-30.
nations in the event that, with the intrusion of English partisan politics into Irish policy, every change of administration in England required a change of administration in Ireland as well. Within the framework of the constitutional relationship lay several pressing divisive issues: parliamentary reform in Ireland; the economic relationship between Ireland and the empire; and questions of places, pensions and honours. Of these Mornington was to be involved intermittently in resisting electoral reform; he was to play an active role in efforts to fashion an Anglo-Irish economic treaty in 1785, and he was to profit from and in his own mind eventually suffer from that liberal dispensation of patronage to which eighteenth century Ireland had become accustomed. In order to play an active part Mornington moved quickly in 1781 and 1782 to make his mark on the great events of the day. His immediate objectives were an expansion of his electoral interest by introducing the family to politics, and by establishing himself as a useful ally or substantial potential opponent to successive Irish administrations.

III: The Borough of Trim

The Mornington family interest in the Irish parliament consisted only of the borough of Trim. Between 1782 and 1800
Mornington made no effort to increase the number of seats under his control and indeed on occasion it seemed possible that he might lose Trim itself. His failure to expand the family's Irish parliamentary base probably reflected among other things Mornington's rapidly maturing plans to translate himself to Westminster, the limited value in Ireland of devoting time and money to competing with interests which were already large and entrenched; the uncertain future of the Irish parliament; and in the early years a dearth of siblings qualified to assist him in politics.

Trim in county Meath was one of 109 boroughs which enjoyed representation in the Irish house of Commons during the eighteenth century. Each borough elected two representatives and as a group the parliamentary borough interest comprised more than two-thirds of the total of 300 seats. Trim was also one of the 91 boroughs in which the franchise was identified with membership in a corporation; of the remainder, 12 were potwalloping constituencies where 55 householders held the franchise and 6 were manor boroughs where freeholders voted.\(^\text{18}\) Porritt has observed that

\(^{18}\) Johnston, *Great Britain*, pp. 121-78.
gentlemen . . . travestied Irish municipal institutions and the work for them to do, and used them solely as a means for pushing their own political, material and social advantage; . . . the record of Irish municipalities in the eighteenth century forms one of the most sombre chapters in the history of the country.\footnote{Porritt, Unreformed, II, 317.}

If anything, the tone of borough politics declined when the undertakers disappeared. Not only did this force successive viceroys to negotiate directly with borough owners for their support, but once incumbents were pensioned they tended "to resign in favour of relatives, who thereupon advanced fresh pretensions."\footnote{Buckinghamshire, 1779, BM Add. MSS 34523, quoted in Porritt, Unreformed, II, 359-60.} Boroughs were and were treated as simply another specimen of private property. About 1750 they were valued at £3,000 if one wished to purchase a seat for life. This increased to between £8,000 and £9,000 by 1783; when Trim was extinguished in 1800 Mornington received £15,000.\footnote{Porritt, Unreformed, II, 357-59; Johnston, Great Britain, p. 174.}

For borough owners who were relatively poor this species of property represented an important investment; for the wealthy it opened new opportunities for office and influence.

Trim was less secure than many other boroughs (and for this reason less marketable) because of the large number of freemen in the corporation. As early as 1697 the manipulation
of the borough franchise in Trim was the subject of complaint and discussion. A petition prepared for the house of Commons alleged that during an election men had been recruited in Dublin in order to expand Trim's contingent of freemen. It had already become commonplace "for the portreeve, with three or four of the freemen and burgesses, to meet at a private chamber and make freemen." The allegation was apparently not without foundation, for throughout the eighteenth century Trim had some 300 freemen, a large number; only a couple of boroughs had more. 22

This ancient borough came into the Wellesley family in 1688 when Garrett Wellesley purchased it from the Duke of Warton. He paid "a mere trifle" for it in that troubled era. Perhaps it was not worth more; at any rate Sir Thomas Ashe of Ashfield gained control of one of the two seats about 1720. Full control was reestablished by the Wellesleys about the time the second Earl Mornington was born. One seat was sold for life to John Pomeroy, a friend of the family, while the other was filled directly by the Mornington clan. 23


23 R. Falkland, Parliamentary Representation: Being a Political and Critical Review of all the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs of the Kingdom of Ireland with Regard to Their State of Representation (Dublin, 1790), pp. 77-78.
Maintaining control was an arduous task, made more so by the advent of increasingly frequent elections after 1760. During the last third of the century the Mornington interest was challenged periodically and in 1790 the challenge almost succeeded. Mornington and his family and friends resorted to traditional devices for discouraging the demonstration of franchise independence in Trim. Arthur Wellesley warned his brother that the citizenry was far from docile and that riots were possible. Mornington journeyed to Trim on this as on other occasions to address the townspeople and even to debate the opposition. The Mornington family papers also confirm that pressure was exerted by other means: cultivating the good will of other influential families was one of these; awarding freeman status in the town to them and to their friends was another.

There is little evidence that the Wellesley family tried to discipline the community by an expansion of the franchise. Technically, freedom of a borough could be acquired by the nomination of the mayor, portreeve or sovereign during his year

24Porritt, Unreformed, II, 339.

of office, by birth, by marriage, by apprenticeship, or by "grace especial" of the patron. This last option was most useful for a rapid expansion of the franchise. In the case of Trim the franchise was already so wide that it was difficult to restrict further growth on one hand and inconceivable that voters could be cowed into support by the prospect of creating a sufficient number of new freemen to neutralise their influence. Mornington's papers contain several proposals for a large scale expansion of the number of freemen but he was obviously and understandably reluctant to implement any of them, even when after 1790 it appeared that the family's candidate faced a stiff challenge. The borough was abolished before the crisis became acute.

Between 1782 and 1798 Mornington appeared at Trim only infrequently; his presence usually marked the advent of one of these crises. In September 1784 he wrote to his friend William Grenville describing his timely intervention to prevent adoption of resolutions and addresses critical of Pitt's Irish policies. He described the local leadership as half-terrified of the citizenry of the borough, ready to approve the crowd's wild proposals. Through his timely intervention,

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Mornington wrote, he prevented the paramount county Meath interest of the Hercules Lanford Rowley family, who had occupied one of the county seats since 1761, from surrendering their leadership to a radical element. To have allowed this to occur, Mornington reminded Grenville, would have endangered the political fortunes of other prominent Meath families and undermined the Wellesley family's position in Trim.27

Gradually Mornington's brothers relieved him of direct responsibility at Trim, and Mornington's shift to the English scene weakened his interest and his control. He continued to write long letters on the subject of Trim affairs; one was composed on the eve of his departure for India and discusses in some detail plans for expanding the list of freemen.28 For the most part, however, Trim served as an apprenticeship for family members as they began to enter politics under the eldest brother's tutelage. The town's tumultuous politics, for instance, served as a baptism of fire for Arthur during the last decade of the Irish parliament. By that time Mornington was to have advanced some

27 Ibid., p. 132; Mornington to Grenville, 2 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 233.

28 Mornington to Sir Chichester Fortescue, 8 June 1797, printed in Anon., "Some Letters of the Mornington Family, 1760-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue," County Kildare Archaeological Society Journal, XII, 47.
distance in his efforts to make a mark on the larger stage. He
rehearsed his future role in the Irish house of Lords.

IV: "A Mild Temper of Rebelliousness"

The summer of 1781 must have been a busy one for
Mornington. He reached his majority only one month after
his father died. He sold and mortgaged family property to
provide ready income. He consulted Henry Grattan, whom he
had met before, about Irish affairs. By the time he took
his seat in the house of Lords in October he seems to have
defined in his own mind a line of political conduct agreeable
to his prejudices on public issues and likely to favour
his rapid advancement.

Mornington entered the Irish house of Lords determined
to keep clear of firm and enduring party attachments. He
thought of himself as the King's man, but no slave. "The
duty of loyalty and affection towards a British sovereign,"
he observed later, "did not consist in submissive obedience
even to the honest prejudices or errors of the royal mind
..." or of its representatives.29 A "mild temper of
rebelliousness," at any rate, was no liability; if properly

29 Wellesley to Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of
Liverpool, 21 May 1612, printed in C. S. Parker, ed., Sir
Robert Peel, From His Private Papers (3 vols.; London:
J. Murray, 1891), I, 70.
harnessed, it would impress upon the government of the day the fact that here was a man worth conciliating. Mornington was also beginning to develop a general political philosophy. On the ideological continuum which stretched from reform to reaction Mornington was by temperament inclined to a programme of modified reform. Throughout his career he consistently believed in granting the executive sufficient resources to maintain strict order, and to the legislature every incentive to remove the causes of unrest. Until the end of his public career he continued to declare his support for liberalism in Ireland, even though his enemy Melbourne was by then the principal architect. But he abhored lawlessness in Ireland. In a speech delivered in the house of Lords in December 1783 Mornington declared that the duly constituted government, even when its policies were imbecilic, must be sustained.

As viceroy in India and Ireland he prosecuted agitators vigorously, sometimes with needless fanfare. Not until 1830 did he concede the need for parliamentary reform.

When Mornington entered parliament he inherited his father's friendship for Earl Charlemont and deepened his own

30 Wellesley to Henry Richard Vassal Fox, Third Baron Holland, 13 November 1839, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 181.

acquaintance with Henry Grattan. From Charlemont, with Grattan's prodding, he accepted an invitation to serve as the opposition whip. The duties were not onerous, for the dissidents in normal times rarely numbered more than a dozen. Under Mornington's youthful eagerness the small band made up for a want in numbers by the frequency of its protests. ³²

A great deal more important factor was the spirit of criticism and independent thinking pervading parliament at this time, stimulated in part by the unnerving and dangerous precedent of a rival legislature in the form of the Irish volunteers advertising itself as the true voice of the nation.

Henry Grattan's relationship to Mornington was bound up in their perception of the dangers posed to the ancient parliament by this extraordinary movement. It was in this context that Mornington made the first important and permanent policy decision of his public career: to labour to sustain the existing legislative order of things whatever its defects as a midwife for necessary reforms. Mornington was strongly impressed by Grattan at this time, and this is reflected in the shape of his ideological commitment. ³³ Grattan was then

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³³ Torrens, Marquess, p. 39.
entering his prime as a brilliant ornament of the Irish parliament, and he was pledged to a course of moderate reform which appealed to Mornington. But Grattan's policies were only part of the reason Mornington found in him an early mentor. Grattan's great rival was Henry Flood, whom Mornington and many others disliked for a variety of reasons. After a strenuous effort to promote an understanding between Grattan and the emerging Pittite interest in England, and when it became clear that Grattan's policy of Irish legislative independence was more than Pitt and his friends could accept with equanimity, Mornington gradually drifted away from Grattan and into a friendship with Pitt's cousin Grenville and the whole Grenville family. This decision was made almost unconsciously but it was one of the most important of Mornington's life. Grattan became the leader of the Irish patriots, though more than most he continued to insist that Ireland retain close ties, dynastic and otherwise, with Britain. Mornington advocated substantial religious and economic reform in Ireland and even wrote a brilliant blueprint for constitutional change. But he opposed an extension of the franchise and supported the claims of the empire over his native Ireland. In this he took issue with Grattan and sacrificed an opportunity to be identified as an Irish patriot.
Two factors, the rivalry between Grattan and Flood, and the use of the volunteers, dominated Irish affairs between 1781 and 1784. Flood entered the Irish house of Commons in 1759 and quickly established his reputation as a zealous and eloquent opponent of the English interest. He fashioned an increasingly vocal and potent opposition in parliament by introducing bills to shorten the duration of parliaments, to reduce pensions, to create a militia responsible to parliament, and to restore the independence of the Irish legislature. He led the fight against Townshend after the viceroy dismissed the undertakers. Townshend was recalled in 1772. His successor Harcourt pursued a more liberal course. After protracted negotiations Flood entered the government as vice-treasurer in October 1775, explaining that "the only way anything could be effected for the country was by going along with the government, and making their measures diverge towards public utility."  

Flood's decision to join the government proved deeply injurious to his reputation among the nationalists. The negotiations which attended his adhesion were not creditable to him. His halfhearted support for coercion against America satisfied no one. After 1788 he attempted to repair the damage by absenting

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himself from the privy council and by identifying himself
with the volunteer movement. His loss of credibility was,
for the moment, Grattan's gain.

Grattan entered parliament in Charlemont's interest
in December 1775. As Flood's disenchantment with the idea
of effecting reform from within the government increased
Grattan and he began to concert their demands that Ireland
be granted more generous access to empire markets and that
restrictions heretofore imposed on Ireland's economic develop-
ment be eliminated. Grattan's efforts to bring pressure on
Britain to make such changes intensified as the depression
brought on by the loss of markets in America became more
severe. In the autumn of 1779 Grattan carried a motion
against the government. The motion opposed new taxes and
limited the duration for which supplies were voted to six
months. His speeches and the rising power of the volunteer
movement made their mark; the old commercial system so
prejudicial to Ireland was substantially modified. But
Grattan was determined to go further. In the spring of 1780
he moved for repeal of Poyning's law and the declaratory act
and sought to reduce the duration of the mutiny act. Fiery
speeches enhanced his reputation and added to Flood's dis-

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35Lecky, Ireland (ed. Curtis), pp. 173-77; Sir Leslie
Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, Dictionary of National Biography
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1885-1900), VIII, 419.
comforture. For Flood the path to a restored reputation seemed to lay in closer identification with the volunteer movement and in articulating demands even more audacious than those framed by Grattan.

In 1778 France openly declared its support for the American colonies. Ireland, denuded of troops, and Britain, staggering under the weight of military defeats in North America, stood exposed to the possibility of a French invasion. A sudden enthusiasm to defend the homeland swept Ireland. Attached to a call for volunteers prepared to deter the French was a surge of resentment against inequities in the Anglo-Irish relationship. Monstrous meetings, infected by radical and even revolutionary ideas, raised the spectre of a surrogate parliament for the Irish nation. Flood identified himself with the movement; Grattan and Charlemont, despite their horror at seeing the movement adopt resolutions granting Catholics not only complete religious toleration and some economic advantages but even full electoral rights, gave it their support and by doing so hoped to exact greater concessions from Westminster.

Between 1781 and 1784 Ireland was treated to a contest

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37 Ibid., p. 160.
between Grattan and Flood for leadership of the reform move-
ment. Flood supported Grattan's motion for Irish indepen-
dence in February 1782; the Portland ministry attempted
to restore Flood to office and to the privy council;
parliament feared Flood for his threats to summon the
volunteers to overawe parliament; Grattan urged London to
save the Irish parliament from destruction by conceding
an amendment to Poyning's law; and Flood declared that
Grattan's demands did not go far enough. Finally in October
1783 the house of Commons was treated to an exchange of
exercises in character assassination by Flood and Grattan.
Perhaps the history of the Irish parliament records no
exchange more bitter.

What was Mornington's political conduct during all
this? He feared the volunteers, and despised Flood. He
admired and feared Grattan. Like Charlemont he feared the
consequences of amending Poyning's law. In London North's
ministry collapsed upon receipt of news of Yorktown. Rock-
ingham, assisted by Earl Shelburne and Charles Fox,
prevailed only from March to July 1782, with the Duke of
Portland as Irish viceroy. Shelburne formed his own adminis-
tration in July, with Earl Temple as viceroy and young
William Grenville as Irish chief secretary.

In three years, therefore, from 1781 to 1784, there
were five separate ministries at the helm of British affairs.
Politicians more experienced than the twenty-one year old Earl of Mornington would have found the situation uncomfortable. For Mornington, as yet unencumbered with a record of public service, it was a question of forging advantageous connections and defining his political principles. In the house of Lords itself he made a modest impression; outside it he began to make a more important and more permanent contribution.

V: The Art of Protest

Party discipline was not a virtue of the eighteenth century Irish parliament; even those who were understood to be pledged to the government of the day by virtue of special favours previously received took the line of opposition from time to time. For Mornington the session of 1781-1782 was an appropriate forum for matching wits with veteran politicians of all persuasions. The political atmosphere was highly charged; reformers had seized the initiative and the survival of the Anglo-Irish connection, and indeed the survival of the empire itself, seemed very much in danger.

The session of 1781-1782 proved to be the culmination of sixteen years of agitation for reform in Ireland. In 1766 Flood had failed in an attempt to amend Poyning's law. He had succumbed to government's enticements, but demands for reform continued. There was agitation for shorter parliaments,
freedom of trade, mitigation of the penal code, parliamentary reform, security of judges' tenure, reform of the pension list, a mutiny act of limited duration and more. Much had been accomplished by the time Mornington entered the house of Lords. A septennial act had been enacted more than a decade before. The penal code was moderated in 1778 and trade restrictions reduced in 1779. All these triumphs, as Lord North noted ruefully, served only to focus attention more clearly than ever on the grievance posed by Poyning's law and the declaratory act of 1720. And these were grievances of scope and weight far above the others.

Thus were the decks cleared for action when Mornington took his seat. Buckinghamshire surrendered his post as viceroy in 1780 and was replaced by the earl of Carlisle. Ten days after the Irish parliament convened in October 1781 British forces were defeated at Yorktown. All hope of diverting the reform impulse was lost. Barry Yelverton and Flood declared their determination to introduce legislation to amend Poyning's law. In London North survived by a margin of only one vote a demand that the war cease, and he was obliged to agree that the Americans could not be defeated. On 15

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38 Porritt, Unreformed, II, 441-49.
February 1782 the Ulster volunteers met at Dungannon; some 25,000 of them joined in a call for legislative independence. At Grattan's urging they accepted the principle of a relaxation of penal laws against Catholics. Flood in turn proceeded to demand that the Irish privy council's power to alter heads of bills be declared void on the basis of an ancient misconstruction of the meaning of Poyning's law. Yelverton took a more moderate view, asking that the privy council be restricted to sending over bills without first altering them. A bill to this effect reached London in April, with Carlisle urging North to accept it in lieu of something more radical. North refused to do so and was spared further pain when his long suffering ministry collapsed.

By early spring 1782 Mornington's position on the great issue of the day was beginning to take shape. As opposition whip in the house of Lords he was of course pledged to a program of reform. He supported legislation to limit the duration of the mutiny law and in doing so warned, like some American orators a decade before him, that unless parliament reestablished its right to regulate the army the Crown's control would become incontestable.  

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On 15 February 1782 he voted with Charlemont in a minority of four against an address to the King on the government's Irish policy. Soon after this he was chosen colonel of the Trim volunteers, an office which he later resigned. Later in the session he called for diminution of the Crown's influence and held that revenue officers should not have to vote against their convictions to preserve their places.

But these were all proposals of reformers who remained at the same time fiercely dedicated to the British connection. Like Charlemont and Grattan, Mornington favoured increasing religious liberties for Catholics but he opposed their enfranchisement. And although Grattan, Flood, and Charlemont all played their part in mobilising the energies of the great Dungannon convention, Mornington was quick to conclude that Flood was a dangerous demagogue because of the extremity of some of his demands and because his behaviour tended to promote the pretensions of the volunteers to the prejudice

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41 Ibid., V (1782), 277.
43 Irish Lords Journal, V (1782), 360.
44 Porritt, Unreformed, II, 445.
of those of the ancient parliament.

With the collapse of North's ministry in early 1782 Mornington no longer found himself in opposition. Rockingham, Fox, and Burke were the animating elements of the new ministry and they were friends of Charlemont. The Duke of Portland replaced Carlisle at Dublin castle; at once he informed the Irish house of Commons that the Crown would entertain proposals for reforms in the Anglo-Irish constitutional relationship. Grattan responded with a speech both loyal and audacious: Britain could not deny to loyal Ireland what had been offered to rebellious America; "the practice of suppressing our bills in the council of Ireland, or altering the same anywhere," was "a just cause of discontent and jealousy."45 Portland urged the King to accede without reserve and Grattan threatened to lead the movement to seize by force what was not conceded gracefully. On 27 May all was conceded. By 7 June a bill to "regulate the manner of passing bills and to prevent delays in summoning parliament" had passed the house of Commons; six days later the house of Lords tendered its consent and named Mornington and Charlemont as its representatives to present the bill to the Lord Lieutenant. It became law on 27 July 1782,

45 Irish Lords Journal, X (1782), 360; Porritt, Unforeformed, II, 446.
exactly one year after Mornington had returned to Ireland.

Mornington's identification with the reform movement during the parliamentary session of 1781-1782 had never been wholehearted and he cannot be placed in the same category as Grattan, Flood or Charlemont. He was still extremely young and inexperienced and the enthusiasm which characterises his correspondence can easily mislead. He cast himself in terms more important than others rated his worth, and he was prone to changes of opinion, some of them sudden. It seems clear, nonetheless, that he eschewed the chance to become identified with the forward line of the reformers. Opportunities to make his mark as a reformer had not been wanting. He admired Grattan but came to deprecate his identification with the volunteers. In late 1781 and early 1782 Grattan applied some pressure on Mornington to take the lead in promoting the organisation of the volunteers in county Meath. Mornington's response was sadly unconvincing, self-contradictory, and indeed insincere. He lauded Grattan's efforts and appreciated the good work of the volunteers in promoting reform. But he complained that his neighborhood lacked that zeal for reform which would "set an example to all other independent counties in this kingdom." He conceded that many people in the Trim area would respond to his call, but he felt "a degree of delicacy upon that head." He "would wish to have the whole proceed from the unbiased
opinions of the people; otherwise, nothing effectual can be done. If anything should arise to give the least encouragement to our cause," Mornington pledged to exert his "utmost powers to profit by it." 46

Mornington's lack of enthusiasm might have led to an early break with Grattan and Charlemont had not Grattan himself become gradually alienated from the volunteers and more directly from Flood. After Grattan had proposed a declaration of rights in the Irish house of Commons Flood's reputation seemed permanently destroyed. Not even the sacrifice of his seat in the privy council and the loss of the attendant salary of £3,500 seemed likely to restore Flood's credibility in the eyes of the reformers. But even as Grattan engineered the bill to amend Poyning's law during the spring of 1782 Flood was preparing a new campaign. 47 At issue was Flood's contention that amending Poyning's law was not enough: Westminster might well negate the concession on this point by reasserting its claims to legislative supremacy under the "sixth of George the First." Flood's contention was made more credible when a decision of an


English court seemed to uphold Westminster's legislative jurisdiction. Grattan had pledged himself to be content with the amendment to Poyning's law and had used his professions of loyalty to promote acceptance of reform by George III and Westminster. He could not now demand more. Flood was prepared to do so and to weaken Grattan at the same time. Mornington was appalled at Flood's behaviour; he resented the breach of faith with England implied in his conduct and in equipping himself to confront Flood he surrendered his precarious claims as an avowed reformer.

Mornington's conversion from advocate for Irish autonomy to supporter of retaining the hallowed Anglo-Irish connection was not sudden, and perhaps it was even logical. Charlemont had entrusted his proxy to Mornington during his absence in the summer of 1782, and Mornington and Charlemont's friends put together "a very bad protest, written over wine at a dirty tavern in Essex street."\(^{48}\) Less than two weeks earlier, however, he had signed a dissent to a bill for electoral reform.\(^{49}\) Perhaps this marked the beginning of a new and more conservative phase in his career. His conviction that


\(^{49}\) Irish Lords Journal, V (1782), 360.
Flood in Ireland and Fox in England posed a grave danger to the two kingdoms took on a sharper tone. Mornington did not abandon a commitment to reform. It became, however, more pragmatic and less a matter of principle. He had moved to the edge of identification with the patriot party and now drew back.

Events over which he had no control now favoured his reluctance to become identified with the vanguard element of the patriot party. In July, just as Flood was placing Grattan on the defensive, the Rockingham ministry gave way to less adventurous some policies under the Earl of Shelburne. In terms of the number of ministers replaced the changes were not great, but for Mornington the exclusion of Fox and the inclusion of William Pitt the younger as chancellor of the Exchequer were most important developments. The changes also brought to Ireland William Grenville as Irish chief secretary and his eldest brother Earl Temple as viceroy. The shift to a more orthodox variant of reform, one which would soon be made permanent with the installation of Pitt as Prime minister, ideally suited the young Irish

49 Irish Lords Journal, V (1782), 360.

Earl. Under the Rockingham ministry the Whigs in England had offered their Irish connections a party union, leading positions in the Irish executive, and a comprehensive program of reasonable administrative reform. The result had been to establish close ties with Grattan, the Ponsonbys, the Duke of Leinster, Charlemont and others of the old opposition, amounting in all to about one sixth of the Irish house of Commons. Mornington took upon himself the task of seeing that Temple cultivated the more moderate reformers of this group, including Grattan, and put at arm's length Flood and even his associate Charlemont, the head of the volunteers. At once Mornington became a man of many parts: ally of the new ruling party at Westminster; intimate of the Irish administration; an architect of moderate reform. He was not yet a crucial element on the Irish scene but he was determined to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by the proximity of his friends to the wellspring of power.

VI: The Grenvilles in Ireland, 1782-1783

News of the impending arrival of Temple and Grenville

excited and delighted Mornington. Grenville and he had parted as students at Oxford less than three years earlier; now they had a share in guiding the destinies of Ireland. On 12 July 1782 Mornington wrote Grenville congratulating him on his brother's appointment as viceroy, expressing considerable astonishment at Pitt's emergence as chancellor of the Exchequer, and passing along tidbits relative to the Irish political scene. He did not yet know that Grenville would accompany his brother to Ireland; he hinted that perhaps his friend was too timid in parliament, too reluctant to take a position, so as to make a mark in politics. On 23 July Mornington wrote again to offer Temple "any little assistance" within his power. About 1 August news reached Dangan of Grenville's appointment. In euphoric language Mornington begged Grenville "to consider me as one of your assistant secretaries, a servant though not a slave of the Crown; and ready to fag with you at business as we used to fag at Lent verses and Episcopo-pastorals together." Eton, Oxford and

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52 Mornington to Grenville, 12 July 1782, Fortescue MSS, I, 162.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 23 July 1782, Fortescue MSS, I, 163.
55 Ibid., 1 August 1782, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 164.
Ireland were all of a piece.

Mornington celebrated the appointment of the Grenvilles by introducing them to his Irish associates and advising them of dangers inherent in Flood's great effort to damage Grattan. To Charlemont he described Grenville as "the oldest, and most intimate friend I have in the world; I am extremely interested in his success; he is very young, but has an excellent head, and an honest heart, and is extremely well-informed." Perhaps with an oblique reference to Pitt and Pitt's prospects or indeed to himself he advised Charlemont that "we must learn to trust young ministers. . . ." 56 He attempted to make Temple's appointment palatable by promising Charlemont that Temple came "with the best intentions and the fullest resolution to pursue the system of the Duke of Portland." 57

These kind words were designed to relieve Charlemont's apprehensions and astonishment at the fall of the Foxites. More important was Mornington's correspondence with Grenville. Flood's tactics initially displeased more than alarmed Mornington. He wrote confidently to Grenville on 12 July that Flood was "a fallen man" whose "desperate grasp at popularity" inflamed some people but would not succeed in its purpose. The new

56 Mornington to Charlemont, 7 August 1782, Charlemont MSS, I, 414.

57 Ibid., I, 414.
viceroy's confidence in the accuracy of Mornington's analysis must have been shaken only two weeks later when he received a much more alarming analysis: "the poison of Flood's insinuations" had "diffused itself through the country with more rapidity than even despondency could imagine." Flood's influence was rising and that of Grattan was on the wane."\(^{58}\)

That "very shrewd and wicked politician" was deceiving the people into deserting Grattan. Worse yet, by exalting the volunteers Flood was undermining the possibility of reform through the legitimate parliamentary system.\(^ {59}\)

Mornington's amidadversions on Flood may have played their part in prejudicing Temple against him. The effort to promote Grenvillite support for Grattan was even more vigorous. Between midsummer 1782 and spring 1783 Mornington played the role of agent for the Grenvilles and for Grattan, usually in relation to each other, and occasionally on behalf of each towards a third party. Mornington had moved away from Grattan after the beginning of 1782; as Flood's fortunes revived Mornington once more saw merit in maintaining ties with Grattan. Flood's role and Grattan's inevitable alienation from the

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\(^{58}\) Mornington to Grenville, 23 July 1782, Fortescue MSS, I, 162-63.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 12 July 1782, 23 July 1782, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 162-63.
volunteers played their part. So too did Mornington's appreciation of the weakness of Shelburne's ministry and the inevitability of conceding Flood's demands for repeal of the declaratory act. Mornington was prepared to concede much, but not the right of the volunteers to legislate for Ireland. The distinction between reform and revolution was for him a vital one, and it remained a part of his ideological equipment permanently.

What should be done with Grattan and what should be done with Ireland? Mornington advised Grenville to see to it that no time was lost in establishing contact with Grattan, "that first of all men in ability and virtue" who was at that time in London enroute to Spa. Grattan, he noted, was "the most upright and temperate demagogue that ever appeared in any country." Mornington urged the Grenvilles to help Grattan in opposing the volunteers by taking him into their confidence and adopting a liberal and open administration which would concede much to Grattan and nothing to Flood and the volunteers.

The Temple viceroyalty was a brief one; the ministry

60 Mornington to Grenville, 1 August 1782, Fortescue MSS, I, 164.

61 Ibid., 12 July 1782, Fortescue MSS, I, 163.
fell in February 1783. Parliament did not sit and there was no need to expend energy in humoring its members. Mornington spent much of his time in London. He concluded in December that Flood's demands would have to be conceded at least in part; he hoped that a bill introduced with government support forbidding interference of the English judicature in Ireland would undercut Flood. Mornington underestimated Flood's success in exciting Irish suspicion of Westminster's future intentions. He was more accurate in his assessment of the English scene. Grattan wanted to satisfy himself that the Shelburne ministry, or any group likely to succeed it, would respect the independence of the Irish parliament vindicated by the recent amendment to Poyning's law. In December 1782, therefore, he entrusted to Mornington a diplomatic mission of sorts. Grattan urged Mornington to assess prospects for the Shelburne ministry's durability and to extract a commitment to further reform when parliament next convened.

Mornington's mission on Grattan's behalf coincided in fact with the rapid deterioration of the Shelburne ministry. It is likely that Mornington saw much of Grenville, who spent little time in Ireland and who probably depended heavily on Mornington for advice as he negotiated the complex questions.

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raised by Flood's demands that Westminster concede a solemn renunciation of all legislative prerogatives in Ireland. Unfortunately for the historical record, having Grenville and Mornington together in London at this critical time denied the need for correspondence. But Mornington did record his impressions for Grattan. Shortly after reaching London he visited with the Duke of Portland and Fox's friend General Richard Fitzpatrick. Mornington had concluded that North and the old ministry rather than the Whigs would succeed Shelburne, but as a precaution he consulted with a number of potential leaders. Fox had already described the Irish settlement as a "full, complete, absolute and perpetual surrender of British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland." His friends now assured Mornington that they were all bound by this statement. Mornington apparently did not have an opportunity to talk to North. The combination of North and Fox, which Mornington could not have predicted and which was to disgust him, upset his calculations but gave added weight to his interviews with the Whigs. Mornington returned to Dublin just in time to see Temple's


64 Mornington to Grattan, 9 December 1782, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, ff. 5-6.
departure. Mornington and the viceroy saw a good deal of each other. Grenville had already urged Temple to flatter Mornington a bit, volunteering his opinion that Mornington was likely to rise in influence and that his loyalty should be cultivated for the future.\footnote{Grenville to Temple, 27 March 1783, quoted in Torrens, Marquess, p. 46.} Such advice was probably unnecessary; even before Grenville's letters reached Dublin Temple was closeted with Mornington for long discussions on Irish politics.\footnote{Temple to Grenville, 28 March 1783, Fortescue MSS, I, 205.} They talked of the impact on Ireland of the rise of the improbable Fox-North coalition on the ruins of Shelburne's shortlived ministry, and Temple departed Dublin with assurances that Mornington would keep the Grenville family apprised of all developments.

Temple's exit meant that Mornington lost his privileged access to Dublin castle, but the loss proved to be temporary. Mornington returned to London shortly after Temple. For the next several months his correspondence was principally directed to Grattan in Ireland, and there was not much of it. He may have frequented the London clubs and dined with the Grenville family, for there are vague references to his visits to Dropmore and Stowe. Mornington certainly contracted a hearty
dislike for the incumbent coalition which he said "stood upon the ruins of some of the best political characters in England." 67 Perhaps Mornington was not unhappy that the new viceroy, the Earl of Northington, was being discouraged from taking Grattan into his confidence. 68 The coalition could not ignore Flood and bury his demands for a renunciation act inasmuch as many of the ministry's leaders and principal supporters had immediately prior to Shelburne's fall supported Flood's demands as one way to embarrass Shelburne. Now they must live with the fruits of their victory; Grattan, Mornington believed with conviction, should become an ally of the Grenvilles and Pitt.

Before Temple was recalled he tendered Mornington the first of those honours which later became so important a part of his public life. The new knightly order of Saint Patrick was a device to accommodate the extraordinarily heavy patronage load of the Irish government. It was justified by reference to Scotland's knighthood. All of Temple's sixteen nominees for charter membership were earls except the Duke of Leinster; this avoided the problems of trying to

67 Mornington to Grenville, 8 October 1783, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 223.
accommodate the large number of less distinguished peers with their relatively equal claims and served to put the new order on a "higher footing." Temple instructed Grenville, who was in London, to enlist Mornington personally, a procedure highly flattering to the young Earl. The Prince of Wales took advantage of a chance meeting at the theatre to congratulate Mornington in a loud voice and to declare that Mornington's inclusion reflected a special request on his part. Mornington cannot have been displeased at this untrue boast; surely the credit belonged almost exclusively to Temple.

Temple identified Mornington with the Grenville clan in other ways. He apparently encouraged Mornington to oppose the coalition's Irish policies and Mornington may in turn have supplied Temple some of the information he required to embarrass the Whigs. We know that during most of 1783 Temple took upon himself the highly questionable prerogative of keeping the King informed as to the Pittites' state of readiness to assume the burdens of office. As the King's extra-constitutional advisor and agent in the British house of Lords and elsewhere Temple was determined to convince the King that

69 Temple to Grenville, 2 January 1783, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 177.
70 Ibid.
the coalition was contemplating succumbing to an invitation from France and Spain to give Ireland special trade advantages if Ireland would reduce tariff preferences for English goods in turn. Such a development would have constituted a serious embarrassment to the ministry, and Temple gave credent to these allegations by referring to "foreign reports of which ministers were ignorant." Perhaps Mornington supplied Temple with an analysis of Irish events when he returned at the end of the summer: was he one of the "foreign agents" whose confidence Temple claimed to enjoy?71

Mornington busied himself after his return to Dublin in September 1783 by preparing for the opening of parliament and by supplying the Grenvilles a steady stream of advice and commentary on Irish affairs. Flood's campaign denying that simple repeal was enough had restored to him much of the popularity he had sacrificed earlier. The volunteers supported Flood. The convention met in grand assembly in September and its surging popularity forced Mornington to conclude that the government must confront the volunteers or sacrifice the ancient parliament to the mob; the convention


would terrorise parliament and parliament in turn would force the hand of the crown. At Dungannon he opposed resolutions for parliamentary reform but they were overwhelmingly approved. People were "wonderfully alarmed" and Irish officials were frightened "out of their wits," Mornington wrote to Grenville on 15 September. Three weeks later Mornington greeted the new session "resolved to be stout."  

Simple opposition to a ministry whose principles and practices he despised was not possible. He was listed as one of thirteen peers comprising the opposition at this time. The same group contained Charlemont. They were still friends but their place in the opposition rested on different bases. Flood was in England; Mornington opined that the wave of radical parliamentary reform which animated the volunteers at Dungannon had either alarmed Flood or encouraged him into thinking he could negotiate with the ministry from a position of strength. At any rate Flood was discouraging agitation of the reform question. Charlemont continued to review the volunteers, but he too feared

73 Mornington to Grenville, 15 September 1783, Fortescue MSS, I, 220-21.
74 Ibid., p. 221.
admitting Catholics to the franchise. Grattan had determined to remain away from parliament. Mornington wanted to censure the government for indulging the petitions of the convention but feared that such criticism would only assist the volunteers. He therefore refused to support the government but told Grenville that they would receive his support when they deserved it. He was pledged to reform and would not oppose good principles even if the opposition called them their own. "The plain direct line of conduct," he advised Grenville, "is always the safest for public men."

In specific terms, what did this "plain direct line" mean? Over the next two years Mornington's conduct in the context of Irish politics included steadfast resistance to the volunteers' pretensions to act in place of the ancient parliament, opposition to electoral reform, and circumspect resistance to measures which tended to undermine the Anglo-Irish connection. By the autumn of 1783 all three points had become interwined beyond repair: the volunteers demanded

76 Mornington to Grenville, 8 October 1783, Fortescue MSS, I, 222.

77 Ibid., 15 September 1783, 8 October 1783, Fortescue MSS, I, 221-223.

78 Ibid., 8 October 1783, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 222.
sweeping franchise reforms and laboured for an Irish nation free from all English influence except that inherent in the shared crown. They were approaching the height of their power. To Mornington and many others the choice was clear: if parliament's prerogatives were suspended all property would be endangered, lawlessness would increase and the union with Britain would dissolve quickly. The drama which in 1781 and 1782 produced legislation to amend Poyning's law and repeal the declaratory act now moved to a new phase. Mornington had matured considerably during this period. He had made new friends and had determined who were his opponents. He appeared prepared to take a more prominent role in defending the constitutional establishment of Ireland and in preserving what remained of its attachment to the empire.

Mornington did not reply to the opening address of the session. On 28 October 1783 the lower chamber was treated to the famous collision between Flood and Grattan on the occasion of the introduction of a motion for fiscal retrenchment. They exchanged commentaries "full of the bitterest personal invective" and in the wake of it Mornington warned Grenville that Flood was about to lead the radical faction of the convention to victory over parliament. At the appropriate moment he delivered one of his few speeches in the Irish house of Lords. It was a somewhat melodramatic affair. He warned

Ibid., 23 November 1783, Fortescue MSS, I, 225.
that the convention, which in the past had usually shown moderation and discretion, now threatened to become an uncontrollable monster. In his best declamatory style he insisted that without the constitution no body of people could be happy. Should the convention overawe parliament he would leave the country along with those elements who guaranteed Ireland's stability and good order.

It was not a great speech, but the peers listened with attention. Earl Mountmorres taunted him for delivering an apocalyptic message which lacked credibility. But Mornington was complimented by the Grenvilles and the government which he ostensibly opposed was grateful. And when Flood appeared in the house of Commons dressed in the uniform of a volunteer Mornington's warning seemed less farfetched. In November the volunteer convention met in Dublin; Flood resisted efforts to propose extending the franchise to Catholics and on 29 November introduced into the house of Commons the compromise bill for parliamentary reform fashioned by the convention. This indelicate attempt by the convention to dictate to parliament vindicated Mornington's warning and Mountmorres fell silent.

The house of Commons rejected the motion by a vote of 157 to 77. The following morning Mornington went to Dublin.

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castle to concert with Pelham, the chief secretary, and Northington how to treat Flood's offensive. This meeting produced a resolution on behalf of the house of Commons declaring that it had "now become indispensably necessary to declare that this house will maintain its just rights and privileges against encroachments whatsoever."\textsuperscript{81} Young William Wellesley Pole made his debut in parliament in seconding the motion and Mornington reported to Grenville that the threat posed by the volunteers might yet be parried.\textsuperscript{82} In retrospect this proved to be true; the convention was dissolved and at length Flood transferred to a seat at Westminster.

The tenure of the Fox-North coalition ministry was almost at an end. Pelham had managed the government's case with considerable skill in Dublin but at Westminster the ministry's fortunes were floundering. Mornington embarrassed or thought he embarrassed the Irish government by making a vigorous plea against its alleged fiscal wastefulness and demanded that Dublin castle produce an "economical plan" if it had one. He attacked vigorously a proposal to

\textsuperscript{81}Journals of the Irish House of Commons, XI (1783), 144.
\textsuperscript{82}Torrens, Marquess, p. 50; Mornington to Grenville, 30 November 1783, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 224-25.
increase the viceroy's salary, a move which would return
to embarrass him a generation later when he thought it too
low. He continued to correspond regularly with Grenville,
offering advice on how to conduct Irish affairs to one who
held no office. These letters undoubtedly went to Temple,
who may have shown them to Pitt or discussed the contents
with the King. And in return Temple was able to announce
in the house of Lords in early December 1783 that the King
would consider a vote in favour of the North-Fox India reform
bill an act worthy of his enemies. It was an indirect method
of dismissing the coalition and brought to a successful
conclusion several weeks' work by Robert Dundas and John
Robinson to prepare for the emergence of William Pitt.
In Ireland Mornington behaved as if he saw this coming.
Perhaps Grenville knew enough from Temple to warn him.

Mornington was prepared to work for Pitt; how could
he demonstrate most effectively that Pitt needed Mornington
to construct and conduct an Irish policy as Mornington needed
Pitt to further his larger political ambitions?

83 Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 10-11.

84 See Paul Kelly, "British and Irish Politics, 1785" in
The English Historical Review, XC (April 1975), 535-63 for
an introduction to the Grenvilles' role at this crucial juncture.
In December 1783 William Pitt launched his ministry of national defense. Conditions could not have been worse in Ireland. Pitt's ministry rested on the principle that the king and the Houses of Parliament were essential to the empire's survival. Pitt did not demand a change in the Irish chamber of Parliament. His government was made up of many different elements to secure the whole proposition of national defence. Until recently Pitt's decision to form a ministry had been considered ridiculous by the election of 1784. By giving Pitt a working majority this poll was interpreted to mean that the king's unilateral actions were acceptable to the people. The papers of John Adamin, undersecretary to the Treasury, show that the election was seen as popular; with Pitt's constitution and funds from royal coffers Robinson not about to purchase the ordinary voter. Even with the crop's extraordinary yield, Pitt's coalition remained popular. As suggested in his memoir, this people would return to Pitt as victor.

Chapter V:

Mornington in Irish Politics 1784 - 1797

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I: Pitt, Mornington and Ireland

In December 1783 William Pitt launched his ministry of national revival; conditions could not have been more inauspicious. Pitt's mandate rested on the precarious foundation that the King had for reasons of his own seen fit to dispense with the services of Lord North and James Fox. Pitt did not command a majority in either chamber at Westminster, and his youth and inexperience were considered by many sufficient cause to dismiss the whole proposition as patently ridiculous. Until recently Pitt's decision to form a ministry has been considered vindicated by the election of 1784. By giving Pitt a working majority this poll was interpreted to mean that the King's unilateral actions coincided with the popular will. The papers of John Robinson, patronage secretary to the Treasury, show that the election was far from "popular"; with Pitt's connivance and funds from royal coffers Robinson set about to purchase the necessary votes.¹ Even with the Crown's extraordinary help, Pitt's position remained precarious. He announced on 19 December that Temple would return to Dublin as viceroy. Three days later Temple was forced to resign when an angry

house of Commons became aware of the Earl's previous "unconstitutional" labours to destroy the coalition. For Mornington this meant that his influence in the course of Irish affairs could not rest on an immediate sympathetic personal connection but demanded demonstration of some ability in the conduct of the Irish government.

The problems of Westminster aside, there remained the painful question of fashioning instructions for the new viceroy, the young Duke of Rutland. He was forced to adopt the formula of constructing an Irish government in which the Lord Lieutenant and the chief secretary were his own nominees, while the remaining offices were filled without strict reference to party allegiance. Fortunately for Pitt the desertion rate from the North-Fox coalition in England permitted the new Prime minister to draw on talent in that quarter. And in Ireland the Whigs who clustered around Grattan when the Fox-North ministry collapsed did not go into opposition after the coalition fell in December 1783.

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2 R. Anthony Smith, "Earl Temple's Resignation, 22 December 1783," Historical Journal, I (1963), 91-97. Temple resigned to avoid embarrassing Pitt after it became obvious that Fox planned to embarrass Temple and would not agree to a union with Pitt. Thus Pitt could not dissolve parliament because he could not hope to win an election.

They did not yet subscribe to the philosophy of party government. They treated the administrations as more or less a fixed body which precluded party opposition. Although the new practice of changing senior officials in Ireland every time a ministry was installed in London inevitably undermined the concept of non-party government, the motivation of Irish officials was still "overwhelmingly the acquisition of peerages, places and pensions." Thus "while professing devotion to their English (Whig) mentors, in practice Irish Whigs merely used their ties with the English opposition in 1784 to extract better terms for themselves." Most of them were prepared to exclude party politics from the Irish legislature in return for equal treatment for both parties.

Mornington was able to make himself useful to Pitt and to the new Irish government by placing his services at the new Irish government's disposal to making contacts with certain of Grattan's friends. The Irish parliament was not deficient in talent; perhaps no period in Irish history could boast so many impressive public figures. Mornington could

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5 Ibid.

6 W. E. H. Lecky, A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth
claim to know many of these leaders. He could point to a
series of letters to Pitt's cousin William Grenville in which
he emphasised the importance of maintaining ties with Grattan
and Charlemont and of making concessions to their sensibilities
in the hope of reducing their dependence on Flood and on
the volunteers. Reforms undertaken in 1782 in an effort to
improve administrative coordination between London and Dublin,
combined with Ireland's new legislative autonomy, placed
increased emphasis on private communications. Thomas Sydney,
first Viscount Sydney, as the new Home secretary now
worked directly with Dublin castle and by virtue of reforms
enacted in 1782 could claim direct jurisdiction over Irish
affairs in many areas.7 The difficulty of guaranteeing a
sympathetic Irish parliament after Poyning's law was amended
certainly intensified. The renunciation act called for
more frequent exchanges of opinion between the two capitals.
There was, as a result, room for ambitious young politicians
to make their mark on the Anglo-Irish scene.

Mornington had briefly played the role of intermediary
in the winter of 1782-83 but his responsibilities as agent

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7This is discussed in detail in Edith M. Johnston, Great
Britain and Ireland, 1760-1800: a Study in Political Adminis-
for Grattan and his intimacy with the Grenvilles had served
to deprive his contributions of any claims to a public character.
Now he expected to be asked to take a leading role in the
management of the house of Lords. He would continue to
correspond with London through private channels, in part to
avoid the King's intervention. But he would also travel
between the capitals in the capacity of trusted emissary.
The role was not new to the Anglo-Irish relationship. But
problems were now intensified and perhaps rewards would be
increased commensurately. 8

As Pitt soon discovered it was easier for Irish legis-
lators to accept offices in the Irish administration than it was
to vote for bills presented to parliament by the Irish chief
secretary. The independent legislature was more susceptible
to popular opinion than had its predecessor. The volunteers
in convention had demonstrated convincingly that Irish
public opinion could be mobilised. The only issue on which
the Dublin parliament was clearly prepared to resist popular
opinion in Ireland as well as pressure from England was
that of destroying its own monopoly of power by a reform
of the system of representation. 9 On every other issue

8 Johnston, Great Britain, pp. 25, 88.

9 Vincent T. Harlow, The Founding of the Second British
Empire, 1763-1793 (2 vols.; London: Longmans, 1952 and
the support of the Dublin parliament either had to be pur- 
chased outright, which was expensive but possible, or a 
community of interest had to be demonstrated, which was 
rarely feasible. In the absence of both the issue had to 
be dropped. Worse, legislation generated in the Irish parlia-
ment itself which was unpalatable to London no longer could 
be disposed of in either the Irish or English privy councils. 
It could of course be amended or vetoed by the Crown, but 
the process was burdened by a tone of confrontation which 
the incumbent ministry preferred to avoid. The responsibility 
placed on the Irish viceroy to discourage support for difficult 
bills thus increased at the very time that opposition in the 
Irish parliament could look for support and inspiration to 
the parliamentary opposition at Westminster.

II: A Role for Mornington

With Pitt in office Mornington moved to impress upon 
the new ministry his importance in the conduct of Irish 
policy and to obtain office in Ireland or Britain and a seat 
at Westminster. His campaign for recognition and for a larger 
parliamentary forum are discussed later; in fact, however, 
Mornington proceeded to behave as if he had already made himself 
indispensable. This was far from being the case and if Pitt 
had been less indulgent or Mornington more humble, Mornington
might well have delayed for a time his supplications for office. In 1784 and 1785 Mornington's record of success as an Irish politician was far from outstanding and thereafter his intervention in Irish affairs was only intermittent.

In 1784 Mornington continued to report to Grenville on the state of Irish politics. Much of what he told Grenville was perceptive; he was apparently well-informed. In March he noted that Flood's popularity was ebbing and that the government's support of measures of moderate reform and expressions calculated to accommodate demands for some protection of Irish manufactures had done much to isolate the volunteers.\(^\text{10}\) Mornington's letters to Grenville make it clear that he took seriously his role as an informed observer: on one occasion he apologised for his delay in writing from "this land of peace and inactivity" by citing poor health and by his having had "so many foolish people to see and so many foolish things to do."\(^\text{11}\) His contacts were undoubtedly the basis for his observations and for his wealth of advice. He was able to assure Grenville that Rutland's administration was well launched, and that prospects

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\(^{10}\) Mornington to Grenville, 16 March 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 226.

\(^{11}\) Mornington features prominently in volume one of the Fortescue MSS, especially in 1784.
for an early prorogation of parliament were good. The viceroy's declared determination "to stand upon the support of the ancient and established friends of English government" had been well received, reported Mornington. Its opposition to parliamentary reform "had given much satisfaction." Grattan and Charlemont were in good humor and Flood was isolated. 12

Mornington's correspondence ostensibly related almost exclusively to the great issues of the day, and others than Grenville were beneficiaries. On 10 April 1784 Mornington furnished Temple a long and detailed assessment of the state of Ireland. Things had proceeded less smoothly than he had forecast a month earlier, he conceded. Parliamentary reform had been set aside without great difficulty; Grattan had acted intemperately on this point and had alienated some crucial elements. Parliament had also rejected a bill for protective tariffs "with proper spirit"; "seditious newspapers" were subsequently censured for the manner in which they opposed the rejection. Embarrassment attended the Post office bill, which the Lords surprised Mornington and the government by rejecting.

Shaping opinion in the house of Lords was Mornington's

12 Mornington to Grenville, 16 March 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 226.
special responsibility, or at least he so conceived it.
The Post-office bill was one of those defeats for the
administration which encouraged Mornington to go to some
length to place the blame elsewhere. Trouble could have
been avoided, he lectured, if a "little more severe discipline"
had been administered by Dublin castle on those who benefitted
from the government's largesse. This was a complaint Mor-
nington was to make in greater detail when the commercial
treaty was considered later on.

On balance, however, Mornington was able to report at
the end of the session in April that the government had
"navigated through the business with great ease." As
a result things were considerably quieter than he had expected,
and certainly much more sanguine than the reports he had
received about Temple predicting an immediate calamity in
Ireland in the absence of a programme of radical reform.

When parliament adjourned Mornington rushed to London
to see his friend Grenville. He spent the summer in England
and as in the case of the summer before there is little
evidence of his movements and thinking. When he returned to

13 Mornington to George Nugent-Temple Grenville, second
Earl Temple, 10 April 1784, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 227.

14 Temple to Grenville, 1-7 September 1784; Mornington to
Grenville, 2 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 234.
Ireland in September he provided Grenville a detailed analysis of the state of public opinion as he found it. He detected a disturbing degree of popularity for parliamentary reform but noted that it was kept in check by a lack of unity on specific proposals and by a fear of Roman Catholic enfranchisement.

During all of 1784 Mornington's information was in part based upon valuable contacts with Charlemont and Grattan. London had good reason to appreciate Mornington's services here. In March Mornington was able to assure Grenville and Pitt that Grattan would remain at least partially cooperative as long as Rutland was committed to the principle of reform. Mornington congratulate(d) himself as well on his role in keeping Charlemont in good humor. 15 In June he laboured to convince Grattan of the government's earnest dedication to Ireland's welfare. He made some progress in justifying government support for a proposed commercial treaty which Grattan concluded was framed in such a way as to compromise Ireland's newly won legislative independence. 16 He flattered

15 Mornington to Grenville, 16 March 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 226.

Charlemont by telling him that he was "almost the only public character to whom any share of public confidence has adhered in this hour of violence." 17

In all this Mornington demonstrated considerable aptitude at improvisation because it does not appear that he received a great deal of direction from either London or Dublin castle as to what if anything he was expected to do. This neglect, if that is what it was, soon induced him to cultivate once more that spirit of calculated independence which he had found useful when he first entered parliament in 1781. In the new chief secretary Orde he found a convenient reason for opposing the government from time to time. Mornington professed to be terribly upset when in April 1784 the government introduced a bill to discourage the popular journalistic practice of inserting fictitious names to avoid libel. The bill seems to have been introduced in part in reaction to the extremely hostile attitude of the opposition press to the government's reluctance to permit enactment of protective duties for Irish manufactures. The special grievance was increasing incidence of the practice of attributing scurrilous articles to false names so that no one was answerable to

17 Mornington to James, Earl Charlemont, 1 June 1784, printed in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont (Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part X; ed. Sir T. J. Gilbert; 2 vols; London: HMSO, 1891), II, 5.
the libel contained in them. The original bill was designed
to make the printer directly responsible for what appeared in
its prints, and Mornington saw no constitutional objection
on this score; indeed, Mornington had more than once ex-
pressed his own indignation at the violence of the press.
But he complained bitterly of the government's handling of
the matter, and in particular of Orde's behaviour. It had
allowed changes to be made which had the effect of lending
credence to charges that the government wanted to divest itself
of responsibility for the bill by permitting amendments so
extreme that constitutional objections could be laid at its
doors. This was most confusing: did the Castle want the bill
or not? Beyond this, Mornington charged that it had been
"put together hastily and without that sort of communication
which ought to attend a measure so important and so delicate."
Mornington was not reluctant to report that Orde himself had
"not read the bill 'till after it was moved, printed, and
all the mischief done." Much worse, however, was the govern-
ment's ill-treatment of its leading supporters in not showing
the bill to them until after it reached parliament. Such
treatment, declared Mornington, "I neither deserve nor will
submit to." He vowed to Temple "either to force an altera-
tion in it before it comes to the Lords, or oppose it with the
utmost exertion of my capacity when it comes," for as it stood
it offended his constitutional sensitivity and his personal honour.\textsuperscript{18}

Such heroic opposition did not prove necessary. Eventually the government saw fit to acknowledge that the bill as amended was far too sweeping and it proceeded to make such changes as pleased Mornington and others.\textsuperscript{19} In retrospect one wonders whether Mornington's unhappiness was affected in any substantial degree by the issue of press freedom, or whether his feelings had been wounded by Orde in neglecting to make him a party to consultations regarding formulation of the bill. He betrayed no misgivings about censorship as a tool of his administration in India.

More serious was Mornington's criticism of Orde himself. Gaining leverage by attempting to divide viceroy from chief secretary was an ancient tactic in Ireland.\textsuperscript{20} Such tactics were not appropriate for one who ostensibly supported the administration, and Mornington tried to balance his expressions of discontent by coupling them with effusive praise of Rutland's "really honourable and generous qualities."\textsuperscript{21} But Orde, he

\textsuperscript{18}Mornington to Grenville, 10 April 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 228-29.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 21 April 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 230.

\textsuperscript{20}Johnston, Great Britain, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{21}Mornington to Charlemont, 1 June 1784, Charlemont MSS, II, 4.
continued to complain, was indeed a disaster. Mornington criticised his performance in the Irish house of Commons and condemned his ineffectiveness in cultivating favourable public opinion in the counties. In a long letter to Grenville in September 1784 Mornington demonstrated both his attention to the details of political management in the counties and his animosity towards Orde. The question of the moment, in Mornington's eyes, was shaping public opinion. Men of property, he observed, had of late become more inclined to take the initiative to restore tranquility in the countryside after many months of turmoil induced by economic depression, excitement in parliament, and other factors. The castle, nonetheless, was slow to encourage such happy developments, and very slow indeed to exploit them. Not only should the government assist those who were restoring order, according to Mornington, but it should promote meetings to extract from each locality a "declaration of an affectionate regard for Great Britain" and testimonials of respect for law and of condemnation of violence. The same principle of government intervention, seen from the reverse side, might be applied to agitation for parliamentary reform if the government were only more active: division

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22 Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 238.
might be procured in many places, and silence in others." Indeed, Mornington complained, Orde was not even trying to influence the county meetings to moderate the tenor of their demands on the upcoming session of parliament.23 This failure was almost criminal.

In January 1785 Mornington's opinion of the chief secretary was put to the test when Orde cleverly invited him to take on the full responsibility of managing the government's interest in the house of Lords. Mornington was pulled both ways. He had no desire at all to make things easier for Orde, yet his claims for Pitt's attention were such that he dared not refuse the invitation. In his letter to Grenville on the subject he was unusually candid. He bemoaned the difficulties inherent in trying to deal simultaneously with an honourable man (Pitt) and with a scoundrel (Orde). "I think I should not find much difficulty in dealing with either singly; it is easy to treat with a man of honour, and it is not very difficult to kick a scoundrel. But when they thus plague me together!"24

Mornington's difficulties with Orde were not for the most part concerned with the conduct of Irish policy, although

23 Ibid., pp. 235-36.
24 Ibid., 26 January 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 245-46.
Mornington chose to paint this picture. This will become sufficiently clear later. For the most part Mornington played a relatively modest role in parliament during these years. He was among the most constant in attendance between February 1784 and the end of the session in May, and again between January and June 1785. It was a period of temporarily diminished parliamentary ferment, and in June 1785 he left for England, to return on 11 August and to sit for the final three weeks of the session. He never sat in the Irish house of Lords again on a regular basis. By any measurement his Irish parliamentary career was too short to see him established as a powerful influence on public opinion, such as it was. After the summer of 1785 Mornington's role in Ireland was limited largely to his involvement in three questions which sorely vexed Ireland and in promoting the fortunes of the Wellesley family in Ireland and in England. He might exclaim to Grenville that the place he rented at Killiney offered the most beautiful view in the world, but he could not convince himself to linger in Ireland permanently.  

25 Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 237.
III: Franchise Reform

In terms of three important questions Mornington's energies and talents continued to be identified with Ireland between 1785 and 1797: parliamentary reform; commercial relations with Britain and the empire; and the constitutional question of the Anglo-Irish relationship. Reform of the electoral system and of other aspects of parliament was necessarily connected to the patronage system which traditionally benefitted Irish politicians willing to support the government of the day at a very high price in pensions, places and peerages. Reform of the franchise necessarily meant some attention to the claims of Catholics and Presbyterians to a share in the franchise.

It is not possible to attach the labels liberal and conservative to proponents and opponents of reform. Most advocates of reform of the patronage system opposed a wider franchise which would undermine the traditional Anglo-Irish ascendancy; agitation for patronage reform was opposed by successive ministries, which depended upon such devices to keep the Irish parliament under control. Catholics and Presbyterians were understandably eager to gain access to the franchise but they feared one another. Pitt was pledged to those who helped him to gain office in December 1783 to push for the franchise for Catholics. All factions walked a
delicate tightrope, basing their convictions on expediency and rarely on the dangerous item of political principle.

Agitation for patronage reform and an end to revenue abuses attracted the support of Grattan, Charlemont, Flood and most Irish "patriots." Mornington also favoured it. The ancient system was easily faulted. Irish revenue was divided into "hereditary or perpetual" grants outside parliament's control and "additional duties" as voted from session to session. Hereditary duties comprised the crown rents derived in large part from sixteenth century confiscations, hearth taxes, customs and excise duties and licences for the sale of ale, beer and spirits. The sums were large. They financed in turn the payment (by 1790) of salaries or pensions to 108 of 300 Irish M.P.s, including forty offices which had been created or revived within the past twenty years. It was difficult not to see the need for immediate and drastic reform in a system which encouraged such an easy sale of influence. But for Pitt, and even more so than for his predecessors, there was the problem of how to maintain a majority in the Irish parliament sympathetic to the English connection were such devices abandoned.

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Pitt came to power convinced that one alternative would be to enfranchise Catholics. He thought the concession was inevitable and hoped that such a franchise (but not the right to sit in parliament) would discipline the Anglo-Irish patriots into realising that unless they were amenable to direction from Westminster they would be overwhelmed by the Catholic majority. Throughout 1784 Pitt remained pledged to granting Catholics the right to vote. But after a year as viceroy Rutland concluded that Pitt's arguments were defective. Rutland decided to oppose Pitt's plans vigorously and in December of the same year Orde went to London to argue against franchise extension. Pitt was persuaded to amend his pledges. In January 1785 when Westminster considered a bill designed to enfranchise English Catholics, Pitt failed to support it. The same thing happened in Ireland. Borough owners, placemen and pensioners all dutifully voted against it, obviously as Rutland had urged them to do. For the moment the question rested.

Mornington played a role in changing Pitt's mind, at least indirectly. During the summer of 1784 he repeatedly impressed upon Grenville the difficulties inherent in expanding the franchise. In September he rejoiced that pro-

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ponents of franchise reform could not agree on a plan. He was also happy to be able to report that Rutland had been persuaded to oppose it. Indeed, Mornington concluded, "the persons who form the strength of England's government here" believed quite firmly that "all English government will become utterly impracticable, from the moment any alteration is admitted in the representation of the people." 29 He refused to assist Charlemont in urging concessions even to benefit the Presbyterians. He blamed the idea of concession on Orde, which was certainly unfair, and he implicitly criticised Rutland for refusing to take the measures necessary to counteract many county declarations favouring parliamentary reform. 30 He impressed upon Grenville the "insolent" attitude and growing power of the Catholic interest and predicted that because of it even the Irish "patriots" were ready to oppose concessions if the government would take the lead. 31 Mornington was therefore happy to see Rutland send Orde to London to challenge Pitt's opinions, and to see Pitt change his mind.

29 Mornington to Grenville, 1785; printed in Fortescue MSS, III, 234-35.

30 Mornington to Charlemont, 1 June 1784, Charlemont MSS, II, 4; Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 236.

31 Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, 3 October 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 236, 239.
Pitt's "conversion" proved temporary. After Rutland's untimely death in 1787 Temple returned as viceroy and as the Marquess of Buckingham he again urged that Catholics be admitted to the franchise. Buckingham's argument that only this device would ease tensions in Ireland and discipline the nationalists carried increased weight. During the short tumultuous session of parliament which commenced 21 January 1790 the opposition waxed stronger than ever. It had already a year earlier voted an address recognising the Prince of Wales as regent and parliament had accepted it as the proper resolution of the dilemma occasioned by the King's insanity. Now the opposition proceeded to introduce bills to reform the entire franchise system and accused Buckingham and his predecessor Rutland of having engaged in a systematic sale of peerages with the funds gained for use in purchasing seats in the Irish house of Commons. The franchise bills were defeated but within two years many of the other demands in the reformers' programme were met. And in 1793 the Irish government was instructed to support Catholic enfranchisement. A measure to this effect was enacted the same year.

Pitt's analysis of Irish political trends proved more accurate than that of Mornington. The reformers conceded

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the Catholic franchise but refused to remove disabilities concerning office holding for fear that the Protestant interest would be overturned. Their reserve on this point angered Catholics and many Presbyterians as well, but in the long run this only convinced many of the beleaguered ascendancy that a legislative union was the only way to preserve the prerogatives of the Irish ruling classes in their portion of a united kingdom.

Mornington's role in all this proved negligible. In 1793 he rose in the house of Commons at Westminster to oppose Earl Grey's motion for franchise reform in England. His speech struck a middle position in terms of what he had held a decade earlier: he now praised the virtues of pocket boroughs and moderate use of places and pensions; and he declared that franchise reform might be justified if it could be demonstrated that the existing system did not produce competent leaders or political stability. Nearly forty years later he was to support the next Earl Grey on the same issue that he had opposed his father in 1793: his contention would be that without franchise reform the larger structure of society might be undermined. In Ireland the thorny problem was after 1785 left to Pitt; Mornington was

relieved not to wrestle with it.

IV: Trade and Commerce

Mornington betrayed only a slight interest in economic questions during his public life. It was perhaps unfortunate that the first major test of Mornington's usefulness to Pitt was connected to the abortive Anglo-Irish economic treaty of 1786. The price exacted for siding with Pitt on this controversial issue was substantial: Mornington's ties to Grattan were virtually severed and his relationship to Charlemont and the Irish Whigs was irreparably weakened. It marked the last occasion prior to 1821 in which Mornington played a major direct role in Irish politics.

The practice of excluding Irish exports from British markets had long exacerbated Anglo-Irish relations. The American rebellion disrupted Ireland's Atlantic trade and economic depression intensified after 1777. Under the pressure of reversals in America and intensifying opposition in Ireland Westminster made grudging concessions to Ireland. They proved insufficient; pressure intensified for a full measure of free trade between the two countries. John Hely Hutchison, an inveterate place-hunter and versatile politician, emerged as perhaps Ireland's first disciple of Adam Smith. His call for free trade was supported by much of Ireland's
mercantile interest and by the Irish nation as well. In 1784 and 1785 widespread civil disturbance was attributed to agitation orchestrated by the volunteers but in fact the sustained and intense economic depression was largely responsible. The failure of the Irish legislature to defy Pitt on the issue of parliamentary reform was widely denounced; in partial compensation the parliament saw fit to demand from Westminster the establishment of more liberal and equitable trade policies between Britain and Ireland based on reciprocal duties.

Pitt was not opposed to the proposal. But he viewed the unsettled relationship between Britain and Ireland as an imperial problem and was determined to extract from Ireland a settlement of the vital question of imperial defence in return for economic concessions. Pitt sought from Ireland a permanent appropriation of any future surplus in the hereditary revenue to the requirements of the navy. In his view the demand was far from unreasonable inasmuch as the hereditary revenue consisted largely of customs and excise receipts, both of which would expand coincidentally with the expected growth of trade. The rub, of course, was

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Pitt's insistence that the navy must be controlled solely by London; there must be "but one navy for the empire at large, . . . administered by the executive power of this country [Great Britain]."  

The manner in which the legislation granting economic concessions in return for naval support was prepared and presented to the Irish parliament illustrates those defects in the system which Mornington would discuss in great detail in a memorandum prepared several years later. The British government provided Rutland several alternative legislative formulae on the subject. Orde concluded that the Dublin parliament would never accept an automatic contribution to imperial defence in return for trade concessions, and he was ready to concede that his own talents in debate would never suffice to change the opinion of his colleagues in the house of Commons. Rutland for his part dared not summon a meeting of the government's "friends," many of whom were taking the lead against Rutland and Orde on this issue. Even a small "safer" group produced an ultimatum saying that unless substantial concessions were made they too would oppose and that the responsibility for the confrontation would rest on Orde and Rutland. Rutland thereupon authorised con-

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cessions which Pitt would never have supported. The Irish parliament was persuaded to dedicate the surplus of its hereditary revenue, then amounting to some £650,000 annually, to the empire's naval requirements, if attached to it was an agreement that Ireland would be exempt from any payments until its overall account showed a profit. In England Rutland's concessions were greeted with expressions of horror. Pitt and the King agreed that it would never do to permit Ireland to enjoy the advantages of free access to imperial trade while everyone awaited that unlikely time when Ireland's budget would nicely balance. Pitt reprimanded Rutland. Rutland refused to resubmit the matter to the Irish parliament: Pitt thereupon submitted an amended bill at Westminster which omitted the equalisation clause and was confident that in its amended form it would be acceptable in London and perhaps later in Dublin.

When Rutland heard of this he despatched Orde to London to make representations on Ireland's behalf. Orde's arrival in London, however, coincided with a large outcry against the

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37 Harlow, Founding, II, 580-81.

38 King to Pitt, 18 February 1785, Windsor Archives and Pitt MSS, G. D. 8/103.

39 Thomas Townshend, First Viscount Sydney, to Rutland, 3 March 1785, Home Office MSS 100/16, ff. 218-31.
Josiah Wedgwood summoned a "great chamber of manufacturers" to demonstrate that free trade would ruin English producers because Irish labour costs were twenty percent cheaper.

Debate proceeded under conditions which produced so little light and so much heat that the Whigs at Westminster managed to present persuasive arguments that the bill would somehow ruin both England and Ireland: the former would be impoverished and the latter enslaved.

Mornington participated in the great debate at Dublin. In September 1784 he had hazarded the opinion that a final adjustment would not be accomplished without great difficulty. Between January and March 1785 he attended the house of Lords in Dublin assiduously and reported to Grenville that he had succeeded in cultivating support among Grattan and his friends for Rutland's version of the trade measure. He combatted Fox and North at a distance by dusting off the Irish debates of 1782 to show that their government's position at that time contradicted their statements now. He went on to blame them for endangering prospects of permanent peace in Ireland. "Nothing can equal the universal indignation which has arisen against Fox, Lord North, and Bâen," reported Mornington in a sweeping statement which presumed all Ireland.

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40 Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 236-37.
marched hand in hand with Pitt. "We are, as we imagined, upon the point of settling this country forever; our militia and the abolition of volunteers likely to be carried triumphantly by the strength of the commercial system; and that these rascals should check our advances towards peace and security is not to be endured."41

But of course a great deal was not only endured; concessions were made. In his successful effort to obtain approval of Pitt's legislation in Dublin (as amended by Rutland) Orde had painted a picture of Cork as a future emporium of the empire. Now in London the unfortunate Orde was called upon to show how Cork's gain would not be Liverpool's and Bristol's loss. The opposition soon proposed to protect the West Indies against foreign (including Irish) shipping. In addition the East India company's monopoly was to be confirmed, so that Ireland could acquire its goods only via England, and subject to whatever taxes Britain saw fit to levy. There was to be no duty on Anglo-Irish commerce less than ten and one-half percent. Mornington in Ireland received all this news in a state of virtual shock. "I entirely agree with you," he wrote to Grenville on 1 April 1785, "in regard to the necessity of giving to Great Britain the same security

41 Ibid., 2 March 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 247.
for the permanence of our contribution to the general expence which she gives us for the permanency of our share in the trade of the empire." There would be no difficulty in extracting "a full and effectual acknowledgement of this principle" from the Irish parliament. But if the commercial resolutions already passed by the Irish legislature were altered significantly, which he hoped "in God no consideration will induce Pitt to accede to," the effect would be "infinite embarrassment" in Ireland. "I do not believe," Mornington argued, "that any man of the smallest degree of importance in this country would consent to such a measure. The consequence must be the failure of the whole system, and, in my opinion, the total overthrow of all English government in Ireland." Fox and North would find it impossible to govern Ireland "by an administration founded on the ruins of the commercial adjustment between the kingdoms." 42

Contrary to Mornington's advice Pitt accepted most amendments put forward by Wedgwood's friends. He certainly underestimated the strength of Mornington's warning that no bill burdened by such amendments could be enacted in Dublin; Pitt wrote to Rutland pleading ignorance of the means available to the Irish government to carry the bill but he protested

42 Ibid., 1 April 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 249.
nonetheless that he could "hardly conceive how you can have any formidable opposition." Mornington himself chose to think that Orde had persuaded Pitt that the government could apply sufficient pressure to obtain Dublin's consent. Perhaps, it has been suggested recently, Pitt caved in to the Foxites and the merchants because he feared a repetition of the crisis of 1782-84 when ministries rose and fell in rapid succession in London and when the entire fabric of the Anglo-Irish connection threatened to come apart. Many of Pitt's supporters were more sanguine, and concluded that their leader was surrendering much more at Westminster than he need to have given away. But they too could not understand how an Irish viceroy with such large amounts of patronage at his disposal could not discipline the Irish parliament.

An undated letter from Mornington, written between 20 May and the end of the month, constituted a last and valiant effort to disabuse Pitt of any conviction that Ireland would accept Westminster's amendments. He reminded Pitt that

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43 Pitt to Rutland, 21 May 1785, printed in Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, pp. 103-107.
44 Mornington to Grenville, 2 May 1785, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 247.
two months earlier he had warned against changing the commercial clauses as they had been enacted in Dublin. A permanent provision, as Pitt wanted, was nothing other than a perpetual revenue bill; as such, the idea was "perfectly inadmissable. I am persuaded," Mornington concluded, "that no power of government could carry a perpetual revenue bill; . . . No man will be found to vote for a perpetual revenue bill, excepting the very dregs of the houses." 46

The bill returned to Dublin in early August, the "perpetual revenue" provision included. On 12 August Orde moved for leave to bring in the bill. Mornington was on hand to chronicle the debacle. A long debate followed Orde's motion. Grattan gave an eloquent but "most inflammatory and mischievous speech" opposing it. Wellesley Pole dutifully offered a vigorous defence of the bill, for which Mornington was thanked in time. 47 Beneficiaries of the government's largess were mobilised and these "dregs" supported the bill in numbers sufficient to secure a second reading, but as Mornington observed, the close vote "predict[ed] fatally;" there was no alternative to abandoning it. 48

This news was received in London with dismay, but indeed

46 Mornington to Grenville, 20-31 May 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 251.

47 Rutland to Pitt, 17 August 1785, Pitt-Rutland, p. 123.
there was no alternative to abandoning it.48 Blame was conveniently transferred to the unfortunate Orde. Mornington remained in Dublin to insure that the opposition would not use the bill to embarrass the government at the end of the session.49 Nothing untoward occurred and parliament rose on 7 September. Mornington apparently never again took his seat in the Irish house of Lords.

For Pitt the commercial treaty negotiations marked Mornington as a man whose analysis of the Irish scene could be depended upon for accuracy, even if he chose not to follow the advice contained therein. He had been quick to challenge Pitt on the premise that the amended bill could be carried in Dublin and he was proven correct.50 Yet one is forced to conclude that Pitt did not yet regard Mornington as an indispensable advisor. It is perhaps partly understandable that Pitt was unable to see why Ireland would not sacrifice a portion of its newly gained legislative autonomy in order to purchase a place in the imperial economy. It is unfortunate, however, that Mornington's real contribution was obscured. If his predictions as to the fate of the bill

48 Mornington to Grenville, 13 August 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 253-54.
49 Ibid., 20 August 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 225.
50 Mornington to Grenville, 2 March 1785, 1 April 1785, 20-31 May 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 247, 248-49, 251.
were useful, much more so was his effort during this crisis to construct a trusting relationship between Pitt and Grattan. Mornington repeatedly urged Grattan and Pitt to consult each other's views. Both had set their hearts, to use Pitt's phrase, on uniting and sustaining "what yet remains of our reduced and shattered empire, of which Great Britain and Ireland are now the only considerable members, in the mutual bond of affection of mutual kindness and of reciprocity of interests." When the Rutland-Orde bill passed the Irish parliament in February 1785 Grattan pledged himself to support the government for the remainder of the session. Pitt had proven less accommodating, and for Mornington failure here was a severe disappointment indeed.

On the brighter side of all this Mornington could take satisfaction in his having mastered many of the intricacies of a discipline in which he had previously known very little. His correspondence reveals a rapid mastery of the technical aspects of finance and economics. Apparently he studied the issue closely and the failure of the effort to bind together the economies of Ireland and Britain pushed him towards the view that a legislative union might be the only answer.

On the other hand his strong support of the measure in its

51Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803, XXV, 587-88.
amended form was reflected in his correspondence with Grattan and others. In doing so he severed his ties with the patriots and they ceased to feature prominently among his correspondents. All this would be confirmed during the regency crisis of 1789. In this, his last intervention in Irish affairs for more than thirty years, he would play the role of British statesman whose Irish connections were only an incidental factor influencing his conduct.

V. The Regency Crisis

Mornington spent little time in Ireland after 1786. His position on the British Treasury board removed him from the front rank of contenders for major Irish office. Pitt, however, was eager to have Mornington continue to serve as a link between the Irish and British governments. His duties at the Treasury board were certainly not so onerous as to prevent Mornington from spending a good deal of time in Ireland, but he preferred to see himself cast in the role of troubleshooter and high level emissary. He played this role in August and September 1785 while Orde tried to secure approval for the commercial treaty. Despite Rutland's pleas that he remain in Ireland long enough to help the

52 Morris, to Grenville, 30 September 1786, Fortescue MSS, I, 269.
government pick up the pieces after the collapse of efforts to have the legislation approved, Mornington remained only two weeks. He visited his estate agent and returned to London in time for a meeting of the Treasury board. He travelled to Dublin the following year when a court action against him demanded an appearance at Trim. The verdict was unfavourable and his control of the borough was threatened pending negotiations conducted through his counsel to have the verdict changed.

In 1787 Rutland suddenly died and Earl Temple, now styled the Marquis of Buckingham, returned as viceroy. A year later he raised the possibility of Mornington succeeding Orde as Irish chief secretary. Mornington was not selected, and the reasons are not known. Perhaps Mornington declined because of illness, perhaps because he was reluctant to reside in Ireland for an extended period, most likely because there were substantial objections to having an Irishman in the post. During this same period Mornington's properties in Ireland were alienated or mortgaged. Even Dangan was soon

53 Ibid., 8 October 1786, Fortescue MSS, I, 270.
54 Mornington to Grenville, 7 July 1788, 17 July 1788, Fortescue MSS, I, 343, 346.
55 Buckingham to Grenville, 2 March 1789, Fortescue MSS, I, 424.
to be surrendered to Mornington's creditors, and when Buckingham inquired through Grenville whether Mornington would be willing to put it at his disposal for a part of the summer of 1789 Dangan may have already become a somewhat uncomfortable lodging. 56

Mornington played a surprisingly limited role in the Irish portion of the regency crisis of 1788-1789. When the King went made in the autumn of 1788 the Irish parliament was not in session and the powers vested in the Irish viceroy sufficed to reduce the need for an early summons to the legislature. But royal insanity focused attention at once on several factors, of which Buckingham's unpopularity in upheld the claims of the English government was only one. Buckingham quickly discovered on this occasion that the borough patrons upon whom so much depended could not be trusted in this instance, and that Grattan and Charlemont, their dedication to the idea of Irish independence now made bolder under the influence of Burke's rhetoric, were determined to vindicate the autonomy of the Irish legislature in no uncertain terms. 57 Buckingham became increasingly gloomy about the chances of keeping the Irish parliament under control.

56 Buckingham to Grenville, 6 May 1789, Fortescue MSS, 1, 463.

He asked Mornington to come to Ireland in an effort to deflect parliament from vindicating its independence through an appeal to the Prince Regent.\textsuperscript{58} Mornington refused and offered as an excuse the need to defend his seat at Westminster in the interest of the demented King should an election take place. English responsibilities now came first.

The regency crisis was an appropriate occasion for a grand debate on the place of the Crown in the British constitution, but Mornington like most others ended up pursuing a pragmatic course of action. Pitt and the ministry held to the view that to vest royal powers in another person required an act of parliament and as the King was an essential part of that parliament no act was valid without his consent. Fox on behalf of the Whigs held that the regent possessed powers as clear as they would be were the King dead. Pitt held that the remainder of parliament (that is, the legislature minus the King) must devise a solution, and the Attorney general apparently hit upon the idea that the King be treated as a child and that the Lord Chancellor affix the great seal to the Regency bill. This was done, and the Regent ruled under restrictions.

In Dublin more profound changes were contemplated. Par-

\textsuperscript{58}Buckingham to Grenville, 5 February 1789, printed in Fortescue MSS, I, 408.
liament reassembled in February 1789. Already many of the country's most powerful politicians had deserted to the Regent. On 5 February a government-sponsored motion calling for a delay in settling Ireland's procedures until a regency bill had been passed at Westminster was defeated in the Irish house of Commons by a margin of nearly two to one. On 16 February Mornington's proxy was employed in a protest against an address of this nature. On 17 February the Commons approved an address modeled on that which had invited William of Orange to assume the government of England in 1688. Mornington's name was appended to another petition dated 19 February denying the right of the Irish parliament to settle upon a Prince Regent in isolation from Westminster's determination. Yet a third petition protested against these moves to undermine the ancient Anglo-Irish connection and a fourth defended Buckingham in his refusal to transmit the addresses of parliament to the Prince of Wales. These petitions were defeated handily.

Because the King recovered his sanity those loyal to him were vindicated. In England the behaviour of the Whigs

59 Journal of the Irish House of Lords, VI (1789), 234.
60 Annual Register, XXXI, 313.
smacked of opportunism without the elevating effect of being married to a great ideal. In Ireland, however, Grattan strove to emphasise the independence of the Irish parliament. His tactics may have been overhasty but his strategy was not simply obstructionist. By refusing to go to Ireland Mornington avoided the necessity of confronting Grattan and Charlemont. Later he would prepare a paper which concluded that the Irish executive must be made responsible to the Irish parliament. This was Grattan's position as well: complete loyalty to a common Crown through the medium of two autonomous legislatures able to control the work of their executive officials. Perhaps Mornington preferred to remain in England so that he need not be forced to attack his old friends on an issue where there was an embarrassing degree of agreement. 61.

Although Mornington played a limited role in the regency crisis the impact on him appears to have been profound. It produced an analysis of contemporary Irish politics which, because prepared informally and never circulated over his name, has gone almost entirely unnoticed.

The regency crisis of 1788-89 confirmed what perceptive observers of the Irish scene had predicted: after 1782, despite

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61 Journal of the Irish House of Lords, VI (1789), 242; Annual Register, XXXI, 313-14.
the generous application of patronage and the threat of undermining the Irish ascendancy by enfranchising Catholics, viceregal influence was not sufficient to guarantee indefinite control over the Irish legislature. In 1782 the government was briefly abandoned but the bulk of the Protestant landlord interest was induced to return to a defence of the altered but still largely traditional order. The volunteers were dissolved and a corrupt oligarchy took heart once more. But public opinion thereafter was not only hostile to the traditional system; it was almost constantly enflamed.

In Britain the danger that Ireland might suddenly move to defy Westminster on military, economic and political issues seemed real and immediate. And the events of 1788-89 seemed to confirm that despite all Henry Grattan's effusive protestations of loyalty to the British Crown, Ireland was destined to proceed on an independent path unless effectual and binding restrictions could be imposed on the Irish legislature.

In 1799 Pitt was to complain that many people contributed to the destruction of the ancient order of things by the violence of their criticism but that no one was prepared to offer an alternative. Pitt himself never evolved a cohesive policy concerning Ireland: his belief that rising Irish prosperity would reduce political discontent to a point where the viceroy
could maintain control in Ireland proved incorrect. Eventually he concluded, therefore, that the Irish and British legislatures should be merged. This drastic solution certainly poisoned Anglo-Irish relations in the nineteenth century. Was there an alternative?

VI: Blueprint for Irish Constitutional Reform

Mornington apparently thought so in 1791. Towards the end of his major continental tour which he undertook in search of better health, of some respite from Hyacinthe and the growing family, and of a world view Mornington took time to produce a lengthy memorandum on the present and future prospects of Irish politics. Included was a blueprint for constitutional reform. It was perhaps the most important document Mornington ever wrote. It drew upon Mornington's full range of experience as an Irish politician and stood as his last major contribution to Irish affairs prior to his appointment as viceroy exactly thirty years later. The document is not only a fine analysis of Irish politics by

62. Harlow tentatively attributed the document to Mornington on the basis of internal evidence (see Harlow, Founding, I, 541-61). Harlow's evidence was not printed because of space limitations and regrettably has not been published in another forum. Apparently there exists no copy of the document in Wellesley's papers but internal evidence, including parallels between Wellesley's correspondence with Grenville at the time, is persuasive.
one intimately acquainted with the Irish scene; it is indeed a work of art in terms of clarity of presentation and closely reasoned argument. It summarises forcefully Mornington's lifelong views on the role of the Crown under the British constitution, the dangers inherent in mass democracy, the need to curb corruption and enhance probity by insisting that public officials be held accountable to parliament, and the necessity of reconstructing the fabric of the empire on a foundation which guaranteed unity of essentials through the viable influence of the Crown but conceded the details of government to the various provincial authorities.

Mornington's primary thesis was that Britain's Irish policy was constantly undermined by a gang of political manipulators. The borough owners who controlled parliament were completely unreliable; they would support the castle only far enough to ensure that blame for unpopular measures was laid at the government's door and then withdraw. The solution was "to lift the Lord Lieutenant out of the cockpit of domestic affairs by transferring the responsibility in that field to those who ought in any case to carry it, the chosen representatives of the Irish electorate." 63 "The responsibility of the servants of the state," Mornington wrote,

63 Harlow, Founding, I, 552.
is the acknowledged principle of the British government, nor can it be expected that the Irish, who are repeatedly told that, in point of constitutional liberty and security, they are now upon the same footing as the people of England, will be deprived of so important a right as that of calling ministers to account, when they have betrayed their public duties. To convince them that every member of the domestic administration of their country is as truly, and legally responsible, as persons in similar situations in England, is an object of such material consequence, that it should always be kept in sight. The personal responsibility of ministers is one of the greatest securities of the monarchy in England; and the personal responsibility of ministers in Ireland is the only ground upon which British supremacy can be firmly built. The idea that the responsibility of government is in the Lord Lieutenant is false and unconstitutional. He represents the executive magistracy of England, the sovereign of Ireland, between whom and the people no difference can be properly supposed to arise.64

Mornington had many times complained that in Ireland there existed neither the concept of ministerial responsibility nor the practice of cabinet consultation. The privy council was large and amorphous; even in 1779 Buckinghamshire had complained that it had become "so numerous as to become frequently a scene of debate and more resembling a house of parliament than a meeting of ministers."65 Mornington himself had observed that in a crisis the viceroy summoned those he could depend upon to give him congenial advice, and that


they could please the viceroy confident that the viceroy himself rather than they would suffer the odium of any unpopular measure. Even the appearance of ministerial responsibility had been destroyed in Ireland; successive governments had stripped every department of its patronage so as to insure against the revival of the system of undertakers. Every appointment had become the personal gift of the viceroy; Mornington had negotiated for office long enough to know that no one other than the viceroy counted.

Even the ministry in England had surrendered its patronage powers to the viceroy, according to Mornington, with the exception of two vice-treasurerships "and a few inconsiderable pensions." As Mornington had discovered, English ministries could no longer award lucrative Irish sinecures to their own supporters. In Mornington's case Pitt himself could find nothing. These offices were now filled with Irishmen whose claims rested on a connection to borough owners. Instead, Mornington asserted, thew posts should go to whatever party could sustain a government.

Would such a change invite revolution in Ireland? Mornington thought not; "half a dozen unconnected men may be turned out from inferior offices, though even that is not very probable." This perhaps strained the evidence; even
offices to reward friends in England would be under pressure to reward old and out of office supporters in Ireland. In practice, as Beckett observed, there had grown up connections between Tories and Whigs in Ireland and England. And Mornington himself had been forced to grapple with problems presented in 1789 when supporters of Buckingham had promptly transferred their allegiance as soon as it seemed likely that he would be superseded by a new viceroy appointed by a Foxite ministry. Perhaps, indeed, this is what encouraged him to suggest that few would lose office; the great college of benefice-holders had demonstrated no reluctance at all in deserting old leaders if such behaviour would preserve their offices.

Mornington's solution was not based upon the modern principle of collective ministerial responsibility but upon ministers' direct connection to the King. The difference was vital, for it permitted the viceroy to wield immense influence and by wielding such influence to guard against "any encroachment on the constitutional powers of the state, and the connection of the kingdoms." Domestic affairs, supervised by several men of high rank and ability who held the confidence of parliament, would be of no concern to the

As discussed in Chapter IV.
viceroy. They would dispense the viceroy's patronage, and
this patronage would be withheld only if any of these ministers
assaulted the imperial connection. The viceroy's power would
be further augmented by a discreet dispensation of "parlia-
mentary jobs" and other favours to men of all parties
as was done in England. The viceroy would therefore insure his
own popularity and the security of the English connection.

Did Pitt see Mornington's plan? There is no evidence
that he did. But if Mornington's memorandum was prepared
at Grenville's suggestion, which is possible, it may have
been the subject of conversations among the Pittites. What
Mornington proposed was neither revolutionary nor unprecedented.
It subscribed to the eighteenth century principle that the
crown played an active role in all phases of government.
In many respects it drew heavily on Grattan. For Pitt the
concessions which Mornington's new plan demanded of England
were probably too high. Pitt was well aware that Irish
independence in 1782 had left the imperial connection perilous.
Pitt was not unwilling to relinquish Britain's effort to con-
trol Ireland's domestic affairs, but he insisted on West-
minster's supremacy in imperial matters. He could not be

67 The views of Mornington's contemporaries on this subject
are discussed in W. L. Morton, "The Local Executive in the
British Empire, 1763-1828," English Historical Review,
LXXVIII (1963), 436-457.
persuaded that in the absence of outside pressure the Irish parliament could ever be induced to accommodate the resurgent Catholic influence. He would not trust the autonomous kingdom to provide its fair share of revenue for imperial defence or to resist the temptation to exclude British manufactures from Ireland. Mornington's paper, a blueprint of sorts for British colonies en route to the modern commonwealth, was destined to be buried in the Dropmore papers. 68

The only alternative left to Pitt was legislative union. In the wake of the King's recovery from insanity Temple was replaced by Earl Westmoreland. But many of the borough owners who had deserted to the Prince in such numbers in 1789 did not repair to Pitt immediately. In the country many listened attentively as Theobald Wolfe Tone denounced the 1782 legislation as a fraud. Branches of the United Irishmen movement multiplied after Wolfe Tone organised the first one in Belfast in October 1791. In Dublin parliament sat for only two weeks after elections were held in the spring of 1790. Charlemont, Grattan and Ponsonby thereupon formed a Whig club dedicated to the preservation of Irish parliamentary independence but refusing to support radical reforms. Pitt's ability to control the Irish parliament once more rested

68 Harlow, *Founding*, I, 551.
on placemen, and new peerages were created in large numbers to fortify loyalists against the enlarged and invigorated Irish opposition. The Whigs nonetheless succeeded in forcing the government to accept legislation reducing pensions and places and admitting Catholics to the franchise. At the end of the decade domestic religious strife, national rebellion, international war and an unprecedented dispensation of patronage closed the reign of the Grattan parliament. Mornington's idea of a free legislature sustaining a responsible government was postponed for more than a century. 69

VII: Trim

Until Mornington left for India the construction of the family interest was limited almost exclusively to the family itself. This was almost inevitable. The period covered only fifteen years, an extremely short time frame in such matters. Family members available for political service were numerous enough. Financial resources, however, were extremely limited and had to be conserved as carefully as Mornington's personal extravagances would permit. In Ireland goals were limited and clear cut: the family's political influence was to be dedicated to supporting Pitt

and thereby to extract from him the normal favours of office and emolument. He in turn relied on Pitt and Grenville for support: on the Grenville family for repeated and kindly assistance in advancing his own career and on providing places for his brothers; and on Pitt to supply that enlarged forum for the exercise of his talents.

As long as Mornington resided relatively constantly in Ireland supervision of the original claim to political influence, the borough of Trim was a relatively easy matter. At the moment only one of the borough's two seats was controlled directly by the Wellesley family, for a life interest in the other seat had been sold to General John Pomeroy in 1760. The first Earl Mornington probably required the money but he may also have concluded that his own prospects and ambitions in Irish politics did not demand direct control of both seats, and his eldest child was not likely to be old enough to take his place in parliament until Pomeroy was deceased. At any rate Pomeroy's behaviour was apparently guided by an informal pledge not to embarrass the Wellesley interest in Trim, and in fact there were never any problems on this score. Indeed, Pomeroy's connections provided the

second Earl Mornington that first opportunity to exercise some influence outside Trim. Pomeroy was a member of the privy council and brother to Lord Harburton. Pomeroy held the Duke of Leinster in great esteem; his nephew, Harburton's son, sat in parliament after 1783 as member for Strabane in Lord Abercorn's interest. He was thought to be under the influence of Leinster and Mornington. All of this does not amount to a very clear picture of the Mornington interest on the eve of Richard's entry into Irish affairs, but it suffices to suggest that there was a very small group which might look to the Wellesley family for some inspiration or direction.

Until 1783 Mornington's nominee for the other seat at Trim was William Arthur Crosbie, Richard's aunt had married William Francis Crosbie of Ballyheague in county Kerry in 1750. William was their son and thus Mornington's first cousin. In 1783 young Wellesley Pole was elected in Crosbie's place, and the construction of the family interest can be said to have begun in earnest. Prompted by Mornington, he spoke in parliament shortly after taking his seat. His good fortune in inheriting the Pole property in the Queen's county added to


his importance, but in all his mark on the house of Commons from 1783 to 1790 was a modest one.  

Prior to 1790 the Mornington interest therefore consisted of Wellesley Pole and General Pomeroy. Pomeroy's nephew at Strabane was also listed among the Wellesley family's supporters. A fourth member, the Rt. Hon. G. Nugent, who sat for Fore, was added to the Mornington interest in a list prepared in 1787. Son of the Earl of Westmeath and secretary to the order of St. Patrick, he held a handsomely endowed position as auditor of foreign accounts and imposts from 1784 to 1798 and was thought to enjoy an annual income of some £1300. None of Mornington's correspondence makes mention of him, however. His support was apparently secured by Mornington's role in assisting him to obtain an office; he had been listed earlier by advisors to Fox and North as eager for a place and perhaps Mornington's petitions to Rutland had some effect. Fore was not far from Trim and some correspondence related to constituency matters in 1796 suggests that the Nugents and Wellesleys were related.

Trim remained the keystone in the arch of Mornington's

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75 NLI MSS 15917 and 16730, Johnston, "Members," p. 169. Nugent and Buckingham were relatives.
influence until 1800. In 1790, therefore, a challenge
to the family's paramountcy there posed serious problems.
Wellesley Pole succeeded in humoring Trim's large body of
independent freemen during the 1780s. In 1790, however,
he shifted to Queen's county to make room for Arthur. After
the poll at which Pomeroy and Arthur were returned a body
of freemen prepared a petition which complained that 119
out of some 300 votes had been disallowed and that at any
rate Arthur had not reached his majority on the day of
the election. Parliament was prorogued before the petition
could be entertained; it was entered again when parliament
convened in January 1791. The displeasure of the freemen
seems to have been aggravated by Mornington's refusal in
1790 to confer the freedom of the borough on Grattan. Arthur
made his first speech at Trim on this subject and justified
his brother's negative by arguing somewhat facetiously that
since Grattan's only qualification was his respectability,
and since this virtue was shared by many others, the family
interest would be swamped if this principle was put forward
as the reason for the borough's honour. 76

76 Ellison, "Rise and Fall," III, 326.

77 Ibid.
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76 Ellison, "Rise and Fall," III, 326.

77 Ibid.
Mornington's constituency problems were exacerbated in 1790 as well by the sudden demise of General Pomeroy immediately after the election. Mornington could not permit a potentially hostile interest to gain control of the seat at a time when Pitt's ministry was pressed to maintain its own ascendancy in Ireland by creating numerous peerages and fourteen new offices and by augmenting the pension list by £13,000. On 15 June 1790 Mornington invited his longtime friend and constituency agent Chichester Fortescue to take the seat, subject to whatever advice the Pomeroy family and young Arthur might proffer. Fortescue may have warned Mornington that the Wellesley family could not carry the seat without allies; at any rate the vacancy was filled by one Clotworthy Taylor, son of the neighbouring Earl of Bective. This friendly alliance saved the day; in parliament the petition against Arthur's election was quietly laid to rest.

As Mornington immersed himself in politics at Westminster it was Arthur who took the helm at Trim. Wellesley

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79 Mornington to Sir Chichester Fortescue, 15 June 1790, printed in Anon., "Some Letters of the Mornington Family, 1780-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue, County Kildare Archaeological Society Journal, XII, 40.

Pole's inheritance relieved Mornington of the need to press his candidacy for office at every turn. This was not true in Arthur's case. He had finished his education at Eton in 1784 because the family's coffers were sorely depleted and because he had shown only a modest appetite for scholarly work. The Countess took him to Brussels to continue his education. In doing so she also managed to escape the harassment of some creditors. By October 1787 Arthur was once again in London and unemployed. Mornington rushed to inform Rutland that Arthur was now educated and "perfectly idle." Rutland had already apparently volunteered to help obtain a commission for the young man. Mornington never forgot such commitments. He now informed Rutland that he cared not in the least what kind of a commission Rutland could deliver; it mattered only that it come soon. 81

An application was also made to the Grenville family. This seems to have been more successful, for in March 1787 he was gazetted as an ensign in the seventy-third (Highland) regiment after declining a place in the artillery. 82 In October Buckingham was instrumental in securing a "highly

82 Rutland MSS, cited in DNB, XX, 1081-1082.
advantageous" opportunity for Arthur to form his own regiment for Indian service. Raising men was an expensive proposition and Buckingham furnished Mornington with some estimates on the cost of doing so in England. Mornington at once calculated that Ireland would be considerably cheaper and available sooner. The Countess, it was assumed, would agree happily to this settlement of Arthur's future. 83

On 31 October 1787 news of the Duke of Rutland's sudden death reached Mornington at Buxton; it was to make a considerable difference in the fate of all the Wellesley clan. Mornington tucked all his sympathy into one sentence: "I cannot help feeling great concern at this melancholy circumstance, though I had little reason to be pleased with the conduct of his government towards me." Enough said on this; would Buckingham succeed him? "On my account," Mornington admitted, "I naturally wish that Lord Buckingham may except [sic] the Lieutenancy." But should he go to Dublin he hoped that Arthur might be taken on as an aide de camp. And if so, Mornington conceded, it might be preferable to India for he wanted to bring Arthur into parliament for Trim at an early date. 84 But with the Indian offer at hand he was obliged to

83. Mornington to Grenville, 27 October 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 287.

84. Ibid., 31 October 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 287.
insist that Buckingham extend Arthur an invitation at once or forfeit the opportunity. "You know me well enough," Mornington wrote to Grenville with breathless audacity, "to imagine that I would attempt to press him upon Lord Buckingham."85

Buckingham had at this point not even accepted office. Now he did so, and took in Arthur as well. "You may judge with what joy and gratitude I received Lord Buckingham's most kind appointment of Arthur," wrote Mornington to Grenville on 7 November 1787. Buckingham's appointment of course generated immense patronage pressures, and Mornington's own influence was by now notorious enough to make him the object of numerous petitions: "every Irish man and Irish woman who knows me by sight have something to ask."86 The Countess of Mornington, taking a cue from others and apparently unaware of her eldest son's representations on Arthur's behalf, applied directly to Buckingham on Arthur's behalf. Mornington's reaction was illuminating; he criticised her insensitivity in not making her wishes known indirectly (that is, through Grenville).

Of course Mornington wrote directly to Buckingham to thank him for his generosity. "I can assure you sincerely,"

85Ibid., p. 288.

86Ibid., 7 November 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 288.
he exulted, that Arthur "has every disposition which can render so young a boy deserving of your notice; and if he does not engage your protection by his conduct I am much mistaken in his character." This was true prophecy.

Mornington was relieved to see Arthur in Dublin. In the first place it voided the need to raise a regiment for India with all the attendant expenses, none of which Arthur was in a position to sustain. That financial aspects were important was confirmed at the time of Arthur's appointment as aide de camp. One of Buckingham's military advisors questioned Arthur's right to draw an allowance as aide de camp while enjoying his regimental pay. Mornington thereupon threatened to send Arthur to India instead, even though arrangements had already been made to enable Arthur to make the necessary exchange of commissions. The Countess weighed in with her opinion that India would be preferable anyway. The concession was granted on the salary issue and the Countess' opinions ignored. Arthur was despatched

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88 Mornington to Grenville, 31 October 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 287-88.

to Dublin by the first mail coach. 90

But there was additional incentive for Mornington's special effusion of gratitude when Buckingham succeeded in protecting Arthur's claims to full pay. 91 Mornington wanted Arthur to succeed William at Trim, in part so that William could devote his enlarged resources to securing a seat in England and in part so that Arthur could further his own career by a stint in the Irish parliament. In Ireland parliamentary service was virtually a sine qua non for a successful military career: "in Ireland even an incompetent soldier could hope for modest success, even more so if, in conjunction with strong family influence, he supported constantly the measures of the administration." 92 To this end Mornington introduced Arthur to Charlemont in January 1788; Charlemont politely reminded Arthur that as aide de camp to Buckingham Arthur was committed to a line of conduct to which Charlemont could not subscribe. 93 But Arthur's real introduction to politics waited until March 1790 when he stood for the seat vacated by William. The Grattan freemen

90 Mornington to Grenville, 7 November 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 288; Mornington to Buckingham, 8 January 1788, quoted in Torrens, Marquis, p. 69; Buckingham, Courts, I, 347.

91 Buckingham, Courts, I, 334; Fortescue MSS, I, 286-88, and II, 11.

92 Johnston, Great Britain, p. 243.

93 Mornington to Charlemont, 25 January 1788; Charlemont to Mornington, January 1788, printed in Charlemont MSS, II, 68.
incident was his initiation; a brave speech, steady nerves and support in the right places helped. "I hope you'll approve," he wrote to his brother; "I was in the most difficult situation." Mornington did. And in April the good citizens of Trim elected him.

Arthur satisfied Mornington in his six years as M.P. for Trim. Later he complemented his younger brother for having restored the interest of the family at Trim "by his excellent judgement, amiable manners, admirable temper, and firmness." Under Arthur for the first time the family correspondence contains a bulky collection of records dealing with constituency affairs in Trim. They are preserved today at Stratford-Saye as a monument to the young man's attention to detail.

Arthur was less impressive as a public figure, although this does not seem to have bothered Mornington. He regularly attended the Trim corporation assemblies but later the good townspeople had great difficulty trying to remember anything he did when in town. In January 1793, after two years of

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96 Ellison, "Rise and Fall," III, 325.
silence in parliament, he seconded the address from the throne and deplored the treatment meted out to Louis XVI.\textsuperscript{97} Despite his speech the King of France was dead within the month.

Arthur opposed a motion to introduce Catholics to the franchise, but they were given this privilege the same year.\textsuperscript{98} So Arthur made his mark instead, by keeping constituency records and monitoring patronage requests. It was a business which did not much appeal to him.

Arthur was assiduous in his attention to borough affairs at Trim but he was equally diligent in seeking an opportunity to begin his military career in earnest. Buckingham did not survive the regency crisis and Arthur found his successor less responsive to the needs of the Wellesley family. In 1791 Mornington heard from Buckingham that Arthur was "full of resentment" towards the Earl of Westmoreland for having refused to recommend him for the purchase of his own regiment.\textsuperscript{99} Buckingham warned Mornington that Arthur might appeal to Mornington to release him from Trim. He did so but if Mornington petitioned Pitt over the head of the viceroy on

\textsuperscript{97}W. E. H. Lecky, \textit{A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century} (London, 1892), III, 3.

\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., p. 151.

\textsuperscript{99}Buckingham to Grenville, 9 January 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 11.
Arthur's behalf it is not recorded.100

At last, in June 1794, Arthur temporarily surrendered his responsibilities at Trim and spent a miserable year with the troops in the Netherlands and along the Rhine. He returned in March 1795 and immediately resumed his place in parliamentary affairs. He applied for some of the Irish offices and was rebuffed until Mornington intervened to secure for him the post of surveyor general of the Ordnance. But Arthur would not accept this; whether he was motivated to reject it because it had been held by one of the Pakenhams is not clear. In September 1795 he was given a chance to sail to the West Indies. Twice this expedition was frustrated by fever and foul weather. Finally in June 1796 he prepared to sail for India.

Arthur thus divorced himself from Trim. Mornington had made preparations for such an eventuality. He confessed that he would miss Arthur "in a variety of ways most bitterly and none more than in the management of Trim." But the prospect of India was "so highly advantageous to him" that he could not advise Arthur to decline it. A replacement was necessary at Trim. Mornington again asked his cousin Chichester Fortescue if he would succeed Arthur, and urged him not to disclose Arthur's plans until after an upcoming

100 Maxwell, Wellington, I, 8.
election. Mornington advertised the seat as a boon to Fortescue, who this time promptly accepted the "honour"; Mornington had no plans to go into opposition and thus there appeared to be no difficulties involved in Fortescue retaining his office as Ulster King of arms and the seat at Trim simultaneously. Arthur eased the transition pains by supplying a detailed set of comments on constituency affairs. In July Fortescue was elected without difficulty.

"I am happy to have you safely seated for Trim, a seat which I hope you will fill the remainder of your life," wrote Mornington on 5 August 1797. Arthur was not likely to return to Dublin; with good luck he would "be called upon to act on a greater stage than dear Dublin." And by the summer of 1797 Mornington himself was organising his affairs and packing his temporal possessions in anticipation of acting "on a greater stage." He was about to sail for India.

Here was the capstone of his labours on the British political scene covering more than a dozen years.


CHAPTER VI: WIDER HORIZONS:

MORNINGTON IN BRITISH POLITICS FROM

1783 TO 1797
I: Bid for Westminster

When William Pitt formed his ministry in December 1783 Mornington had been active in Irish politics only two years. Much had been compressed into so short a period. Three ministries had been overturned; perhaps never since Cromwell had the nation's problems appeared so serious or the stability of the political system seemed to be so much in doubt. But the young Earl of Mornington was pleased with his own progress. He quickly concluded that he was qualified to take on greater responsibilities and an office equal to his contribution to maintaining the Anglo-Irish connection. He was, to be sure, young, able and ambitious. He was also increasingly impecunious. Office promised to provide both sorely needed income and an opportunity to play a greater role in politics.

Mornington's identification with Ireland was not substantial. He was a borough patron but not really a major landowner. In Ireland public opinion distinguished sharply between the two. As one Irish M.P. observed in 1795 landlords' influence was based on "that general good character, those general acts of benevolence and kindness, which are the natural result of the situation of a great landlord."  

1 Mr. Jephson, M.P., Irish House of Commons, Parliamentary Register, XIV (Dublin, 1795), 97, cited in J. H. Whyte, "Land-
Borough patrons were identified with bribery and "legal chicanery"; their actions were often suspect and their reputations were often vindicated only to the degree that they dedicated their influence to reform (which was seldom enough) or to maintaining the English connection.¹

A recent biographer has attributed Mornington's decision to seek a seat at Westminster in 1784 to his disillusionment at London's refusal to follow his advice more faithfully in the conduct of Irish affairs.² This does not seem to have been the case. He was indeed unhappy in 1784 that Pitt refused to take Grattan into his confidence and that Pitt would not trust Grattan to carry out the terms of a commercial settlement in the absence of specific legislative guarantees.³ But more important a factor was the prospect of office.

Mornington enjoyed the friendship of highly-placed

¹Whyte, "Landlord," p. 742.


English politicians after 1783. But London had lost control of Irish patronage to Irish borough owners, as Mornington noted in his analysis of the Anglo-Irish constitutional relationship some years later. Trim was too small an interest to count for much. Even one or two other M.P.s attracted to Mornington because of his youth and ability counted for little when matched against the great borough interests. Later Mornington would maintain that he had taken a seat at Westminster to gratify the wishes of the Grenville family and not "in pursuit of any view of [his] own mind." But this was in large part contrived and the Fortescue correspondence proves it. The battle for patronage in Ireland was too intense for a lightweight political interest like that of the Wellesley family. He would have agreed with Rutland, who in June 1786 complained that a rumor of his intention to quit the country produced an effect similar to a financial panic. "Like a banker reported to be in a bankrupt way, there

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5. Richard Colley Wellesley, second Earl of Mornington, to William Grenville, 26 January 1785, printed in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Drummore (Walter Fitzpatrick and Francis Bickley, eds.) 10 vols.; London: HMSO, 1892-1927), I, 245. The Grenville faction in parliament constituted one of the most durable family connections of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Contemporaries disliked the Grenvilles as sinecurists, and they have been seen by political historians such as Richard Pares, Michael Roberts and W. E. Brock and the social historian David Spring as one of the great eighteenth century holdovers. They did not constitute a coherent political group; except for William Grenville family rather than ideological interests predominated.
is a run on my shop, and all my creditors are pouring in upon me…." In this environment Mornington could not expect to fare well.

Why Mornington should launch his campaign for a seat at Westminster in early 1784 is not difficult to explain, although his extraordinary impatience suggests a serious dearth of sensitivity and political maturity. It was not only that he was "bored to death with Ireland" and could with "a very little encouragement" be induced "to bid a long farewell to it." Surely the rise to power of Pitt and the Grenvilles presented Mornington an opportunity which he could not resist. Pitt relied heavily on the support of a powerful and entrenched interest which shared many of his own centrist values. Pitt’s major weakness was certainly to prove to be his inability to resist claims on patronage at his disposal advanced by family and friends, and more so if representations involved family and friends together. And William


7 Mornington to William Grenville, 3 October 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 239.

Grenville, key to Mornington's relationship to Pitt, was far more than a cousin. He was a man of considerable talent and industry: under Pitt he staffed no fewer than eight important offices, many concurrently and all of them as a relatively young man.\(^9\) In 1784 he held three offices (postmaster general, member of the board of control, and member of the board of trade), any one of which would have gratified Mornington's ambitions at the moment. Within three years he would also prove himself as a diplomat, demonstrating coolness and poise in negotiating with the French and justifying the great trust Pitt placed in him.\(^10\) Mornington undoubtedly envied Grenville and this alone was sufficient stimulus for an impatient young man to press hard for a seat at Westminster and for office.

Mornington somewhat prematurely concluded that perhaps his services in Ireland from 1781 to 1784 constituted a claim for office. He was quick to advertise the value of his relationship to Grattan. He had already settled William into Trim, and William was outspoken in supporting Pitt and the Grenville family even when it was clearly unpopular to do so.

Mornington at first conceived himself to be a depository of


information and experience on Irish affairs, and he was confident that if he could be close to Pitt he could prevent his ministers from committing serious errors in shaping Irish policy. It was perhaps important that Mornington launch his career early, either to profit from a groundswell of popularity which Pitt might generate or to establish himself before Pitt's term as Prime minister collapsed.

II: "Profit and Honour"

Mornington's search for an English constituency began as soon as news of Pitt's successful bid for power reached Dublin. He spent three months in London beginning in December 1783 and his subsequent correspondence makes it clear that an English seat was already on his mind. He spoke to William Grenville and to Earl Temple. Temple offered to help Mornington secure a seat held by the Pitt clan and Mornington returned to Dublin in mid-March to think it over.

He did not have much time. Pitt finally decided to dissolve parliament to test national sentiment and did so 25 March 1784. Temple's offer of a seat belonging to Lord Camelford was rejected; the reasons are not clear but apparently Camelford stipulated conditions which Mornington considered...
onerous to Temple. He sent William to Temple to offer his regrets and in a later letter explained that he could not accept the seat "without injury to those whose success was my first object." By the time he wrote this eloquent note he knew that Temple had secured him another and even more attractive situation at Beer Alston, a borough so secure that it required not even "the trouble of personal attendance at the election." The borough was controlled by Lord Beverly, son of the Duke of Northumberland, and was purchased whenever required by wealthy politicians. Mornington remained at his post in Dublin, no doubt now fired by a healthy zeal to aid Pitt and the Grenville friends who supplied the seat.

He was not content for long. Indeed within a month he saw fit to complain to Temple that although Rutland and Thomas Orde were "extremely civil" Mornington was persuaded that they were not disposed "to make those arrangements which your Lordship's experience pointed out to you as important to the King's service here." This perhaps referred to matters of policy but Mornington went on to discuss his own aspirations for office and it is clear from subsequent

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12 Mornington to George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, second Earl Temple, 10 April 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 229.

13 Richard A. Brashares, "The Political Career of the Marquess Wellesley in England and Ireland" (Ph.D. Dissertation:
correspondence that Temple (soon to become the Marquis of Buckingham) made made a commitment of some sort to Mornington which had not been fulfilled. Mornington therefore pressed on the harrassed new viceroy, the Duke of Rutland, his extreme interest in securing office in Ireland or elsewhere. Rutland was clearly annoyed. His humor did not improve when Mornington informed him, and Pitt belatedly confirmed, that with Pitt's permission Temple had promised Mornington and several others Irish offices before he left Dublin in 1781. Rutland was stunned and later wrote angrily to Pitt about it: "If my information speaks truth Lord Temple is a liar; he has broken his word with me; used me cruelly ill. . . . I must attribute Lord Mornington's present discontent to his suggestions." Rutland's eruption came at the end of a long series of threats, bluffs and demands on Mornington's part which frayed viceregal nerves, angered his chief secretary Orde, embarrassed the Grenvilles and sorely vexed Pitt. In this


14 Mornington to Grenville, 16 March 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 226; Mornington to Temple, 10 April 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 229.

exercise we see Mornington as petulant and ungrateful, Temple as less than candid and Pitt somewhat naively assuming that Rutland in Dublin must have in his patronage arsenal the resources to cope with Mornington's demands. Rutland did not and his anger was intense. Certainly from Rutland's point of view Mornington's demands were most inconvenient. The ministry was far from stable and clearing an office for Mornington's benefit was hardly calculated to please the Irish borough owners whose support must be purchased. At first Rutland suggested giving Mornington the office of Irish Lord Privy Seal. Nothing happened. Rutland thereupon once more crossed over to London in early May, in part to share in Pitt's electoral triumph and to take his seat in parliament, and in part to press Pitt and Grenville directly for an Irish office.

Temple's predicament was painful. He seemed to be well aware, and knew that Mornington was well aware, that he had made a firm commitment to Mornington during his brief viceroyalty. How specific the offer was cannot be determined; no correspondence related to it seems to have survived. Temple's embarrassments would have been less widely advertised

16 Rutland to Thomas Townshend, Viscount Sydney, 24 March 1783, Rutland MSS, III, 83.

17 Mornington to Grenville, 21 April 1784, Portescue MSS, I, 230.
had not his selection in December by Pitt to be viceroy a second time been abruptly terminated three days later. Now in the summer of 1784 Temple was forced to humor Mornington in London while in Dublin Rutland continued to complain of the want of any suitable office to give him. In desperation Temple suggested that Mornington return to Dublin to assist Rutland. Mornington was also led to believe that "the very first person to be taken care of in any arrangement whatever" would be he. Mornington thereupon return to Dublin in August 1784, armed with this apparently unequivocal assurance.\(^\text{18}\)

Temple in his attempt to get Mornington out of his hair only aggravated problems, because Pitt still did not feel himself bound to provide an office for Mornington on his side of the Irish sea. Mornington's earlier expectations based on a general promise had now been translated into an immediate commitment, at least in his own mind. But Rutland had not been consulted and in his opinion there was no prospect of an office becoming available in Ireland in the near future. This prompted Rutland's allegation that Temple was a dissembler. In defence of Temple it is perhaps possible to say that Pitt had encouraged Temple to assure Mornington that an office

\(^{18}\)Thomas Orde to Rutland, 9 June 1784, Rutland MSS, III, 105-106.
would be forthcoming, and Pitt in this and other situations seemed confident that Rutland with all his patronage resources would be able to do something. Rutland was aware of Pitt's frame of mind, and at last agreed with "no hesitation" that the first vacant office "worth of his acceptance" would go to Mornington.

Rutland's attempts to placate Mornington proved disastrous. In January 1785 Rutland asked Pitt whether he could not supply an office for Mornington inasmuch as Temple had created the problem. Pitt treated the request as if it were a potential favour to Rutland, a seemingly naive but perhaps a calculated device to leave with Rutland Mornington's problem. "Your Grace thoroughly knows my desire to comply with any wish in which you seem so much interested," Pitt wrote somewhat blithely on 11 January, but "the fact is, that... no such vacancy is likely to happen; and if it did, there are claims and pretensions in our house of Commons, which it would be impossible for me to set aside, as things stand at present..." Pitt eased the pain slightly by promising to write a short note to Mornington "to state how I am circumstanced on the subject."

19Pitt to Rutland, 11 January 1785, printed in Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, p. 83.
In Dublin Rutland consulted with Orde about this unhappy state of affairs and complained privately about Pitt's insensitivity on the issue. Finally, in what Mornington described as an insincere initiative, Rutland invited that inveterate place-hunter Hely Hutchison to surrender his post as provost of Trinity college and to become commission of Hely Hutchison refused the offer because it was not sweetened by a simultaneous invitation to become master of the Rolls. Rutland and Orde complained that public opinion would never concur in his giving Hely Hutchison both offices; Mornington accused Rutland and Orde of a "complication of treachery and folly" in failing to remove Hely Hutchison from a post which Mornington would have found acceptable. He told Grenville that the characters of both men had fallen into "utter contempt and abhorrence" among persons of every description, and that despite Rutland's "vast profusion of good wishes" he, Mornington stood "worse than ever" in his quest for office. 20

Mornington now resorted to threats. On 5 September he told Grenville that despite Rutland's conduct he was busy labouring at Trim to counter the impact of the volunteers by soliciting signatures for a loyal address to the viceroy and by debating the radicals. When he saw Rutland about 9

20 Mornington to Grenville, 5 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 234.
September to complain of Orde's want of attention to the
creation of a favourable climate of public opinion, he delivered
an ultimatum: "until reparation [was] made to me," he repeated
for Grenville's benefit, "I would neither hear from government
nor utter to them one syllable upon public measures." With that
Mornington returned to the country - not to Dangan but to a
"very pretty troddling house" in Wicklow, where he could
relieve his anger by bathing in the sea, writing letters, and
admiring the lovely bay. 21

It was again Rutland's turn to complain bitterly.
His correspondence with Pitt, extending back more than six
months, constitutes an adequate defence against all of Mor-
nington's insinuations and accusations against him. In the
spring he had urged Pitt to accommodate Mornington and had
advertised the value of the young Earl's assistance in the
conduct of Irish affairs. Orde it is true had criticised
Mornington severely but Rutland had not. Indeed, Rutland
feared Mornington would desert the castle, and wrote that his
connections with Grattan and Charlemont would make an altered
allegiance feasible and even credible. 22 On the other hand

21 Ibid., 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 237.
22 Orde to Rutland, 9 June 1784, Rutland MSS, III, 105-106.
he dared not incur the wrath of the Irish parliament by proceeding to create new offices merely to meet the accumulated demands of Mornington and others. He listened sympathetically while Mornington complained of the injustice of being burdened with the responsibilities of a leading supporter of government "without those attendant advantages of office which," in Mornington's words, alone could "prevent such a situation from being ridiculous as well as irksome." He even indulged Mornington's admonitions against buying enemies and not supporting friends and believed Mornington when he declared he would never support or oppose on the basis of favours granted or withheld. He could show Mornington a book of correspondence in which the viceroy had pleaded Mornington's case before Pitt and had determined to give him Hely Hutchison's place. Unfortunately the incumbent was, as Rutland put it nicely, "more famous for accumulating office than relinquishing it." All this was in the record. Nonetheless, Mornington blamed the viceroy for an alleged conspiracy to deny him office.

23 Rutland to Pitt, 13 September 1784, Rutland MSS, III, 136.

24 Mornington to Rutland, 17 June 1784, Rutland MSS, III, 136.

25 Pitt to Rutland, 19 August 1784, printed in Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, pp. 33-34; Orde to Rutland, 24 June 1784, Rutland MSS, III, 114.

26 Rutland to Pitt, 15 August 1784, printed in Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, p. 36.
Rutland could not find an office Mornington would accept. Pitt would not believe that Rutland could be so circumstanced. From Wicklow Mornington confessed to Grenville that he was "heartily sick of political connections." Rutland heard rumblings that Mornington might abandon his self-imposed isolation and unite with the opposition at an early date: Mornington's language was, Rutland was sorry to say, so intemperate and his general discourse so hostile to government, that should this continue, it must preclude him from any favours which it may be in my power and inclination to bestow. He states engagements to which I am a stranger, and which must have been made to him by Lord Temple; and at the same time he claims merit and disinterestness in coming forward to support government without terms. . . . He cannot wait for parliament to oppose but he even now insinuates in private conversation charges of negligence and inactivity against my government. . . .

With parliament about to meet Rutland had good reason to fear the potential damage of seeing Mornington take his place on the opposition benches. And Mornington's correspondence to Grenville continued to contain charges levelled against Rutland's government. Grenville was probably not unhappy to hear Rutland condemned and perhaps some of Mor-


28 Mornington to Grenville, 10 September 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 237.

29 Rutland to Pitt, 13 September 1784, printed in Rutland MSS, III, 135-36.
Mornington's letters go into the hands of others. In retrospect it is quite clear that Mornington's threats were in large part a bluff: Pitt was gradually strengthening his position in Britain and in Ireland there was no future in joining an opposition which at the time was composed of frustrated patronage seekers, a few inveterate radicals, and in a reluctant way a few luminaries. Mornington at any rate was unlikely to oppose policies which fit his general philosophy. But Rutland was alarmed. By the beginning of October, on the eve of another session of parliament, it was time for new initiatives.

On 3 October Mornington described the new initiatives in a long letter posted to Grenville. According to Mornington Orde became alarmed when Mornington announced to Rutland his determination to pursue an independent course of action until he received a suitable reward. He made a "direct offer" to Hely Hutchison of the commissioner's office for his son and master of the Rolls for himself. Hely Hutchison "absolutely refused to resign on these terms." Orde thereupon advised Rutland that they had done everything possible for Mornington and the next move was definitely up to Pitt. For his part Mornington decided to suspend any further communication regarding

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30 Mornington to George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, First Marquis of Buckingham, 23 December 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 244. Buckingham's marquisate dated from this year.
patronage matters with Dublin castle and to look only to London in the future. "Left of the payment" after all these negotiations, Mornington reminded Grenville that Pitt himself in addition to Temple had promised him office as soon as the government in Ireland "had assumed a settled shape." Not only Rutland and Temple, it now was suggested, had broken a promise; Pitt himself was culpable. And now Mornington must "rely on accidents and contingencies" while those who had "acted a less honourable and more cautious part may laugh at my foolish incredulity." He closed by noting that rumors were afloat that one of the Irish vicer-treasurerships might soon be open. Mornington, however, would not apply for the post on his own initiative.

Grenville wrote to Rutland advertising Mornington's suitability for a vice-treasurership. Rutland was only too glad to recommend Mornington. Grenville thereupon wrote directly to Mornington and urged him to speak to Rutland. Mornington did so and Rutland advised Pitt to place Mornington "in a situation where he may be pledged as an avowed and responsible supporter of government in both countries." Unfortunately the post was not available;

31 Mornington to Grenville, 3 October 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 237-38.

it was in the gift of the English government and expectations that it would be restored to Ireland were quickly quashed by Pitt. At any rate Lord Walsingham, the incumbent, was not disposed to sail for India and another post. That ended Mornington's hopes for the vice-treasurership.33

Mornington's disappointment was vented largely on Orde, and vented harshly. Rutland's letter of recommendation he thought "very cold" but correct; surely, however, Mornington could forgive the viceroy for advancing as an argument in favour of promoting him the vexatious nature of Mornington's applications and complaints. "I really believe he means fairly by me," Mornington conceded; this compared favourably with the acerbic tone of Mornington's description of Rutland in his letter of 5 September.34 Pitt returned a "very civil letter." But there was Orde. In November the presidency of the council was offered to the Duke of Leinster. He declined it, but Mornington considered the offer to be "a direct breach of faith" with him because his own situation "had not been provided for in any degree."35

33 Rutland to Pitt, enclosed in Mornington to Grenville, 7 November 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 241-42; Pitt to Rutland, 11 January 1785, Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, PP. 47-48.

34 Mornington to Buckingham, 14 December 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 244.

35 Mornington to Grenville, 26 January 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 245.
According to Mornington Orde justified the offer to Leinster by saying that Pitt indeed planned to concede the vice-treasurerships to Ireland as part of a larger plan to revive the board of trade. This was not true and Orde was aware that the proposal had been abandoned. "You will see," observed Mornington.

how Orde's duplicity has grown and flourished, increasing daily in stature and craft . . . . Can there be a more gross or impudent piece of treachery than his last endeavour to feed me with the hope of the vice-treasurership, knowing as he must have done, that the idea of giving it into the Irish patronage was thus abandoned?36

What should Mornington do? He had already threatened once to withhold all support for the government until office had been procured. He had not done this. Instead he had assisted Rutland in the management of parliament. He had agreed to take the lead in the house of Lords. Now new threats were in order. "After this last trait of Orde's character, I fear I must withdraw my neck from any concern in the management of the Lords." Yet once again he was not quite prepared to take drastic action; this "very delicate question" required further consideration and Mornington was not eager to burn his boats. "My situation," he explained, "is really very distressing between the candor, the honour, and the friendship

36 Ibid., p. 246.
of Pitt, and the falsehood and perfidy of Orde. I cannot," he concluded on a high and self-righteous note, "give those proofs which I would wish of my sense of obligation to the former without incurring the risk of that disgrace and dishonour which, I fear, might attend any confidential connection with the latter." 37

At the end of 1784 Pitt began to realise that Mornington's ill-humor in Ireland was more dangerous than his unhappiness when in England. His weight in public affairs counted for something in Dublin and Rutland was vulnerable to whatever corridor gossip Mornington chose to generate against him. It says much for Mornington's hold on the Grenville interest and Pitt's indulgence towards his friends that Pitt was not willing to brave the consequences of alienating Mornington and ostracising him. Instead, he began writing directly to the irate young man. He made no specific commitment but held out high rewards for patience. 38 Pitt began to urge Mornington to return to England. At first Mornington refused: he would remain in Ireland until he obtained office. Gradually he changed his mind. Perhaps

37 Ibid.

he came to see, as he explained convincingly in his survey of Irish political conditions written later, that Rutland did not in fact enjoy sufficient flexibility in the application of patronage resources to be able to accommodate Mornington. Grenville's advice that Mornington leave Ireland was also probably an important factor: Mornington did not go immediately, but he abandoned all thoughts of a break with Pitt. On 1 April he wrote to Grenville threatening rather unconvincingly to oppose Pitt on a legislative issue and making it clear that his private considerations were not involved. He told Grenville that he could not leave Ireland immediately but volunteered the significant observation that he would not mind leaving Ireland at some future date, and leaving it permanently.

In Ireland, he wrote with an affected poetic despondency, he had "no mate, nor brother in exile; nor has old custom made this life more sweet than that of painted pomp... ." In May the adverse reaction in Dublin to Pitt's concessions at Westminster on the commercial treaty made any thought of departure inadmissible. Rutland, who six months earlier would have been glad to see Mornington leave Dublin, now refused to let him

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39 Mornington to Grenville, 2 March 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 247.

40 Ibid., 1 April 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 250.
In August, when the commercial bill was debated and for all practical purposes defeated, it was almost time for Mornington to go to London. Mornington wrote to Grenville on 13 August to announce the imminent demise of the commercial treaty and to observe with ill-concealed glee that many of those to whom Rutland and Orde had been so generous in terms of patronage had either voted with the opposition or absented themselves from debate. Mornington's point was not lost upon London. In high fury Buckingham denounced Rutland and Orde for having assured Pitt that they could command a parliamentary majority on the matter. They had shown themselves "criminally unequal to their situations," thundered Buckingham, and henceforth Pitt must rely instead on Mornington. Mornington rushed more calamitous news to London: the speaker had defected ingloriously along with Ponsonby and the Duke of Leinster. The country was in an uproar and Mornington was quick to make much of Rutland's desperate plight. He, Mornington, was "in wretched spirits and impatient to

41 Ibid., n. d., c. 20-31 May 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 251.
42 Ibid., 13 August 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 253.
43 Buckingham to Grenville, 18 August 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 254.
get away"; "in honour" however he could not desert Rutland in this hour of tribulation.44

No doubt all this reinforced Mornington's claims on Pitt; Mornington thought so and the Grenville family supported him. It was high time to go to London to exploit Pitt's discomforture. In early September the Irish parliament rose and Mornington reached London at the middle of the month. Mornington received en route an invitation from Pitt to discuss offices and future career plans. When they met Pitt reviewed Mornington's continuing candidacy for office in Ireland and in Mornington's words discussed prospects in "the most clear, open, and friendly manner." Pitt urged him to forget, as he would, those "unpleasant passages" in his correspondence with Dublin castle and to avoid any further communication with Orde. He pledged to take a direct role in Mornington's future welfare.45 Pitt reiterated his wish to make Mornington a vice-treasurer of Ireland and pledged himself, as he had not done in the past, to transfer to Ireland the first such vacancy. No timetable was set, however.46

44 Mornington to Grenville, 20 August 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 255.
45 Mornington to Rutland, 17 June 1785, Rutland MSS, III, 114.
46 Rutland to Pitt, 15 August 1785, Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, p. 34.
The next day Orde wrote from London to inform Rutland that Mornington had been restored to "perfect good humor" and that all traces of acrimony had been buried. 47

Pitt's success in restoring Mornington's temper was a triumph of his personality over a paucity of offices. Mornington had secured an appointment to the Irish privy council in early 1784 and nothing else would come his way until September 1786. By the end of 1785 Mornington's September enthusiasm was beginning to wane. On 14 January 1786, after another interview with Mornington, Pitt wrote to Rutland reporting that Mornington was "full of expressions of the most cordial attachment to you" but "in a different disposition towards a part of your government, and on that account disposed to be very much out of humor." It was of course Orde to whom Pitt referred; little had changed in the course of a year. Pitt urged Rutland to treat Mornington gingerly when the young Earl next visited Dublin, but Pitt offered not office. Rutland reaffirmed his determination not to create a sinecureship to accommodate him. 48 To Rutland, who trembled at the prospect of having the Earl once more on his doorstep, this was bad


news indeed. To Orde, however, it was a vindication in one sense of his view that Mornington deserved nothing. Rutland was less callous; he reaffirmed his determination to honour Mornington's right to an Irish treasurship until something equally attractive could be found; a commitment had been and must be honoured, whether Mornington deserved office or not.

Between January and July 1786 Mornington occupied himself with parliamentary duties at Westminster. His mark was modest but Pitt's affection for him increased. In July, to Orde's disgust and Rutland's delight, Pitt informed the viceroy of his intention to remove someone from the British treasury board and into the Irish peerage to make room for Mornington; the commitment to him had been outstanding for too long a time. Fortunately for Pitt an incumbent conveniently expired the same month. Even at this moment Mornington doubted that he would be offered the post; in his characteristic way Pitt delayed and Mornington again began to talk about the delights of opposition, and this

49 Orde to Rutland, 31 May 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 304.

50 Ibid., 25 June 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 307; Rutland to Orde, 20 July 1786, Rutland, Pitt-Rutland, p. 142; Rutland to Orde, 8 June 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 307.

51 Orde to Rutland, 14 July 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 323.

52 John Pitt, Second Earl of Chatham, to Rutland, 1 August
apparently induced the Grenville family to apply heavy pressure. The "great tree at Eton" counted for much. In September 1786, after two years of persistent and often heavy-handed petitioning, Mornington gained office as a junior Lord of the Treasury.

III: Richard Colley Wellesley, M.P.

Mornington's appointment as junior Lord of the Treasury represented a decisive break with Ireland. He continued to play a role on the other side of the water, but it was a diminishing one and was often directly related to Pitt's conduct of affairs at Westminster. In England, on the other hand, Mornington played a rather inconspicuous role in debate and made only a slight mark on the Treasury board. He did, however, circulate freely among the great country houses of the era and made the acquaintance of prominent people. He began to read voluminously on India. He travelled to the continent. His liaison with a Devon lady proved temporary.

1786, Rutland MSS, III, 328.

53 Orde to Rutland, 12 August 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 332.


His infatuation for Hyacinthe was more prolonged.

Mornington seems to have been more interested in bidding for even higher office during this period than in making a mark at Westminster or on the Treasury board. His colleagues on the board were Pitt, the Marquis of Graham, E. J. Elliott, who later went to India as Lord Minto, and Sir James Aubrey. Mornington accepted office as if it were his due; indeed, he was candid enough to declare that it was inadequate to his abilities. Orde urged Pitt to make it quite clear to Mornington that the Treasury board position was meant to satisfy Mornington's claims fully. Pitt did not share Orde's cynical estimate of Mornington. Perhaps he should have; within days of being installed at the Treasury board Mornington wrote to Rutland that he still looked to a settlement of his claims in Ireland in order to complete his "views." Rutland must have been startled but he took the position that in the absence of an explicit disavowal by Pitt of Mornington's Irish claims he would continue to regard himself bound to Mornington on this score.

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57. Mornington to Rutland, 15 August 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 334.

Pitt had other devices at his disposal to balance the sheet with Mornington. Mornington's career as M.P. for Beer Alston in Devon began in April 1784. He spoke not once until June 1786. Such a delay in matching wits with Pitt's opponents was excused in part by Mornington's continued involvement in Irish affairs. There was, however, a widespread feeling that Mornington performed more satisfactorily in backstage negotiations than on the floor of the house of Commons. Pitt's ministry was exceptionally weak in debating talent in its first year, so a bright young man such as Mornington might have been thought to be a prime candidate to defend the government's policy in some field or other whatever his predilection for private negotiations. Pitt's membership on the Treasury board relieved Mornington of a necessary role there, but there were other pressing burdens. In the summer of 1785, therefore, Grenville urged Mornington to take a leading role in defending the Anglo-Irish commercial treaty in London much as he had been involved with it in Dublin. Mornington's response was not enthusiastic:

I confess I am afraid. I think I understand the question tolerably well as it applies to Ireland; but its application to the complicated system of English revenue, and to the almost innumerable branches of manufacture in that country, is so involved, in detail which I have no means of knowing, and perhaps have not industry to go through, that I feel myself totally unequal and unfit to enter into the question in England. I conceive that the whole debate must turn upon such detail; and a general argument upon union, harmony, strength, glory,
and knitting together of remnants, would make but a miserable sound, and perhaps recall the last dying speech of orator Flood to the memory of the house. . . . 59

Looked at as a justification for shirking an onerous and unpleasant task this explanation perhaps suffices. Mornington's disinclination and indeed inability to debate an issue unless he was overprepared was to become a hallmark of his public career.

Ironically Mornington's first parliamentary skirmish was not a prepared effort. On 1 June 1786, during one of the debates on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Lord North attacked Pitt's government for taking too benign a view of Hastings' alleged crimes. Mornington rose to twit North by reminding him that as Prime minister he had three times reappointed Hastings governor of Bengal after the Rohilla war and the much condemned treaty with the Nawab of Oudh. He wondered why, after North had laboured to force through parliament a bill to reform the East India company he should appear so reluctant to interfere with the court of directors, as Pitt wished to do in proposing further reforms to insure government control of the company, and who even North had conceded were implicated in the charges levelled at Hastings. 60

59. Mornington to Grenville, 1 April 1785, Fortescue MSS, I, 248.

60. Pearce, Memoirs, I, 32-33.
Mornington also accused North of ignorance of Indian affairs. These were rather bold charges to lay at the doorstep of the veteran politician. Mornington may have already been delving deeply into India affairs; a short time later he reported to Grenville that he had been reading a selection of the heaviest historical literature then available on the subject. Perhaps he had not yet read enough when he rose to confront North; his performance was generally considered "ill-judged and by no means successful" and the weary North swept Mornington away in a few words. Mornington's friends said that he lost no credit in the skirmish; the experience, nonetheless, seems to have reinforced Mornington's aversion to impromptu debate and he was not soon seen again attempting it. Mornington's weakness on this score must have been of some concern to Pitt, who in 1786 was still the only cabinet member with a seat in the house of Commons. Pitt was forced to carry the burden of debate in that chamber virtually alone; he would have appreciated finding in Mornington a capable amanuensis.

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61 Mornington to Grenville, 30 July 1786, Fortescue MSS, I, 263.


63 Daniel Pulteney to Rutland, June 1786, Rutland MSS, III, 306.
Not until February 1787 was Mornington called upon to assist the government in debate. On this occasion he defended the recently concluded treaty with France which effected a reduction in tariffs between the two countries. Mornington was well prepared and he performed more impressively on this occasion than during the previous summer. His theme was that "the true majesty of Great Britain was her trade and the throne of the world the fittest object of her ambition." His friends conceded that it was not the best speech in the debate but some thought he had done extremely well. In line with much of the oratory of the day Mornington relied heavily on platitudes and added little to the house of Commons' members' precarious comprehension of the treaty's complex and obscure provisions. Perhaps he performed a more valuable service the same month when he served as manager of the government's interest in the Commons in a conference with the house of Lords concerning the address from the throne.

As a result of his elevation to the Treasury board in

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64 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 34; Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 15.
66 Pulteney to Rutland, 24 February 1787, Rutland MSS, III, 375.
September 1786 Mornington was forced to stand for reelection. What in many cases was merely a vexatious formality became an expensive chore for Mornington when Lord Beverley denied him permission to stand again for the eminently safe pocket borough of Beer Alston. Most likely Pitt had incurred Beverley's wrath by denying him a favour and Beverley was delighted to have an opportunity to express his resentment. Pitt offered him Saltash instead.

Saltash was far from being a constituency of the modern type but it required some campaigning in the community, even if votes were more likely to be purchased by bribes and alcohol than earned by eloquent speeches and reasoned argument. Mornington shuddered at the prospect of so demeaning and expensive a proceeding. He begged the Grenvilles to dissuade Pitt from saddling him with it. "I tremble at the idea of a contest, and would rather be out of parliament for some time than risk so heavy, and perhaps fruitless expense." But no other seat was forthcoming and by insisting that he take up the challenge Pitt had his gentle revenge on Mornington for his having pressed so vigorously for office. Mornington won in a close contest

67 Mornington to Grenville, 8 October 1786, Fortescue MSS, I, 270.
68 Torrens, Marquis, p. 56.
and took his seat in time for the opening of parliament in February 1787. But he was unseated on petition in May. Mornington was not unhappy to contemplate remaining out of parliament long enough to repair the damage to his pocketbook.

At length Pitt's friends reserved for Mornington the royal bailiwick of Windsor. In the summer of 1788, therefore, he ran against the Bedford interest. It was the only occasion in Mornington's career when the contest came close to being an ideological one. Permanent party alignments had not yet matured. Pitt, to Fox's disgust, had proven popular with the backbenchers, even if they revolted from time to time and thus defeated his projects. In retrospect it appears that 1788 was the Indian summer of non-party politics. During the regency crisis of the next spring most of those who had voted for Fox in 1784 would return to his standard and the onset of the French revolution would challenge the traditional idea of government based on a coalition of non-ideological issues. Even though Pitt was very much in command of things in 1788 and the King was generous in his support at Windsor, Mornington's campaign was not without its adventures. An effort was made to drown


70 The King to Pitt, 24 June 1787, printed in Arthur
him, and there were violent speeches and fisticuffs. Mornington survived these and was safely elected. He represented Windsor until the general election of 1796 when he moved to that apotheosis of the safe seat, Old Sarum.70

IV: Travel

A minor but persistent theme of Mornington's correspondence from 1782 onwards was his health. He was frequently ill although perhaps not as seriously ill as he often thought himself to be. As a child his health was often described as delicate. Perhaps because of this he never participated in vigorous sports. At the young age of twenty-three, after crossing over to Ireland, Mornington complained to Grenville of a pain in his chest followed by a "pain in my side which has given me some alarm." In March 1784 he was "very ill, as usual after the sea." On these occasions he seems to have shut himself in for several days and then, in a turn to the other extreme, exiled himself to Dangan for a bout of good air and exercise while haranguing his Trim constituents.71 In October 1787 he may have suffered a very mild stroke and he retired to Bath. His health improved but


71 Mornington to Grenville, 15 September 1783, 28 September 1783, 16 March 1784, Fortescue MSS, I, 221, 222, 225.
but he could not get rid of the "restraint" in some of his limbs. Early rising, air, exercise and the waters were in order and they apparently succeeded to his satisfaction.  

Two years later, however, he suffered a series of attacks which seem to have included pneumonia. In the summer of 1790 he decided, according to the custom of the day, to seek a cure in the form of travel on the continent.  

Mornington probably had other reasons for wanting to travel. He had seen something of Europe on a short trip to the continent in 1786, where he visited his mother and Arthur and when he apparently was accompanied part of the way by his friend Grenville. Now as junior Lord of the Treasury Mornington found his financial situation somewhat improved. Although deeply in debt he may have concluded that for the first time he could afford the heavy expenses of the grand tour. Having removed himself from the center of Irish affairs without thus far having succeeded in placing himself in the front rank of Pitt's friends Mornington may also have looked to the proposed trip as part of his political education. His situation at Windsor was secure enough. The King had been pleased to see upon recovering from his insanity that Mor-

72Ibid., 27 October 1787, Fortescue MSS, I, 286.

73Ibid., 4 January 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 4.
nington had conducted himself in a fashion appropriate to the constituency's peculiar importance as the site of the royal household. Finally and unfortunately, by 1790 Mornington had contracted in an informal way the burdens of a family whose domestic charms were not complemented by the proper credentials of marriage and legitimacy. From these cares and concerns the journey promised to be a welcome albeit temporary escape.

Mornington's correspondence during his year abroad was voluminous and perceptive. Much of it is not particularly relevant to this study: the pages of classical verse penned for Grenville's benefit while Mornington sat in the shade of this or that crumbling temple; a long and eloquent tribute to the Rome of the Caesars and to the Italy of the Renaissance popes; an inviting description of the Neapolitan coastline; and detailed accounts of the trials encountered by the determined traveller in the late eighteenth century. He recorded in great detail the undependability of conveyance (his carriage broke down twice between London and Dover and he sent young Gerald, who travelled with him, back for parts).

74 Ibid., 4 January 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 5-10.
75 Ibid., 25 July 1790, Fortescue MSS, I, 593-94.
to the revolution. Letters from Grenville and a first-hand view of the state of affairs in Paris convinced him that he should proceed. He found it difficult to sum up his impressions for Grenville's benefit and admitted to being "quite perplexed by the number and variety of ridiculous and absurd things." The common people were as gay as ever, though many were starving for want of employment. They praised the revolution, condemned the national assembly and villified and praised the King all in one breath. Libels were pedaled by street hawkers "exactly in the manner you must have observed in Dublin." Because there was no police every specimen of "audacious bawdry" was posted in public places. The theatre celebrated the revolution with new plays, all of them "a heap of hackneyed public sentiments" on the rights of man and the duties of Kings, "just like Sheridan's grand paragraphs in the Morning Post."

Society had crumbled; houses were deserted and the aristocrats were "melancholy and miserable." 81

There was much about the revolution which was absurd, but Mornington was strongly impressed by the strength and determination of its adherents. He would carry to India a profound

81Ibid., 27 September 1790, Fortescue MSS, I, 607-609.
respect for the dangers posed to well-ordered society by revolutionary doctrinaires and by the weakness of many institutional elements of the old regime. The assembly was unruly and its proceedings were often boring. But the royal court was cowed and gloomy, with courtiers perpetually dressed in mourning clothes. The King was well but his manner was humbled: "he now bows to everybody, which was not a Bourbon fashion before the revolution." Much more important was the dedication of the revolution's missionaries to the new cause. The radical clubs, Mornington observed, had despatched spokesmen abroad "to teach all mankind how ill they have been governed, and how preferable a state of anarchy and confusion is to the trammels of order and law. I assure you," Mornington told Grenville, "this pious zeal is not feigned; and I most sincerely hope we may not feel its effect in Ireland."82 Their zeal was made more ominous by the weakness of the old order. In Belgium he observed that the emigres had officers but no soldiers among them. The princes' servants openly supported the revolution and many of them were spies. The exiles' dedication to restoring full despotism was so unpalatable to Mornington and so unrealisti- 

82Ibid., p. 609.
was so weak.  

By the end of the year Mornington had reached Naples. The trip had considerably improved his health; he had not been confined to bed once in six months, a definite improvement over the annual bouts of fever he had suffered in autumn and winter during recent years. Upon seeing the Alps and Rome he temporarily put behind him the ominous portents of Parisian politics and surrendered himself completely to the classics and the warm climate. His constitution suffered severely from the spring heat and he forfeited a visit to Venice in order to cross the Alps before summer. In Spa again, he found the shadows of the revolution lengthened. He described to Grenville the dejection of the emigrés when they learned of the King's unsuccessful flight from Paris. Mornington's opposition to the revolution was hardening and the impact on Ireland became an important part of his correspondence. He had previously known Burke only casually and had been surprised to find him an agreeable and sensible companion when on one occasion they had journeyed to Ireland together. Now he read Burke's pamphlets on the revolution with enthusiasm. Paine's "blackguard libel" was also selling well and, he heard, circulating in Irish whisky houses. Paine's publica-
tions alarmed Mornington; one of them was "by far the most treasonable book that ever went unpunished," and he urged Grenville to "hang the fellow" if he could be caught. 84

Mornington returned to England in September 1791. He had been away for more than a year. He believed that he had prolonged his life by virtue of the tour even if his bouts of fever and virus soon resumed. 85 He had seen the first stages of the revolution at close quarter; he did not like what he saw but he was impressed by its power. His travels proved to be the last extensive visit to the continent prior to his embassy to Spain in 1809. He never again saw Italy and Germany and by the time Napoleon was vanguished he was too old and too impoverished to contemplate a stay even in France. Later he was to be Foreign secretary and perhaps for this reason alone the trip, expensive and extravagant though it proved to be, was a worthwhile investment.

V: Pitt's Circle

A year abroad did not repair that deficiency in his

84 Ibid., p. 120.

85 Ibid., 27 December 1793, Fortescue MSS, II, 486.
parliamentary fortunes as much as his friends had hoped. Mornington's "worthy electors" at Windsor complained of his neglect loudly enough so that the King concluded that their M. P. was "really obnoxious to them." In December 1791, on the eve of the opening of parliament, Buckingham inquired of Grenville in an exasperated tone where Mornington was and what he might be doing with his time.Indeed, Mornington played an insignificant role in politics during that year. A year later he wrote to Grenville congratulating him on his speech at the opening of the next session of parliament, an event which he claimed he was forced to pass up because of ill-health. During this time his major tangible contribution to the Pittite cause appears to have been his analysis of the Irish situation and even this made no impact.

Beneath the surface there was some movement, however. He saw much of Pitt after 1791; he became a member of that circle of young men on whom Pitt relied for diversion, inspiration, and encouragement. Mornington was included in many dinner parties at Walmer castle, Pitt's refuge from

86 The King to Pitt, 1791, Aspinall, Later Correspondence, II, 407.

87 Buckingham to Grenville, 6 December 1791, Fortescue MSS, II, 236.

88 Mornington to Grenville, 17 December 1792, Fortescue MSS, II, 359.
London's tensions. It was at one of these that George Canning, just prior to taking his place in parliament for the first time, had an opportunity to converse at some length with Mornington. Canning found Mornington "generally very sensible and pleasant" and described him as "one of Pitt's intimate friends." 89 Probably Mornington at last had reached the stage where his entrée no longer depended on the Grenville interest, for the private circle, originally bent sharply towards his relations, was beginning to take on a more heterogeneous cast. These young men with their sharp minds, great self-confidence and irrepressible ambition were devoted to Pitt. They did not all get on well with each other. Grenville, despite his status as *primus inter pares* by virtue of his familial ties to Pitt and his influence as Foreign secretary, was jealous of Henry Dundas, whose father managed the Scottish interest virtually as a personal preserve. After 1792 Grenville's position was made even more secure: he married Anne Pitt, daughter of the first Baron Camelford, nephew of the elder Pitt and Mornington's patron in parliament after 1796. 90

Mornington's relations with the English members of


90 Sack, "Grenvillites," p. 27.
Pitt's circle seem to have been satisfactory. He reciprocated the young Canning's friendship. He worked with Henry Dundas on the board of control of the East India company and when he was unable to pry from Dundas any share in the management of that board he ceased to attend rather than challenge him. Later the competition between them was to stimulate an interesting and informative correspondence. Mornington also esteemed Henry Addington, who by the early 1790s was already constructing an important parliamentary interest and who had been appointed speaker of the house. Addington took an avuncular interest in Mornington and periodically offered solace and encouragement when Mornington despaired of achieving greatness. Mornington was also on good terms with William Wilberforce, whose proselytism for an end to the slave trade Pitt treated with some deference and much good humor.

Mornington was less friendly towards two young politicians who had entered Pitt's circle. Perhaps they posed a direct challenge to Mornington's pretensions to some expertise on Irish affairs. Undoubtedly there were personal and political

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91 Edward Ingram, ed., Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801 (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1970), passim.

92 Torrens, Marquess, p. 100.
considerations. Most of Mornington's animosity focused on Robert Banks Jenkinson. Jenkinson was ten years younger than Mornington. At Christ Church he became an intimate of Canning and Leveson-Gower. He travelled on the continent for three years (compared to Mornington's one) and his maiden speech in 1791 was a great success. He urged war with France and gained a seat on the board of control for Indian affairs. His career therefore closely paralleled Mornington's. Throughout his career Mornington was forced to suffer Jenkinson not only as a colleague but in many respects as his superior. This galled him because he thought Jenkinson incompetent. It is unclear how Mornington managed to arrive at so decided a negative impression of Jenkinson's abilities so early in their relationship. That the estimate was formed early, however, is confirmed by an entry in the Sidmouth papers dated 3 May 1794: "I really cannot crouch to young Jenky whom I have laughed at ever since I have known him and my habits of considering him as a ridiculous animal are so rooted that I am afraid I cannot easily be brought to admire him as minister."93

Undoubtedly Mornington was jealous of Jenkinson: he became a minister at a time when Mornington held office only

93 Mornington to Henry Addington, 3 May 1794, Exeter, County Record Office, Sidmouth MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 79.
on the board of control. Reverence for Pitt was such that competition for his favour did not admit of criticism of his choices for office. Criticism and animosity, sharpened by pangs of jealousy, were therefore directed towards those who had risen most rapidly. The pressure on Pitt to brighten the world of his disciples by a gracious letter, an invitation to dinner and an office, was intense. In Mornington's case, at least prior to 1796, Pitt's attentiveness took a less tangible form than it seemed to take in the case of some others. Pitt was solicitous and generous with his time but reluctant to place Mornington in office. He confided in Mornington and sought his advice. But he would not except in the case of close relatives award office on the basis of friendship alone: Mornington must prove himself and the competition was stiff. Mornington's prospects seemed dim. He returned from the continent in 1791 to find his friends preparing themselves to act as Pitt's lieutenants in confronting revolutionary France. And in 1794 Mornington bemoaned the adhesion to Pitt of the Portland Whigs, who thereupon proceeded to fill many offices which might otherwise

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have been reserved to the older Pittites. Could Mornington demonstrate ability impressive enough to challenge men like Jenkinson? Two avenues remained open: parliament and office.

VI: In Debate

During the six years between his return from the continent and his departure for India Mornington was directly involved in only four parliamentary issues: ending the slave trade; parliamentary reform; imposition of sedition acts; and British policy towards France. Of these four he opposed Pitt in one instance, that concerning the slave trade, and here parliament, the nation and even Pitt were moving irresistibly if very slowly towards Mornington's point of view. In opposing parliamentary reform and in advocating use of sedition acts Mornington supported Pitt's views even though they may have run counter to popular feeling. His views on France were distinguished more by their grasp of global strategic considerations than by an understanding of the ideology of revolution.

Mornington went on record in favour of ending the slave trade in a letter addressed to Buckingham in January.

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96 Mornington to Addington, 27 July 1794, printed in George Pellew, ed., Life and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth (3 vols.; London: John Murray, 1847), I, 123; Philip Henry Stanhope, Fifth Earl Stanhope, Miscellaneies (2 vols.; London, 1861 and
1788. Grenville did not share Mornington's point of view; this appears to have been the earliest significant difference of opinion between them but it was by no means a crucial one. Mornington supported Wilberforce with that animation often displayed when his opinion in his own mind was so incontrovertible as to admit of no contradiction. He admitted to being eagerly engaged in a study of Wilberforce's proposals at that time and passed on the rumor that Burke, who opposed Wilberforce, was busy preparing a case to prove the excellence of slavery and the great difference between Negro slavery and Indian low caste servitude. Not until after his trip to Europe in 1790 and 1791, however, did Mornington engage in parliamentary debate on the subject. In April 1792 Dundas as Home secretary proposed gradual abolition of the slave trade with full cessation to be achieved by 1800. On 25 April Mornington moved an amendment to end the slave trade completely within the year. The amendment was defeated 158 to 109. Two days later Mornington revived the amendment when the house went into committee on Dundas' resolution. Mornington's presentation was brief and surgical


97 Mornington to Buckingham, January 1788, cited in Torrens, Marquess, p. 70.
and was not calculated to make friends. "The force of truth
being given, and the hardness of the planter's heart being
ascertained, in what space of time will the former be able
to penetrate the latter?" One year would do as well as seven; Mornington would concede no more than two. "Every
hour that this nefarious traffic was allowed to be continued
was a disgrace to Great Britain." 98

Two years later Mornington's name again appeared in
Wilberforce's journal among those agitating for an immediate
prohibition on the trade. He agreed to write a pamphlet but
would not affix his name, undoubtedly because it would likely
annoy Pitt and perhaps lessen his chances for higher office. 99

By the time Mornington returned from India Wilberforce's
campaign had almost succeeded. Mornington's enthusiasm,
on the other hand, gradually succumbed to a reverence for
Pitt. It is difficult to predict how active Mornington would
have proven to be in the last years of the anti-slave trade
movement had he been in England and not India. He might
well have curbed his enthusiasm in much the same way as
other disciples of Pitt abandoned projects embarrassing to their
leader.

In the case of parliamentary reform both Pitt and

98 Anon., "Wellesley," p. 403; Pearce, Memoirs, I, 46-49;

99 William Wilberforce, diary, 19 December 1795, cited in
Torrens, Marquess, p. 111.
Mornington agreed that Grey's motion of 7 May 1793 was not acceptable; the proposal was inconveniently timed and the need for parliamentary reform had not been demonstrated convincingly. Mornington emphasised the latter point, declaring that the "unreformed" parliament had shown a capacity to direct the revival of British fortunes after the American revolution. Never before by any distribution of political power, he claimed, had "the true ends of society been so effectually accomplished"; every British interest received a hearing in the legislature. No proof could be established that the blessings enjoyed by the British people were not connected with the construction of parliament; there was, in fact, "the strongest presumption of an intimate connection existing between them." Its deficiencies were "trivial" and "insignificant" by comparison. In the fashion of the times, Mornington concluded his argument in parliament by painting a lurid picture of the state of France; undoubtedly the chaotic conduct of affairs in the national assembly when he visited Paris in 1790 had not been forgotten.

Fox rebuked Mornington. He emphasised that the benefits

100 *Annual Register*, XXXV, 159.

101 *Pearce, Memoirs*, I, 50-56; *Parliamentary History*, XXX (1793), 850-54.
of the British constitution should not be exaggerated by comparing them to the deficiencies of revolutionary France. Forty years later the Marquess Wellesley would admit the justice of this observation and would join the Whigs and support the reform bill of 1832. By that time the aging Marquess would have been frustrated by the refusal of the unreformed parliament to support his most cherished projects and to invite him to be Prime minister. In 1793, however, the ancient system favoured him. It had offered Mornington an avenue for advancement which a more popular system might well have denied to an Irish aristocrat of modest resources. What Mornington believed in 1793 was that any system which permitted men of his calibre to share in the government of the nation when still young and vigorous was not in need of reform. The talent displayed by Mornington and his colleagues and by Pitt himself suggested that he was right.

Mornington's support for tight restrictions on freedom of speech did not conflict with his support for more liberal treatment of Irish Catholics, a cause which he championed vigorously after his return from India. Nor was it simply the other side of the coin of his opposition to parliamentary reform. Whether in Ireland or Britain or India Mornington consistently held that the best guarantor of liberty was the strength of those instruments of social control which Britain
had fashioned in its own historical experience. He opposed the volunteers although he advocated many of their objectives when he concluded that by their very existence they constituted an assault on the framework of legitimate government. In India he justified the most arbitrary measures as a necessary antidote to India's defective governmental institutions. He claimed, and history has not contradicted him, that the institutions he founded and strengthened by acts of questionable constitutional propriety, measured by English standards, were depositories of future liberties. To Mornington worse than unjust laws was the capricious application of just laws. Better than a liberal temperament in rulers were judicial processes which by their regularity and strength engendered confidence in the system as a whole. Mornington's public life was made uncomfortable by the fact that his reverence for ancient institutions was Tory while his faith in the ability of man to prosper when laws were so designed as to promote merit rather than to prevent progress was Whig. If a choice had to be made he favoured defending the defective but ancient institutions of the nation against theoretically enlightened but untried alternatives. Judged from our perspective, Mornington's position on all the great questions of the age seems remarkably astute, more attractive by far than that of his younger brother the future Duke of
Wellington.

In Paris Mornington had recoiled in horror at seeing Tom Paine's seditious attacks on the British monarchy and parliament. Mornington feared not so much the content of Paine's pamphlets as the context. In 1791 Britain was still at peace with France, yet he thought Paine was the greatest threat to the British constitution he had ever encountered. In 1795, when Pitt's ministry offered a seditious meetings bill, Britain's very survival seemed to many at stake. The nation's leadership had virtually no way to measure the threat posed by the London corresponding society and similar groups because the police was weak and spies were unreliable. In defending the need for the bill Mornington read to the house a variety of extracts from "violent and disloyal publications"; short of an insurrection there was not much else he could do to demonstrate what he perceived to be a grave threat. Inevitably opponents concluded that Mornington had been "looking for plots with the utmost diligence" but could find none and that parliament should not take seriously such proofs as were based "upon vile scraps and paltry passages from pamphlets collected by rummaging old bookshops and turning up the dirt of every stall in London."102

102 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 130; Annual Register, XXXVIII, 38.
It was true, as Mornington maintained, that with the repeal of the suspension of habeas corpus at the close of the previous session in 1794 there had been a flood of anti-government literature. But Sheridan in that brutal way which was often characteristic of him in debate rose to remind Mornington that the "placid countenance and sonorous voice" which he used on this occasion (November 1795) was the same which had been employed two years earlier to assure the house of Commons that revolutionary France would collapse within a few weeks. Of course it had not; should Mornington's predictions of dire calamity at this time be trusted any more than his promises of imminent peace earlier? Sheridan thought not and Mornington was unable to devise an effective retort. But the house rallied to the Pittite standard and anti-sedition measures were approved 213 to 43.\(^{103}\)

The debate on sedition was of course only a small part of Britain's effort to cope with revolutionary France. Later Mornington could boast that his own contribution to the defeat of France was more substantial than most. In 1793 he was foremost among the Pittites in urging that Britain declare war on France before the entire continent succumbed to the revolution; like others he thought at first that Britain's

\(^{103}\)Torrens, Marquess, p. 115.
intervention would bring an early end to the conflict. He kept tabs on the danger of rebellion and revolution in Ireland. He frustrated French designs in the vast theatre of the Indian ocean. He defended the Copenhagen expedition and joined the government at the very moment when the British were at their war-weariest. He restricted his political options by supporting his brother's campaigns in Iberia. He was eclipsed in fame by his brother, whose rise was due in good part to Wellesley's determination to see the war through. In parliament between 1793 and 1796 he urged that the French danger be taken seriously and that the war required a global strategy. He was confident that Britain could mobilise for war on an unprecedented scale and he urged that her armies and navies be afforded competent leadership and that these chosen leaders be given resources adequate to their tasks.

His major contribution in parliament, a long and somewhat violent speech, was delivered on 21 January 1794. It injected a powerful ideological tone into the war and dramatically diminished the chances for a compromise peace. It came at a time of waxing backbencher disillusionment at the failure of Britain to achieve a quick peace, and in

104 Mornington to Addington, 8 November 1793, printed in Pellew, Sidmouth, I, 112; O'Gorman, Whig, pp. 172–73.
the wake of news of the fall of Toulon which snuffed out hopes of containing France by exploiting the civil war. Like all of Mornington’s lengthier parliamentary performances this one was well prepared. It proved to be the first of a small number of such efforts which encouraged some contemporaries to conclude that Mornington possessed oratorical abilities of the highest order. This great philippic, long in gestation, proved to be an emotional recapitulation of the principal arguments against the French revolution.

He urged Britain to prosecute the war vigorously and to abandon all thought of preserving the anomalous state of things in which Britain enjoyed neither the advantages of peace nor the strength and commitment required to achieve victory. France had launched an assault on all mankind and neither its neighbours nor the British empire would survive without resort to war. Compromise with France was not possible because the principles which that nation now represented were fundamentally alien to Britain and to the civilised world. In long sentences Mornington described the horrors

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105 O’Gorman, Whig, pp. 172-73.
of the revolution: the bloody purges; the confiscation of private property; the frenzied denied of God; the plunder at home and now the drive for plunder abroad.

Mornington was pleased with his performance; he permitted his friends to rush the text into print. It was well received by Pitt and by Mornington's friends. William Windham, who would later plow an independent political furrow, declared that Mornington "had recapitulated the conduct of France in a manner so masterly, so true, and so alarming, as seriously to fix the attention of the house and nation."¹⁰⁸ Mornington certainly showed himself to be enormously well informed on the subject; in his five hour presentation nothing had been omitted. But the speech suffered, perhaps inevitably, from the deficiencies which prophecies coloured by an ideology are so often prone to. It promised that war now would produce an early victory and a total victory, and Fox in responding to Mornington was rightly horrified when he contemplated the dangers of a long, exhausting war with an enemy with whom there never could be negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Sheridan attributed the terrors of the revolution to the

¹⁰⁹ Malleson, Wellesley, p. 9.
inequities of the ancien régime and to the provocations of foreign states. He chastised Mornington for calling on the people to make greater sacrifices when in fact such exertions were translated into higher offices for members of the government, this "train of newly-titled alarmists." 110

The speech left a deep impression in unanticipated ways. It so angered the French that when they captured brother Henry and sister Anne enroute from Lisbon accompanying Anne's husband's corpse they showed the speech to the unfortunate pair and condemned them to death. 111 Two years later Sheridan, who had rushed into print his rebuttal to Mornington's declamation, recalled for the benefit of the house of Commons this speech drawn "from shreds and patches of Brissot." 112 Butler wondered whether it might not have inspired W. P. Thackeray, who must have heard many stories about Wellesley from Thackeray's uncle Merrick Shawe, to write in The Rose and the Ring of a "speech so magnificent, that no report can do justice to it. It lasted for three days and three nights, during which not a single person who heard him was tired, or remarked the difference between day and night." 113 Perhaps

110 Pearce, Memoirs, I, 115-22.
113 Butler, Eldest, p. 80.
Hazlitt despite his prejudice against Mornington and his unnecessary unkindness must have the last word: "a degree of dull vivacity, of pointed insignificance and impotent energy, which is without parallel but itself."\textsuperscript{114}

But for Mornington’s career this speech in 1794 was crucial. For the Grenvilles it constituted that monumental parliamentary performance which they had long hoped to extract from Mornington in part payment for offices and honours promised and proffered. For the Whigs it was an unequivocal signal that Mornington, despite the liberal cast of many of his ideas, was not likely to enter their ranks, whatever his occasional threats to do so. The speech and Mornington’s subsequent observations on the war seem to have encouraged Pitt to refer to him for advice on foreign policy. In 1795 Mornington was invited to discuss prospects for negotiating peace with the more moderate French directory, heir to the terror.\textsuperscript{115} Mornington also met with Pitt at Walmer castle from time to time to discuss the subject. The effect was to stiffen the resolve of Pitt and Grenville to prosecute the war rather than to seek an early negotiated peace.\textsuperscript{116}


\textsuperscript{115}Mornington to Grenville, c. November–December 1795, Fortescue MSS, III, 149.

\textsuperscript{116}Marshall, Canning, pp. 180–81.
a result, by 1797 Grenville was the most insistent of the group on the virtue of continuing hostilities, even though he had been among the most reluctant to go to war in 1793. He would leave the government in 1801 when Addington and Pitt negotiated the truce of Amiens.117

Mornington's forceful assault on all facets of the French revolution underscored his own commitment to the British constitution, whatever its defects. It reflected his excitement at the prospect of war and his enthusiasm for sustaining the struggle. He was eager to do more. After the collapse of peace negotiations at Lille in 1797 he joined Canning and others to publish a weekly newspaper dedicated to mobilising public opinion in the country for greater efforts during the war.118 Most important, this demonstration of enthusiasm did its part to pave the way for Mornington's appointment as governor general in Calcutta.

VII: "Dying of the Cramp"

After Pitt died, with the viceroy of British India home just in time to see him expire, Pitt's disciples rushed


118Marshall, Canning, pp. 175-76.
to contribute their testimonials on their late leader.

In a long eulogistic letter to the Quarterly Review Wellesley described Pitt as "a most affectionate, indulgent, and benevolent friend, and so easy of access that all his acquaintances in any embarrassment would rather resort to him for advice than to any person who might be supposed to have more leisure." 119

The memory plays its tricks and unpleasantries are forgotten. During the last decade of Mornington's parliamentary career before India he invested much energy in attempts to promote his claims for higher office. He rarely communicated his desires directly to Pitt and seems to have been heartily reluctant to do so despite his exceptionally strong drive for higher office and wider responsibilities.

Mornington wanted an office of weight and influence and he wanted a seat in parliament which would exempt him from the periodic and heavy election expenses attendant on a place in the house of Commons. In retrospect it can be seen that Mornington was correct in judging himself worthy of high office; whatever his deficiencies as viceroy they did not involve a want of willingness to exercise authority. But in 1790 Mornington's claims were far from persuasive. He had performed some valuable work in sustaining Pitt's Irish policies and he

was capable of cogent analyses of the nation's affairs. He had not, however, cut a commanding figure in parliament or shown unusual commitment to the burdens of his office at the Treasury board. His family interest at that moment consisted of his brother William, who had served faithfully but not brilliantly in the Irish parliament from 1783 and who was finally brought to Westminster in 1790. He was deeply in debt. Mornington's occasional threats to desert Pitt were blunted by the fact that even if carried out they could inflict little damage on anyone but Mornington himself.

Despite all this before the end of the decade Mornington would secure an appointment to the privy council, a promotion from the Treasury board to the board of control for Indian affairs, a British peerage, an appointment as governor-general of Bengal and thus the Indian primacy, and, as the century drew to a close, an Irish marquisate. The accomplishment was considerable and he was not yet forty when the decade closed. How was this done? As has been seen his identification with the war against France did much to bring him to the special attention of Pitt after his friendship with the Grenvilles had placed him in Pitt's circle of friends. His continuing value to the ministry in terms of Ireland was based in part on his efforts to develop a family interest in parliament. The rest must be credited to Mornington's persistent
applications for office, involving as they did such presumption on the friendship of fellow Pittites that perhaps they were not unhappy to see him depart for India in 1797.

Between 1787 and 1796 Mornington was forced to endure the financial distress of a large number of elections: for Saltash in 1787, where he was soon turned out on petition; at Windsor in 1789 and in 1790; at Windsor again in 1794 after his appointment to the board of control; at the general election of 1796. In 1790 as well he brought in his brother William for East Looe in Cornwall. He promised to purchase a seat for himself if he failed at Windsor, despite Buckingham's offer to find him a berth in his interest. In 1796 this was likely to be the case, or rather he was in danger of being barred from standing in the Treasury interest there. The reason was the King, who by 1794 was complaining loudly to Pitt of Mornington's "total want of attention" to his constituents at Windsor. Mornington reciprocated: nothing would be more pleasant, he declared, "than to be relieved from my connection with the worthy electors of that loyal borough." And he was relieved.

120 Brashares, "Wellesley," p. 45.
121 Aspinall, Later Correspondence, II, 406-407; Butler, Eldest, p. 81.
122 Mornington to Pitt, 4 October 1795, PRO, Chatham MSS, 4 October 1795, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, II, 407.
Once more Mornington was fortunate to be intimate with the Grenville interest. For years the Pitt family had controlled the quintessential pocket borough of Old Sarum; William Pitt the elder had begun his public career as its representative in 1735. In 1796 control was vested in the second Lord Camelford, Pitt's first cousin once removed and Lord Grenville's brother-in-law as well. Camelford was a wretched, violently conservative, partly insane naval officer. The franchise was vested in a manageable group: two clergymen, three farmers; and the patron's bailiff. While Camelford was at sea the borough was controlled by his mother, Lady Camelford, who admired Grenville and hated Pitt. She accepted Mornington on Grenville's recommendation and reminded Mornington that he owed nothing to Pitt. It is unlikely that Pitt was much hurt by this effort to destroy him and Mornington was the happy beneficiary of the old lady's clumsy anger. Mornington represented Old Sarum from 30 May 1796 until he received his British peerage late the following year.

Representing so delightful a pocket borough would have

123Torrens, Marquess, p. 121.

124Anne Camelford to Mornington, 15 May 1796, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37308, ff. 28-29.
been of immense value if the greater good fortune of India had not intervened. Securing this required harder work. The first promotion, access to the privy council, seems to have come with a minimum of fuss. Mornington could take some comfort in the fact that the number of Irishmen so honoured was small indeed: Foster, Beresford, and John Parnell were among them. Later Pitt was to celebrate Castlereagh's decision to "stimulate [his] exertions" in England by appointing him to the English privy council and he would be, along with Mornington, one of only five Irishmen on the council in 1798. In later, sadder years Mornington would attempt to make use of his position to gain direct access to King George IV after he had lost his cabinet rank.

By early 1794 Mornington was showing evidence of that air of melancholy which normally preceded an assault on those who had places to give. In May Mornington wrote to Henry Addington, a confidant over the preceding year and more, that he feared Pitt had no plans to alter his situation that year. He was "mortified" but confessed in a rare moment of humility that perhaps others deserved preference. "I have serious

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125 King to Pitt, 21 June 1793, printed in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, II, 53.
thoughts of relinquishing the whole pursuit [of office]," he concluded, "and becoming a spectator . . . but I cannot bear to creep on in my present position." He hastened to add that he would not abandon the war or "Pitt's interest and honour."127

Mornington's intuition served him well. In the early summer Pitt effected a coalition with the Duke of Portland and his pro-war Whigs. This led to a new distribution of the principal offices. Mornington was not included. In late July, however, Pitt sent for Mornington and assured him that "in settling this treaty [with Portland] he had positively stipulated that I should have the next office . . . which should become vacant." Portland had agreed that this was "but reasonable." Mornington was partially mollified but he remained pessimistic.128 A month later David Murray, second Earl of Mansfield and president of the council, died. Mornington rushed to remind Pitt of his availability. Mornington wanted to go to the Lords but could not afford to be so explicit with Pitt.129 It was just as well; Pitt nominated his brother Chatham. Mornington could not hide his


128 Pellew, Sidmouth, I, 123; Mornington to Addington, 27 July 1794, Torrens, Marquess, p. 110.

129 Pellew, Sidmouth, I, 173.
disappointment; it was a rerun of his correspondence of 1783-86. Mornington proclaimed the impossibility of remaining in his current situation and Addington agreed: "You want a wider sphere; you are dying of the cramp."\textsuperscript{130}

Since 28 June 1793 Mornington had been a commissioner of the board of control of the East India company. Pitt's India act of 1784 had decreed that six privy councillors be vested with the control and superintendence over all civil, military and revenue officers of the East India company. The directors were obliged to lay before the board all papers relevant to the company's administration in the east and to obey all orders issued by the commissioners regarding government and revenues. The commissioners were obliged to return copies of all papers received from the directors within fourteen days or state reasons for disapproving them. The commissioners conducted their business in a half dozen meetings in London each year.\textsuperscript{131}

In 1793 Henry Dundas was president of the board of control. It was one of three responsibilities entrusted to him. He had already served as Home secretary (1791-1793) and in 1794 was to take on the newly created post of secretary of state for

\textsuperscript{130}Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 21; Torrens, Marquess, p. 100; Roberts, India, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{131}Pearce, Memoirs, I, 56-59.
Dundas' interlocking responsibilities permitted him to superintend the global war. He did not, however, see fit to share any of the burden of Indian affairs with his colleagues on the board of control. Two themes would therefore govern Mornington's role on that board: frustration at being deprived of access to substantive power; and an avid interest in furthering his knowledge of Indian affairs. The board was also to be Mornington's steppingstone to Calcutta and we may suspend further discussion of it until Pitt invited him to become custodian of British interests in the east.

By the end of 1795 Mornington was once more toying with the idea of giving in to opposition. He cannot have been too serious about it but he did confide to Sir Chichester Fortescue through Arthur that if he should do so Fortescue's position would not be affected. 132 So he was giving it some thought. He entered a couple of bids for a peerage, using Addington's good offices. The appeals were ignored. 133 His petitions were far from humble in tone: "his display of temperament in place hunting before he went to India," as one observer has noted, "calls into question the common opinion that it was holding sway there that disabled him


133 Mornington to Addington, 4 September 1796, printed in Torrens, Marquess, p. 118.
from the democracy of the cabinet. But by 1797 the strident tone of Mornington's supplications betrayed something more than an overweening ambition. His debts had reached dangerous proportions; even after dismantling almost all of the Irish estate he possessed by 1797 virtually nothing; the will which he executed prior to his departure for Calcutta certainly confirms this. More importantly, Mornington was in danger of being outdistanced by his contemporaries. He had failed to develop an ability to sway the house of Commons with great speeches. He had become an armchair specialist on war and diplomacy and had contributed some useful ideas to Pitt on these subjects. But too much time had also been spent currying Pitt's favour by writing heroic stanzas on British naval victories for Pitt's amusement in his holidays at Walmer castle. Mornington had pressed so hard upon his friendship with Grenville that ties were beginning to wear thin. Mornington was no longer willing to play the role of servant to Pitt and to the Grenvilles as he had volunteered to do fifteen years earlier. His rule in India was to constitute a veritable explosion of energy, initiative,


and movement on all fronts. From this perspective the frustration of his role in Britain must have been unbearable.

There was also the question of Mornington's prospects on the domestic scene. By 1797 Pitt had been the King's first minister for some thirteen years, the longest term since Walpole. His most talented assistants, nonetheless, were still extraordinarily young; indeed, because Pitt handled virtually all of the burden of the house of Commons alone for the first decade the young men who surfaced in the 1790s were likely to enjoy long parliamentary careers before they tired. Mornington was only one of these aspirants and he was not in the front rank. In 1797 Mornington was approaching ministerial office; Pitt told Canning that he planned to put him at the Admiralty if a vacancy appeared soon. But he apparently also told Canning to expect for himself an early elevation to the cabinet, a promotion which would have injured Mornington deeply. But Canning was an effective and reliable parliamentary debater, someone whose talents Pitt needed in the house of Commons. Mornington was not, and his prospects in the Commons were limited as long as Pitt was convinced that Mornington took so long to prepare a

speech as to earn the reputation as "the animal of the longest gestation in the world." Mornington's greatness was not to be ratified by a career in the British house of Commons.

If his talents did not suit him to the house of Commons there seemed little reason to endure the heavy and frequent expenses of a parliamentary contest or to rely on Pitt to provide a safe seat so Mornington could avoid this. Mornington was keen to receive a British peerage. The King was peculiarly sensitive to the widespread view that the nation was burdened with too many nobles and his stinginess on this score had the effect of limiting promotions to those who had performed an exceptional service or who had substantial powers to obstruct the will of the ministry if they were so inclined. There was no room for spectacular achievement as a member of the board of control, which under the superintendence of Dundas met infrequently and for the most part gave formal sanction to decisions already made elsewhere. Worse yet by 1797 Ireland was in the throes of rebellion and as an inner member of Pitt's circle Mornington could not have been ignorant of Pitt's determination to proceed with plans for a union of the


legislatures of the two kingdoms. He could not have known, but as an Irishman he might have suspected, that the great Irish interests whose support had to be gained for this project would force Pitt to pay dearly for their cooperation. The "union engagements" which resulted from Castlereagh's two rounds of bribes involved a scandalous exercise in peerage creations and other honours. The Wellesley interest in Ireland was not substantial enough to bid for a British peerage in payment for such cooperation and as Pitt's friend he could resist the union only on grounds of real principle.

In Ireland the bright promises of 1782 and 1783 had faded. Pitt had proven to be little better than his predecessors in his sympathy for Ireland; perhaps he was worse because expectations of what he might do had been so much higher. In peace the distraction to imperial unity caused by Ireland's incessant rumbling was bothersome; in wartime this dissatisfaction was potentially calamitous. Mornington had grown alarmed by 1796 as to the state of Irish affairs and he feared that Pitt did not understand how easily Ireland might sink into war. "A revolution in Ireland," he noted in a private letter to Baron Auckland in 1796, "would be the infallible consequence of the landing of even a small French force in that country." 139 In the spring of 1797, as

139 Mornington to William Eden, Baron Auckland, 1796, printed in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 45.
Mornington began serious negotiations for India, Ulster was in almost open revolt and the government there was obliged to take strong countervailing measures. The remainder of the year was dominated by news that Napoleon was busy preparing "the army of England." Before Mornington reached India a plan had been drawn up to seize Dublin castle and the city had been placed under martial law.\(^{140}\)

Mornington was perhaps not unhappy to leave to William the unenviable task of salvaging what he could from the family's reduced stakes in Ireland. Safe in India, or at any rate safely away from the Irish scene, Mornington urged the ministry to pursue the same vigorous and decisive policies he was adopting in India.\(^{141}\) For Wellesley Pole the matter was not so simple. He alone had maintained close ties to Ireland and he alone of all the Wellesleys remained a substantial landed proprietor by virtue of his Ballyfin estates. He disagreed with Mornington at almost every turn on how Ireland should be handled; he was especially adamant in his opposition to Castlereagh's drive for a legislative union, although in the end he cast Trim's vote in its favour as Mornington wished. His letter to Mornington reviewing the

\(^{140}\) Auckland to Mornington, 22 April 1798, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, quoted in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 55-56.

\(^{141}\) Mornington to Auckland, 19 November 1798, printed in William Eden, First Baron Auckland, Journal and Correspondence (4 vols.; London, 1861-1862), IV, 68-70.
state of affairs after the act of union had been defeated in 1799 reflects a hardening of William's attitudes, a heightened maturity and perhaps a sense of political sophistication which Mornington had once thought lacking in him. Perhaps also it can serve as a melancholy summary of the Ireland in which Mornington had launched his career and which he now took leave of for a quarter century:

It is out of my power to describe what I think of the state of Ireland. In a former letter I gave you shortly my opinion about the union both as to the measure itself and the manner in which it was likely to be received. I did not imagine it would have been prepared after the temper of the Irish had been shown upon it, but I believe Mr. Pitt was deceived as to the numbers in parliament by Lord Castlereagh. Ministry here talked openly of carrying the measure in the Irish house of Commons by a majority of fifty at least on the very day the account came of their defeat; and so little did Lord Castlereagh know of the temper of the house, that after the debate had lasted twenty hours, and he was walking out to divide, he clapped W. Skeffington on the shoulder (he thought Skeffington would vote with him) and said he should carry the division by forty-five. The measure now sleeps in Ireland, but the ministry here are so strongly prejudiced in favour of it that I believe they will dissolve the parliament, and try it again the next session. The ferment caused by the agitation of the measure in Ireland, added to the strange misconduct of Lord Cornwallis' government, has brought the country into the most deplorable state. The rebels have been secretly working during the whole winter; all Ireland is more full of concealed arms than ever and most of the counties in a complete state of organisation. The ruffians who are in jail under the treaty which Lord Cornwallis entered into with them have been allowed all kinds of access to each other, and it is believed that regular committees, etc. etc., have been constantly

held in Kilmainham jail. At length Lord Cornwallis has seen the situation to which his lenity has reduced the country, and an act is now passed which grants him as much power as ever Nero possessed. ... A more severe censure could not be passed upon Lord Cornwallis' measures than this very bill, and I hope it will open Mr. Pitt's eyes; and I am also sure that it is a strong additional argument against a union of the legislatures, for I would ask any candid man whether he thinks it possible for a united parliament, sitting in Westminster, to have borne the idea of passing an act empowering the Lord Lieutenant for the time being to put all Ireland under martial law at his pleasure. They never could do it, for this plain reason, that they are too remote from the danger to feel the necessity of so desperate a remedy. ... Lord Cornwallis, that he might leave no means untried to induce the rebels to continue their preparations, has issued a public order . . . desiring all his generals to call all commanding officers to their regiments, as it is now certain the French are fitting out a larger force than ever against Ireland. Here the rebels have the authority of the castle for believing their friends the French are coming and, accordingly, they will use every exertion to be ready to receive them. I could tell you a thousand stories of the impolitic and cruelly lenient measures of Lord Cornwallis but I forbear. ... 143

Mornington continued to support Pitt's policies for Ireland. 144 The union was carried; Trim was abolished by way of compensation of £15,000, which Wellesley Pole obediently applied to Mornington's debts. Wellesley Pole himself became M.P. for Queen's county in the new united parliament and surrendered his pocket borough in Cornwall.

Ireland went to India as a burden on Mornington's mind.

143 Wellesley Pole to Mornington, 14 March 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 206.

144 Sylvester Douglas to Mornington, 29 July 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 245.
Within eighteen months Richard Colley Wellesley was a marquess and except for the fact that his title lay in the Irish peerage, he had broken the last traces of his Irish connections and interests. A decade later, when he identified himself with Catholic emancipation, he based his convictions on universalised principles rather than on his Irish background. His Irish interests were not cultivated again until he returned as Lord Lieutenant a decade after that. For six years he was almost totally consumed by Indian affairs. His interest in events in Britain was almost entirely related to the conduct of the war. But for Wellesley Pole he had virtually no direct influence in parliament. His earliest observation, that one reached high office by virtue of a career at Westminster, had been tried. His success, nonetheless, was attributable more to his connections than to his performance. He would return as a peer of high rank. His debts would be extinguished and funds would be available for renewal of the family's influence in parliament. By virtue of their careers his brothers would be solvent and esteemed. He would start on a level higher than he had stopped in 1797. Or under happier conditions Wellesley might have remained in India almost indefinitely.
CHAPTER VII

WELLESLEY IN INDIA:

RELATIONS WITH CROWN AND COMPANY
I. Wellesley's Indian Years

In Historical Perspective

Wellesley as viceroy of India has been examined in some detail by several historians. This analysis assesses the impact of India on Wellesley's career in Britain; any attempt to recount the Indian years in detail would require a work of several large volumes. Here it is sufficient to bridge the gap between his role as a politician of modest achievements in Britain and Ireland prior to 1798 and his bid for preeminence in British politics after 1805. Much of what happened during his Indian years is related to Wellesley's subsequent public career. But much of it has already been studied in great detail, and reference to these sources and to the observations contained therein will supply the want of an exhaustive new analysis. Perhaps, as this observer believes, India did constitute for Wellesley a career apart. Possibly too much has been made of the alleged irreparable "sultanisation" of his character, values and personality. Wellesley himself rarely referred to India after the impeachment controversy waned. He seldom drew comparisons between his Indian policies and his remedies for British and Irish ailments. Only late in life, and even then with an eye towards a dukedom, did he relive his India years.

Historians have tended to treat Wellesley almost exclusively
as an Indian phenomenon. For many the contrast between his enormous accomplishments in South Asia and what they perceive to have been his mediocre role in domestic politics has been easily accounted for by holding that the temptation to play autocrat in India subsequently disqualified him for service in the more collegiate atmosphere of British politics. Torrens' imaginative reconstruction of Wellesley's return to an England indifferent to his conquests and achievements still permeates most historical presentations. The little Marquess, terror of India, came home to suffer the vexations posed by those eager to impeach him and the even more galling realisation that his achievements counted for little in the eyes of his countrymen. Wellesley sulked and suffered when he might have seized the initiative, and as a result his Indian years became the capstone of his public career rather than the steppingstone to further glory.

How impressive were Wellesley's Indian achievements? Many of his contemporaries accorded them a modest renown after discounting the evil effects of his highhanded methods. Others, as Henry Wellesley noted in his diary, never could bring themselves to appreciate the vastness and wealth of the subcontinent, or the difficulties of governing it. But there were many who applied themselves to studying a map of India and who were thereby forced to concede that at a minimum Wellesley had dramatically
extended British territorial power in India. Wellesley had his enthusiastic supporters; most of them had been his protégés, and in the eyes of many observers their unreserved acclamations smacked of self-serving attempts to enhance their own reputations. Thus did the greatest and most articulate of Wellesley’s subordinates claim that

his great mind pervaded the whole; and a portion of his spirit was infused into every agent whom he employed: his authority was as fully recognised in the remotest parts of India as in Fort William: all sought his praise; all dreaded his censure.

Wellesley gave to his subordinates the "plentitude of power" and to that "liberal confidence which gave them all the impression of the fullest power" is their success to be ascribed.¹ In praising Wellesley John Malcolm heaped praise on himself, and most of Wellesley’s contemporaries chose to interpret this as a stratagem deliberately conceived.

At the end of Wellesley’s long life the tide of opinion turned in his favour. A decision to publish voluminous Indian despatches invited critics to celebrate Wellesley’s mastery of the verbal arts even if they lamented his priorities. Wellesley’s most vociferous critics, moreover, were by then all safely buried, and deletions here and there in the published version of his papers served to strengthen Wellesley’s case. At any rate after 1830 the

¹John Malcolm, Sketch of the Political History of India from 1784 to 1823 (2 vols.; London: J. Murray, 1826), I, 331-32.
public waxed increasingly enthusiastic about India; empires no longer invited apologies and protestations that they were all a great mistake faded away. Those who had been ambivalent now tendered support; those who had been hostile became ambivalent. Thomas Babington Macaulay, whose relatives and friends included many of the old anti-imperialists, came away from a visit to Wellesley just prior to setting out for India himself betraying a grudging admiration for the old man: "he has made a great and splendid figure in history, and his weaknesses, though they make his character less worthy of respect," Macaulay added, "make it more interesting as a study...."  

Until our own age distaste for Wellesley's tactics leavened enthusiasm for his accomplishments. Historians of today, perhaps reflecting the prejudices of the environment in which they write, seem more content to measure Wellesley's achievement for the success it was. When Lord Curzon wrote shortly after World War I he was still bothered by the problem of reconciling Wellesley's "noble conceptions and petty conceits." Curzon was taxed to find in "the gallery of British celebrities a man upon whose character and achievements more opposite verdicts have been passed, or

 whose character more fairly justifies such a clash of opinion."
He concluded, somewhat apologetically, that on balance his
Indian career was "decidedly in his favour." 3

Subsequent evaluations have often included Curzon's approbation
and have regularly ignored his pained efforts to treat
Wellesley's alleged weakness of character. The first casualty
was the Duke of Wellington, whose vaunted reputation after Water-
loo had inevitably translated itself into the thesis that he
and not his eldest brother had shaped British India. 4 Beginning in
the 1890s, however, historians who examined closely the Indian
record felt obliged to conclude that Wellesley was very much in
command. 5 This did not always rebound to Wellesley's credit, es-
pecially in the eyes of some modern Indian historians. 6 But it did
mean that by the 1930s even Wellington's enthusiasts had con-
ceded Wellesley's preeminence. Once Wellesley had been "nearly,
though not quite, in the first rank of those who have governed
the Indian empire." 7 Now he was elevated to the first rank. "In

3George M. Curzon, Marquis Curzon, British Government in India
6Anil Chandra Banerjee, The Eastern Frontier of British India,
7Curzon, British Government, I, 181.
respect to material additions . . . , in military renown," Roberts concluded, "and in its lasting effects upon the whole conception of empire in the east," Wellesley's tenure "was the greatest of all British administrations in India." He superintended the "most important and critical stage in building up our Indian dominion," wrote Lyall in his acute analysis of India. Wellesley's achievements, Lyall added, could be compared with the conquests of Napoleon and lasted much longer.

His contributions to the defeat of the French were considerable, and in his "alertness of mind" he fashioned an autonomous and highly effective foreign policy in Asia. Wellesley's personality, the author of so many calamities in his career in Britain and Ireland, was soon advanced as a partial explanation for his successes in the east. His "consuming arrogance" was matched only by Dalhousie and Curzon; he was unabashedly supercilious and self-opinionated. But this "brilliant and ardent temperament" incorporated an unlimited

capacity for work." 13 These factors justified the verdict that Wellesley was "an administrator and ruler of wonderful achievement and glorious capacity." 14 Roberts, who studied Wellesley's Indian years in the greatest detail, concluded that his fame seemed "to rise triumphant above the deadening contact with detail, circumstance, and environment" because he more than anyone else "knew the motive-springs of his own soul and fashioned his own purpose." 15 As his disciple John Malcolm wrote long ago, Wellesley's achievements were "calculated to excite astonishment." 16 This astonishment, ironically, is more apparent in the estimates contributed by modern observers than in those of Wellesley's own contemporaries. And in the act of forgiving Wellesley his pettiness, irritability, vanity and arrogance, these observers have tended to hold that in the context of India these were really virtues. He practiced the arts of "realpolitik"; to a generation which condemns only what does not work, Wellesley stands forth as a hero. 17

13 V. B. Kulkarni, British Statesmen in India (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 70.
14 Ibid.
15 Roberts, India, p. 308.
II. The East India Company in British Politics
Before 1800

Wellesley would not have been surprised to read modern estimates of his genius. His campaign to secure a position of responsibility was married to perfect self-confidence. Until late 1796, however, it was far from certain that Pitt would see his way clear to provide Wellesley an office equal in reputation to the petitioner's demands. Prior to this point Pitt was not convinced of the wisdom of entrusting substantial power to the future Marquess. There was certainly a good argument for not sending Wellesley to India, and Pitt's decision to do so stands as a monument to his ability to place young men in positions of extraordinary power in such a way as to exploit the potential of both. Wellesley, as we shall now title him in anticipation of his later elevation in the Irish peerage, was nominated governor-general in 1797. This closed a critical chapter in the development of the British Raj in the east. The chapter opened in 1784. The impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in 1780 exposed the long-standing anomaly of sustaining Britain's role in India by treating it solely as a commercial enterprise. Well before 1780 the East India company had ceased to consist primarily of traders and their trading entrepots (called factories) clustered near convenient maritime ports. In the eighteenth century Moghul India lay exposed: great achievements in art and architecture continued to impress themselves upon the sub-continent; commerce bore witness to the
The region's economic vitality; there were even impressive political achievements. But the system invited European intervention. Princes' territorial jurisdictions were ill-defined, and the hierarchy of feudal relationships which nominally sustained the Moghul imperium had ceased to reflect realities in the distribution of power.

Even so, India's indigenous system might well have continued had not the greatest European powers, Britain and France, advanced their own reasons for intervening in Indian affairs. Certainly the venality of many of India's rulers invited European officials to violate their trading companies' prohibitions on political and para-political activity in India. Impoverished company officials made immense fortunes by converting company resources to loans at usurious rates of interest. All this distressed the Indian princes and deranged trading companies' commercial enterprises while it enriched the officials involved. It also impelled those Europeans entrusted with the responsibility for defending the companies' rights to support military intervention in order to protect their investments. More important, however, was Anglo-French rivalry. During the American revolution Britain was forced to abandon its initiative in India to employees of the East India

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18 Ainslee Embree, Lecture delivered at the Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, Washington D.C., 10 August 1972. Dr. Embree lectures in South Asian history at Columbia University, New York.
company. The company's privileges were exposed to French intrusions. The company responded by diverting revenues to military objectives, expanding its territorial jurisdiction, and assuming a vital role in the conduct of India's internal affairs.

The idea of the company as a territorial power began here and not with Wellesley, a fact which officials of the company sometimes tended to forget when they attacked Wellesley for his territorial acquisitions. After Clive's victory at Plassy in 1757, by which Bengal was acquired, the company began to see that great profits could be made from these conquests. Employees for their part found new opportunities for private plunder, and they were not even mildly disciplined until a regulating act was passed by parliament in 1773. The company itself saw great potential in using profits from territorial revenues instead of bullion shipments as a way to purchase Indian goods for sale in Europe. The Indian empire thus became a servant to the commerce of the company. Wellesley was to advertise the logical extension of that principle: more territories would mean more revenue and more security for the territories already controlled.

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19 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 13.


Hastings' trial awakened Britain to an awareness of two factors: the fate of the East India company was identified with the revitalisation of India's indigenous political institutions; only strong centralised government under British aegis could curb European commercial avarice, eliminate political corruption, and effect certain humanitarian reforms. In 1782 Charles Fox advanced a plan of reform based on the supremacy of the British parliament, rather than the company or the crown, in Indian affairs: "an omnipotent parliament would itself control executive actions overseas." But Fox also wanted continuity of policy, and only the crown could guarantee that. The Foxites were swept from power before their leader's plan could be enacted.

It was Pitt who was destined to fashion a new basis for British rule in India, and to establish the parameters for Wellesley's efforts. Like Fox, Pitt recognised the need for permanent, regular, and systematic control over Indian affairs based on statute, and centered at home. But he wanted ultimate control vested in the cabinet, working through a board of control analogous to a third secretary of state but constructed as a commission. He also wanted a strong executive in India. Unlike Fox, he could not envision any system surviving in India without a powerful local

\[22\] Ibid., pp. 139-43.
superintending agency. These principles were incorporated into the India act of 1784, but in an attenuated form. Pitt's goal of a "strong government in India, subject to the check and control of a still stronger government at home," was fatally weakened in the process of securing the acquiescence of the East India company.²³ The company's pretensions and ancient rights could not be ignored; the importance of Indian commerce was enhanced by virtue of the loss of the American colonies. Pitt was therefore induced to concede to the company jurisdiction over commercial matters. The effect was to circumscribe government efforts to devote proceeds from economic activities to the defence of existing possessions and to the acquisition of new territories. And it encouraged a fatal bifurcation of British policy objectives which would tempt Wellesley to exceed his mandate and prompt the company to demand his recall.

For a generation parliament was fundamentally satisfied with the Indian settlement. Spasms of interest, such as the Wellesley impeachment debates, occasionally surfaced in parliament. For the most part, however, "India was a kind of 'dinner bell' which cleared the house of Commons."²⁴ Pitt too was satis-


fied. Unlike previous efforts to regulate Indian affairs, the act of 1784 did not break down. The powers of the governor-general had been permanently enhanced and were strengthened further by amending legislation passed in 1786. The council in Bengal and the presidencies of Bombay and Madras were made more clearly subordinate to the chief executive. Pitt's primary objective in all this was to preserve the British constitution from the threat of corruption by Indian conditions. This had been secured. Prospects were bright for the spread of "good government" and for the triumph of humanitarian reforms.25

But problems institutional and individual remained. The 1784 act's delineation of authority for Indian affairs proved cumbersome and invited flanking movements by the government and the company alike. There were in the first place six commissioners for Indian affairs, known as the board of control. The board enjoyed access to all company correspondence, and no instructions other than purely commercial ones could be despatched without its approval. The company's proprietors no longer could annul decisions of their twenty-four directors, and even the board of control through its secret committee could issue orders which the directors could not cancel. The company retained control over patronage and dedicated itself to guarding this right.

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very jealously. It could also appoint and dismiss company servants, but in practice normally deferred to the wishes of the board of control in the case of senior officials. The directors never relinquished their right to recall the governor-general, however.

In 1793 Britain began to wage war on France in India and elsewhere. In the east it attempted to fashion a policy amenable to the company and sufficient to maintain British power. From 1785 to 1792 the post of governor general was filled by Charles, Earl Cornwallis. The vanquished hero of Yorktown enjoyed the trust of the company and Whitehall alike. His approach was frankly imperialistic; he thought little of India's indigenous institutions and was convinced that the imposition of British practices would prove to be a boon to India. His land reform program attempted to reproduce England's improving landlord class whose loyalty to Britain would be reinforced by the extension of landlords' rights against those of the peasantry. The unfortunate result was the increased exploitation of the peasant population by the new landlords, whose traditional role as tax-collectors ill-suited them to serve as the nucleus of an improving rural class. Cornwallis' legal reforms, on the other

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26 Ibid., p. 44.

hand, were beneficial. They introduced English legal precepts to India, not without violence to traditional instruments of social control. This was, moreover, merely a continuation of Warren Hastings' reforms, for which he had been exoriated and impeached. It mattered much that the highly respected Cornwallis should preside in his place. 28 Standards of conduct among company servants rose and in England Pitt could praise the efficacy of the act of 1784. 29

But this was peacetime. Cornwallis was persuaded to remain in India until 1792 but no longer. His successor and Wellesley's predecessor was John Shore, later styled Lord Teignemouth. Shore went to India in 1768 as a writer in the East India company and by dint of industry and ability rose to be a member of the supreme council of Bengal in 1787. Shore inherited a viceroyalty which even in perfect peace demanded vigorous supervision. British territories in India were scattered and weakly defended. Madras and Bombay fashioned policies which often clashed with those of Calcutta. 30 France possessed enclaves in India which could serve as bases for inciting Indian princes to challenge British control.

28 Ibid., p. 65; Ingram, Two Views, p. 2.


30 Ingram, Two Views, p. 2.
The company's principal concern - profits - was inevitably diminished as military expenses increased. The times called for decisive action; Shore was conciliatory by nature and preferred to temporise. Cornwallis had pressured certain Indian princes into recognising an ambiguous British influence in their territories. This had been achieved without bloodshed or inordinate expense, and the company therefore waxed enthusiastic.\textsuperscript{31}

After 1792 this policy of expansion on the cheap proved impossible. The French were prepared to supply officers and equipment to those indigenous leaders who resented British pretensions.\textsuperscript{32} Shore's response was to abandon the forward lines, discourage increases in military expenses, and pursue a program of modest but well-intentioned humanitarian reform. Such caution generated no enthusiasm at home. The company's directors were dismayed to discover that their revenues were falling because war interrupted trade. Pitt became persuaded that every concession made by Shore to the susceptibilities of the Indian princes became an advantage to the French.\textsuperscript{33} Britain's principal Indian allies lost confidence in their protector.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31}Kulkarni, \textit{British}, p. 67.


\textsuperscript{33}Roberts, \textit{India}, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{34}Malleson, \textit{Wellesley}, pp. 22-24.
By 1797, at age forty-six, Shore was worn out and eager to resign. In March the following year he drifted out of the governor generalship as listlessly as he had drifted in.\footnote{Thompson and Garratt, \textit{British}, p. 185.} He took his place in the history of British India, "crouched forever at his desk with the towering figures of Cornwallis and Wellesley on either side."\footnote{Denys Forrest, \textit{Tiger of Mysore: the Life and Death of Tipu Sultan} (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 239.}

But Shore's desire to abandon India did not make ready the advent of Wellesley. Others placed their considerable pretensions before Pitt. One of these, Lord Robert Hobart, held the governorship of Madras with what he understood to be the right of first refusal at Calcutta. The first of Wellesley's many triumphs in India was removing Hobart from the contest.

\section*{III. Wellesley's Interest in India}

Wellesley had been studying India from afar for nearly fifteen years before he became viceroy. In part this was an academic exercise, and he betrayed an interest early. On 30 July 1786 he wrote to Grenville detailing the problems involved in tracking down books on Indian history and begging his friend to help him find books in London. Within the subject area his tastes were eclectic: the Moghuls; the rise of the...
British; general counts of European settlement in the east. 37 He must have continued his program of self-education, for his speeches on India, delivered in parliament between 1793 and 1797, constantly alluded to conditions in the east. He also profited immensely from his acquaintance with Cornwallis when that aging pillar of the nation returned to England in 1793. 38 And in the last year of his residence in England Wellesley had the advantage of first-hand accounts from his brother Arthur in India. Arthur's letters described in great detail the company's languishing prospects and the incompetence of certain of its personnel. Arthur encouraged his brother to think in terms of a program of dramatic reform, and promised to aid him in a campaign of great public service and private achievement. 39 His papers also include voluminous notes on Indian history and politics. They were written prior to his departure and were burdened with lengthy and perceptive comments on policies and personalities, politics and economics, strategic triumphs and blunders. They betray Wellesley's


intense dissatisfaction with Shore and his marvelously rapid and comprehensive grasp of the written word.

Few men ever assumed the mantle of power in any portion of the empire so well informed as was Wellesley. Few perhaps have shaped such definitive policies prior to a first encounter. Wellesley condemned the act of 1784 which sanctioned divided authority and checks and balances. Divided authority invited chaos and gave comfort to the enemy. Indecisive leadership in India was particularly grievous, because Britain's hold was tenuous. From the first Wellesley was determined to bend the act of 1784 to his purposes, and to secure Britain's position in India by an unexampled display of decisive leadership. The history of India invited this. The Indian princes themselves had bid for power and had failed; it was now Britain's turn.40

Wellesley relied on books to show him the contours of India's economic and cultural landscape and the political verities which had shaped her history. But he was also able to test his ideas at the board of control. As has been seen, he

was appointed to the board in June 1793. He was not faithful in attending its meetings, however. Squabbling over points of procedure, initialling documents, and listening to the petty squabbles of the court of directors bored him. But he read all the substantive despatches. He came to appreciate and detest intensely what the French were doing under the pressure of revolution, and would not have accepted the verdict of modern historians that the French after Plassy constituted a minor threat in India. He studied Shore's policies and judged them supine. He communicated his thoughts only intermittently to his colleagues on the board. Most of the board was sympathetic to the need for more vigorous policies in India, but it had to contend with the court of directors. The court was dominated by merchants with no stomach for war and territorial annexation. Among its members only David Scott, who shared Wellesley's ideas, seems to have been an acquaintance. Instead Wellesley harangued Pitt constantly. He played a significant role in supporting the more vigorous policies of Lord Robert Hobart in Madras, who first urged that Ceylon be wrestled from the Dutch, and who when that was done insisted that it be retained. Wellesley impressed on Grenville

41 Bearce, British Attitudes, pp. 52-53.

the danger of conceding to France any role in the affairs of India. He sided with Hobart against Shore when Shore attempted to countermand orders to an attack on the Dutch. And when Hobart moved to discipline the Nawab of Arcot and Tanjore for having betrayed French sympathies, Wellesley joined Dundas and Grenville in urging Pitt to commend his vigour.

It was unhappy irony for Hobart that his own policies should be vindicated on an expanded scale by the very men who laboured to have him removed. Wellesley liked Hobart's policies but liked office more. His role in engineering Hobart's recall in 1797 is not a particularly attractive one. Perhaps it is best described as one of those apparent historical developments justified by events which followed.

IV. The Bid for Office in India

In October 1796 Pitt informed Wellesley that a major office had been reserved for him. Pitt did not say which office he had chosen, and the evidence suggests that if Pitt indeed had a particular one in mind, it was not related to India. At any rate, Pitt had more important problems to worry about. The first coalition against Napoleon was rapidly unravelling, and when

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43 James Harris, First Earl of Mulgrave, Diaries and Correspondence (4 vols.; London: R. Bentley, 1844), III, 385.
Austria surrendered to Napoleon in April 1797. Britain stood alone against a hostile continent. A mutiny in the navy followed, and Pitt was vilified in the streets. Ireland rose in revolt. Pitt remained unperturbed, the mutiny was quelled, and Napoleon at the critical moment failed to exploit Ireland's discontent. Meanwhile in India Shore had virtually surrendered his office.  

Cornwallis was sworn in for a second term as viceroy on 1 February 1797. Pitt's decision to send Cornwallis reflected his confidence in this aging statesman and soldier. The decision, however, was destined to prompt a storm of protest and to influence dramatically Wellesley's entire career. In the first place Cornwallis at length decided not to sail for India, which reestablished the vacancy at Bengal. In the second place Lord Hobart's pretensions to succeed to the vacancy were denied a second time. The factors which determined that Cornwallis not go to India influenced Wellesley's policies when he at length succeeded Shore. The decision to deny Hobart's claims a second time directly involved Wellesley, who played a not insignificant role in Hobart's misfortune, and whose friendship with the Grenvilles and others suffered as a result.  

The complicated scenario of events was directly related to what Cornwallis chose to do. There was widespread speculation even as Cornwallis was sworn in that he would be sent to Ireland instead. By April Wellesley had reason to believe that Cornwallis

44 Mendis, Advent, p. 161.
would never sail. In July this seemed almost certain. By the middle of August Cornwallis had decided definitely not to proceed to Bengal. The decisive factor was a dispute with the court of directors over patronage and military policies. Cornwallis waxed angry during the spring of 1797 when the company dignified discontent among the armed services in India by negotiating with their representatives in London. This was not the only factor, however. Until the middle of summer Cornwallis' delay in departing was satisfactorily accounted for by a commission from Pitt to investigate the causes of the naval mutiny at Nore. In August, however, the court of directors also refused Cornwallis' request that it finance a larger share of the defence of India by augmenting native levies and thereby releasing some European troops for service elsewhere.

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46 Mornington to unknown correspondent, 5 July 1797, British Museum, Wellesley MSS 37314; Mornington to Sullivan, 3 July 1797, quoted in Torrens, Marquess, pp. 125-27.


It is not clear whether the decision not to go to Bengal was only an expression of Cornwallis' displeasure at the company's policies, although it was the weightiest factor. Pitt may have been determined to deny the company the services of Cornwallis as an expression of his own dissatisfaction. At any rate Cornwallis was subsequently moved to complain that he would have preferred Bengal to Dublin, where he eventually went. Part of this certainly reflected his dismay at the course of events in Dublin by the time he wrote in March 1798. But he also remarked that he had been the victim of pressures which he neither understood nor found very palatable. Perhaps he had become aware of the allegation levelled by William Wellesley Pole that Cornwallis' "criminal leniency" in Ireland had done much to foster rebellion. Perhaps, and more likely, his review of the events of the first six months of 1797 encouraged him to wonder whether Wellesley had not worked on Pitt to keep Cornwallis from setting sail, so as to open the position for himself. In later years Cornwallis became a great opponent of Wellesley's pretensions.

Hobart's fate elicited more forceful and immediate commentary

50 Cornwallis, Correspondence, II, 361.
on the propriety of Wellesley's behaviour. During his tenure as governor of Madras Hobart emphasised his independence from Shore by contrasting the vigor of his policies to Shore's lassitude. Wellesley approved Hobart's initiatives in the annexation of Ceylon, and believed him to be far superior to Shore. The company on the other hand tended to defend its own career employee, even if it betrayed some alarm at the weakened position of the company after the war with France commenced in 1793. Dundas also felt that Hobart must be recalled. Hobart was querulous and short-tempered, and Dundas had come to dislike him thoroughly. It is possible that Dundas was also prompted by a desire to assume the Bengal presidency himself. Dundas betrayed such sentiments in August 1796. Dundas' biographers do not tell us whether he still held these sentiments in 1797, and the published correspondence between Dundas and Wellesley never alludes to it. At any rate, Pitt was very unlikely to let him go. Dundas gradually lost his enthusiasm for Wellesley's vigorous policies in India, but it is unlikely that Wellesley had interposed himself between Dundas and India.

Hobart blamed Dundas for the appointment of Cornwallis in January, and for his own recall. In fact, Wellesley had also

52 Mornington to William Pitt, 19 February 1797, Public Record Office, Chatham MSS, vol. 188, f. 16; Dundas to Scott, 11 March 1797, Home Office, Miscellaneous MSS 81, f. 243.
joined those who advocated a "clear sweep" in India, and in February 1797 he laboured to convince Dundas that Hobart must not be allowed to remain in India in any capacity. But the onus for the initial decision lay on Dundas, and the animosity which eventually turned to efforts to impeach him came from people such as Hobart who felt that he had treated them shabbily. "I accepted the government of Madras," Hobart reminded Dundas when he reached London the following year, "upon the express condition of succeeding to the supreme government." Hobart's sentiments included Wellesley after Wellesley was appointed successor to Cornwallis. They sharpened when reports of Wellesley's brilliant victories over Tipu Sultan reached London, and Hobart soon concluded that Wellesley rather than Dundas had been primarily responsible for Hobart's recall.

Over the next several years Wellesley was to complain frequently of Hobart's conduct. He complained to the Grenvilles that Hobart had inculcated in the company's servants at Madras a

54 Mornington to Pitt, 19 February 1797, PRO, Chatham MSS 118, f. 16; Dundas to David Scott, March 1797, Home Office, Miscellaneous MSS 81, f. 243.


56 Hobart to Dundas, 28 August 1799, Melville MSS, Lot 708, owned by Francis Edwards, quoted in Furber, Dundas, p. 137.
spirit of animosity against him. Hobart became, in Wellesley's words, a "most bitter and implacable enemy whose hatred [was] derived from the consciousness of his own base ingratitude and flagrant injustice towards me." Wellesley later withdrew these accusations, perhaps because Hobart succeeded Castlereagh at the board of control in 1804. It is possible, however, that Hobart's problems contributed significantly to a strain in relations with the Grenvilles. Certainly it became a major consideration of the Marquis of Buckingham.

In January 1797 Buckingham became aware of the plan to deny Bengal to Hobart. Shortly thereafter his colleagues learned that although Cornwallis planned to take the oaths of office there was a good chance that he would not go. Dundas was indiscreet enough to confirm this in February. Buckingham undoubtedly was aware of Wellesley's role in persuading Dundas to recall both Shore and Hobart simultaneously, and he wrote to Wellesley expressing his hope that Hobart might be permitted to

57. Mornington to Hobart, quoted in Fortescue MSS, VI, 337.

58. Buckingham, Courts and Cabinets, II, 367, 373; Buckingham to Mornington, 16 April 1797, British Museum, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 34.

take Calcutta if Cornwallis did not. He also admitted that Hobart's prospects were dim. Nevertheless, it would now prove to be an intolerable insult to Hobart to be denied Bengal when the "emergency" which had warranted the planned speedy departure of Cornwallis from England no longer seemed to exist. 60

Buckingham had intentionally posed a painful dilemma for Wellesley. Wellesley told Buckingham that he could not urge Pitt to place Hobart at Bengal, a post for which he believed Hobart was not qualified. He did promise to suggest to Pitt that Hobart be given a peerage and a handsome pension from the company. In April Wellesley secured Pitt's approval in principle for this. During the months that followed, however, neither the pension nor the peerage materialised.

In early July Buckingham became aware of rumors of Wellesley's candidacy for Bengal. Buckingham well understood now why Wellesley was slow to support Hobart, and conceded that he would do nothing to endanger his own prospects. Buckingham hoped, however, that Wellesley would feel obliged to make it a condition of his appointment the prompt and genuine effort to assuage Hobart's wounds. 61 At this stage Wellesley was un-

60 Buckingham to Mornington, 16 April 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 35.

61 Buckingham to Mornington, 7 July 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 48.
willing to injure his own chances by any initiatives whatsoever. He apparently failed to satisfy Buckingham, who wrote again on 18 July, this time in some agitation, to tell Wellesley that he would press Hobart's claims through other channels inasmuch as Wellesley would not act on his behalf. Buckingham's labours finally bore fruit: Hobart obtained his peerage and pension. But well before all this Wellesley had set said for Bengal.

How did Wellesley convert the promise of office at Madras into an immediate appointment to Bengal? The story is not altogether complimentary to Wellesley's reputation. In February 1797 Wellesley was glad enough to accept Madras without any commitment from Pitt for removal to Bengal at a later date. In April when it became clear that Cornwallis might not leave England he requested reversion to Bengal. His proposal was audacious and even threatening. He informed Dundas and Pitt that he would no longer take Madras if Hobart received Calcutta, and indeed would probably refuse to leave London if anyone but Cornwallis went to Bengal. Wellesley certainly had no reason for wanting Cornwallis at Bengal. He had already seen fit to hint that Cornwallis had conceded too much to Britain's foes during


63 Mornington to Buckingham, 20 April 1797, quoted in Torrens, Marquess, pp. 121-22.
his first tenure as viceroy. He hoped of course that he might go in place of the aging hero.

Dundas opposed Wellesley's thinly veiled ultimatum. Pitt was less upset; perhaps he assumed during the spring that Cornwallis would eventually sail. He conceded the right of succession to Wellesley, but both Dundas and Pitt apparently thought that this concession bound them only to acknowledge Wellesley's claims after a stint at Madras. In June Wellesley tended to conclude that he had destroyed his candidacy by demanding too much. But in early July Pitt dropped hints that Wellesley might be sent out. On 3 July Wellesley conveyed to close friends his hopes of going to Bengal. Two days later he thought that the appointment was "probable." A month later Pitt did in fact offer him the supreme office of the Indian empire. Wellesley thus secured a position beyond his most ambitious dreams of earlier years. The cost in terms of friends and supporters, however, was a high one. Hobert's claims had been pushed aside, and Wellesley's part in this was perhaps crucial.

64 Ingrain, Two Views, p. 1.
65 Mornington to Sullivan, 3 July 1797, noted in Torrens, Marquess, pp. 125-27.
Wellesley had also failed to oblige Buckingham on what was the first substantial favour the Grenvilles had requested of their Irish protégé. Indeed, it could be said that Wellesley was now outgrowing his ancient connections.

Wellesley also offended some associates by the high tone he employed to discourage the inevitable demands made upon him to place relatives and friends of members of the ministry in high Indian positions. To Earl Bathurst, whom Wellesley urged to take the post at Madras and who refused, he proclaimed a "point of indispensable necessity to avoid all appointments and engagements until my arrival in India." To his old patron Buckingham he demonstrated considerable audacity and no little insensitivity: he was resolved to take no one except servants and his brother Henry, he told the Marquis, so as to guard against the temptation to make an "irregular" distribution of patronage. It was fortunate for Wellesley that Buckingham had not sought refuge in similar arguments when Wellesley was cast in the role of petitioner. His associates later suspected the new viceroy's motives when he lavished such attention on his

67 Ibid.; Buckingham to Mornington, 7 July 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 48.

68 Mornington to Bathurst, 25 July 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37314, f. 2.

two brothers.

There remained Pitt, and, up to September Wellesley could not be completely certain that he would be instructed to sail for Calcutta rather than for Madras, even though Pitt had promised the post to him. On 26 July his appointment to Madras was gazetted. At this point Dundas urged Bathurst to take Madras, which implied that in his mind Wellesley's promotion had been settled.70 But the final determination lay with the wavering Pitt. At the end of the first week in September Pitt at last gave his unequivocal consent. Wellesley was overjoyed. During the two months that followed, if we may believe Torrens, Wellesley experienced the most pleasant moments of his life. He strolled in the woods with Pitt, who urged the new viceroy to fashion in India an empire grand enough to erase Britain's memories of humiliation in America. This version of events is probably inaccurate. If accurate, Pitt would not have reacted with such unfeigned surprise to subsequent evidence of the new viceroy's grand schemes and highhanded tactics.71

These were sunny days, however. The exhilaration Wellesley felt is betrayed in some vivacious if frivolous verses which he composed at Pitt's request to celebrate the naval victory at


Camperdown, and a Latin poem he composed for the Anti-Jacobin. But Wellesley managed to inject a less happy note by using these last weeks in England to plead once more for an English peerage. He believed that the governor generalship at Calcutta was "the most distinguished situation in the British empire after that of prime minister." As such, it deserved to be matched by an English peerage. There was also the special situation in India, where authority must be visible. These arguments were inherently weak: Wellesley was already an Irish peer, and in India the differences between Irish and English, as Pitt noted later, surely counted for little. The King was unlikely to raise Wellesley to an earldom in the English peerage, so that he would remain Mornington in any case. Pitt at first therefore resisted his petition. He pleaded the difficulty of extracting a peerage from the King prior to a demonstration of the new viceroy's ability in India. Pitt adverted to problems this would occasion for the government in handling Shore and Hobart. But at length Pitt succumbed to Wellesley's petitions. He applied for the peerage for Wellesley and was pleased and surprised to be able to report that the King had responded positively. Mean-

72 Anti-Jacobin, VI (18 December 1797).

73 Mornington to Chichester Fortescue, 5 July 1797, quoted in "Some Letters of the Mornington Family, 1760-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue," County Kildare Archaeological Society Proceedings, XII, 48.
while his appointment as viceroy was gazetted 4 October 1797. He sailed for India a month later with the best wishes of those whom he had managed not to alienate in his effort to seize this "very brilliant situation."

His colleagues were correct in placing this arduous situation in his hands; of this Wellesley entertained no doubts. "May you return," prayed Wilberforce, "with a good conscience, a large stock of honour, and an uninjured stock of health." This Wellesley was determined to do.

V: The Voyage

Wellesley took his oaths as Baron Wellesley on 3 November and sailed from Southampton four days later. He had made elaborate preparations: his legal papers were in perfect order, as the voluminous documentary material in the British Museum and in the Carver papers confirms. He left Hyacinthe in charge of all personal matters, and William with her held a power of attorney. His will was a treasury of clear advice for every contingency; it must have demanded much of his time during the final weeks to prepare it. On the political side he was confident,

74 Mornington to Fortescue, 2 May 1797, quoted in "Some Letters," p. 45.

75 William Wilberforce to Mornington, 9 October 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37805, f. 55.

rather naively so, that his reputation had been enhanced by his conduct during negotiations leading up to his appointment as viceroy. He had "reached every object which can be desirable by honest ambition," accepting that of prime minister (which he did not "despair of obtaining"). He had "the conscientious satisfaction of having honestly, faithfully and diligently discharged the most important duties which can be confided to a British subject." By his "abstinence from jobbing the appointment" of friends and relations he had obtained "the warm approbation and full confidence of the court of directors to such a degree" that he feared only that they might expect more from him that he might "find it practicable to perform." From his friends, including Dundas, "when the business of my appointment ultimately came to a question," Wellesley "received the most zealous support." In arranging his peerage "Pitt showed the warmest interest in my advancement." The King and Cornwallis approved his determination not to carry out a "train of followers" or to fill his hands with "engagements from Europe." He was well satisfied with his own work.

It would be easy enough to accept all this at face value. His patronage commitments, or rather the lack of them, were indeed exemplary, although his "abstinence" on this score, the evidence suggests, angered individuals who made claims and were rebuffed more decisively than it pleased those who took a higher line of conduct. It is rather difficult to substantiate
Wellesley's claim that the board of directors of the company greeted his appointment enthusiastically. To them in theory belonged the right to nominate. In point of fact, however, they were forced to accept whomever the prime minister selected. They would not have approved any resolutions between Pitt and Wellesley to extend the eastern imperium in a vigorous fashion. Perhaps they were suspicious of the new viceroy's motives, for their instructions were certainly heavy on the negative side. We do know for a fact that Wellesley's rendition of the application for a peerage was a highly coloured one. In later years the King was to condemn him for drinking so heavily at the royal patronage font. In all it appears that Wellesley sailed with a light heart and with solid grounds for optimism about his new post. But there were shadows in the background, and Wellesley served himself poorly if he chose to ignore their portents.

The wind which finally (after several false starts) carried Wellesley from England's shores also transports him in some respects beyond the limits of this study. For the next seven years Wellesley carried on a tumultuous correspondence with Hyacinthe; this is examined in great detail with skill and charm by Iris Butler. Wellesley's career as administrator has been thoroughly studied by Roberts and by Philips, and in smaller compass by a dozen historians who have looked at British rule in
India. The evidence is voluminous; there is material sufficient for a dozen studies, each dealing with a facet of Wellesley's Indian years. Here it is enough to advert to those aspects which cast a long shadow over his subsequent career in British and Irish politics.

The most striking feature of Wellesley's voyage to India was the breadth and detail of that region he displayed in despatches prepared at the Cape of Good Hope, and the audacious plans he formulated there for the conduct of Indian affairs. He forever displayed a capacity for quick and almost photographic absorption of the written word, but his record enroute is proof positive that he had been groomed for the post, partly at Pitt's demand, and partly as a result of his own interests. 77 He read while on ship, and he travelled heavy with baggage, much of it books. To such a degree was his frigate encumbered, reported a London paper, "that should a rencontre of an enemy make it necessary to prepare for action Lord Mornington would inevitably suffer from clearance in the course of five minutes a loss of at least £2000." 78 A good portion of this would have been his voluminous notes and his many books on India. He was fortunate in all respects: the voyage to Madeira was rough but safe, and


after eight days there he began a passage to the Cape. Henry Wellesley and his brother complained privately of the conduct of each other. Wellesley wrote home that Henry was sick and idle; Henry in later years allegedly confided in his son that Wellesley was so "ill and nervous" that he was determined to return home, and was dissuaded by only "the most urgent entreaties."  

This story smells of gross exaggeration. If true, it merely adds one more dimension to the impact of Colonel William Kirkpatrick, whom Wellesley met for the first time at the Cape. Nothing underscores more dramatically the new viceroy's lifelong ability to measure the worth of a man's counsel in a brief encounter. Kirkpatrick had served as a confidential advisor to Cornwallis and Shore. Wellesley was probably aware of him by reputation but there is no evidence that their encounter at the Cape was other than fortuitous. Kirkpatrick was there simply to recover his health. Wellesley had time on his hands while his ship was refitted for the remainder of the voyage. Kirkpatrick impressed Wellesley with his intimate familiarity with India. His expertise was based firmly on experience. He was born in the east, rose through the officer ranks in the Indian

79 Mornington to William, Baron Grenville, 28 November 1797, Fortescue MSS, III, 40; Butler, Eldest, pp. 100-101.

army, and served as Persian interpreter during British diplomatic initiatives from 1777 to 1785, and again in 1790 and 1791. He resided at Gwalior, Scindia's court, and directed the first British mission to Katmandu. Cornwallis praised him: "no one could have acquitted himself with more ability, prudence, and circumspection." From 1795 to 1797 he was accredited as British resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, and here he mastered the intricate politics of the southern Indian region. He retreated to the Cape in 1797; perhaps word of his availability reached London before Wellesley sailed. In any event Wellesley prevailed upon Kirkpatrick to return to India. He served as military secretary to the governor general during the Mysore campaigns, and then as acting private secretary until 1801, when ill-health forced him to return to Britain.

At the Cape Wellesley also intercepted despatches destined for London, and received from Hobart additional timely information on French intentions in Mysore. Thereupon Wellesley wrote to Dundas two long despatches which set out what was to become

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81 Cornwallis, Correspondence, II, 570.
the basis of his Indian policy. Little of what transpired over the next six years is not prefigure in these massive documents: Wellesley wrote the Indian chapter of his public career before his first visit. It stands as a remarkable and thoroughly convincing monument to his capacity for conceptualisation, mastery of detail, unbounded self-confidence, unabashed dedication to British imperial expansion, and deep hatred of revolutionary France.

Wellesley's principal observations were these: conditions in India admitted of no division of power in the British settlements; India was not suited to deliberative government, and only vigor and force, advertised by an unapologetic display of the trappings of power, would suffice; French designs were clear, and that nation had advanced far in preparations to excite Tipu Sultan in Mysore and the Marathas farther north to attack and possible to destroy the British; Britain should encourage the adhesion of allies by sustaining forces sufficient to protect them, by demanding that they equip and permit British advisors to train indigenous troops, and by protecting their ruling houses; Britain should retain Dutch possessions deemed vital to the security of British India, such as the Cape settlements and Ceylon, and should deny any other European power substantial influence on any periphery of India; the East India Company should encourage a spirit of reform in India beyond the minimum heretofore called for by the Dutch.
need to promote trade and commerce.

If Wellesley thought for a moment about returning home, all this was quickly put aside. By the time he set sail from the Cape on 10 March, he had fashioned a complete if yet general philosophy appropriate to a "tutelary deity." He had also put in motion a grand strategy which would greatly expand British power in the sub-continent and insure Britain's unchallenged supremacy there for more than a century. In the short space of half a decade Wellesley would secure the alliance of the Nizam of Hyderabad and dismiss his French advisors; defeat the Sultan of Mysore, capture his capital, destroy his dynasty and end forever France's potential for mischief-making in the southern half of the sub-continent, and restore an ancient family to rule under terms of dependency on Britain; subject the Nizam himself to a subsidiary alliance; blunt prospects for an invasion of Afghans and reduce the Nawab of Oudh to a small state almost totally circumscribed by British annexations; and break the power of the Maratha confederacy by virtue of the treaty of Bassein in December 1802. By this date British influence was paramount in India. The French danger had perhaps been exaggerated,

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84 Wellesley MSS in the possession of Field Marshal Sir Michael Carver (Carver MSS), cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 118.
85 Mornington to Dundas, 23 February 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 16-43.
but it had served the viceroy's purpose. Thereafter the growth of British power was a "more important aim than the defence of the company's possessions against foreign invasion."86 Enemies would remain, because Britain's viceroy would suffer no competition. At length reality would catch up and smite Wellesley in the shape of some temporary military reverses in India and, more importantly, in the guise of an angry court of directors in the East India company.

VI: The Sultanised Viceroy

Was it true that Wellesley never recovered from his Indian years? Was his conduct in this his first and greatest public office the inspiration for much of what he tried to accomplish subsequently? The vast territorial acquisitions by which Wellesley so enhanced successive viceroys' political power played no direct role in Wellesley's subsequent career, which was devoted almost entirely to Europe. It is possible to argue, and many have done so, that the totality of the Indian experience affected Wellesley psychologically. Unfortunately, such arguments have been advanced most strongly by those whose dealings with Wellesley as a subject of study have been almost exclusively either in India or as a British political phenomenon, but not both. Butler perhaps comes closest to copy with the psychological

phenomenon by investigating his relationship to Hyacinthe during this period. She maintains that Hyacinthe's absence aggravated Wellesley's autocratic tendencies and reinforced his sense of isolation. His letters to her indeed become brutal where initially they had been gentle and inviting. But she too waxed acerbic in attempting to rear a family in London, where society refused to accept her, and in a nation at war with her own. In India Wellesley refused to bend. Lord Valentia described approvingly Wellesley's dedication to the principle that viceregal authority admitted of no fraternali-
sation with India's indigenous peoples, and indeed not even with his British staff. It was an extraordinarily lonely life for Wellesley, and the fact that his health was better by far in India than at home simply suggests that he found this type of punishment agreeable in some respects to his tempera-
ment and constitution.

Leaving to others the question of the psychological impact of India on Wellesley, what elements of his viceregal career can be identified with his career at home? What in his public life as an Irish and English politician surfaced in India, and more importantly, what elements of his India years surfaced when he


87 Mornington to Dundas, 24 November 1798, 29 April 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 111, 258; Mornington to Grenville, 18 November 1798, Fortescue MSS, IV, 381; Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, I, 82-83.
Every effort such as this inevitably does violence to the larger picture: chronology must be subverted to convenient categorisation so that the larger ones may stand in sharper focus; parallels drawn under the influence of perspective may have never presented themselves to Wellesley. Recognising these hostages to fortune, we might propose that the following facets of Wellesley's Indian career warrant further attention in terms of his career in Britain and Ireland. The largest and most important area of interest concerns his relationship to British politicians and statesmen, to the board of control of the East India company, and to the court of directors. Herein must be included a discussion of Wellesley's attitudes towards war with France and the security of India: display as an instrument of authority; treatment of subordinates; administrative techniques; Wellesley's attitude towards the press, religion, and education; his role as a military commander. These themes do not comprise a full portrait of Wellesley in India, but each facet does relate itself to his subsequent career. Comparisons are implicit: they will appear in sharper focus as Wellesley's career unfolds.

When Wellesley set out for India the viceroyalty was already the most prestigious office in the overseas empire. Its importance had been enhanced by Clive's victories, Hastings'
reforms, and the loss of the American seaboard colonies. British possessions in India, however, were not extensive, although other European settlements were certainly minor by comparison. Wellesley's impact was twofold: he expanded British direct and indirect control on the sub-continent itself; and he laboured to justify British expansion in all parts of the Indian Ocean littoral as necessary to the security of India. The first relied primarily on military and diplomatic initiatives within the subcontinent itself. London was presented with a series of fait accomplis. The second demanded the intervention of the cabinet, and Wellesley's role was largely one of lobbyist for annexation. The former endeavour has been the subject of intensive historical examination, and here it will be sufficient to isolate the techniques for further scrutiny in order to describe Wellesley's style of leadership subsequent to his career in India. The latter prompts some comparisons with Wellesley's views towards the conduct of war in Europe after 1806.

What themes dominate Wellesley's orchestration of the expansion of British power on the subcontinent? A convenient shorthand list might include the following: 1) a thorough command of all relevant materials; 2) delineation of all viable options; 3) incisive and accurate measurement of the opponents' skills and motives; 4) rapid execution of diplomatic and military initiatives; 5) detailed instructions for subordinates' benefit;
6) implicit confidence in subordinates' capacity to meet the objectives defined by Wellesley; 7) lavish rewards for those who followed Wellesley's plans precisely. The first four points are of special relevance in this section.

In Ireland and England Wellesley had demonstrated a capacity to master complicated subjects. In the space of a year he developed a perceptive knowledge of Irish parliamentary politics and came to understand the dynamics of its government. In England he mastered the fine points of new economic theories and prevailing commercial conditions. But he demonstrated this ability only occasionally. Not until he embarked on this viceroyalty did he dedicate himself to almost continuous study of a subject. His despatches from the Cape demonstrated an awesome command of the political terrain of south India, such as his despatches as plenipotentiary to Spain in the summer of 1809 would impress even his strongest critics. No detail escaped him: the state of the army; evidence of contact between Tipu Sultan and the French; the strength of Jacobin influence; the motives of India's native rulers. On occasion his despatches reflected signal gaps in his knowledge, such as his misconstruction of the

88Melleson, Wellesley, pp. 30-32.

89Mornington to Dundas, 23 February 1798, 28 February 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 16-38.
constitution of the Maratha confederacy. But such ignorance was rapidly rectified, and only in the case of his war with Holkar of Indore, one of the five chiefs of the confederacy, can his failures be attributed to a want of familiarity with the adversary and his resources.

Because Wellesley was capable of digesting large amounts of material rapidly and accurately, he demanded much of his subordinates. He much preferred that it be put to paper. At the Cape he urged Kirkpatrick to commit their conversations to written form, and to expand the presentation. He demanded of the British agents assigned to the various native courts frequent and lengthy despatches. Colebrooke at Nagpur favoured Wellesley with long reports every fifth day in the year 1800. No detail was omitted: every palace intrigue; every visitor to court; rumors and facts all carefully evaluated as to credibility. Today the events of these courts as duly incorporated into residents' reports fill many volumes, all printed by the appropriate departments of the British Raj and its successor independent India. After the fall of Seringapatam in May 1799 Wellesley immediately turned his attention to the north. Long-suffering

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90 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 23.

scribes translated documents describing historical and contemporay conditions among the Marathas. From Poona Palmer provided painfully detailed reports on the alarms shared by Maratha leaders in the wake of the destruction of Tipu Sultan's kingdom, animosity between the powerful Scindia and the terrified Peshwa, and the progress of negotiations authorised by Wellesley to force the Peshwa into a subsidiary alliance. Wellesley's marginalia clutters these despatches, and once a fortnight he consolidated his impressions into long reports for London and detailed instructions for the long-suffering Palmer.92

The machinations at Poona, where the Marathas' conspiracies against their confederates and their enemies were allowed to germinate during the eight month summer, rank among the most intricate ever to tax Wellesley's fine mind. But he mastered all the details. From afar he could speak with confidence of Poona's scheming widows and wily wives, of alienated chieftains and half-demented heirs. He directed Palmer to treat with this and with that party and spoke of their foibles with such penetrating detail that one would demand proof that he was not in their midst. His measurement of the Peshwa and Scindia was perceptive and totally accurate: the first was unreliable, frightened,
a veritable representative of what had been a dynasty of mayors of the palace, the second clever, resourceful, potentially a dangerous enemy, and not maleable. Wellesley frightened the Peshwa into begging the British for an alliance which he did not want or need, and later into conceding his sovereignty when he no longer counted in any respect other than as a symbol. Scindia was more formidable; in every respect, indeed, he appeared to be invincible, with his ascendancy within the Maratha confederacy a bulwark against British aggressiveness. But Wellesley soon compiled a list of those who, because of jealousy or venality, might turn on Scindia, and Wellesley proceeded on the basis that Scindia was therefore more vulnerable than even he himself suspected.

Two decades later Wellesley would demonstrate to a skeptical Irish secretary, Henry Goulburn, that he could master the complexities of tithes perhaps better than any other public figure of the day. Bursts of concentrated energy, focused on an intricate and previously unfamiliar problem, permitted Wellesley to

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93 Palmer to Mornington, February and March 1799, quoted in Sardessai, Poona, pp. 340-50; Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 94-95; Kulkarni, British, p. 82.

94 Malcolm to Mornington, Harris to Mornington, April–May 1799, quoted in Sardessai, Poona, pp. 401-45.

95 Arthur Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, quoted in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 549.
establish himself as virtually an expert in the field.

Wellesley's abilities invited him to subvert issues when it was advantageous to do so. In the case of the Peshwa at Poona, Wellesley was perfectly aware that whatever his pretensions the Peshwa was in no sense the head of a unitary Maratha state. Despite this, Wellesley found it convenient to treat him as such, and by imposing on him the treaty of Bassein, Wellesley established to his own satisfaction every right to enforce directly the terms of the treaty when the Peshwa could not and would not. Such devices invited war with other Maratha princes. Arthur defeated Scindia at Assai and at Argaon in the autumn of 1803. Delhi was seized under the same pretences, and the Moghul emperor, blinded by enemies in a previous war and "regularly listed along with territories as if he were an inanimate piece of loot," was glad enough to become a vassal of the British. This magnificent triumph was founded on a calculated miscomprehension of Indian conditions, and Wellesley would reap the whirlwind in 1805 when another Maratha potentate, Holkar, rose to dispute Wellesley's step-by-step destruction of

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97 Welleson, Wellesley, pp. 120-25.
98 Kulkarni, British, pp. 84-85.
this last great agency for the preservation of an India free from British suzerainty.

Wellesley's decision to conduct himself on the basis of the technicalities of the constitution of the Maratha confederacy may be excused; the letter of the law, as it were, was not violated. More suspect was his method of interpreting information about the conduct of Tipu Sultan derived from documents seized early in 1799. Wellesley later loudly protested that he had wished at all costs to avoid bloodshed in Mysore. He had, however, already prepared elaborate plans designed to induce Tipu to capitulate. The plans were so audacious and aggressive that his brother Arthur felt obliged to warn against a precipitate breach, even though he also considered Tipu Sultan dangerous. He rushed to declare that Tipu Sultan's suspicions of British motives and his delicate invitations to France to provide support constituted treason. He suppressed evidence that Tipu's schemes were really quite harmless. Many historians have been persuaded by the sheer force of Wellesley's arguments to indict Tipu. Others have concluded that the prospect of eliminating French influence in Mysore justified stretching the truth. By certain standards

99 Mornington to Dundas, 16 March 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 123.

of political conduct this is valid. In Wellesley's case, however, he prided himself with good reason on his ability to fathom accurately the motives of his friends and foes alike. The argument he fashioned to support the capture and destruction of Seringapatam deliberately misconstrued Tipu Sultan's motives, and makes suspect Wellesley's later and vehement protestations of conduct consistently honourable.

For the moment London was eager enough to applaud Wellesley's successes; there were few enough reasons to celebrate in Britain during these dark days. Dundas temporarily saw fit to discount the viceroy's barely disguised glee at his success in finding an excuse to fight Tipu. Wellesley's despatches were so convincing in their complexity that Dundas proposed to Grenville an attack by Russia on Afghanistan. By a series of reverberations this was supposed to help Wellesley in Mysore. Grenville replied politely that Dundas should look at the map before believing everything that came out of Calcutta.

Wellesley would eventually be chastised not so much for his great military and diplomatic schemes against Tipu Sultan and the Marathas as for his peaceful browbeatings of weaker Indian potentates, such as the Nawab of Oudh and the Sultan

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101 Mornington to Dundas, 12 January 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 121.

of Arcot. Wellesley's behaviour on both these occasions reflected a masterful understanding of the weaknesses of his opponents and a certain unscrupulousness wrapped in high and self-righteous language. His victories in both cases were not essential to his great scheme for British domination in India, but they reveal in a microcosm his techniques and style. At some violence to the chronology of Wellesley's career in India they might be examined first.

Wellesley's conduct towards the Nawab of Arcot was subjected to legislative scrutiny during impeachment hearings in 1806 and 1807. The evidence revealed scandalous misconduct on the part of some servants of the East India company prior to Wellesley's arrival in India, and in doing so deflected opprobrium from methods used by Wellesley to bring this state of affairs to an end. The Carnatic coast, south of Madras, and the inland territories of its Nawab which bordered on the small British possessions to the south and west, had attracted the attention of the company's acquisitive servants. The Nawab had by treaty long before Wellesley's arrival surrendered his rights to independent communications with foreign powers, and had gained the dubious advantage of company protection in return for payment of a subsidy. The Nawab, however, had fallen deeply into debt by

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103 Malleson, Wellesley, p. 86.
1795 and had resorted to applying to company servants for loans, which they extended at the rate of three percent per month. As collateral the Nawab gave his creditors territories, certain of which were supposed to have been reserved so as to raise funds for the company in terms of the subsidiary treaty. The double burden inevitably encouraged increased exploitation of the peasantry, with all the attendant evils of bad government. The Nawab of Arcot's incompetence was notorious; Wellesley was well aware of the scandal before he left England.104

Soon after Wellesley reached Madras in April 1798 he reported to Dundas that nothing had been done to rectify Arcot's problems.105 The treaty which governed relations with the company guaranteed the Nawab freedom from interference in his domestic affairs, and Wellesley began the search for a plausible excuse for British intervention. Wellesley blamed the company's servants at Madras for having demonstrated so little resourcefulness in this regard; presumably their indifference was not unconnected to the handsome profits many of them were making from the Nawab's plight.106 In January 1799 Wellesley complained to

105 Mornington to Dundas, 8 May 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 45.
106 Ibid.; Mornington to Dundas, 6 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 88.
Dundas that the Nawab had "behaved very ill towards him" and that he would take advantage of his protracted residence in Madras during the conflict with Tipu Sultan to urge a "complete arrangement." The excuse came in May 1799 when Tipu's files at Seringapatam yielded correspondence from Arcot. The correspondence was innocent enough, but it violated the terms of the treaty. Wellesley informed Dundas that the correspondence "camouflaged discussions of an alliance." 107 This was a fabrication, and later Wellesley's critics complained vehemently. For the moment, however, the charge was sustained. Dundas authorised Wellesley to seize the Carnatic. 108 The Nawab inconveniently died before Wellesley's troops could depose him. His son and successor was thereupon labeled a public enemy and was replaced by a docile cousin. The British took over the civil and military government, appropriated £800,000 in revenues, and thereafter enjoyed complete control.

The episode has been judged on two levels. Even Wellesley's critics acknowledged the benefits inherent in terminating such misgovernment. 109 The deposition was therefore justified by every moral consideration, in the eyes of many. But the charge

107*Ingram, Two Views, p. 8.*

108*A. Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, quoted in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 561-65.*

109*Kulkarni, British, p. 73.*
of treason levelled against the Nawab was "indecent" and the
construction of the affair as fashioned by Wellesley was open
to serious criticism. Two modern observers have concluded
that "Wellesley's despatches form what must be the most question-
berg and self-righteous body of literature in existence." Castlereagh wrote to Wellesley in September 1802 that the
Arcot arrangement was likely to be used by the opposition in
parliament "to impress the public mind with the harshness and
injustice of the transaction." Wellesley himself took quite
a different view. He was impressed by results and unruffled
by threats and strained interpretations put on the Nawab's
innocent correspondence. He hazarded the view that deposing
the Nawab was "perhaps the most salutary and useful measure"
which had been adopted by the company in many years; by re-
moving a temptation to peculation for its officers Wellesley
had performed for the company a service similar to what he
did for Britain by expelling the French from Mysore.

In his India under Wellesley Roberts accepts this point

110 Thompson and Garratt, British, pp. 234-35.
111 Montgomery Martin, ed., Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During His Administration in India (5 vols.; London: John Murray, 1836), III, 38.
112 Kulkarni, British, p. 73; Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 249.
Wellesley's success here prompted him to dethrone other petty rulers in south India and to sanctify his arbitrary measures by publicising their faults in London. One instance was the Gaekwar of Baroda. In 1799 he sought British aid in a private war with the Peshwa, but he died before the war was concluded. The British intervened to place their own nominee on the throne and reduced him to the status of a puppet. He went beyond this to fashion the doctrine of "lapse"; when the succession in any state was contested, the company was entitled to intervene and to dispose of the principality as it saw fit.

For the historian the problem is one of balancing means and ends. Wellesley's methods were extraordinarily deft and supple. He avoided bloodshed. His ends were universally praised, for the Nawab had become a cancer on the body of the Madras presidency. But London's approbation and the Nawab's punishment were engineered under false pretences.

In the case of Oudh Wellesley's tactics were even more masterful. Oudh's Nawab was more skillful and less exposed to the viceroy's wrath. The issue was more important. Oudh's problems had vexed Hastings and Cornwallis. The territory encom-

113 Roberts, India, p. 24.
114 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 73-82.
passed wealthy lands in the great basin of the Ganges, and separated company territories in Bengal from the wild and bellicose tribal states of Kashmir and Afghanistan. Its strategic importance was not in dispute. Its economic potential was much appreciated. Oudh was, however, notorious for the miserable inefficiency and corruption of its government. Its wealth, location and chronic mismanagement had invited British intervention for more than a quarter century preceding Wellesley's arrival in India. During this time the influence of the British resident steadily increased. A large part of the Nawab's revenues, extracted as they were from a depressed and sullen peasantry, were directed to the support of a British subsidiary force imposed on the country by Hastings. Most of Oudh's commerce had passed into the hands of European adventurers. In 1797 a disputed succession prompted Shore to intervene, but for want of conviction on his part Shore failed to annex Oudh or to place its government directly under British control.

Wellesley's correspondence suggests that from the outset he was determined to annex Oudh. His correspondence to

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115 Ibid., p. 86.
116 Roberts, India, p. 23.
117 Mornington to Dundas, 28 February 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 39.
London highlighted every detail of misgmanagement in Oudh. British agents in that unfortunate province painted a thoroughly unattractive portrait of the Nawab. But "though endowed with every possible fault from his subjects' side," as one modern observer has noted, the Nawab was "embarrassingly loyal" to Wellesley. More evidence of malfeasance was required. Reports on the utter insufficiency of the Nawab's forces in the event of an invasion by the much feared Afghan chief Zeman Shah arrived on the viceroy's desk. He digested them with care. Even more attention was paid to evidence of weakness in the Nawab's capacity to resist Wellesley's pressures. Wellesley concluded that Oudh's leader could be browbeaten, and in letter after letter proceeded to berate the Nawab like "the indignant schoolmaster." The Nawab submitted a long and impressively reasoned defence of his plight and his conduct. Wellesley refused to answer these arguments, and merely censured him for being disrespectful. The distracted Nawab at length decided to abdicate in favour of a minor son rather than be humiliated further by Wellesley. Wellesley blandly had assumed that there


120 Thompson and Garratt, *British*, pp. 231-35.
would be no heir and that the company would inherit the entire territory. On hearing this the Nawab decided not to abdicate. Wellesley reacted angrily and berated the Nawab's "virtually unassailable" arguments. The best that Wellesley could do was to deliver a petty rebuke because the Nawab had failed to seal his letter properly, "indicating a levity totally unsuitable to the occasion" and "highly deficient in the respect due to the first British authority in India." He labelled the decision to cancel plans to abdicate an assault on "the honour and justice of the British government." Finally, in November 1801 the Nawab was forced to cede the richest portions of his territory to the company and to assume a status "more abjectly vassal than any other in India."

Agitation to impeach Wellesley five years later would center on the Oudh question. Had Wellesley been misinformed as to the Nawab's motives or as to the justice of humiliating him? Based on the information he solicited, Wellesley waged a completely successful psychological offensive, and his letters to London betray every sign that he was thoroughly convinced of the justice of his cause. In the case of Oudh his objectives

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122 Kulkarni, British, pp. 78-81.
123 Thompson and Garratt, British, pp. 231-35.
were preconceived. He required information to support his prejudices and to defeat the Nawab without resort to war. On both counts he succeeded completely. The Oudh affair represented a departure from Wellesley's usual procedure of reserving judgement until all sides of the question had been examined thoroughly. Perhaps he was convinced that his extensive reading while yet in Britain had met this requirement. If the process of self-education in the Oudh instance was contrived to produce the effect he wanted, it was also masterful. Wellesley convinced himself of the rectitude of his conduct, and he never wavered. He was never to apologise for any part of his Indian record. After humiliating the Nawab he treated him with every courtesy, but "it is clear that he did not regard Indian powers as independent states to be treated with the niceties of international law." Perhaps the annexation of Oudh justified such tactics, but the unfortunate Nawab deserved more humane treatment.

The Nawab of Oudh's singular misfortune was the proximity of his territories to the center of British power in Bengal: pressure proved irresistible. Wellesley was unable to behave in so highhanded a manner throughout all of India. He needed

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124 A. Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 556-60; Ingram, Two Views, p. 7.
125 Roberts, India, p. 135.
126 Kulkarni, British, pp. 78-81.
allies who, while subscribing to his policies, would remain sufficiently viable to play a part in containing the subjugating Britain's enemies. This was the basis of the subsidiary treaty concept. It was cumbersome, and Wellesley would have preferred direct annexation or complete administrative control if both these devices, especially the former, had not contravened an act against territorial acquisitions passed in 1793. In effect, the subsidiary alliance system skirted this prohibition by inducing an Indian state to subsidise British forces for its own defence. There were several variations, depending on the initiative retained by the local ruler regarding use of the forces, the soldiers' location, and whether they were financed by a periodic levy or by the cessation of sufficient territory to provide revenue for their upkeep. Other stipulations insured the subservience of the native ruler even during periods of absolute peace: a British representative resided permanently at court; negotiations with other powers without British consent were proscribed; no Europeans could be employed without permission; no state could interfere in the internal affairs of an allied state.

Wellesley became convinced of the utility of this system. It provided a ready military force well equipped. Expenditure was borne by other states. Open annexation was avoided, thus defusing the company's objections and blunting other nations'
jealousy. Britain's power to police India was guaranteed. Arthur Wellesley, who sometimes thought that his brother enforced the terms of these subsidiary alliances too vigorously, celebrated the company's ability to keep wars at a distance from the sources of its wealth. Many modern interpreters of British rule in India have concluded that the system was essentially beneficial in that within a period of fifty years Britain was thereby able to establish universal peace on the subcontinent.

But there have been some detractors. States became saddled with excessive military expenditures. Patriotism was weakened and corrupt governments were sometimes sustained when they would have fallen under their own weight. Britain was forced to involve itself in every local problem and eventually had to assume direct control in many states. In a more immediate sense Wellesley's identification with the system exacerbated his relations with the court of directors, who could not see virtue in a system which prompted such heavy expenditures and occasioned so many wars. To them the Maratha and

127Roberts, India, pp. 36, 37-39.
128Owen, Wellington, II, lxxiv.
Holkar wars were a monument to the essential and fatal flaws of the subsidiary alliance system.

On the basis of advice received from Kirkpatrick at the Cape of Good Hope and after reading the intercepted despatches Wellesley decided to employ the Nizam of Hyderabad as his ally in the south. The decision demonstrated the new viceroy's ability to extract from reports of others a more accurate estimate of current conditions and likely future developments than could be supplied by the contributors themselves.

At the Cape on 23 February 1798 Wellesley committed his own considered views to a despatch for Dundas. French advisors, he noted, had gained great influence in Hyderabad. Their influence ought to be prevented by every means within our power, consistent with the respect due to the court of Hyderabad. The qualifying phrase was significant; Wellesley had already determined on the basis of information at hand that Hyderabad must be an ally, and the threat of hostilities he reserved for Tipu Sultan, whose identification with France Wellesley considered irreversible. Hyderabad, at any rate, had been the ally of the British for some thirty years before French advisors took advantage of Shore's lassitude to ingratiate themselves with the Nizam. Wellesley would have been thoroughly acquainted with

130 Mornington to Dundas, 23 February 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 17-28.
the history of this relationship by virtue of his extensive reading in England; this same exercise had convinced him that Tipu Sultan was inevitably Britain's sworn enemy. The Nizam now threatened to overturn tradition, and Wellesley predicted that this would "disparage us in the eyes of all the native princes of India." 131

How could the Nizam be weaned from the French, whose numerous representatives now guided the army? Would the army permit the British to strip it of its European officers, and thus render it vulnerable to an easy subjugation by Hyderaband's aggressive neighbor Tipu Sultan? Could British advisors be supplied in their place? Would the Nizam declare war in response to an ultimatum? Wellesley's advisor of the moment, Kirkpatrick, warned the new viceroy that the potential British advisors were mere rabble, and that the British army must be prepared to supply the necessary officers from its own ranks. But more important than this was the task of stripping Hyderaband of the French. Kirkpatrick conceded the need to attempt it; he could not match Wellesley's optimism that it could be made to succeed without bloodshed.

Wellesley's optimism reflected an informed opinion of the Nizam's character and aspirations. The Nizam's immediate concern

131 Ibid.
was not Tipu, Wellesley told Dundas, but the Marathas. Wellesley would secure Maratha acquiescence by supporting their confederacy against Zeman Shah in the northwest. The Marathas thus conciliated, Tipu Sultan would be denied an opportunity to exploit a war between Hyderabad and Poona. Tipu would be isolated, and in his turn he could be vanquished. This incredible strategy surpassed what Kirkpatrick could supply in advice; the very flanks of the Himalayas had been enlisted to support the expulsion of the French from south India. From Poona despatches rolled in describing reactions to British intentions in Hyderabad. In Hyderabad itself the Nizam's army was reported to be "in a condition worse than that of absolute inefficiency," while Tipu's forces grew stronger by the day. Was there merit in taking the risk to restore to an alliance the enfeebled nizam, and to provoke war with powerful Tipu? As soon as the viceroy reached Madras, his advisors were pressed to contribute their informed opinions. Wellesley listened to everything, demanded more details, and wrote a string of despatches demanding comprehensive analyses from Britain's representatives throughout the subcontinent.

Wellesley's bold plans to oust the French from Hyderabad

132 Mornington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 57-61.

133 Ibid., 28 February 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 28-38.
reached London in May. Dundas approved the bold plan on 18 June. The company feared that Wellesley was being duped. Dundas need not have rushed; on 20 June Wellesley ordered the French to quit Hyderabad. The Nizam obliged. As Wellesley had already assured his own advisors, it was clear that the Nizam feared his "Jacobin" Frenchmen, and Wellesley's combination of boldness and persuasion impressed on the Nizam the wisdom of reviving the British connection. The French themselves were completely surprised; British troops entered Hyderabad with "the utmost secrecy and despatch." The French surrendered at once and were sent to London with a promise of immediate transhipment to France. Not a shot had been fired. "Our army is in the field everywhere," Wellesley exulted in a letter to Dundas, "and our spirits are high. We neither court nor fear war."

Wellesley's triumph at Hyderabad was to be consolidated still


135 Mornington to Dundas, 4 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 101.


137 A. Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 553.

138 Mornington to Dundas, 12 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 102.

139 Ibid., 4 November 1798, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 101.
further. He granted the Nizam a part of Tipu Sultan's territories the following year, and in return placed Hyderabad under full British protection. In 1800 Wellesley prevailed on him to surrender a portion of his territory in exchange for this mixed blessing. The Nizam and his successors remained Britain's faithful vassals until India became independent in 1947.

Hyderabad was Wellesley's first Indian triumph, and he was profuse in advertising the brilliant results of his calculated audacity. It confirmed Wellesley's claims to brilliance in the eyes of skeptical and even cynical British officials in India, many of whom had earned their positions and influence by enduring the subcontinent's heat, privations, and enforced separation from European society. It demonstrated Wellesley's command of every dimension of the Indian scene. It emboldened him to prepare for an early confrontation with Tipu Sultan.

The destruction of Mysore constitutes Wellesley's greatest single success in India. French power was permanently eliminated. The military campaign afforded Arthur Wellesley his first opportunity to display his own considerable talents. It temporarily strengthened Wellesley's hand by silencing the murmurs of the court of directors in so magnificent an addition to the nation's treasury of imperial triumphs that no patriot could criticise it.

140 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 265.
By confirming Wellesley's superior talents the destruction of Tipu Sultan may have contributed a crucial dimension to Wellesley's inability to suffer the constraints of cabinet politics in later years.

Tipu Sultan was cast in the Wellesley mold: ambitious for family, egotistical and active, he was determined to avenge a defeat at the hands of Cornwallis in 1792. His father Haidar Ali had overthrown the ancient Hindu dynasty and in its place raised a vigorous and well administered state able to dominate the southern reaches of the peninsula. Haidar Ali had almost driven the English from Madras and remained a formidable figure until the end of his life. His son lost half of his realm when the English came to the defence of the Rajah of Travancore, whom Tipu Sultan attacked in 1791. He retired to lick his wounds, to conspire with the Maratha chiefs, and to renew negotiations with France which had been broken off in 1788. He advertised his continuing hostility towards Britain. Shore left him alone; Wellesley was determined to cure him of his dangerous sympathies. 141

Nothing in Wellesley's life approaches his assault on Tipu Sultan in terms of audacity and precise orchestration of diplomatic and military strategies. At the Cape Kirkpatrick

141 Malleson, Wellesley, p. 18.
urged Wellesley to be aware of his capacity of mischief, although it appears he was opposed to war. Wellesley wrote cryptically to Dundas whether Britain should "suffer Tipu's hostility quietly?"142 Butler thought Wellesley's plans at this point were entirely pacific, but this cannot have been the case, for his first act upon reaching Madras on 26 April 1798 was to inspect the army and to evaluate its capacity to wage war in the near future.143 Two months later Wellesley and the council in Bengal approved assembling the army on the coast of Coromandel, quick and provocative work indeed if Wellesley had been dedicated to maintaining peace in the Deccan.144

If Wellesley indeed wanted war, he was fortunate to have Tipu Sultan as his potential opponent. Tipu undoubtedly hated the British, and in hating them conceded to Wellesley an excuse for an aggressive policy.145 Beyond this he was inferior to his father in everything except energy and personal valour. Tipu possessed "a temperament which operated by paroxysm and

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142 Mornington to Dundas, 28 February 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 40.


144 Annual Register, XLI, 55.

145 Henry Wellesley, Diary, pp. 33-34.
His appeals to the French were impulsive, impractical and conspicuous. While Wellesley was still enroute to India he permitted a French privateer to be refitted in his port at Mangalor. He sent agents to the Isle de France and thence to France itself. A small force of French soldiers and adventurers, too small to provide service but a convenient causa belli for Wellesley, reached Mangalor 26 April 1798, the same day Wellesley first saw Madras.147 On 8 June Wellesley must have been delighted to read in a Calcutta newspaper a proclamation by the governor of the Ile de France of an alliance between France and the Sultan. It prompted Wellesley to secure the expulsion of French advisors in Hyderabad.148 Immediately thereafter he instructed his commander-in-chief, General George Harris, to concentrate a force at Madras to put pressure on Mysore. Wellesley's action was unnecessarily provocative. France was in no position to extend immediate assistance to Tipu Sultan, but the viceroy was determined to deprive Mysore of its coastline and to prepare the way for its submission.149

146 Thompson and Garratt, British, p. 207.
148 Ibid., pp. 34-40.
149 Ibid., pp. 45-51; Mornington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 62-63.
These moves were calculated to protect Wellesley's relations with London; he could not be criticised for taking precautionary measures to defend British interests. But Tipu must be made to appear the aggressor. Here Wellesley was forced to summon every fragment of evidence his agents could glean which would shed light on Tipu's personality. This was done, and from it Wellesley fashioned a policy to treat Tipu Sultan so perfectly calculated to enflame him that all the world, including Wellesley's critics, proclaimed the lion of Mysore to be the instigator of the war. To Dundas Wellesley charged that the despatch of two hundred men from France proved that "on every principle of public faith and of the law of nations" Tipu Sultan had violated Mysore's treaties with the company. His actions were "equivalent to a declaration of war."\textsuperscript{150} The viceroy must therefore seize all his maritime possessions, secure cession of this by seizing his capital, compel him to defray the entire cost of the war, force him to admit a permanent British resident at his court, and demand the expulsion of all the French.\textsuperscript{151} In August 1798 Wellesley candidly admitted that the French might too easily decide to leave, and these confessions would be turned against the viceroy when Dundas' enthusiasm for British expansion in

\textsuperscript{150}Menzington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 52-55; Choksey, History, p. 232.

\textsuperscript{151}Menzington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 55.
south Asia began to wane. He vowed, however, not to force war on Tipu, an insincere resolution which reflected more his distress at deficiencies detected in the army than any commitment to peace, his desire to conclude an alliance with the Nizam and the Maratha confideracy, and his suspicion, shortly to be confirmed, that the company had little appetite for war.\textsuperscript{152}

Wellesley had taken the measure of his adversary. He despatched letters to Tipu. At first they were friendly, calculated to please London and to disarm the Sultan. A correspondence characterised "by the most sweepingly dishonest cordiality on both sides" resulted, since Tipu pursued the same devious ends. But Wellesley was committed in his own mind to a plan of aggression; Tipu Sultan for his part was merely increasingly fearful. Well might he have been, for beginning in November 1798 Wellesley suddenly changed his tone. Letters became more threatening; the viceroy forecast the destruction of Seringapatam and more.\textsuperscript{153} Tipu became alarmed and incoherent. He exhorted Wellesley "to gratify me continually with your messages." Wellesley in return invited him to celebrate the French defeat at Aboukir. He sent "confused and embarrassed" letters which Wellesley "swept away ruthlessly and cavalierly as disingenuous

\textsuperscript{152}Ibid., 24 August 1798, 6 July 1798, 19 May 1799, 11 October 1798, 12 November 1798, quoted in Ingram, \textit{Two Views}, pp. 65, 56-57, 155, 94-95, 104.

\textsuperscript{153}Annual Register, XLI, 54-55.
and insulting." Tipu stalled and prayed for French assistance. Arthur urged Wellesley to demand less of Tipu, but to no avail. In February 1799 Wellesley instructed General Harris to move towards Seringapatam, and provided copious instructions how to handle Tipu if he offered resistance. Offers from Seringapatam to negotiate were brushed aside. On 22 February he delivered an ultimatum to Tipu. On 4 March British forces invaded Mysore. They were attacked and Tipu's army was easily repulsed; Wellesley translated this into evidence of his enemy's aggressive behaviour. Arthur urged peace, but under Wellesley's firm hand the British armies advanced. On 6 March this army defeated Tipu under circumstances "equal to the most brilliant achievement recorded in the annals of our military glory in India." In April Seringapatam was besieged; on 4 May it was captured. Tipu Sultan died fighting, and the city was exposed to unbridled plunder. A booty worth

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154 Thompson and Garratt, British, p. 202; Roberts, India, p. 57.

155 Wellesley to Mornington, 2 January 1799, quoted in Owen, ed., Wellington, II, 52.

156 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 55-59.

157 Mornington to Dundas, 22 April 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 146.

158 Thompson and Garratt, British, p. 70.
hundreds of thousands of pounds was surrendered by soldiers with a promise of generous rewards in return. Britain was dominant in south India.

This signal victory was Wellesley's own. He had supervised equipping the army, monitored its progress, and had dictated that Tipu Sultan be compelled to surrender unconditionally. It was a brilliant if brutal military triumph under the hand of one who had never served in the army. And he crowned his victory with a draconian peace, exiling Tipu Sultan's family and installing a Hindu minor under British tutelage. He awarded chunks of territory to Mysore's neighbors, expelled the French remnant, and subjected Mysore and later Hyderabad as well to subsidiary treaties. He appointed a board to govern the subjugated state. It was "the largest number of men of genius ever assembled at the same board in India."159 Ostensibly Mysore in its reduced form remained independent; in fact it was a vassal state.160 To British forces were granted all the fortresses and the right to command the nation's resources in war. By annexations the state was nearly completely surrounded by British territory. This splendid and permanent settlement was completed only one year after Wellesley

159 Roberts, India, pp. 68-69.

reached India.

Wellesley's triumph at Seringapatam was the product of his talents as a perceptive student of Indian history and current affairs, his supreme self-confidence, his ambition, and his ability to devise strategy. It was not the product of experience. After Tipu's defeat and death and the Nizam's surrender Wellesley applied to the Marathas and to the northern border powers the tactics which proved so successful against Tipu: isolation of the most dangerous antagonist by conciliating his neighbors; contrivances to demonstrate that war was caused by the failure of the enemy to fulfill obligations established under earlier treaties; reference to the French menace in order to conciliate London; swift and audacious military campaigns guided by Wellesley's detailed instructions; imposition of a subsidiary treaty and the installation of a British resident or a commission empowered to reform the indigenous military establishment and the system of taxation. His officials supplied and Wellesley absorbed enormous quantities of information. He solicited advice from all quarters but surrendered to no one the burden of orchestrating the sequence and scope of future events. He shaped the course of events so that victory at one stage facilitated intervention in another area on terms favourable to the British and under circumstances designed to convince London that such intervention
was critical to the safety of British interests in India. 161

Wellesley's confrontation with the Marathas extended the duration of his viceroyalty; Holkar, the most resourceful Maratha leader, was vanquished only after Wellesley left India. The Maratha wars have attracted enormous historical attention in part because here Arthur Wellesley first demonstrated his military aptitude on a great scale. Wellesley's own achievements have also been thoroughly studied; only a few points need to be examined here. The focus is on Wellesley's aptitude for fashioning a subcontinental strategy and the methods he was determined to use proved effective and appropriate for securing British dominance.

Recent Maratha history had comprised part of Wellesley's reading program after 1785. He was well aware that the confederacy was little more than an alliance of a half-dozen chieftains based upon principles of self-interest. The Peshwa, who resided at Poona, was titular head as Wellesley tried to suggest by the treaty of Bassein. He also knew that the Marathas had experienced a steady accession of strength during the last forty years, moving with considerable success to supply the want of central authority in northern India as the Moghul empire decayed.

rapidly, even spectacularly. Under Warren Hastings the company had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Mahadaji Scindia, the greatest Maratha warrior at the time. By the treaty of Wargi in 1779 Bombay government was reduced to a small principality. The company then attempted to revenge this defeat and by the treaty of Salbhai in 1782 regained some of its lost territories. Both sides thereafter shaped their policies to meet the contingency of a future contest for hegemony in India. Cornwallis attempted to consolidate Britain's position in the Deccan. The Marathas invited European officers, mostly French, to help modernise their several armies. They abandoned their traditional speciality in guerrilla warfare and emphasised artillery. Under the colourful French adventurer Benoit de Boigne Scindia overran the Rajput states on the Indian ocean littoral near Pakistan and in 1789 captured the Moghul imperial capital at Delhi. Shah Alam, the blinded and helpless emperor, passed under Scindia's jurisdiction. Scindia himself, already the most powerful Maratha chief, assumed the honours of a Moghul nobleman as well. He obtained the title "viceregent of the Empire" for the Peshwa, and for himself the title deputy to the Peshwa. Was it possible that all India might revive under him? Shore, too

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163 Ibid.
timorous to oppose him directly and desperately hoping to blunt his power by temporising, heaved a sigh of relief when Mahadaji Scindia died in 1794 just as he was preparing to challenge the British. 164

Daulat Rao Scindia, his successor, soon faced a series of local revolts. He defeated the Nizam in 1795 and after the violent death of Peshwa Mahdoor Rao Narian the same year Scindia gained the upper hand at Poona. But the expansion of his power base was achieved at the cost of precarious control of many of the provinces. British power alone could challenge the Marathas, if it so wished; Shore refused to accept the challenge. 165 Wellesley was determined to exploit the situation. Armed with the latest information brought by Kirkpatrick to the Cape, he informed Dundas that he intended to watch Poona affairs closely. He anticipated no immediate action because Tipu Sultan must be confronted first; he judged Scindia still too weak to attack in concert with Tipu Sultan, and he was correct. 166 To Poona Wellesely sent a young aide and then despatched a series of brilliant instructions calculated to enflame the new Peshwa against Scindia. The new Peshwa,

164 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 23; Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 115-16.
165 A. Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, quoted in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 549.
166 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 30-32.
Wellesley soon learned, was "handsome, charming, and versatile, but he was also a consummate rascal -- cunning, deceitful and treacherous. 167 The challenge was not more than Wellesley could handle. He succeeded in convincing the Peshwa that his own overmighty subordinate must be disciplined. Mornington translated this into despatches for London portraying the Peshwa as an effective sovereign and eager to aid Britain and the Nizam of Hyderabad against that villain Tipu Sultan. 168 A strategy which attracted so many friends, London was supposed to conclude, must be sound and beneficial to Britain and to the company.

From 1799 to 1802 Wellesley played a masterful diplomatic game against the Marathas, characterised by secret understandings, secret intrigues, and every chance of war on a grand scale. At Nagpur the Raja Raghiyi was induced by the British resident Henry Colebrooke to commit himself to an alliance against Tipu Sultan and Scindia both. The poor Rajah was flattered, cajoled and tempted with promises of territory taken from his neighbors, and he conceded all. 169 But Scindia himself was also persuaded

167 Kulkarni, British, p. 82.

168 Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 94-95.

to cease threatening Hyderabad, so that Hyderabad could join Wellesley in attacking Tipu. Wellesley extracted this promise by committing himself to dismiss the Nizam's French forces; he conveniently forgot to say that he planned to supply British officers in their place. He also conjured up the spectre of an invasion by Zeman Shah from the Himalayan slopes, dedicated to rescue the Moghul empire from Scindia control and to restore the emperor to a dignified independent. Wellesley grandiosely offered to serve as arbiter among India's states so as to keep the peace, if they would in effect retreat to defensive positions and partially disarm. It was a promise beyond the resources of company to implement, but momentarily it worked. Wellesley was popular in Britain and feared in India.

Wellesley's pretensions would not have survived until 1801 had he not accurately anticipated the propensity of the various Maratha princes to fight among themselves. Wellesley was willing to guarantee the integrity of those states which behaved and which respected the British. The Maratha confederacy, however, was supposed to be able to police itself. If war occurred, it would be beneficial to the remaining states that the Marathas destroy themselves; only if chaos threatened would Wellesley intervene. And the Marathas moved to oblige him. In 1801 the jealous and unbalanced Peshwa, whose feeble mind

170 Mornington to Dundas, 6 July 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 57-61.
Wellesley was delighted to exploit, induced Holkar to attack Scindia. Scindia survived and conquered. The following year Holkar sought revenge and defeated Scindia. The Peshwa fled Poona, carrying with him nothing more than an empty claim to be head of the Maratha confederacy. In December 1802 he sought refuge near the British possessions at Bombay. The time had arrived for Wellesley to pretend that the Peshwa continued, if ever he had, to represent the entire confederacy. He extracted from the Peshwa the notorious treaty of Bassein.

Before Bassein, concluded at the end of 1802, there was a "British empire in India;" subsequently there existed a "British empire of India." So concluded the chronicler of Wellington's exploits in India. The "most momentous compact ever concluded by an Anglo-Indian government" degraded the Peshwa from an independent prince to a company vassal. The British government assumed the obligation of arbitrating disputes not only between the Marathas and other powers but among the Marathas themselves. Scindia, weakened by his defeat at the hands of Holkar, urged the Peshwa to sanction it. Wellesley's plans

171 Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 116-17.
172 Kulkarni, British, p. 83.
173 Owen, Wellington, I, xlvi.
174 Ibid., I, xlv, xlvi.
175 A Wellesley, memorandum, summer 1806, quoted in Wellington, Supplementary, IV, 73-87.
role for British India had soared far above anything dreamt of before or conceived of in London. The viceroy's ambitions had vastly expanded the company's responsibilities. Was it wise to do so?

The treaty of Bassein, Arthur Wellesley observed, inevitably led to war with the Maratha chieftains. He opposed war, but stated in 1806 that war with them was inevitable anyway, and that by virtue of the treaty the company could wage war as the injured party and with allies who could promise a decisive victory. The arguments are far from convincing.\textsuperscript{176} Wellesley himself may have felt confident that his deft diplomacy could isolate and subdue the various Maratha chiefs without recourse to war.\textsuperscript{177} It did not, and during the year he and his brother covered themselves with glory. Arthur's spectacular victories over the Marathas during a campaign which saw him march north from Seringapatam to Delhi have been praised many times. They were splendid triumphs against great numerical odds. But the viceroy was the architect of all this. He planned a military campaign that called for an attack on five fronts simultaneously. He issued voluminous and detailed orders. He negotiated adroitly. The year 1803 was in all this

\textsuperscript{176}Ibid., IV, 573-77, 578.

\textsuperscript{177}Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 125-33.
the most glorious of his Indian years, and because of that perhaps the apogee of his public career. "He strode to and fro" among his lieutenants, "flung his orders about a continent, to every corner where the company possessed an envoy or a garrison; and dictated the movement of armies. The work was exhausting, and Wellesley's letters to the company and to Hyacinthe reflected a shortened temper and an overbearing manner. He lavished rewards on his brave troops and praise on his assistants. Parliament supplied a vote of thanks and Calcutta gave him a sword. By December 1803, one year after he had extracted from the Peshwa the treaty of Bassein, he had crushed two of the three major Maratha chieftains. He had captured Delhi and rescued the blind Moghul emperor, treating him with a studied deference and guaranteeing him in his last years a period of quiet and peace. The viceroy was now custodian of the emperor; the emperor had delivered India, at least symbolically, to the viceroy.

There was a flaw. In 1804 Holkar, the last and cleverest Maratha chief, decided to challenge Wellesley's imminent supremacy.


179 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 38; Wellesley to the King, 22 December 1803, quoted in Aspinall, ed., Later Correspondence, IV, 146.

180 DNB, 1082-1084.
over the entire sub-continent. He invited the vanquished Scindia to turn against his conqueror. Scindia did not; Wellesley's settlements with him and Bhonsla in November and December 1803 had been generous. Holkar had thus far escaped Wellesley's attacks, and he attributed this exemption to viceregal fear of him. He might have obtained by negotiations a settlement which would have left to him, alone among all the Maratha chiefs, a measure of independence and power. But he would have been asked to abandon the Maratha tradition of plundering and despoiling neighbors, and perhaps such restraints were intolerable. Wellesley for his part could not believe Holkar would be so foolish as to risk war. He prepared, prematurely as it turned out, a valedictory on his Indian achievements. Holkar, however, fought like the cornered tiger that he was. He defeated a British expedition and news of this disaster reached London. Castlereagh at the board of control had praised all Wellesley's victorious efforts unstintingly. Now in early 1804 he began to vacillate. Ad-dington had replaced Pitt. The company saw that the time was

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182 Roberts, Indis, p. 239.
183 Choksey, History, p. 302.
ripe and it convened to pass judgement on Wellesley's expensive expansion schemes, on his refusal to support the company's monopoly of trade, and on just about everything else. The time had come for Wellesley to resign or suffer the indignity of being fired.

Wellesley showed signs of losing confidence in himself. He abandoned his ambitious plans and thought in terms of retrenchment. But it came too late to save himself from the company's wrath. In the middle of his campaign against Holkar, therefore, he returned to England. He could not know that Holkar would surrender completely at the very moment Wellesley set foot in England, and that British dominion in India could no longer be doubted.

Wellesley's greatest monument was the conquest of India: he did not initiate it and others completed it, but to him belongs primary credit for guaranteeing the success of this enterprise. This mighty achievement haunted him for half his public life; he was blamed by anti-imperialists and he raised his own pretensions to unreasonable levels. Modern India semi-consciously celebrates this enormous achievement in its own mastery of a sub-continent. No study of Wellesley in the British or Irish dimension is complete without a reference to his role as architect of British India. How frequently he would complain after 1805 of the incompetence of his colleagues!

How true it was that none of them had defeated Tipu Sultan,
overawed the Nawabs of Oudh and Arcot, stripped the Nizam of Hyderabad of his independence, deterred the wild Afghan tribes, and vanquished the Marathas! He could not forget that with his brother's assistance and that of others loyal to the little viceroy he had managed to annex a wider territory than the whole of Napoleon's conquests in Europe, and to do so permanently. In India he fulfilled Pitt's directions to the fullest degree; in England Pitt had lost interest in India and a supreme position in politics.

VII: The Periphery of India

There was more to Wellesley's record than the consolidation of British power on the subcontinent. The territory under his immediate command was vast, but the viceroy was also in part responsible for Britain's far-flung maritime interests from the Cape of Good Hope to the China coast. Wellesley's work here comprised a great many autonomous efforts, and they have at times been treated as inconsequential or even neglected completely. Even those who have studied Wellesley's Indian years with great care have been content to explain his interest in Ceylon, the Cape, Egypt, Persia, Burma and the East Indies as simply a product of his intense hatred towards revolutionary France. This is not the case. It is not appropriate here to examine these questions in great detail. There is, however,
some justification for adverting to Wellesley's role as imperial strategist, because the premises which guided his policies in the Indian ocean arena were reflected later in his schemes against Napoleon. As Foreign secretary Wellesley was not the match of Castlereagh or Canning. He was destined to preside over foreign affairs during the darkest days of the war, and his audacious designs were to be frustrated by a demand for economy and by geopolitical difficulties in finding a place to grapple with Napoleon. He would yearn for an area which afforded an opportunity for pitched battles, decisive victories, and subtle and ingenious diplomacy. He would want an India.

In July 1841 Wellesley wrote that prior to his departure for India in 1797 he had entertained no plans for the extension of British power in the east. When he reached the Cape, however, he began to realise that Cornwallis had been too sanguine, and that British possessions in India were endangered. And finally, by virtue of his experiences there, he concluded that survival was linked to expansion; Britain would not be secure until it was supreme.  

These are the views of a man over eighty, looking back four decades. They can be dismissed perhaps as simply a rationalisation of his conquests on the subcontinent and his

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184 Wellesley, memorandum, 4 July 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS 37313, f. 175.
zeal in fishing in troubled waters thousands of miles away. But they anticipate almost precisely the thesis advanced in recent years by historians who have directed their efforts to explaining the expansion of the British empire after the loss of the American colonies. Professors Gallagher and Robinson have maintained in a series of recent publications that the dynamic of expansion lay at the periphery rather than at the centre; they see colonial administrators and agents encouraging territorial expansion by persuading themselves and London that the various colonies must expand to eliminate opponents on their frontiers. Often they undertook to defeat these real or alleged opponents without proper authority from home. Once annexed, new territories were not easily surrendered, and the act of expansion brought the empire to the doorstep of new potential opponents.

In the case of India the dynamic factor in expansion was strengthened further by the need to protect the sea routes to the subcontinent. The Cape's retention in 1815 was justified by this argument, as was Ceylon. Then exploitation of the Cape itself demanded that intermediary ports be established or expanded on Africa's west coast. The Indian frontier was extended to incorporate areas which might be used by hostile powers to challenge British hegemony. At a later period the Suez supplanted the Cape, and it demanded its own buffer states and intermediary stops. Gibraltar and Malta took on
new importance. Cyprus, Aden and the Persian Gulf protectorates were added. There was also expansion to the east of India, connected for the most part with the development of commercial ties, including the invidious trade in opium with China. This explains the rise of Singapore and the annexation of territories in modern Malaysia, and the occupation of the Burmese littoral.

There are many objections to the Robinson and Gallagher thesis, and they have been criticised in many quarters. They do not address themselves in any detail to Wellesley's role in the east, partly because they are much more concerned with the post Napoleonic period. Yet in many respects Wellesley's observations and policies fit their theory. His was a strategy of imperialism rather than colonisation. Given the desirability of British predominance in India, all other projects become justified in their turn. For Wellesley all such annexations were jewels in a necklace in which India was the diamond pendant. The concept was at once simple and convincing. There was no room for hesitation in the expansion of Britain's power in Asia.

In the spirit of one of Wellesley's earliest biographers, Pearce, all annexation could be justified because it expanded the forum for Britain's humanitarian impulse and good government. In 1802 Wellesley declared that this "sacred trust" in
India was a "permanent succession" in order that justice and a "prudent and temperate system of revenue" would lead to happiness and prosperity. On another occasion he sanctioned the appropriation of strategic points on the route to India by proclaiming that "duty, policy and honour require that" the British empire "should not be administered as a temporary and precarious acquisition, as an empire conquered by prosperous adventure, and extended by fortunate accident, of which the tenure is as uncertain as the original conquest and successive extensions were extraordinary."  

Beyond these noble sentiments Wellesley went to India impressed by Pitt's conviction that revolutionary France must be met and mastered in every theatre. When he sailed for India

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185 Wellesley to Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, 5 August 1802, quoted in G. S. A. Ranking, "History of the College of Fort William," Bengal Past and Present, VII (January 1911), 23. In 1803 the new governor of Madras, Lord William Bentinck, a great admirer of Wellesley, wrote to Wellesley that he had made a profession of faith which held out to "this unhappy country" the hope of redemption from "anarchy and misery," a system which could embrace the whole of India, which could comprehend in one bond of mutual defence and reciprocal forbearance the predatory chiefs of this great empire, deserves the admiration of the civilised world. That system, one of the noblest efforts of the wisdom and patriotism of a subject, which has founded British greatness upon Indian happiness, demands, in a particular manner, the thanks and applause of the country.  

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186 Mornington, minute, 10 July 1800, quoted in Anil
the war was going badly. England lost its only continental ally after the battle of Campo Formio, and had already abandoned the Mediterranean to the combined Dutch, French, and Spanish fleets. Wellesley was determined to supply for Britain the consolation of such victories in his part of the world which could not at the moment be supplied in Europe. 187 His anti-Gallicanism pervaded the whole; there were no geographic and no functional barriers to it. 188 The intensity of his hatred of the French was such that he defined that nation's menace in handsome terms. It was not sufficient to save British India but to use India as an instrument to preserve Britain. Many observers have wondered whether Wellesley was in fact convinced that the French posed a grave danger to British India. They have for the most part concluded that his conviction was sincere and not merely a convenient excuse for his numerous annexations. They have also pointed to Arthur's influence. 189 They have referred to Napoleon's projects for massing one hundred thousand men on the Euphrates and to invade India as an ally of Czar Paul


189 Owen, Wellington, p. xxxviii.
of Russia. A few have condemned Wellesley for having "fostered the canard" of French power, for having stooped to "deliberate forgery." Most are convinced that one of Wellesley's qualifications for India in Pitt's eyes was his hatred of the revolution. But all of these judgements misread the central point: Wellesley's determination to use Indian resources to win the world war. Wellesley's definition of French danger applied not only to India. It was a universal principle, and was as relevant to fears of a French invasion of Ireland as it was to the alleged conspiracies of Tipu Sultan. And because Wellesley saw himself as a factor in the conduct of global war, he saw his responsibilities as extending to every area which touched on India.

The most crucial dimension of Wellesley's global strategy concerned the near and middle east. He focused on Egypt and Persia: the first held the key to a French maritime challenge, as has been noted, and the second to an overland campaign with Russia and Persia as allies. In the middle east his efforts complemented those of his viceregal predecessors, but went much further. In 1799 at Wellesley's urging the Bombay government

190 Roberts, India, pp. 30-32, 145. Recent studies have raised serious reservations about Napoleon's interest in an Indian expedition. See: J. L. Schneidman, "The Proposed Invasion of India by Russia and France in 1801," Journal of Indian History, XXXV (1957).

191 Kulkarni, British, p. 69.

192 Edwardes, Sahibs, p. 20; Butler, Eldest, pp. 116-17.
despatched a mission to Sana, capital of Arabia Felix or modern Yemen, to secure the cooperation of the Imam in strengthening British influence at the lower end of the Red Sea and along the Arabian littoral. He instructed his envoy to Persia to stop at Muscat late in 1799 and obtained an agreement to establish a British resident there. The Sultan of Aden made friendly overtures. And in early 1801 Wellesley addressed letters to a number of local potentates in the Arabian peninsula, and sent gifts to encourage them to make common cause against the French. His reports reveal an astonishing familiarity with political dynamics in the Hejaz.

In Persia the company had already appointed Harford Jones to serve as resident. The court of directors feared an overland French invasion; Wellesley late in 1799 was much more upset to discover that the enterprising resident was attempting to fashion diplomatic policy independent of the viceroy. Wellesley therefore decided to send John Malcolm as his own emissary in December 1799. At thirty-one he was one of the viceroy's most trusted lieutenants, and his embassy was made spectacular by Wellesley's decision to send with him expensive presents and

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193 G. S. Misra, British Foreign Policy and Indian Affairs, 1783-1815 (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 42.

194 Ibid., pp. 43, 46.

195 Mornington to Dundas, 29 November 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 211-12.
five hundred assistants. Malcolm was instructed to demand the cession to the company of some islands in the Persian Gulf and to offer a mutual security pact against Zeman Shah in Afghanistan. His ostentation later excited much criticism, but the idea was typical of Wellesley's methods and he would have approved Malcolm's defence that such display was appropriate in dealing with "a government not two stages removed from a state of barbarism." Malcolm did not obtain the islands but he did persuade the Shah to attack Zeman Shah and to keep the French out of Persian territories. It was a considerable achievement and launched Britain's lengthy involvement in Persia. Zeman Shah for his part became more circumspect and did not lead his forces against Delhi and the British protectorates; this accelerated Britain's consolidation of the northern frontiers in India.

Wellesley's conduct in the Persian theatre reflected his willingness to ignore and even to defy London in fashioning his own foreign policy. Shades of this will appear again during his tenure as Foreign secretary. London feared French involvement

196 Woodruff, Founders, pp. 206-207.
197 Kaye, Malcolm, I, 122.
199 Misra, British, p. 41.
in Persia; Wellesley did not. 200 Dundas feared that British friendliness towards Persia would alienate Russia as a potential ally in Europe. But this did not bother Wellesley, who much preferred to gain the immediate advantage of Persia's help in checkmating Zeman Shah while Oudh negotiations were in progress than he was in any hypothetical assistance to Anglo-Russian relations in Europe. Later Wellesley stopped short of assisting the Shah to settle differences with the Russians, but only because Zemán Shah was no longer an immediate danger. 201 Wellesley in all aspects of his Persian negotiations managed to marry his Gallophobia to the immediate need to use Persia to counterbalance his opponents in India, but his first consideration was his own power base. This formed the basis of his independent foreign policy and has confused many historians who have held that his conduct in Persia must have been motivated solely by fears of a French invasion. 202 This will be confirmed when Wellesley argues for retaining Ceylon.

In Egypt Wellesley was for the most part responding to


201 Wellesley to John Duncan, Governor of Bombay, 11 July 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 13693, f. 128.

specific requests from London. Dundas agreed in principle with Wellesley that French and Dutch colonies should be seized whenever possible, whether central to the war or not. This philosophy invited Wellesley's attention to many enterprises. Most germane to India's security was French use of the Isles de France and Bourbon to prepare soldiers and ships for an attack on India. Wellesley was eager to capture them, but Rainier refused to cooperate. Wellesley was furious at this second demonstration of independence on the part of the admiral and demanded from London plenary power over the navy which he had already obtained over the army in India, but his wish was not granted, and the islands remained French. Rainier, at any rate, was determined not to despatch his forces to remote corners of the Indian ocean when rumors of a French maritime invasion continued to circulate. In October 1798 Wellesley wrote to Dundas reporting rumors that Napoleon had prepared a fleet to rescue Tipu Sultan. This report was in part correct, for he learned from Dundas in early November that a fleet had indeed sailed from Toulon, and was thought to be destined for

203 Ingram, Two Views, pp. 4-5.
204 Wellesley, pp. 92-95.
205 Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 97-98.
India. He promised to supply Wellesley forty-five hundred troops from the Cape, Gibraltar, and Portugal. In November Wellesley claimed that Napoleon has reached Basra in Iraq; reports were "vague and contradictory" but he believed that Napoleon would reach Lahore before the monsoon set in. 207 Dundas of course possessed better information. He knew that Napoleon had reached Cairo and not Basra. Napoleon was not murdered, as Dundas at first was led to hope, but by March 1799 he could write of British successes in the Mediterranean and of Napoleon's army "mouldering away under many hardships" in Egypt. 208 By the time this information reached India, Wellesley had not only determined to force the issue with Tipu Sultan but had in fact destroyed him. Wellesley had also warned Dundas not to restore to France any of their ancient Indian possessions, and hoped that Napoleon would make a bid in this part of the world if he survived the encampment on the Nile: "the arrival of a French force in India would be rather a desirable event than otherwise" he told Dundas. 209 "If Bonaparte should

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206 Dundas to Mornington, 16 June 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 48-49.

207 Mornington to Dundas, 26 November 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 112.

208 Dundas to Mornington, 29 December 1798, 23 March 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 116-17, 140.

209 Mornington to Dundas, 16 May 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 149.
now choose to visit Malabar," he wrote to Pitt, "I trust he
will find supper prepared for him before he has reached
Calcutta."210

Wellesley's role in the British expedition to Egypt in
1801 forms a part of this theme. Napoleon invaded Egypt in
1798 in a heroic effort to secure his own reputation (which
he did despite the disaster which followed in Egypt) and perhaps
to undermine British control in India. In London William Lord
Grenville as Foreign secretary was glad enough to see one army
out of Europe and opposed a British expedition to destroy it.211
But Dundas was increasingly concerned as Napoleon advanced to
Damascus, and as he confessed to Wellesley "it is laid down
as an axiom applicable to the conduct of extensive warfare
by this country that our principal efforts should be to deprive
our enemies of their colonial possessions."212 This lay behind
Dundas' ample support for Wellesley's Mysore policies, his
efforts to appropriate Portuguese possessions at Goa and Diu,
and even the use of the Marathas as a subsidiary force to protect

210 Mornington to Pitt, n. d., PRO MSS 30/8/188, f. 91.
212 Dundas to Wellesley, 31 October 1799, abstract, National Library of Scotland, Melville MSS 1062, f. 53.
India against a land invasion through Sind. Such policies would be rendered unnecessary only if Grenville would support a direct attack on the French in Egypt. Grenville refused. Nor would he support plans to reinforce the Turks so that they could deal with the French on the Nile, fearing that as soon as the French departed the Turks would revert to a pro-French policy because of fear of Russia. Grenville was overruled, but not in time to implement a policy of aiding Ottoman forces, and the French were still in control of Egypt in early summer 1800.213

Wellesley eventually forced the issue by virtue of his policies in India. By destroying Tipu Sultan he angered the Marathas, who in turn could not be used to defend India's land frontier against a potential French threat. Dundas at once demanded that a British expedition be sent to Egypt.214 Pitt agreed, but of course he expected that Wellesley would also assist by sending a force from India to the Red Sea. In London this seemed to be an entirely reasonable course of action. Wellesley, however, resisted, for by the time these instructions reached him in early 1801 he had already laid out his plans to

213Grenville to Elgin, 28 March 1800, Foreign Office MS 72/28.

214Dundas to Grenville, 9 September 1800, Scottish Record Office, Melville MSS, GD 51/1/548/6.
dismember the Maratha confederacy. He covered his ambitions by claiming that France was much more likely to invade India by a maritime expedition, and independently of London laid plans for some maritime activity in the summer of 1800.

Wellesley's strategy was a grand one. In the summer of 1800 Wellesley regrouped his army at Tincomalee and Madras. At first he contemplated an attack on Batavia, but postponed this when he concluded that the French might send an expedition to Suez to reinforce their troops. Later he abandoned Batavia and under pressure from Dundas laid plans for a grand strategy involving the despatch of troops to Suez, if London would authorise the transfer of troops from the Cape to balance India's losses. When by December he had heard nothing further from Dundas (the delay was due to Grenville) Wellesley adopted yet a third strategy, the capture of the Isles de France and Mauritius, "those prolific sources of intrigue in peace, and of piracy and buccaneering in war." Wellesley's plans were frustrated when Rainier, the admiral in command of the East Indies fleet, refused to budge. Wellesley was becalmed.

215 Wellesley to Rainier, 21 June 1800, BM, Wellesley MS, 13751, f. 77; Wellesley to Dundas, 7 March 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 13457, f. 66.
216 Mornington to Dundas, 5 March 1800, Wellesley to Dundas, 13 July 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 229, 277-78.
217 Martin, Despatches, II, 39.
Dundas came to the rescue. In February 1801 Wellesley received instructions to send an army to Suez. Grenville had capitulated. Wellesley had reservations about such a strategy, and the Indian army arrived in Egypt in time only to complicate matters. The French army surrendered on generous terms and returned to France. Wellesley's own grand strategy to use India to save Europe had come to very little.

In India itself, however, Wellesley performed a signal service. When news of the peace of Amiens reached Calcutta, Wellesley refused to restore to France her Indian settlements as stipulated under the terms of the treaty, or truce, of Amiens. Bonaparte sent out a large staff to direct French interests from Pondicherry, and Wellesley refused to surrender it. In May 1803 hostilities in Europe were renewed, and Wellesley's discrete disobedience was applauded.

These initiatives may be regarded as the beginning of Wellesley's own "foreign policy" in the east. By virtue of his expedition to Egypt he "had already made a most effective proclamation to the world that the far-off Indian empire, instead of being merely a burden to the war-worn mother country,

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220 Ibid., p. 56.
was able to react upon the European situation." 221 Now his decisions were likely to carry additional weight. His next order of business was to proceed with the appropriation of remaining non-British European possessions in India. 222 "My resolution is fixed, he declared, "to dislodge every European excepting the company's servants." 223 As early as 30 January 1800 Wellesley had complained to Dundas that the Danish enclaves Tanquebar and Serampore were filled with "adventurers, Jacobins, public defaulters and debtors from Bengal." He proposed to "annihilate" all these petty European states, beginning with those belonging to Denmark. 224 This was a highhanded suggestion, for Denmark was not at war and Portugal was Britain's ally. Prussia, Denmark and Sweden formed the "armed neutrality" in 1801, however, and the Indian presidencies were duly instructed to seize Danish settlements, ships and property. 225 Denmark never got them back, even though Wellesley was directed to restore

221 Roberts, India, p. 149.
222 Ibid., p. 143.
223 Ibid., p. 175.
225 Misra, British, p. 46.
them. Wellesley's initiatives against Portuguese possessions were considerably bolder, considering Portugal's status. In October 1798 he recommended to Dundas that Goa be seized to prevent a French thrust at the Malabar post from taking advantage of the weakness of the garrison.²²⁶ A year later he was prepared to seize Goa and compensate them with Dutch territories in the East Indies; Portugal had failed to offer assistance against Tipu Sultan.²²⁷ No encouragement was forthcoming from London; surely he could not have expected approval for a bald violation of an ally's possessions. Wellesley therefore proceeded on his own initiative. He commandeered Goa to prepare his ships for the Egyptian expedition in February 1801.²²⁸ The Portuguese cooperated as they had to, for Wellesley deployed troops so as to seize Goa if necessary.²²⁹ Henceforth Portugal's Indian territories were no more than British protectorates.

European possessions farther afield were also fair game. Wellesley may have given some consideration to acquiring Dutch and Spanish possessions east of the Malacca straits even before

²²⁶ Mornington to Dundas, 11 October 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 99.
²²⁷ Ibid., 26 October 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 198.
²²⁸ Ibid., 5 March 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 230.
²²⁹ Misra, British, pp. 47, 56.
he left Britain. Buckingham in a letter congratulating Wellesley on his appointment to Bengal indicated that he was aware of the new viceroy's interest in the East Indies. Buckingham even proposed the preposterous idea of seizing Spanish possessions on the Pacific coast of the Americas by an expedition from India. In June 1800 Wellesley had reason to believe part of Buckingham's dream might be realised. He was ordered to prepare a naval expedition to Batavia, and proceeded with alacrity. The expedition was cancelled when Napoleon's invasion of Egypt occurred, but Wellesley soon renewed his requests to seize the Philippines and Mauritius. Mauritius was taken and remained British.

Wellesley's role in the Dutch East Indies revealed his penchant for ambitious and audacious projects. In 1796 various Dutch settlements in that region had been captured. Ternate in the Moluccas, the most valuable of them, was not captured until 1801, however. This ambitious undertaking apparently angered officials at Madras, who complained that R. T. Farquhar, the resident at Amboina, had "spent the public

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230 Buckingham to Mornington, 11 October 1797, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 57.

231 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 267.

force and wealth on a splendid but most injudicious conquest."  
Perhaps so, but Wellesley may have ordered the expedition in order to end Dutch-sponsored piracy against British trade. When it came time to implement the treaty of Amiens, Wellesley decided against retaining any concessions gained by virtue of wartime conquests in the East Indies. He undertook instead to restore an old British establishment at Balambangan off the north coast of Borneo. This port of call was designed to serve as a listening post on the China trade routes, a point for diplomatic contact with local powers, a base for possible naval action, and an entrepot for the distribution of opium, Indian piece goods and English manufactures. Goods collected in China could also be handled there. Wellesley uncannily presaged the role of Hong Kong, and he hoped that the Dutch would see the wisdom of leaving British trade unmolested.  
Farquhar and Wellesley reinforced the empire-building tendencies of each other. In 1804 Wellesley was asked to approve an assault on Manila. Wellesley did not — Holkar was enough trouble at the moment — but he urged Farquhar "to consolidate and augment our power, influence and consideration among the


234 Bengal Foreign Consultations, 31 March 1803, and 11 July 1805, no. 98, cited in Wright, East Indian, p. 268.
eastern seas. Inevitably, the East India company took issue with this. It ordered the Balambangan settlement disbanded and Wellesley gave orders to this effect shortly before he sailed for England. Later British naval power was called on to subdue the Dutch once more. Wellesley meanwhile had refused to destroy the captured Dutch settlement at Malacca on the Malay coast. This was retained and became with Penang the nucleus of modern Malaysia. One of Malaysia's provinces bears Wellesley's name.

Wellesley's views and actions made an important mark in London, even if not all the territories he proposed to acquire were appropriated. Nothing is more striking as testimony to his global perspective than his agitation to retain the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon, and to attach them to the Indian empire. Wellesley justified his plans for the Cape by advancing all the major arguments later associated with British imperialists. He added a few of his own. He had been much impressed by the salubrious climate there, and thought that the Cape should be retained so that the incumbent viceroy could regain his health there. Indeed, if Britain would keep the Cape, Wellesley would


236 Wright, East Indian, p. 278.
agree to remain in India indefinitely! Wellesley wrote this in anticipation of negotiations at Amiens. Pitt's friends decided not to keep the Cape.

The treaty of Amiens necessarily neglected a veritable collection of Wellesley's acquisitions, for they had been neither authorised nor digested in London. The expansion of British territory in India under Wellesley was technically illegal under terms of the India acts of 1784 and 1793. These prohibitions prompted the use of subsidiary treaties and other such devices to camouflage British control. But outside the subcontinent much was possible. Wellesley reinforced Britain's claims to preponderance all along the foothills of the Himalayas and into modern Kashmir. Perhaps his most spectacular unreported annexations occurred in Burma. Here the French menace was elaborately exaggerated: the French were not really interested until they saw Wellesley in action. From 1798 to 1800 Wellesley tried to exploit a contested succession to King Bodawpaya "for the purpose of establishing British influence and ... promoting British interests in the Burmese empire." Wellesley's envoy was instructed to offer the inevitable subsidiary treaty. The young heir stalled, and French ships arrived almost simultaneously. The Burmese were able to refuse both offers, but the effect was to leave Britain rather than

237Wellesley to Dundas, 7 October 1800, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 304-307.
France the option of making new overtures in the future. Wellesley did not need Burmese assistance to crush the French in India, but Burma would eventually be forced to accept the superintendence of the Raj. He mentioned Burma when urging Britain to retain Ceylon; the special status of Ceylonese Buddhism would facilitate British control in Burma.

But Wellesley's most significant triumph was the decision to retain Ceylon in 1801. Wellesley's role has been consistently neglected here. He never visted the island, but he studied it with great care and war far better informed about its immense potential than almost anyone in the area. Over a period of three years Wellesley not only persuaded the Pittites that Ceylon was well worth saving, but he advertised its virtues so forcefully that Pitt would subsequently counter criticism of the treaty of Amiens by declaring that acquiring Ceylon outweighed every concession to France elsewhere.

Pitt had recognised Ceylon's potential importance to British India as early as 1787. In 1795 Britain extracted from the fugitive Statholder William V the right to limited military facilities in Ceylon and elsewhere. In the case of

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238 Banerjee, Eastern, pp. 190-219, 220.

Ceylon local Dutch authorities opposed the concessions made by the deposed Statholder and resisted the British. This resistance was eventually overcome after a seven month campaign, but Britain thought that the bloodshed involved entitled them to treat Ceylon as a conquered colony. Immediately Ceylon became an important feature in Britain's bargaining position vis-a-vis the French. In 1797 during the Lille negotiations Britain was willing to return Ceylon to the Netherlands, but by 1801 Pitt was unwilling to part with it. Grenville became even more adamant on the issue.

The rising value of Ceylon during this period has usually been credited to Dundas. He despatched a royal governor rather than leave Ceylon under the jurisdiction of Madras. He talked of Ceylon's importance when justifying the attack on Mysore. From these observations scholars have tended to conclude that he was instrumental in convincing Pitt to retain Ceylon at all costs. It is clear now, however, that Dundas did not play this role. He removed Ceylon from Madras' jurisdiction

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240 Mendis, Advent, pp. 143-45.
242 Adams, Influence, p. 56; Malmesbury, Diaries, III, 385.
because he had many reasons to dislike Hobart. When news of Tipu's defeat reached London he was quick to discount the need to retain Ceylon, which he now declared was not essential to the defence of British India. Instead, Wellesley played the role of advocate traditionally identified with Dundas. He supplied Grenville and Pitt the material which convinced them, and his papers contain drafts and proposals which suggest quite clearly that Wellesley did more than write to Dundas. He primed messengers and sent his proposals through several different channels. In short, he lobbied for Ceylon.

What were his arguments and what light do they throw on Wellesley in India? As early as February 1798 he was persuaded that "the possession of Ceylon, either in the hands of France or of her bondslove Holland, would enable the French interests in India to rise within a very short period to a degree of formidable strength, never before possessed by them. . . . The possession of Ceylon," Wellesley concluded, "is universally held to be indispensable to the preservation both of our power on the continent and of our commerce on the seas of India." In October he strengthened the garrison in Ceylon. During 1799 no fewer than ten references to the indispensability of

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244 Dundas to Mornington, 9 October 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 185.

245 Ibid., 28 February 1798, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 99.
Ceylon to Britain's position in Asia were incorporated into Wellesley's correspondence to Dundas. The same sentiments were addressed directly to Grenville, to Pitt, and even to Addington. Wellesley held that the Napoleonic threat by an overland march was not great, but that a maritime assault would pose grave dangers. Ceylon must be retained, and it was.

For Wellesley the retention of Ceylon was only the first step. He also campaigned to have it made subject to Bengal. He was disappointed when Frederick North arrived as governor in late 1798 holding a commission making him both governor and commander-in-chief, with instructions to report directly to London. North himself told Wellesley that he was eager to respond to the viceroy's directives "as far as circumstances will permit." Wellesley's immediate reaction was to cultivate North's friendship and to support his projects for establishing a protectorate over the Kandyan kingdom in the interior. He urged London to transfer North to Madras and thus extend Madras' jurisdiction to Ceylon. Dundas hesitated; Wellesley pleaded that there was an "absolute necessity of preserving the control of the governor general in council over the government of Ceylon entire, and in the fullest efficiency. . . . Without this control,"

246 Frederick North, governor of Ceylon, to Mornington, 5 June 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS, 13866.

247 Mornington to Dundas, 21 April, 16 May, 31 July 1799, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 151-71; North to Wellesley, 15 September 1799, BM, Wellesley MSSS 13866; De Silva, Ceylon, I, 231-32; Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 267.
he argued, "the possession of Ceylon, instead of being . . . the great bulwark of this empire, may become nearly as useless to the common cause as if it were in the hands of a neutral power." A governor independent of the company might prove to be "the source of the most dangerous confusion and distraction in the bosom of our dominions." Already, he thought, there were too many autonomous authorities in the empire, and there was too much reliance on bureaucratic devices to justify such separate jurisdictions. Dundas was not convinced, and Wellesley's petitions to Castlereagh and Hobart, his successors at the board of control, fell on deaf ears. London had been convinced of the necessity of saving Ceylon for the empire. It could not be persuaded that it should belong to Wellesley.

The bid to attach Ceylon to Britain and to British India underscored Wellesley's interest and influence in fashioning a policy against France, and his own determination to play a prominent role in Britain's foreign policy, even from India. He demanded autonomy in his own jurisdiction, but he wished to influence London's thinking. This was especially the case after Pitt resigned and Grenville was alienated from Addington.

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249 Wellesley to Dundas, 10 May 1801, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 328-31.
Wellesley was convinced that the empire needed his leadership. This impression intensified even as his own position in India was threatened by steadily growing criticism of his aggressive policies. After 1801 Wellesley confronted Addington's indecisiveness and loss of nerve at the board of control. And behind all this was the mounting anger of the court of directors of the East India company, whose servant Wellesley was.

VIII: Wellesley's Relations with the Pitt and Addington Ministries

Wellesley did not realise until his return to England in January 1806 that the public was not much interested in India. Britain was engrossed in a war closer to home, and not until another generation had passed would the nation take up the Indian empire as an object of popular fascination. To the extent that a general interest could be measured, it seems that Wellesley's expansionist program was supported. There was a distrust of his imperial grandeloquence, a hesitation about assuming once more the role of imperial greatness much as had led to such misery in North America only twenty years earlier.

Parliament reflected this lack of enthusiasm. Between 1784 and 1813 Parliament saw fit to enact almost no significant legislation related to the East India company or to India. The

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250 Bearce, British, p. 48.
Charter act of 1793 slightly altered the commercial system of India. Several other pieces of legislation involved the introduction of British-style courts, or touched on the Indian army and the company's financial affairs. None involved any serious debate in which the purposes and objectives of British rule in India were discussed. During this period only about six or seven percent of M.P.'s were closely connected to Indian affairs or commerce and thus could be considered as constituting an Indian interest.

For Wellesley's colleagues it was also a case of "out of sight, out of mind." Dundas of course was immediately interested while he served as president of the board of control. But this was only one of several heavy burdens entrusted to him by Pitt, and managing the Scottish vote at Westminster was pre-eminent. Dundas was inclined to manage Scotland by distributing Indian patronage to his countrymen. Scotland lost control of its own destiny, one observer has suggested, while it gained control of India. At any rate, Dundas was destined to be replaced in 1801 by Dartmouth, who was ineffective, and later by

251 Ibid., pp. 36-37.


253 Thompson and Garratt, British, pp. 170-71.
Castlereagh, whose dismay at the embarrassment caused by Wellesley's annexations led him to keep his contacts with the viceroy to a minimum.

Wellesley went to India assured of support from Pitt and Grenville. This commitment gradually faded. Wellesley believed that he had from Pitt a commitment to excuse any violations of the act forbidding annexations. Pitt's own views had changed under the pressure of war and would not stick to "the literal or any other meaning of abstract resolutions" embodied in this legislation.254 After Wellesley reached India Pitt did nothing to check his ambitious policies. But, as Butler suggests, "his value to the prime minister had been that of stimulating companionship: this ardent, brilliant, graceful young man made impact in leisure rather than in business hours."255 With Wellesley gone there was no chance for this companionship, and long letters were no substitute. Pitt was never a good correspondent, and the pressure of events was sufficient excuse for him to postpone taking up his pen.

But there were deeper reasons for the gradual decline of intimacy between Wellesley and Pitt. The most important factor was Grenville. Wellesley had entered the Pittite circle

254 Torrens, Marquess, p. 147.
255 Butler, Eldest, p. 149.
as a Grenvillite. In 1800 Grenville split from Pitt on the issue of negotiations with France, Grenville taking a decidedly harder line. Perhaps Pitt was reluctant to preempt Grenville's place as Wellesley's natural leader. If so, he should not have worried. Grenville also ceased to correspond with Wellesley. At first there were a few long letters, and Wellesley contributed a couple of items to the Fortescue manuscripts. Gradually others put down their pens. Canning offered "a long and brilliant survey" of British prospects in Europe in November 1799, after he had surrendered his position as under-secretary in the Foreign office and joined the board of control.256 There was little else.

At first Wellesley complained bitterly that all his friends had conspired to forget him, and he sent several stinging letters berating them for defaulting in their promise to write. But gradually this ceased to bother him. Wellesley was closer to Grenville in assessing the evils of the treaty of Amiens, which made it difficult for him to write to Pitt or to Addington. India was too distant, he told Grenville, for him to determine whether he should "aid their weakness, or to drive them from their offices."257 Grenville's own anomalous position did not


257 Wellesley to Grenville, 14 February 1803, BM, Wellesley MSS 37283, f. 31.
make things clearer. As a result of all this, Wellesley slowly began to realise that there was no one in Britain to whom he could turn. As he observed in a letter to Hobart on 31 December 1803, "his friends and connections" were "scattered over both houses in inconsiderable parties, almost without a single point of agreement." Wellesley had gained a temporary independence from government, not only by virtue of "all this dreadful space of half the convex world," but because the central executive of the empire had lost a sense of direction. For the moment Wellesley could enjoy the exhilaration which attended such independence. Later he would realise that this much-weakened government at home could not and would not defend him against his angry employer the East India Company.

What transpired in England while Wellesley governed distant India? Soon after he sailed for the Cape Pitt's coalition of elements committed to the recovery of Britain's prestige and power began to reveal irreparable fissures. By 1802 centrifugal tendencies were to become strong enough to destroy the alliance of Pitt's own disciples and the pro-war Portland Whigs. Ostensibly the issue was concessions to Catholics. Beneath the surface, however, the system was suffering from the

258 Wellesley to Hobart, 31 December 1803, BM, Wellesley MSS 37283, f. 125.

weakness endemic in the 1760s and again in the early 1780s: too many candidates for leadership positions, and not enough loyal followers; too many factions; too little parliamentary discipline. "All the principal features of party management - party leaders, shippers-in, patronage secretaries of the treasury, the part chest, party meetings, the party press - had long been in existence."\(^{260}\) In themselves, however, they did not guarantee a system of government by party. The Whigs, who constituted at the beginning of the century the largest grouping, not excluding the Pittites, had become accustomed to treating elections as a popular referendum on who should be supreme: cabinet or king?\(^{261}\) But the Whigs, though numerous (about one hundred fifty M.P.s adhered to Fox in 1805) were not by themselves large enough to form a government. Until Pitt fell he held together a body of talented politicians who in turn relied on the small factions they commanded to provide the ministry a majority. Pitt held little stock in parties, but much in talented individuals.\(^{262}\) It has been said that Pitt

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made no contribution to nineteenth and twentieth century party government. This may be too sweeping a statement, but it is true that his followers demonstrated none of the cohesion of Fox's followers.

The period between 1800 and 1812 proved to be the last great era of government by faction. Thereafter the art of constructing a ministry on the support of numerous small groups would gradually disappear, and by the third decade of the nineteenth century even the Tories would accept the notion that ministerial mandates relied on command of parliamentary support rather than on the will of the monarch. But at the beginning of the century the great increase in the number of mercantile men, combined with the reduced stock of strong leaders, encouraged one last flirtation with government by faction. These mercantile men, along with a certain number of country gentlemen who supported every ministry in order to command local patronage, constituted a "floating transferable body so powerful as to enable the crown to give a majority to any minister however small may be the number of his adherents."263

The revival of action was certainly encouraged by signs that Pitt's hold on the people was wearing thin after a half dozen years of war. One of the first letters despatched to

Wellesley described Pitt's being hooted by the crowds when enroute to St. Paul's to celebrate a series of naval victories. 264 There had been a series of bad harvests, and when the weather improved Pitt gained a temporary respite. But there was sedition among the "wildest and bloodiest democracy" (Wellesley's successor at Dangan Castle was among those arrested), but the country seemed prosperous and London "good-humoured and gay." 265 More and more European states were falling to Napoleon, but British leaders looked forward to an explosion in which "the whole colossus of the French power would speedily and suddenly fall to pieces." 266 Such illusions soon faded, but each year brought its new hopes: Napoleon's troubles in Egypt in 1799 suggested that "the prospect of crushing the revolutionary monster" had "never been so fair," and when Napoleon made a bid for peace talks at Christmas 1799 Grenville as Foreign secretary couched his refusal in insulting language. 267 Meanwhile Napoleon escaped Egypt, and the ministry soon resorted to a cheerless tax of ten percent on all income, a stiff impost in those days. 268 In February 1800 Hawkesbury could

264 Bathurst to Mornington, 3 January 1798, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 80.


266 Ibid.

267 Sylvester Douglas to Mornington, 29 July 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 245.

268 Auckland to Mornington, 15 September 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 263.
assure Wellesley that there was no disposition at all to treat with France at the conference table. "In truth, the administration of the country was never more firmly established, nor more popular and triumphant, than it is at present." \(^{269}\)

In truth, however, Pitt's ministry had already been seriously weakened. The opposition was large if divided, and as long as the King was steady, unpopular measures and disappointing news regarding the war could be absorbed. But Pitt resigned when the King refused to sign a measure conceding civil rights to Catholics. Pitt wanted his supporters to help Addington, who, as Buckingham told Wellesley, was "rash enough to undertake the government" and thus upset all calculations to force Pitt and Catholic concessions onto the king. \(^{270}\) But Grenville took the lead among those who would not remain in office. Buckingham did not suggest that Wellesley should return to England, and others urged him definitely not to do so; the question of Addington's incapacity transcended party considerations and endangered the empire. \(^{271}\)

Had Addington not proceeded to negotiate the treaty of Amiens the Pittites' divisions would have stopped short of an

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\(^{269}\) Robert Banks Jenkinson, Viscount Hawkesbury and Second Earl of Liverpool, to Wellesley, 14 February 1800, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 279.

\(^{270}\) Buckingham to Wellesley, 10 February 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 321.

\(^{271}\) Auckland to Wellesley, 4 April 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 327.
irrevocable break. William Wellesley Pole wrote to Wellesley in July reporting that Addington improved as a public speaker after he surprised everyone by accepting office in March 1801, and that Pitt's departure had generated "little sensation."272 Pitt was robust in his ostentatious unemployment and spoke "brave words at the breach" in defence of reverses in the war.273 Napoleon, however, advanced from triumph to triumph, and his system had established itself so well that even his demise would not end the war.274 But debate on the treaty of Amiens finally precipitated the inevitable crisis, and in this Grenville took the lead. He proclaimed that Amiens was harsh to Britain and feared that Addington could not save the country. After ratification, and though shocked that Pitt adhered to the treaty, Grenville took the line that there could be no salvation for Britain unless Pitt returned to office. In October 1801, therefore, he began a course of systematic opposition to press parliament into demanding Pitt's return to office and to pressure Pitt into accepting such an invitation. Pitt, however, did not come to share Grenville's objectives until he had seen Addington in

272 William Wellesley-Pole, Baron Maryborough and Third Earl of Mornington, to Wellesley, 3 July 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 344.

273 Auckland to Wellesley, 28 August 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 347.

274 Ibid.
action for more than a year, and until he saw that Grenville, despairing of Pitt, had turned to Fox. 275

In the short run Grenville's decision to seek an alliance with Fox was intended as the basis for a "broad-bottom" amalgamation of parties dedicated to assisting Pitt. It is hard to think that Fox shared these objectives, but the desperate nature of Addington's ministerial management was such as to loosen most ancient prejudices. 276 Pitt at any rate released Grenville from any embarrassment here by categorically refusing to accept a "broad-bottom" approach, Fox included, to meet Britain's need for a stronger government. Grenville thereupon moved immediately to invite the cooperation of Fox, and their differences were discussed and adjusted between January and May 1804. 277

By these maneuvers Grenville stimulated the recovery of viable opposition to the Pittites, of which he had long been the most prominent ornament. His group was small, only about fifteen members, and in relation to Fox's group ten times that size it was numerically insignificant. But this smaller


interest provided more of the combined opposition's tactical direction than did the larger party. Those tactics proved startlingly simple in their Machiavellian way: to pull Addington down Grenville had joined with Fox and would continue to refuse to join a second Pitt ministry without Fox. But as soon as Pitt's ministry rallied Grenville solicited Addington (now Viscount Sidmouth) to help in forming his own ministry. Better still it would be if Wellesley could also be persuaded to join this amalgam of anti-Pittites trying to revive Pittitism of a sort.

In Calcutta and at his summer retreat at Barrackpore Wellesley did not know what to make of all this. Because his correspondents in Britain were confused, they wrote infrequently. Hyacinthe forwarded the most succinct report: "time will explain this mass of falsehood and intrigue - but when religion is mixed with politics, only misfortune can be expected." Wellesley wrote to Pitt agreeing to support Addington, lamenting the King's inconvenient religious scruples towards the Catholics' demand for relief, and warned Pitt not to be outflanked by the likes of Lord Hawkesbury. Later he grew more alarmed,

278 Ibid., p. 41.

279 Julian R. McQuiston, "Rose and Canning in Opposition, 1806-1807," Historical Journal XIV (September 1971), 519.


281 Wellesley to Pitt, 21 October 1801, Fortescue MSS, VII, 63.
probably under the impact of letters from Grenville entreatning him to take a harder line against Addington and thus to help pave the way for the return of Pitt. Addington's ministry, Wellesley observed after two years, "possesses no great degree of energy," but they were "nearly all men of honour and common sense." He disliked the "perilous and humiliating" peace of Amiens. But he would not desert Pitt despite Grenville's entreaties, and he was glad enough to be in India where he need not choose between Pitt and Grenville.282

In the spring of 1803 Wellesley's letter complaining of Addington's lassitude" was intercepted by the French, translated, and published in Paris.283 Addington was undoubtedly embarrassed. But he was long-suffering by nature and at any rate he could not afford to recall Wellesley only to have him oppose the government. So into 1804 Wellesley continued to humour Grenville with confusing observations: peace had been inevitable and war would soon be inevitable (indeed, it had already resumed when he wrote); he agreed with Grenville but sympathised with Addington; Pitt was the only hope and yet hopeless.284

282Wellesley to Grenville, 16 February 1803, Fortescue MSS, VII, 144.
283Grenville to Wellesley, 12 July 1803, Fortescue MSS, VII, 172-75.
284Wellesley to Grenville, 1 January 1804, Fortescue MSS, VII, 383.
The collapse of Pitt's government in 1801 also stimulated factionalism in other quarters. Of these by far the most interesting to Wellesley was the group being fashioned by his young colleague George Canning. Canning shared many of Wellesley's principles, though it is unlikely that they were seriously interested in each other's political philosophy prior to Wellesley's departure for India. Canning's background was precarious in respects different from those of Wellesley; his mother was an actress and this was thought to be an insuperable bar to his advancement. But he had been raised by an entirely respectable collection of relatives, and he was clever. He had no base in politics, such as Wellesley had Trim, but his success as a parliamentary speaker was such as to provide recruits for his interest right off the floor of the house of Commons. While Wellesley reigned in India Canning was laying the basis for his own parliamentary interest at home.

The Canning interest inherited many of the brightest younger Pittites when Pitt himself withdrew from the King's service in 1801. Closest in terms of intimacy were Charles Ellis, Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, and William Huskisson. Wellesley knew all three well. Second in rank were William Sturges Bourne, Lord Binning, Lord Boringdon, Lord Morpeth, and Robert ("Bobus") Smith. The third rank consisted of John Frere and John Hookham Frere (whom Wellesley at a later date
would replace as envoy to Spain), and four country gentlemen, Robert Holt Leigh, Multon Joliffe, Bootle Wilbraham, and John Dent. The Freres had abandoned parliament by the time Wellesley returned from India, and Smith went to India in 1803 to make his fortune. The major inhibition on an even more rapid development of the Canning interest was Canning himself. He was among the first to realise that the Pittite party had been shattered, probably irreparably, in 1801. But such was his devotion to Pitt that he was reluctant to pursue new connections of a "less wide and therefore more binding nature" which the collapse of the Pittite alliance now encouraged.

Canning's conduct between 1801 and 1806 strikes one as close to a course which Wellesley might have followed had he been in England during that period. His enemies and some of his friends complained that Canning exercised a despotic control over his friends and relatives. Undoubtedly, as Aspinall has noted, Canning held strongly the notion that "political connections of public men must unavoidably have considerable influence on their private friendships." He despised Addington but could not go into opposition "without breaking with

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Pitt violently and publicly," since Pitt was pledged to support Addington. When by early summer 1803 Pitt was no longer defending Addington Canning felt free to support a vote of censure on the ministry. 288

While Canning laboured to restore Pitt to office in place of Addington, he also made an attempt to secure the support of Grenville, and through him, Fox. In 1801 Grenville and Fox both found themselves in opposition but not in agreement with each other: Grenville supported resumption of war while Fox would not. By 1803, however, Fox was willing to end the truce with France, and Grenvillites and Foxites stopped criticising each other. 289 By early 1804 they were prepared to take office. In March Canning obliquely invited both of them to consider taking office under Pitt. They interpreted this as a signal that Pitt was indeed prepared to return to power. 290 Canning, Fox and Grenville thereupon worked to maneuver Addington into opposing Pitt's ideas. Addington's ministry fell, but Canning's hope for a comprehensive ministry was foiled by the

288 Ibid., pp. 180-83.


290 Eastby, "Fox," p. 66.
King's refusal to accept Fox. Pitt would not deliver the ultimatum which might have succeeded in breaking down the King's prejudices; he was dedicated to the crown and not to party. So Fox and Grenville were excluded. Canning also stayed out temporarily.

Whether Wellesley would have been willing to serve with Fox is debatable, but 1804 must not be judged by his feelings about Fox in 1806, following Fox's flirtations with Paull. The "comprehensive ministry" proved impossible in any case and Canning's group adopted the curious stance of a "party of Pitt's friends out of office." Canning finally joined the ministry, though he later regretted it. He tried again to resign when Sidmouth astonished the political world by swallowing all pride and coming in as well. Again Pitt would not have it. Canning's intimacy with Pitt was on the way to recovery when Pitt died in January 1806.

Canning's behaviour was so close to what Wellesley was advising the Pittites from his steaming quarters in Calcutta that at first glance it might appear Canning was Wellesley's amanuensis. Both shared the drive for a reunification of the Pittites. Both urged a vigorous war effort, when war began.

292 Ibid., pp. 181-83.
293 Eastby, "Fox," p. 80.
Neither had any confidence in Sidmouth (although Sidmouth had been kind to Wellesley). Both though highly of themselves. They were eager to rescue Grenville from Fox, and if that could not be done, to wrestle prospective leadership of the Pittites from Grenville. So close was their thinking that Wellesley might be excused for thinking that the Marquess would find a parliamentary interest already in place which might be used with that of his own friends. But that was still in the future.

In May 1804 Addington's ministry finally collapsed. It could not deal with Napoleon, and the King's periodic bouts of insanity persuaded everyone that Pitt must return. Wellesley had managed to avoid entangling himself in any of the Pittite factions. Hyacinthe had entreated him to identify with Grenville. Addington had on the other hand done what he could to support Wellesley, and though Wellesley would come to dislike him intensely before he reached England, he could claim to have supported Addington honourably (with one well publicised indiscretion) during the critical period. On 30 August, after receiving news of Pitt's return to power in an unusually fast-travelling post, he was glad to be able to lay aside all thoughts of factionalism. At any rate, Wellesley had more immediate concerns, for among those who had joined to defeat Addington in large numbers were the members of the East India interest.294 Were they critical of Addington

294 Philips, East India, pp. 139-40.
alone or of the viceroy in India? Did they want to see Pitt restored perhaps so that Wellesley would be subject to stricter discipline? By 1804 Wellesley's troubles were beginning to mount; Castlereagh remained at the board of control and at first he was not disposed to dispute Wellesley's actions during the long Addington interregnum. But much had happened which was beyond his control to suppress, and his own criticism of Wellesley gradually increased.

IX: The Board of Control

Communications between London and Calcutta were necessarily poor at the end of the eighteenth century: distance insured that much time elapsed; war and normal hazards reduced the likelihood that messages would arrive at all. During the war many despatches between the board of control and the viceroy were encoded; coding was arduous and it certainly discouraged frequent communication. In 1798, shortly after arriving in India, Wellesley complained of the paucity of information he received. A system of overland despatches had recently been instituted, but in Wellesley's opinion they were insufficient because the despatches themselves were skimpy. He asked to be furnished every month with a short statement in cypher of all intelligence London could supply about enemy

295 India Office, Home Miscellaneous MSS 505.
military activity, and wanted copies of the London weeklies forwarded to all three presidencies, all by overland mail. 296 It is not clear whether this was done. Wellesley continued to complain of a want of information. He relied on private correspondence, including that of his wife, for more intimate details. It was carried around the Cape and arrived five months later.

Communications from the company regarding appointments, routine administrative matters and periodic reports seldom demanded urgent attention, and Wellesley tended to ignore these items altogether. But communications from the board of control concerning Wellesley's war, annexations, treaties and expenditures demanded an early reply, and after 1802 the court of directors was also sufficiently angry to prepare communications calling for serious consideration. As much as Wellesley complained of a dearth of attention on the part of London, he was far more frequently in arrears in his correspondence than they. He far preferred to ignore a query than to justify his conduct, an exercise which he thought unnecessary (his policies were transparently appropriate to competent and well-informed observers). and demeaning (those who opposed him were usually incompetent). In this his conduct was not limited to India: he was equally uncommunicative as Foreign secretary and as Irish viceroy. Perhaps nothing prejudiced his conduct in India more than his
disdain at replying to queries from his staunchest supporters
eager to defend his actions if only they could be informed
about his plans and motives.

Until 1803 most correspondence between Wellesley and
the British government supplied information rather than direction.
Dundas in his capacity as secretary of State for War and as
Pitt's spokesman on imperial policy supplied most of the
material. His role here can be distinguished from his respons-
sibilities as president of the board of control. Dundas'
observations were certainly not designed to dampen Wellesley's
enthusiasm for expansion. He urged intervention against the
Newab's "rabble" of an army in Oudh.\textsuperscript{297} He applauded the
expulsion of the Nizam's French officers.\textsuperscript{298} In October 1799
he told Wellesley that his war policy was to defeat France by
taking all her colonies and destroying her trade.\textsuperscript{299} He urged
that all Mysore be annexed when the "glorious news" of the fall
of Seringapatam reached London.\textsuperscript{300} Indeed, Dundas' appetite
at this time knew no bounds. He advised that Arcot, Oudh, Tanjore

\textsuperscript{297}Dundas to Mornington, 21 March 1799, quoted in Ingram,
Two Views, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{298}\textit{Ibid.}, 18 March 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp.
125-30.

\textsuperscript{299}Dundas to Wellesley, 31 October 1799, Board of Control,

\textsuperscript{300}Dundas to Mornington, 27 September 1799, quoted in Ingram,
Two Views, p. 80.
and Mysore be consolidated into one valuable possession; enough said of these petty princes who if preserved in their privileges would simply cause problems in the future.\textsuperscript{301} For the moment he also advocated a Ceylon subservient to Madras, a Maratha confederacy stripped of all non-British officers, and an enlarged army establishment.\textsuperscript{302} There was more: Dundas urged Wellesley to liberate the small remnants of Spanish territory to be found in the western Pacific, and confessed "how much importance" he attacked "to the conquest of all the colonial possessions of our enemies." Batavia should be converted into a British colony; the navy would be placed at the viceroy's command to assist in this.\textsuperscript{303}

How sharp was the distinction between Dundas the minister for War and Dundas the president of the board of control is seen in his despatch of 4 November 1799. News of the fall of Mysore had clearly excited him. In October and November his despatches were unparalleled in terms of size and frequency. Towards the end of this series he himself realised that he was urging Wellesley to undertake measures which the court of

\textsuperscript{301}Ibid., 9 October 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 181-87.

\textsuperscript{302}Ibid., 1 November 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 24-25.

\textsuperscript{303}Ibid., 16 October, 31 October 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 188-89, 206-208.
directors would not sustain. He dared not submit these projects concerning Batavia and other places to their review, and therefore he would not order Wellesley but only suggest to him that he think about them. Perhaps, Dundas added naively, the viceroy could act in an "individual" capacity.304

Wellesley was glad enough to satisfy Dundas' "voracious appetite" for lands and fortresses. "Perhaps I may be able to give your a supper of Oudh and the Carnatic if you should still be hungry," he wrote in high spirits in January 1799, just as he began his campaign against Tipu Sultan.305 In all this Dundas pursued a blatantally imperialist theme. He orchestrated the house of Commons' unreserved expression of delight at the fall of Serangsaptem; "the imperial note here sounded - probably for the first time in a public document - contrasted sharply with the hesitating, almost apologetic tone" of the commemoration of British successes in India twenty years earlier.306 Pitt was moved to write one of his rare letters to Wellesley, and reported that Cornwallis talked "with rapture and surprise" of Wellesley's "noble administration."307 Well might the viceroy

304Ibid., 4 November 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 208-209.
305Mornington to Dundas, 25 January 1799, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 218.
306Lyall, British Dominion, p. 243.
decide to send Henry to England in the summer of 1799 burdened with trophies of Mysore, and well might be expected to receive in return an honour higher than an Irish marquisate. 308

After 1799 Dundas spoke less frequently and less confidently as minister for War. Shadows of the company's displeasure lengthened. When the treaty of Amiens was signed the impulse for further annexations and ambitious expeditions faded away. Dundas retired. Correspondence with the British government, as opposed to the board of control and court of directors, assumed a narrower and pettier tone. Wellesley set this tone. He threatened to resign when he heard of his place in the peerage. In a letter of Grenville he complained that most of his friends had either died or left India; he was left "without conversation or relaxation of any kind." He was misunderstood in England, and his work went unrecognised and unrewarded. 309 Dundas was genuinely alarmed when he got this news. He referred to all the projects yet unfinished. Bathurst opposed in a blunter fashion: to return before the regular term of five years would deeply injure his "public character." 310 Wellesley almost surely meant to bluff. Dundas,

308 Mornington to Grenville, 9 August 1799, Fortescue MSS, V, 49.

309 Wellesley to Grenville, 9 March 1800, Fortescue MSS, VI, 158-59; Wellesley to Dundas, 12 November 1800, printed in Ingram, Two Views, pp. 310-12.

310 Wellesley to Dundas, 8 June 1800, quoted in Ingram,
he noted later, was working to strengthen his powers to as
to balance the "deprecation" of his services.\textsuperscript{311} He vented
his frustrations elsewhere: by accusing Dundas of failing to
act on a long series of Wellesley's recommendations running
the gamut from reform of the mails to reform of the Bengal
presidency;\textsuperscript{312} against Pitt for refusing to recommend a
higher peerage because, as Wellesley saw it, he was afraid
to offend Cornwallis ("what atrocious, exorable justice, what
infamous sacrifice of the principles of friendship — even of
reason!");\textsuperscript{313} and against poor Hobart for being proposed to
succeed Wellesley should be resign.

Hobart's place in all this suggests how unbalanced and
indeed vicious and unfair Wellesley could be. Hobart and he
had been friends in the past. Wellesley had advised Hobart
when the latter was in India in 1795 and 1796, and Hobart was
godfather to one of the Wellesley boys. Wellesley's role in
barring Hobart from Calcutta was certainly not calculated to
improve Hobart's disposition. But it was Wellesley who took

\textsuperscript{311}Wellesley to Dundas, 12 November 1800, printed in Ingram,
Two Views, pp. 310-12.

\textsuperscript{312}Mornington to Dundas, 25 January 1800, "Memorandum of
Points Hitherto Unanswered by Mr. Dundas," printed in Ingram,
Two Views, pp. 219-22.

\textsuperscript{313}Wellesley to Hyacinthe, Lady Wellesley, 15 September
offence. When he reached Madras he took an instant dislike to some of Hobart's old staff, especially one Josiah Webbe, secretary to the government of that presidency. Webbe was later restored to favour in a spectacular way. It was not so easy for Hobart to be restored to grace in Wellesley's eyes. Wellesley was absolutely convinced that Hobart intended to launch a personal vendetta against the Wellesley appointment.  

Hobart behaved discreetly, received his pension and peerage, and sought a wife.  

Wellesley's suspicions were not disarmed, and when he heard rumors that Hobart would come out to replace him he immediately laid to rest any thoughts of resigning and heaped a mountain of blame and abuse on Hobart:

He will overturn the whole system of this establishment and he will never be respected here. As far as he is capable of forming any regular plan, he appears to have formed the one diametrically contradictory to mine in every respect. He will therefore overthrow all my institutions and frustrate all my plans. He will be the more inclined to this violence from his natural temper, as displayed in Madras, and from his personal resentment against me, and his jealousy of my reputation. . . . I think I may claim from the just and merited gratitude of my country that my most bitter and implacable enemy, whose hatred is derived from the consciousness of his own base ingratitude and flagrant injustice towards me, should not be my immediate successor. Either I am unfit for my office, or he cannot wreak his vengeance on my memory without injury to the public service. 

314 Mornington to Dundas, 6 October 1796, printed in Ingram, Two Views, p. 89.

315 Bathurst to Mornington, 20 April 1799, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 234.

316 Wellesley to Dundas, 4 October 1800, Fortescue MSS, VI,
These vicious words of character assassination were not betrayed in a private letter to Hyacinthe: they were directed to Dundas. Hobart had indeed made enemies while governor of Madras, quarrelling with Shore and alienating Dundas with his own complaining letters. But there is no evidence at all that Hobart schemed against Wellesley when he returned to England, or that he deserved the sobriquet "bitter and implacable enemy." Even had it been true, Wellesley was likely to suffer more than Hobart from such violent language. Hobart became minister of war in succession to Dundas in March 1801. All Wellesley's charges proved embarrassingly inaccurate. Hobart and Wellesley proceeded to exchange a number of letters, and Wellesley testified to everyone about Hobart's support for his cause against the court of directors. He wrote to Hyacinthe to instruct her to be kind to Hobart's wife, small enough indemnity for all his venomous letters.  

Wellesley's anger tempered. He wrote to Dundas on 7 March 1801 that he saw "no near prospect" of resigning for several years if his health remained good. He still believed that his services were vastly underrated in London, and he disagreed

337-38; Wellesley, 4 October 1800, W. Dacres Adams MSS, cited in Aspinall, Later Correspondence, III, 505.

317 Wellesley to Lady Wellesley, October 1802, Carver MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 299.
with Dundas' rather piquant observation "that every mind must be weak which is sensible to public neglect." After March 1801 he was forced to grapple with an administration in London which lacked Dundas' expertise, Canning's parliamentary talents, and Pitt's reputation. All this exposed Wellesley more directly to the anger of the East India company. Wellesley was wise enough to realise that short of altering his India policies he must make a more concerted effort to cultivate the favour of Addington and his colleagues. There was damage to be repaired. Wellesley had failed to write to Addington in a private capacity for more than a year prior to Addington's succeeding Pitt and Wellesley-Pole told his brother that the new prime minister was "mortified." Wellesley soon rectified this. On 1 October 1801 he penned an extremely long (26 pages) letter thanking Addington for attending to Hyacinthe and the children, demanding to be relieved of office a year hence (and transported to England in a ship of the line, of seventy-four guns if possible!). He also complained of the ingratitude of King and government, and wondered why no one was impressed by his magnanimity in refusing £100,000 in plunder from Seringa-

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318. Wellesley to Dundas, 7 March 1801, quoted in Ingram, Two Views, p. 324.

319. Wellesley-Pole to Wellesley, 3 July 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 344.
He heaped scorn on the court of directors: "the directors have been permitted to treat me in a manner which would have entirely destroyed the authority of a governor-general of less personal influence and less determination; and which eventually may affect my means of concluding affairs in the same tone which I have hitherto preserved without variation."

He was "anxious to retire," he added, "before I can be compelled to become the instrument of my own disgrace." Despite the litany of complaints, the year 1802 proved to be Wellesley's most satisfying in India. His health was good and he planned a long tour of India. Addington was attentive, appointing Wellesley-Pole to the post of clerk of the ordnance at £1200 per year and giving brother Gerald a fine prebend. Other ministers followed Addington's example. Lord Dartmouth, who succeeded Dundas at the board of control and served only a year, warned Addington that the board must be strengthened by appointing as its president "a cabinet minister in whom you


321 Mornington to Addington, October 1801, BM, Wellesley MSS 37282, f. 266.

322 Wellesley to Grenville, 21 October 1801, Fortescue MSS, VII, 63-64.

323 Wellesley Pole to Wellesley, 8 June 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 361; Auckland to Wellesley, 28 June 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 342.
can put the utmost reliance. Castlereagh was chosen, a good man but not likely to recover for the board of control the influence earlier enjoyed by Dundas among the court of directors. Nevertheless, Castlereagh moved immediately to secure from the company a vote of confidence in Wellesley. He succeeded, and was rewarded with a seat in the cabinet for doing so. Dundas and Cornwallis supported Addington and Castlereagh on this. Cornwallis' support was important, for he carried immense weight with an administration so uncertain of its policies and methods.

Wellesley therefore had every reason to be satisfied with Addington and his friends. They were, however, now


326 Minutes of the Court of Directors, 13 October 1802, III/707, cited in Philips, East India, p. 121.

327 India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, ff. 16-19.

328 Castlereagh to Dundas and Pitt, 6 September 1802, PRO, Chatham MSS, vol. 121.

329 Cornwallis to Charles Ross, 2 September 1802, Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 492-93.

330 Castlereagh to Wellesley, 10 August 1802, Martin, Despatches, III, 32; Wellesley to Grenville, 16 February 1803, Fortescue MSS, VII, 143-44.
inclined to encourage Wellesley to return to England in the near future. The company's unhappiness at Wellesley's conduct in Oudh and towards the poor Nawab of Arcot slowly intensified. Sheridan and Earl Moira, both of whom Wellesley knew well, threatened in early 1802 to attack the viceroy in parliament. It came to nothing, but Addington and Castlereagh felt obliged to examine the Carnatic papers with great care before concluding that they could support the viceroy "with reservations." Castlereagh advised Wellesley to try "to end his tenure of office with as much solidity as his former policy had brilliance." At the end of the summer the directors reacted unpleasantly to the appointment of Henry as governor at Oudh. Castlereagh defended Wellesley by saying that the case was exceptional (relatives were barred by regulation from company posts). However, the defence was not easily done, as Castlereagh made clear to Wellesley. By October a successor to Wellesley was a principal topic of conversation in London.

331 DNB, XX, 1064-65.
332 Scott to Wellesley, 23 April 1802, India Office Records, European MSS E. 176, f. 698.
333 Castlereagh to Wellesley, 27 September 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS, 13466, f. 1.
334 Board of Control to the Court of Directors, 20 September 1802, 2/125, cited in Philips, East India, p. 135.
Edward Clive, second baron Clive and son of the hero of Plassey, had been selected for Madras as soon as Wellesley was shifted to Calcutta. Clive proved congenial to Wellesley and was suitably deferential in his conduct. But by 1802 Wellesley had been impressed by George Hilario Barlow, a company servant, whom the viceroy appointed as his chief secretary when Kirkpatrick felt obliged to return to England. He laboured hard to have Barlow appointed his successor, a choice he would later regret. Barlow would prove by virtue of his caution to be one of a very few of Wellesley's choice of assistants who would later disappoint him. Barlow in fact, however, assumed the office in Calcutta only because Cornwallis died soon after reaching India. William Bentinck was selected to replace Clive at Madras.

But replacing Wellesley proved to be even more painful than keeping him in office. In September 1802 Addington informed Wellesley that upcoming efforts to condemn Wellesley's policies would be weathered. Cornwallis had pledged to take the lead in defending him in the house of Lords, and Grenville "in the

335 Castlereagh to Wellesley, September 1802, quoted in Martin, Wellesley, V, 75. In a recent article B. Mehta has argued that Barlow did not retreat precipitously from Wellesley's aggressive policies when he succeeded Cornwallis; indeed, he preserved more of Wellesley's gains than Wellesley himself would have been able to: Mehta, "Reversal," p. 179.

336 Castlereagh to Dundas, Castlereagh to Cornwallis, 19 October 1802, India Office Records, Home Office MSS 504, ff. 13, 15; Fortescue MSS, VII, 178.
the handsomest manner" volunteered to help in the Commons. Pitt had offered "cordial and strenuous support." Addington could hope, naively as it turned out, that Wellesley would follow Castlereagh's advice to substitute solidity for brilliance, and that he could continue in India. Addington in return would promise him "comfort and honour." Addington reinforced his case by inducing brother William to write as well. His inspired letter repeated all of Addington's supportive sentiments and elaborated on the earlier reference to further honours. They would come, would prove "most satisfactory" to Wellesley, and would best be unsullied by an representations on Wellesley's part.

Wellesley opted to remain in India. Certainly the prospect of being forced to choose between Grenville and Pitt upon his return was throughly unattractive; Addington even in complementing Grenville for offering to defend the viceroy feared that his motives were suspect. Wellesley might also hope that when all loose ends were tied the court of directors would have no reason to complain of his conduct. Meanwhile he

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337 Addington to Wellesley, 28 September 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 375.
338 Ibid., 9 September 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37308, f. 367.
339 Ibid.
Wellesley was too sanguine. After 1802 he was no longer an asset to the ministry, and his power to extract concessions in return for a promise to remain longer in the east gradually evaporated. Wellesley did not realise it, but the board of control, which under Dundas had protected him from demands made by the company for retrenchment and reform, had lost the initiative. Prior to 1798 Wellesley had watched the board gradually extend the powers allocated to it under Pitt's act of 1784. The act had stipulated that matters of trade were clearly reserved to the court of directors, but in the 1790s the board tried to encompass this as well. When Wellesley left for India he expected the power of the board to continue to expand, and inasmuch as it was the extension of Pittite government he had reason to expect sympathetic treatment. But the factors which divided Pitt's friends and led to Pitt's resignation also helped to undermine the vitality of the board of control. The immediate and most serious casualty was Dundas. In seventeen years at the board he proved that the 1784 machinery could work. To him belong credit for accommodating

340 Wellesley to Grenville, 8 June 1802, Fortescue MSS, VII, 96; Malleson, Wellesley, pp. 107-108.

essentially inconsistent and conflicting policies.\textsuperscript{342} Dundas' motives were selfish enough: the drive to deprive the company of powers reserved to it under the act of 1784 was directly related to his desire to establish himself as a secretary of state for India with a place in the cabinet and enormous patronage powers.\textsuperscript{343} Had war not intervened and had Dundas not been burdened with the responsibilities of that department he might have sustained his role indefinitely. But the truth was that he could not superintend both departments effectively, and Pitt's resignation at last convinced him that he too should resign.\textsuperscript{344}

Dundas was an administrator of enormous energy. His successor was the apotheosis of the weak and distracted aristocrat on whom Addington often relied to conduct the affairs of the nation. Lord George Legge, Viscount Lewisham and third Earl Dartmouth, has been described as "stupid and obstinate" and "quite ignorant of India matters." He admitted he had accepted the post because he needed funds to provide his children a suitable education.\textsuperscript{345} In his defence it should be added that inexperience

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{342}Philips, East India, p. lll.
\item \textsuperscript{343}Ibid., p. 49; Marshall, Problems, p. 49.
\item \textsuperscript{344}Ingram, Two Views, pp. 10-11.
\item \textsuperscript{345}Lewisham to Pelham, 12 February 1801, BM, Add. MSS 33107, f. 17; cf. Dartmouth MSS, pp. 425-37.
\end{itemize}
and a lack of support from Addington added to his misery. He was pledged to support Wellesley and, in his own words, "constantly inculcated moderation" in his letters to Calcutta.346 By early 1802, however, the commitment to support Wellesley had placed him "in violent opposition" to the court of directors.347 In late spring 1802 he was virtually driven from office by the directors. Castlereagh inherited the shambles.348

The full extent of Dartmouth's disaster was hidden from Wellesley during this period by the support extended the viceroy by Grenville, Addington, Cornwallis and Pittites in and out of office. This support, as has been noted, arrested Wellesley's inclination to return home prematurely and gave him a measure of peace in 1802. But the damage was permanent and irreversible. By proceeding with plans for new wars against the Marathas Wellesley insured that his final years in India would be tempestuous ones. They would cast a long and ugly shadow over the remainder of his public career. His opponent of the moment was the court of directors of the East India company; later on it would include a generation of politicians and statesmen whom the

346. Lewisam to Dundas, 1 August 1801, Indian Office Library, European MSS D. 624, f. 42; Martin, Wellesley, II, 593.


348. Marshall, Problems, p. 50; Lewisam to Addington, 24 March 1802, Dartmouth MSS, p. 432.
company's powerful supporters convinced that Wellesley in India had behaved illegally and indeed immorally.

X: The Company

Long before the end of the eighteenth century the East India company had ceased to be fundamentally a private company. Not only had it been founded under a government charter, but its prosperity had long depended upon diplomatic and military initiatives at Westminster. In turn the company had served as a convenient if cumbersome vehicle for the expansion of British power in the Indian ocean. Warren Hastings' trial affirmed the futility and exposed the danger of proceeding as if the East India company was simply another private concern. The act of 1784 was designed in part to guarantee that the company's servants would conduct themselves less like agents of a commercial concern and more like ministers of a sovereign.\(^{349}\)

It was also designed to give the ministry of the day a controlling voice in the formulation of policy in the "levying of war or making of peace" or relating "to the native princes or states of India."\(^{350}\)

The agency for this was the board of control. It was

\(^{349}\)Hutton, Wellesley, p. 119.

empowered to issue orders through a committee of three company
directors sworn not to reveal the contents of the board's
orders to their colleagues in the court of directors. This
"secret committee," as it was soon called, was soon enough
regarded by the directors as a device for keeping them in the
dark. The board of control expanded its own jurisdiction
by taking the secret committee into its confidence, and by
1795 the secret committee was little more than another agency
of government. 351 When the secret committee showed signs of
revolt, the president of the board of control simply communicated
directly with the viceroy. And Dundas reinforced this power
by exploiting the once narrowly-defined privilege of making
changes in the court of directors' despatches. 352

The court did not atrophy completely. The court relied
in the first instance on the strength of the East Indian
interest in parliament. By the beginning of the nineteenth
century this interest was considerable. In 1784 some sixty
M.P.s could be identified as representatives of the company
interest. In 1802 it was ninety-five, and in 1806 one hundred
three. Thereafter it declined sharply, which suggests that this
interest was at its apogee in terms of parliamentary strength 353

351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
353 Philips, East India, p. 299.
during Wellesley's period of service in India. Fortunately for Wellesley, the East India interest was not an entirely cohesive one; a monopoly-oriented old shipping faction disputed control of the company with the newly rich "nabobs" who advocated among other things more flexibility in shipping policies. But on crucial issues the East India M.P.s could be counted on to vote in a bloc. Beyond this, Dundas could not superintend the entirety of the company's operations, nor did he wish to. And Wellesley was to demonstrate that he could unite court and board against him, largely on the issue of economy. Extravagance in peacetime was unpalatable to the merchants; in war it weakened the entire nation. All issues which enflamed Wellesley's relationship to the company revolved around money: the cost of territorial expansion; an unseemly display of independence; patronage; trade; and Wellesley's special project, the school at Fort William were all involved. Added to this were profound differences in personality. Wellesley despised merchants and entrepreneurs. In this area he was notoriously deficient himself and lived his long life on the edge of bankruptcy. He was, in a sense, representative of the worst type of the Irish landed class. Unfortunately for his cause there was arraigned against him after 1800 an unusually wealthy, able, and independent set of men, more than half of whom were members of parliament. Of this group only one, Thomas Metcalfe, father of
one of Wellesley's Indian protégés, supported the viceroy. For the rest, most of whose sons and relatives were on the Canton establishment and thus out of the viceroy's reach, sentiments hostile to Wellesley steadily increased. And worst of all, the court was dominated by Charles Grant.

At the time Wellesley sailed for India the court was deeply divided by a dispute between a faction led by Jacob Bosanquet and another which looked to David Scott. Scott, a close friend of Dundas, had profited greatly from an eastern trade which lay outside the company's jurisdiction. Subsequently he joined the court of directors. He tended to oppose the company's monopolies and was accused by Bosanquet of an infringement of company regulations. These accusations were parried by Scott, but he soon retired from his post as chairman of the court of directors. Bosanquet, who succeeded him, came from a "very rich and respectable" London merchant family. He had allied himself with the shipping monopolists, and by succeeding Scott as chairman in 1797 he confirmed the trend towards more conservative fiscal policies within the company. But even more important was the rising influence of Charles Grant, who in time became Wellesley's formidable opponent.

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354Ibid., p. 130.

355Ibid., pp. 100-101; Bosanquet to Wellesley, 11 May 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS 37278, f. 89.

356Dundas to Scott, 8 December 1796, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 731a, f. 491.
Grant had "served both himself and the company in Bengal" for more than twenty years, and he returned to England in 1790 a wealthy man. At first he assisted Scott against the shipping monopolists, but soon tacked in the opposite direction when he realised that the monopolists could jeopardise his chance of becoming chairman. In his younger years he had gained a well-deserved reputation for gambling and loose living; back in England, however, he underwent a conversion which entirely changed his personality. He became strongly identified with the Clapham sect, and with them looked forward to converting British India to Christianity. He strongly supported Wilberforce and slave manumission. Faith and commercial monopoly became in Grant scarcely indistinguishable: British interests must come first and Britain must maintain a monopoly of Indian commerce. The handmaiden of commercial supremacy was financial economy.

On both counts Wellesley erred grievously, in Grant's eyes.

Grant was not merely a member of the court of directors. In 1804 his election to the office of deputy chairman afforded him an opportunity to challenge Wellesley on every point of his India policy. This he did not fail to do. The deputy was equal to the chairman in all but the formal respect, and could

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358 Bearce, British, pp. 54-56.
even dominate the chairman. In addition, he almost always succeeded to the office of chairman, and in Grant's case he did this three times. Beyond this, according to Embree, "adroit management of customary privileges rather than actual provisions of the company's constitution" made possible much of Grant's influence. One point of custom was that the chairman's consent was necessary before a subject could be discussed by the court of directors. In practice the chairman and deputy chairman also saw many more documents than did members of the court. In part this reflected privilege, and in part sheer stamina; sixteen thousand documents crossed the chairman's desk between 1793 and 1813, many of them running into hundreds of pages. Few cared to see them all; an assiduous chairman could have his way by default, and Grant was very assiduous.359

Wellesley's battles with the court of directors have been analysed and narrated in great detail elsewhere. Some points of controversy were petty, and others were important. Most of them are of little relevance here. Several stimulated debates which presaged Wellesley's subsequent role in British politics and which perhaps helped to shape it, not only by sorting out Wellesley's ideological baggage but by sorting

359 This section is based on Ainslee Embree, Charles Grant and British Rule in India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), chapter X.
out friends and foes as well. These issues must be addressed at the appropriate time. There were other issues, such as the school at Fort William, which represented not so much controversy in themselves as generated bad blood in other quarters. And above all there was the exercise in vindictiveness to which Wellesley surrendered himself in his later years in India. Had the directors been more popular and their own policies less self-serving it is quite likely that Wellesley's career would have been finished forever in 1806. His vituperation cost him much support which otherwise he would have retained.

Because the court was weak and malleable in 1797 Wellesley never appreciated the fact that it could turn itself around and do him great harm. Wellesley knew and admired Scott, who was also Pitt's friend. He was not popular within the company because he had made his fortune outside it. But in the days when the directors devoted most of their time to feuding within their own ranks Scott was a powerful force, because he enjoyed Dundas' confidence. And because most of the directors held seats in parliament they were hostages to Dundas' patronage powers. How quickly all of this changed! Dundas resigned. Scott retired. Pitt gave way to the weak Addington. The court patched up its internal differences and took stock of the power Dundas had taken from them over a span of seventeen years. All attention focused on Wellesley.
It being assumed that the court came to oppose Wellesley and all his works, how did Wellesley respond? The first tack was, as has been seen, to threaten resignation. He was confident of his indispensability: "to the devil with their empire," he wrote to Hyacinthe in June 1800. "It will be a kingdom of fools and cowards and perhaps then they will appreciate my services." 360 For the moment he was correct, but for the wrong reasons. The company was not disinclined to let him go, but the government would not stand for it. Henry's mission to England in 1801 also had a soothing effect, 361 as did the momentary misimpression that the wars were finished and that Wellesley would turn a large profit from the annexations. 362 When this mirage faded in 1803, Wellesley's fatal conflict with the directors became inevitable. "I may confidentially state to you," wrote Stuart Hall of the court to a member of the Madras council in August 1803, "that the slightest failure in the most insignificant enterprise would be sufficient to destroy his popularity and overwhelm him with the bitterest


361 Samuel Johnson to William Petrie, member of the Council at Madras, 23 August 1801, quoted in Anon., Intercepted Correspondence between Certain Persons in This Country and Their Friends in India (London: Spilsbury, 1804).

362 Malcolm to Henry Wellesley, 19 June 1802, Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 228-29.
reproaches. The court of directors detest him."\textsuperscript{363} These prophetic words were about to be fulfilled even as they were being written, with Wellesley set to embark on his Maratha wars.

In 1803 the court took the offensive, and gradually the ministry wavered. At first Addington advised Wellesley to ignore the animadversions of the court, but to plan nonetheless to return to Europe by the end of 1803.\textsuperscript{364} Addington was not prepared to provoke the directors. Castlereagh took a bolder line. He observed to Pitt that if Wellesley "would pursue the principle of retrenchment as ardently as he has done other more animating considerations during the war" all would be well, for the new acquisitions required the firm hand which only Wellesley at this point could supply.\textsuperscript{365} Until the summer of 1803, moreover, Castlereagh was still confident that he could chastise the court and restore its membership to a more submissive attitude.\textsuperscript{366} The collapse of the treaty of Amiens and the resumption of war vindicated Wellesley's earlier refusal to surrender to France its ancient Indian possessions, and this strengthened his hand temporarily. Indeed, Wellesley's

\textsuperscript{363}Stuart Hall to Petrie, 10 August 1803, Anon., Intercepted, pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{364}Scott to Wellesley, 3 February 1802, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37282.

\textsuperscript{365}Castlereagh to Pitt, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, ff. 1-2, quoted in Roberts, India, pp. 184-85.

\textsuperscript{366}Castlereagh to Pitt, 12 September 1803, PRO, Chatham MSS 121.
annexations were seen as Britain's principal war trophies.\footnote{367} Prospects were bleak that there would be success elsewhere, and this gave Wellesley further immunity.\footnote{367} The court was momentarily taken aback, and protested weakly that they had not intended their criticism to be taken so seriously.\footnote{368} They acceded to Castlereagh's request that Wellesley not be recalled before 1804, although they fully anticipated that he would then do so. "Though we have been under the necessity," they wrote bravely, "of differing from our governments abroad in some material points . . . it is impossible for us not to feel and to acknowledge the zeal and ability which the governor-general has displayed in the general management and superintendence of our affairs."\footnote{369} Castlereagh had good reason to be pleased.

But after July 1802 Wellesley's cause suffered a series of sharp reversals. First was the publication of Henry Wellesley's correspondence to Grenville which the French had intercepted. It was full of court gossip and offered some unflattering comments on the leading figures of the day. As Buckingham noted

\footnote{367}Wellesley to Hobart, 20 June 1803, quoted in Owen, \textit{Wellesley}, pp. 579-80. \\
\footnote{368}Castlereagh to Wellesley, 14 May 1803, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 505, ff. 59-68. \\
\footnote{369}The Court of Directors to Wellesley, quoted in Roberts, \textit{India}, p. 185.
(and he was as much addicted to gossip as any), Henry appeared to the world "an egregious simpleton." Henry protested ineffectively that his observations had been subject to a malicious exercise in double translation. At any rate, the court of directors was afforded a first hand view of what Henry, and by implication Richard, thought of the leadership of the East India company, and they were not pleased.

Worse yet was the reaction to the treaty of Bassein. News of the treaty reached London in March 1803, but it was presented in terms designed to allay suspicions of the company. Castlereagh at first was actually persuaded that the treaty was likely to militate against future war. He wrote to Wellesley complimenting him on his achievement. But he had not inspected the treaty closely. Led by Bosanquet, the court digested the terms of Bassein in July and moved immediately to condemn it. The court predicted that war would soon follow, and this prediction was soon vindicated: war with the Maratha chiefs resumed in August.

News of the resumption of war was next to fatal to the

370 A Letter of Henry Wellesley to Wellesley, 28 July 1803, described in Buckingham to Grenville, 30 September 1804, Fortescue MSS, VII, 236.


372 Castlereagh to Wellesley, 14 May 1803, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 505, f. 62.
viceroy, for now Castlereagh began to lose credibility in the eyes of the court and control over their policies. Henry's intercepted correspondence must have emboldened them. He conceded that the board of control had "actually been transferred . . . to the court of directors. It is perfectly evident that we cannot obtain what the court of directors has resolved not to grant." Henry's observations were confirmed in other quarters. One of the directors in a private letter also included in the intercepted correspondence assured his friend in Madras that the court had never been more independent, better qualified, and more determined to resist encroachments than at this time. Dundas in retirement saw little prospect of bringing the court under control. Addington wrote to Wellesley on 9 September 1803 urging Wellesley to remain in India and then telling him that this would not be possible. Castlereagh was more direct: "we cannot call on the court to urge you to remain."

374 Thomas Parry, Member of the Court of Directors, to Parry, 21 August 1803, Anon., Intercepted, p. 36.
375 Dundas to Scott, 10 August 1803, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 731a, f. 923.
376 Addington to Wellesley, 9 September 1803, BM, Wellesley MSS 37309, ff. 367-73.
377 Martin, Wellesley, IV, 28.
By the end of 1803 Castlereagh was fully persuaded that Wellesley's Maratha policy was a disaster. In December he conferred with the court of directors, who urged Wellesley's immediate recall. Rumors circulated that Castlereagh also planned to resign. Castlereagh's anguish was undoubtedly intensified by the behaviour of the viceroy whom he had heretofore defended so skillfully. Wellesley had long threatened to resign and return to England; every impassioned petition from Addington, Dundas and Bathurst urging him not to do so had stimulated further threats. There is no doubt that he immensely enjoyed the supplications. After early 1803 he no longer received them, and perhaps inevitably this prompted him to determine to remain in India. And after the eruption of war in August he perhaps felt that he had no choice. The result was that his tone of defiance shifted from the government to the company. The shift was significant and very dangerous. His friends in government were prepared to discount his violent language and to weather his tantrums. The court was not. It was bad enough that Wellesley would vent his displeasure in private letters to Dundas and Castlereagh. Now it became

378 Castlereagh to Bosanquet, 16 December 1803, 7 January 1804, Indian Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, f. 52, f. 378; Secret Committee Minutes, 3, 10 April 1804; Scott to Wellesley, 11 May, 14 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37283, ff. 181, 183.

379 Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 508.
clear that he was using the same tone in conversations in Calcutta. Friends of the court overheard him and relayed the viceroy's sentiments. The aging Warren Hastings observed wryly that Wellesley had "committed the heinous crime of using expressions of ridicule and contempt about the company at his table and the words have carried home. . . . I would tell him that civility costs little."\(^{380}\)

Measured by what he entrusted to his letters, these "expressions of contempt and ridicule" must have been severe indeed. To Dundas, now Lord Melville, he referred to

the injustice, folly and baseness of the most odious and mean faction ever engendered by the collision of the foulest passions. . . . It would be too shocking if the proportion of superstititious, bigotted prejudice and of chimerical nonsense which enters into their inconsistencies had not thrown an appearance of ridicule on the whole tenor of their proceedings. There is also something comical in the extreme audacity of their falsehoods and in the excessive stupidity and grossness of their ignorance.\(^{381}\)

To Castlereagh Wellesley declared his "utter contempt" of the court and expected "every practicable degree of injustice and baseness from that faction."\(^{382}\) Phrases such as "vindicative

\(^{380}\)Curzon, British Governors, I, 179.

\(^{381}\)Wellesley to Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, 13 February 1803, BM, Wellesley MSS 37275, f. 250.

\(^{382}\)Wellesley to Castlereagh, 1 March 1804, cited in Malleson, Wellesley, p. 112.
profligacy" and "ignominious tyranny" burdened his letters. Wellesley stretched the parameters of the English language to find words adequate to his sentiments, and perhaps the violence of his language is more comical than convincing. But he was sincere in his apoplexy, and finally arrived at the point where he felt compelled to issue a declaration of independence from the company. "No symptoms of tardy remorse" on the part of the directors would keep him in India or change his opinion of them. No injury or insult "from the most loathsome den of the India house" would accelerate the time of his departure if the public good required him to remain. This is what Castlereagh had to contend with.

The court was not to be overawed by Wellesley's language. Nor was it to be rushed into intemperate expressions which might provide the government an excuse to abridge its right to recall the viceroy. Later Charles Grant was to attribute the delay in condemning Wellesley's actions to Wellesley's deliberate policy of withholding all details as long as possible. The onus for permitting Wellesley to continue was shifted therefore to the government and in part to the secret committee. But

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383 Ibid., 19 June 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 29.
384 Ibid.
385 Embree, Grant, p. 213.
by 1804 the court could no longer suppress its anger. In the same year Grant became deputy chairman, which afforded him access to a great deal of highly sensitive material which he had not seen earlier.386 Battle lines were drawn. For the company the overriding complaint rested upon the conviction of its leadership that the company could not assume the burdens of ruling a large Indian empire without ruining itself. For Wellesley it was the simple question of British mastery in India; if the company need be sacrificed to that end the price was not too great. For Castlereagh the problem was procedural and constitutional: was Wellesley governor general of the company's Indian interests or the crown's surrogate in the east? Castlereagh was far from sure, but he hoped to preserve the government's preponderant role as Dundas had described it without at the same time destroying the company. Castlereagh was by temperament a peacemaker but the principals were not inclined to compromise. In many respects Wellesley's impeachment proceedings can be dated from 1804.387

The occasion for launching the formal confrontation was the preparation of a despatch by the court containing a detailed justification for condemning Wellesley's policies and concluding

386 Parliamentary Debates, VIII (26 February 1807), 1024; VIII (22 April 1806), 873; Castlereagh to Wellesley, 27 September 1802, quoted in Martin, Wellesley, III, 37.

387 Roberts, India, p. 266.
in a censure of the company's principal servant. The famous despatch took more than a year to prepare, and after receiving despatches in December 1804 announcing that Wellesley had gone to war with Holkar the court converted their paper into a lengthy letter of dismissal. Castlereagh devoted most of 1804 and early 1805 trying to persuade Wellesley to resign and return home. On 1 January Wellesley wrote to Grenville announcing the rapid approach of a peace settlement in India which would secure India against the French permanently. This settlement could not be completed by March, however, and it would not be safe to travel thereafter until December.388 He gave a ringing defence of his policies, all of which made it quite clear that weather was not Wellesley's principal reason for remaining in India. He was obviously no longer much bothered by the hostility of the court, and he betrayed a complete inability to comprehend that the court could succeed in its efforts to censure him. The public would "find the road to the truth by means of its own common sense." The company did not count.389

Wellesley's naivété was not quickly disabused. On 3 March 1804 he suggested that Addington offer him the opportunity

388 Wellesley to Grenville, 1 January 1804, Fortescue MSS, VII, 381-84.
389 Ibid.
to remain in India as long as he wished. This "symbolic gesture" (symbolic because he claimed to be eager to return home) would make a suitable impression on the court. In June he wrote to Malcolm that he would consider remaining beyond the beginning of next year if there remained outstanding any problems in India. All this time his correspondence painted a glowing picture of the Indian scene. The defeat of Scindia had convinced Wellesley that the era of war was finished. The peace comprehended "every object of the war, with every practicable security for the continuance of tranquility. . . . The foundations of our empire in Asia," he assured Castlereagh, "are now laid in the tranquility of surrounding nations, and in the happiness and welfare of the people of India." 392

There was no tranquility and happiness at India house or at the board of control. In January 1804 Arthur wrote in alarm to Malcolm that Addington could not longer offer any assistance in defending the viceroy. Arthur was still in India, and his observations were based on letters from Henry, who insisted that circumstances had taken so serious a turn that

392 Martin, Wellesley, III, 584, 586.
that Wellesley's immediate return was in order. William wrote to complain that the government's support was simply fading away, even with reports reaching London of a successful conclusion to the Maratha wars. Addington, he added ominously, was unable to explain why the war had been necessary and only a few of Wellesley's friends were present in the house of Commons when Castlereagh moved a vote of thanks.

This vote of thanks of May 1804 was Wellesley's last triumph. It was not everything the viceroy would have wanted; it praised the British achievement in India more than it commended its architect. Nonetheless, it represented a considerable triumph for the hard-pressed Castlereagh. He supported Wellesley's scheme for partitioning and annexing Marath territory; at the same time he wrote to Wellesley wondering whether these annexations did not violate the act of 1784. Castlereagh removed the sting of rebuke by asking at the same time how the government in India would work when cut off from "that impulse which every department of state so visibly receives from the mind that now directs it."


394 Wellesley Pole to Wellesley, 7 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37283, ff. 213-14; Philips, East India, p. 139.

395 Martin, Wellesley, IV, 224.
Addington surrendered the seals just as parliament approved a vote of thanks for the Maratha wars. Would the return of Pitt silence the directors? Would Pitt defend his Irish disciple? Wellesley was not unhappy to hear of Addington's resignation. Addington was certainly not sympathetic to the court of directors, and he had been one of the few of Wellesley's associates to look in on the Wellesley family during the viceroy's absence. But Wellesley secretly despised this avuncular figure for his inability to make bold decisions and perhaps for his inability to emulate Pitt's charisma. There were also more immediate factors. Although Addington was fairly successful in obtaining recognition for valiant services rendered by members of Wellesley's staff he did nothing for Wellesley himself. Wellesley still hoped for something higher than his marquisate and Addington did not secure it; perhaps Wellesley did not yet realise how heartily the king disliked him.

Pitt's first letters were encouraging. While out of office he had taken little interest in India and in Wellesley. Wellesley had taken great offence at this neglect, but Pitt

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397 Wellesley Pole to Wellesley, 27 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37283, f. 216.

repaired much of the damage by promising Wellesley during the summer of 1804 that if the viceroy wished to remain in India the government would support him. He surmised that Wellesley was probably eager to return and indeed would soon be on the high seas "unless any new or great scene should unexpectedly open for fresh exertions." But Wellesley should not, Pitt concluded comfortably, be influenced by "the petty cabals and narrow views and prejudices which too often operate at the India house." 399

These words must have comforted Wellesley. Unfortunately, Pitt was quickly educated as to the difficulties attached to Wellesley’s remaining in India and to the predicament into which Castlereagh was placed because of what had happened under Addington. Pitt was soon advised to adopt a different policy. Hobart as minister for War was forced to admit in the house of Lords that he had no documents on which he could base a defence of Wellesley’s military policies in India. "Here was a war carried on for a long time," he confessed, "without a single document having ever been sent to the executive government of this country." 400 This was an exaggeration, and


400 Hansard II (12 April 1804), 106.
Hobart's personal animus can be detected. But Pitt cannot have been insensitive to Wellesley's deficiencies in this regard. There was also the increasing hostility of Cornwallis. Wellesley had complained earlier of Pitt's reverence for the opinions of this aging soldier-politician. Cornwallis had complemented Wellesley on his efforts to make the borders of British India those of the Marathas, which he thought would serve as a good buffer. His support faded rapidly when Wellesley went to war with the Marathas. 401

Most important to Pitt was Castlereagh's increasing disillusionment. For more than a year Castlereagh had been lecturing Wellesley on the danger involved in provoking fresh hostilities. His own influence in the company had already been weakened by attempts to defend Wellesley, and by late 1804 he was convinced that his store of persuasion was exhausted. Even such concessions to the court as agreeing with their criticism of the treaty of Bassein prompted no expressions of gratitude on the company's part. 402 The court's preparations to recall Wellesley continued, although Wellesley's brilliant successes against Scindia and Pitt's return to office slowed the

401 Cornwallis to Lt. General Rosse, 14 October 1804, quoted in Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 518.

402 Board of Control, Secret Drafts, 3, 6 March 1804, cited in Philips, East India, p. 138; Choksey, History, p. 301; Philips, East India, p. 143.
pace. The company's initiative might have stalled completely had more bad news not arrived in October 1804. The news, of course, was the war with the last great Maratha chief, Holkar.

War with Holkar broke out in April 1804. As late as August of the same year Wellesley made no mention of difficulties with this Maratha chief, and official confirmation of war did not reach London until March 1805. Unofficial accounts of course began to circulate earlier; by November 1804 Pitt and Castlereagh were well aware that Wellesley was in deep trouble. Pitt's attitude changed dramatically. In August Pitt wrote "a very kind and flattering letter" (as Wellesley described it) although somewhat ambiguous in terms of support for Wellesley's policies. Castlereagh also wrote to declare that the new ministry would stand by the treaty of Bassein and the settlement with Scindia because these matters had already been settled in India. Castlereagh and Pitt also took this position in the cabinet. As late as the end of August Pitt told Henry Wellesley that he would try to extract

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404 Castlereagh to Wellesley, 30 August 1804, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 505, f. 238; Philips, East India, p. 135.
405 Castlereagh to John Pratt, Second Earl and First Marquess of Camden, 26 May 1804, India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous MSS 504, f. 74; Scott to Wellesley, 11 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37283, f. 181.
from the King some honour for Wellesley. But three months later Castlereagh concluded that Wellesley must be recalled; he despaired of any success in defending him. For the first time a note of antipathy towards Wellesley, flavoured by the attitude held by the company, entered the correspondence of the government. Pitt concluded that Wellesley's conduct was not only impolitic but illegal: he must go. On 21 December 1804 Pitt delivered the death warrant to Wellesley: it was the "clear opinion" of Castlereagh and himself, and of others as well, "that you could no longer have the means of carrying on the government in a way either creditable or satisfactory to yourself, or advantageous to the public service." Wellesley was, in effect, dismissed from office.

In India the viceroy proceeded in complete innocence of the calamity. He was dismayed to hear that even the accession of Pitt had not silenced the court, and he decided to despatch

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407 Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester, diary entry, 18 December 1804, Diaries and Correspondence (3 vols.; London: Murray, I, 530; Castlereagh to Pitt, December 1804, PRO, Chatham MSS 121.

408 Cornwallis to Lt. General Ross, 6 December 1804, Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 522; Buckingham, Courts, III, 403.

Arthur to London to strengthen Pitt's hand against the company. He was embittered by the manner in which parliament had seen fit to thank him for the treaty of Bassein, and wrote to the court that by such devices their authority in India was inevitably weakened.  

410 He believed, on the other hand, that the court was not popular, and indeed, as his brother Gerald maintained, some people did believe that "the conduct of the court . . . is universally reprobated."  

411 But Wellesley always tended to believe that those who failed to appreciate his qualities were too stupid to make an impression on others, and he did not change his opinion now. He wrote to Grenville in this vein as late as May 1805; a naive letter it was. "The court of directors is incensed against me . . . because the public business in India has been despatched in the most expeditious form in a crisis of war."  

412 There were, in addition, so many loose ends in India that he felt obliged to write his wife that he could not see his way clear to returning until at least the end of the year.

About 20 May, however, he finally received two pieces of


411 Gerald Wellesley to Wellesley, 24 May 1804, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 27.

412 Wellesley to Grenville, 22 May 1805, Fortescue MSS, pp. 271-72.
ominous news: Cornwallis had been appointed to succeed him and planned to leave England immediately; the court of directors had proceeded with their project to censure Wellesley and the ministry had finally surrendered. The news about Cornwallis, who had grown increasingly critical of Wellesley, was perhaps more galling to Wellesley than the censure. He heard about it informally through despatches sent to lower-ranking company officials, a procedure which offended his fine sense of place. Wellesley, moreover, had long lobbied on behalf of Barlow, an unusual choice in that he was a company servant and perhaps not the most distinguished company bureaucrat. Doubtless Wellesley thought him suitable for precisely these reasons, and he would preside over Wellesley's empire as a custodian guards an estate. He would change nothing, and would revere Wellesley for the honour accorded him.

But Cornwallis was a different matter. He was old (aged sixty seven) and infirm. But he was also cast in an independent and cautious mold, and his military experience would rescue Wellesley's India from its problems with Holkar. His appointment was a direct slap at Wellesley, and an insult he could not endure. Cornwallis landed at Madras on 30 July 1805 perhaps astonished to find his predecessor still in India. Cornwallis

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413 Toone to Hastings, 7 January 1805, BM Add. MSS 29180, f. 84.

414 Cornwallis to Ross, 7 January 1805, Cornwallis, Correspondence, III, 525.
proceeded to Calcutta and Wellesley and he suffered each other there for two days. One observer noted the difference in style: Wellesley drove "in his coach and six, proceeded by a party of dragoons and a number of outriders;" ten minutes later Cornwallis came by "driving himself in a phaeton with a pair of steady old jogtrot horses, accompanied by his secretary."\textsuperscript{415} Wellesley left Calcutta in early August and by the middle of the month had put Madras behind him. He was accompanied by Shawe and a few trusted aides.\textsuperscript{416} He affected an air of high confidence in his letters to Hyacinthe, and carefully omitted any impression that his departure was other than voluntary. But he betrayed an increasing awareness of the true state of affairs in his final letter to Pitt:

This is not the time for any remark upon the conclusion to which my administration has been brought by the conduct of the India house aided by my own imprudent sacrifice of personal convenience and interest to the great object of completing every public arrangement for the security and prosperity of this vast empire. . . . [But] it will be no satisfaction to receive personal honours and rewards if the fruit of my public services are to be torn from my hands and destroyed in my sight.\textsuperscript{417}

It cannot have been a happy journey home.


XI: The Reckoning

Even as Wellesley returned to England the drama continued to unfold. At the time of Cornwallis' appointment Pitt thought in terms of salving Wellesley's wounds by offering him an English marquisate and a place in the cabinet. At St. Helena, where Arthur rested on his way home, news was circulating that Wellesley would take immediate possession of the Foreign office. The Grenvillites also anticipated this appointment. Arthur reached London in September, however, and he realised immediately that his brother's reception would be anything but cordial. He requested an appointment with the court of directors. The chairman initially refused lest receiving Arthur be interpreted as a sign of approval for the policy of the marquess. Arthur was shocked to discover that members of the court were convinced that Wellesley planned to overturn the authority of the company as soon as he came ashore. Arthur received a studiously cordial reception from Castlereagh and Pitt. Castlereagh was now secretary of state for War and the
Colonies, and his influence with Pitt was greater than ever. Arthur laboured to justify the Maratha wars and Pitt was reported to be impressed with his presentation. It was, however, only a temporary change of mind on Pitt's part and it counted for little. Wellesley had already sailed down the Hoogly and was heading home. More important, the court of directors had finally completed their condemnatory report. This document was to bear witness to all of Wellesley's achievements in India even as it condemned a good number of them. For the remainder of his life Wellesley's enemies would rely on it to sustain allegations of haughtiness, insubordination, and ruthlessness. From the same report, and from a masterful rebuttal prepared in 1806 by Arthur Wellesley, friends of the Marquess and historians of India would construct their own evaluation of the Wellesley viceroyalty.

The condemnation as finally presented to the Court of Directors for their formal approval was one of the longest documents ever produced by India house. The original "draft number 123" as it was generally referred to advanced elaborate

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423 DNB, XX, 1082.

424 Board of Control to the Court of Directors, 22 April, 19 October 1805, 2, ff. 248, 264, cited in Philips, East India, p. 142.
arguments to support the thesis that in Wellesley's hands the company's government in India had been transformed into a "simple despotism" by a number of unconstitutional acts. The bluntness of the language shocked Castlereagh, who asked that a further consideration of the charges be delayed until all supporting documents had been assembled, and who took immediate exception to the charge of unconstitutional behaviour on Wellesley's part. By conceding that Wellesley's conduct on occasion had been inexcusably highhanded, however, Castlereagh in effect assured the court that the attempt to censure Wellesley might well succeed. The court in turn quickly assembled the necessary supporting documents, so that the board of control was in possession of all materials by the time Wellesley sailed from Calcutta. Castlereagh managed nonetheless to postpone further consideration for five months, until October 1805. By this time Arthur Wellesley had met with Castlereagh, who showed Wellesley the damaging despatch. Arthur was terrified, and he prepared memoranda for the returning viceroy to ease the shock. Castlereagh at length informed the court that the despatch seemed "very injuriously and unjustly to reflect upon the British counsels in India for a series of years past," but

425 Castlereagh to the Court of Directors, n. d., India Office Library, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 153-54.

426 Ibid., ff. 356-57.
agreed again with the court that there had been an "obvious departure" and some "leading irregularities" which could not be tolerated in the future. Because the board of control wished to avoid "the appearance of a general censure," however, and was sure that the company would not want Wellesley's conduct condemned outright, the draft would be returned for further amendment.[427]

These exchanges were polite, but the difference of opinion was substantial. At length the court invited the board of control to submit a draft of its own, and in December 1805 this was done. The new despatch "differed from the directors' draft by employing throughout the language of urbanity and admonition instead of truculence and prohibition." It made clear, nonetheless, that the board supported many of the court's specific complaints and agreed that "the autocratic features of Wellesley's rule were alien to the traditional system."

The board's draft omitted specific charges.[428] The court refused to accept so generalised a formula. A long letter which bears an interesting resemblance to some of Lord Acton's essays on the corruptibility inherent in unbridled power warned the board of control that "absolute power in one man is no more

427Ibid., ff. 556-57.
428Roberts, India, p. 278.
necessary in British India and will do no more good than in other countries." And unless the board strongly condemned Wellesley the government in India would forever be distinguished by absolutist tendencies, and the power of the company would be soon enough destroyed. 429

Time was passing quickly. It was early November when the board replied to this latest round by saying that an extended criticism of the India system could not be permitted, even if on many of the specific points the board and the court agreed. On 6 November, therefore, the court withdrew its despatch and retired to the safety of a letter addressed to the board of control summarising the case against Wellesley. In their eyes Wellesley stood convicted of autocratic rule, insubordination and fiscal irresponsibility. 430 Wellesley was only a month away, and they had forced his recall. Pitt, it was now becoming clear, was too ill to conduct the nation's affairs much longer. Charles Fox and Wellesley's sharpest critics were possibly to gain a share of Pitt's legacy, and Wellesley's conduct might be reviewed and assessed in the highest court of all, that of parliament itself. The court of directors' triumph would therefore be a considerable one. Wellesley would never forgive the company and nation for their

429 The Court of Directors to the Board of Control, n. d., India Office Library, Home Miscellaneous MSS 486, ff. 583-84, 588-90.

430 The Court of Directors to the Board of Control, 6 Novem-
ingratitude, and indeed his career would be permanently scarred.

ber 1805, printed in Marshall, Problems, pp. 142-44.