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CHAPTER XII:

INTO OPPOSITION:

JANUARY - APRIL 1812
Wellesley resigned as Foreign secretary 19 February 1812. Although he would live another thirty years and be active in British politics for most of that time, he would never again sit in the cabinet. His resignation came when Wellesley's parliamentary interest was at its apogee. Thereafter his position as head of the family would be challenged by Wellington. His foreign policy, built on a strategy of defeating France in Iberia, would continue. His demands for increased mobilisation of British resources and energies to prosecute the war would be honoured. Arthur would advance in the peerage and in the eyes of his countrymen until there was no equal in the land.

At first glance one might conclude that Wellesley resigned in order to devote his declining years to reading the classics and writing his memoirs. But he was only fifty-two and was still vigorous. He was ambitious and exceedingly angry. He called for new policies and offered himself as a new leader to the war-weary nation. The trumpets sounded but no one responded. Wellesley began the descent into what would be the darkest decade of his life.

Wellesley had threatened to resign for most of the previous two years. He had issued ultimata to almost everyone except Perceval, and gradually his threats had lost their
force. During this period Wellesley's complaints involved two considerations. Perceval refused to support more vigorously the prosecution of the war in Spain and Portugal. The cabinet lacked that ability and energy which was needed to provide the country with a strong and stable government. These two points Wellesley did not hesitate to put to paper. Implied in all this was a third objection more important than these two: the failure of the Regent, parliament and nation to appreciate the need to transfer the leadership of the ministry to Wellesley himself. The events of the first two months of 1812 can be described accurately by viewing them as a clash between Wellesley and Perceval for supremacy within the government. Matters of principle intruded, and there were valid differences of opinion on the major issues of the day. But the clash of personalities transcended these differences.

What underlay Wellesley's inability to work in harness with Perceval? The most basic reason was Perceval's office, which Wellesley coveted, rather than Perceval himself. Wellesley came into office in late 1809 convinced that although Perceval was Prime minister Wellesley was expected to dominate the cabinet and to direct the war effort. Wellesley's point of view was widely supported. In Spain Arthur Wellesley thought that next to placing the Marquess in
the office of Prime minister it was best that his brother
serve under Perceval; the differences in policy were likely
to prove only minor. In England Perceval's rise to the
head of the cabinet was identified more with Canning's
struggle against Castlereagh than with his own intrinsic
merits. The duel, it was thought, had momentarily cleared
the decks of two of the nation's more talented leaders, and
Perceval would act as caretaker until the natural order of
things was restored. Perceval was amiable, self-effacing,
diligent, relatively free from ideological burdens, eager
to see the the nation's work was done. He was not considered
to be dynamic, assertive, imaginative or durable. He was
closer to Addington than to Pitt on the continuum of ability.
Some indeed identified him with Portland, under whom the high-
 spirited egotistical Pittites could find a niche and get
on with the work of the day.

One wonders how much of Wellesley's trouble with
Perceval was related to the fact that Perceval was his superior.
When Wellesley disclosed his intention of resigning he gave
as reasons his inability to carry out policies which were
not his own, or to permit others to revise his drafts. He
attributed this to his experience in India. It is possible
that this is the closest that Wellesley ever came to disclosing,
or perhaps even understanding, why he resigned. In this sense
Wellesley was certainly jealous of Perceval.

In many respects Perceval was far from demanding as a Prime minister. He was invariably polite to Wellesley, even when his disagreements with the Foreign secretary were sharp. He asked Wellesley to concert his activities with the cabinet only when the issue at hand was a particularly important one, and even here Wellesley often had his way simply by ignoring Perceval's requests. His absences from cabinet meetings were notorious, yet Perceval never upbraided him. Perceval, then, cannot be blamed for the friction, and later Wellesley admitted as much.

If Perceval was look upon as an interim leader, a custodian of Pitt's legacy but not an embodiment of Pitt's charisma, then it was inevitable that the nation should scan the political horizon for a new leader. To no one's surprise Wellesley nominated himself. Many others, even some who thoroughly despised the Marquess, were convinced that Wellesley would indeed succeed to Pitt's heritage. Not many relished the prospect, but for a time there was a certain inevitability about it. Unfortunately for Wellesley, the number of those thus persuaded gradually diminished after Wellesley entered public office. From 1810 to 1812 Wellesley tried to arrest this trend by stressing the incompetence of other candidates. He ignored almost entirely the fundamental
consideration that by 1812 his prospective body of disciples had dwindled almost to nothing. Viewed from this perspective, Wellesley's fulminations against Pittites in the cabinet, against Whigs and Grenvillites who contradicted him on the war, and even against his friend Canning whenever he flirted with the Whigs, simply contributed to his own downfall. 

Wellesley's failure was hinted at in January and February 1812, and confirmed during May and June. 

Wellesley could not justify his decision to quit the government or to work for the formation of a new ministry, simply on the basis that he could not abide Perceval. Either genuine differences of opinion existed, or it had to appear that there were differences. Three issues loomed above all others: the war; the Catholic question; and the Regent's household finances. All of them were influenced by the matter of timing: which of them would command wide popular support at the critical moment? Beyond this, Wellesley was obliged to determine whether a period of retirement from office would act as proof positive of his indispensability to the country. Thus issues, timing, and expectations governed the drama of Wellesley's departure from office, and later contributed to his decline into frustrating isolation. Was Wellesley in all this a victim of his own hubris?
Perceval's two biographers have disputed vigorously the contention that Perceval flagged in support for Wellington in the peninsula. They point out that Wellesley while Foreign secretary never declared that Perceval opposed the peninsular strategy.\(^1\) They point as well to Wellington's statement in 1835 that he was satisfied that Perceval had supported his efforts vigorously.\(^2\) To them the issue of assistance was one of degree. Perceval as prime minister was forced to accommodate demands made upon government financial resources by a wide number of interests. By temperament Perceval was frugal, but his frugality was not directed solely towards the peninsula. They imply that Wellesley was by nature financially irresponsible, or at least failed to concern himself with the questions of money, whether in his private situation or as a public servant.

Why was Wellesley so certain that an increase in expenditures in Iberia would materially accelerate the revival of Spain? On the surface it seemed at times that he was more depressed than were any of his colleagues by Spain's and Portugal's ability to squander money and materiel. He had come away from Spain despairing of that nation's capacity to save itself. Wellington's correspondence


\(^2\)Ibid.
conveys a similar impression although he was often more discreet in his choice of language. On closer inspection of the question, however, it appears that Wellesley was not complaining of the lack of financial support for the peninsula so much as the want of specific forms of assistance, primarily additions to British troop strength and the allocation of certain types of supplies. In part of course this can be traced back at least to Walcheren, where Wellesley established his case that resources must be concentrated in Spain or not employed there at all. Wellington urged Wellesley to secure more officers for training and supervising Spanish and Portuguese units, more supplies for his own troops, and a concentration of the command structure in his own hands. Most appropriations to the Junta, and later to the Regency and Cortes, were in effect bribes calculated to weaken resistance to British trade with the colonies. Wellesley did not oppose these expenditures; by increasing Britain's world markets government revenues would also be increased. But it is quite likely that he saw these endeavours as something quite different from the war, and his clash with Perceval on the Iberian issue was directed in large part to supplies for Wellington, not for the Spanish government.

Substantial indirect evidence supports this point of
view. One of the sharpest clashes with Perceval concerned a proposal to send a second army to northern Spain to support rebel efforts in Asturias. While reducing supplies to Wellington was anticipated, the total amount of assistance to Spain would have increased substantially. The principle of concentration of effort, so crucial in Wellesley's mind, would have been violated. Wellesley's opposition was tempered when Perceval proposed that the new expedition be placed under Wellington's command; Wellesley later waxed enthusiastic.

With a family as unabashedly ambitious as that of the Wellesley clan, it was easy enough to conclude that Wellesley's motives were largely selfish. Would Wellesley have been as enthusiastic in the cause of Spain if it had not been his brother in command of the troops, and another brother in charge of the diplomatic efforts? Perceval was very careful to keep any such suggestions of Wellesley family interest to himself. Others did not. Prior to 1812 Wellington was not an entirely popular figure even within the cabinet. He gained a peerage, it is true; but the government was under some pressure to demonstrate that Wellington was indeed setting the stage for the defeat of Napoleon. Perhaps Wellesley would not have exerted himself with the same vigor on this issue if responsibilities in Spain had been entrusted to another person.
When family and national interests are intertwined it is difficult to criticise motives or even to dissect them. The only letters Wellesley wrote with every hope that they would not eventually be published were those to Hyacinthe, and in them he certainly made it clear (to her increasing disgust) that he would sacrifice all to vindicate Wellington's reputation in the peninsula. His thesis, which she violently disputed, was that Wellington's triumphs were an extension of his own fame. Did this sentiment drive Wellesley to press so hard for assistance for his brother as to make Spain preeminent in his strategy against Napoleon? Does it explain why Wellesley ceased to be interested in India after 1806, and even to declare in 1814 that India was not worth the large appropriation then being proposed for its defence? It is quite possible that family ambition played quite as important a role in stimulating the clash between Wellesley and Perceval as did the principle of Spain itself. Towards the end of his tenure Wellesley complained of Perceval's ability to block the allocation of that small increment for Iberia which would permit Wellington to achieve a dramatic breakthrough of British arms. Certainly by February 1812 Wellesley claimed to see conspiracy in it. A hasty exposition of his relationship with Perceval, written by an assistant from Wellesley's
notes and drawn from Wellesley's off-hand remarks during that critical period, offered as harsh a view of a fellow colleague as appeared anywhere in early nineteenth century British political literature. It went far towards suggesting that Perceval had been reduced in Wellesley's estimation to the level of his old enemy Paull. It was vindictive, and was not meant to be published. Wellesley confessed, nonetheless, that the sentiments therein were his. Through a series of accidents it was indeed published and alienated again those who might have been willing to serve under Wellesley when Perceval was assassinated in May 1812. Even in death Perceval seemed to frustrate Wellesley.

Of the two other issues, that of funding the Regent's household smacks of improvisation and opportunism. It reveals Perceval at his best and Wellesley at his worst. To make no effort to discipline the Regent was irresponsible in its own right and inconsistent with Wellesley's own view that not enough was being done to mobilise the nation's resources for the prosecution of the war. It is hard to take seriously Wellesley's contention that Perceval's formula here would weaken the executive branch of the government. It is not difficult to see that Wellesley hoped to purchase the assistance of the Regent which, after all the hours spent at Carlton house impressing him with the brilliance of his
grand strategy for the salvation of Europe, and making it appear that it was the Regent's own handiwork, Wellesley had failed to secure.

Wellesley's tactics in protesting Perceval's economies here advertised Wellesley's adhesion to the Prince Regent, but at the cost of prompting the cabinet to vent openly its well justified condemnation of Wellesley's tactics. He defied the principle of cabinet cohesion by taking his case directly to the Prince. Resignation would have been more appropriate if the matter was of such great importance to Wellesley. Beyond the bad manners and questionable constitutional behaviour involved, there was the real question of what Wellesley hoped to gain by proceeding the way he did. Wellesley either underestimated the Regent's cleverness in matters of this sort, or overvalued his own services. Wellesley would not have been able to secure from parliament approval for a higher allocation if Perceval, with his reputation for economy, had considerable difficulty mustering support for the lower figure. The most Wellesley could offer was a sort of sympathy for the Regent drawn from some experience in contracting large debts of his own. The country and the parliament were unlikely to overturn the ministry of the day in order to grant the Regent, that fickle and frivolous fellow, a larger allowance.
Wellesley's support of Catholic relief betrayed a higher standard of conduct and purpose. After 1810 it was appropriate to resume debate on this issue because the King's permanent insanity was clearly established. George III had extracted from Pitt the pledge never to raise the issue again after Pitt had attempted to balance the extinction of the Irish parliament by making concessions to Catholics. For a decade Pitt's disciples respected that injunction. Wellesley rightly thought that the bar had now been removed. He had agreed with Pitt in the impropriety of urging the measure while the King reigned and ruled, but he contended that when the King went insane the ministry of the day was free to act.³ Others urged the Regent to delay raising the matter until the King died. Wellesley warned the Regent that he could not be the King in some instances and merely heir presumptive in others.

Perceval opposed concessions. Wellesley was convinced that his opposition was absolute, although at least Liverpool held that Wellesley had chosen to cast Perceval's opinions in

³Merrick Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda (15 vols.; London: J. Murray, 1858-1872), VI, 270. In 1801 Wellesley had written from India to Grenville that the King's prohibition constituted a gross error and one which must be rectified as soon as the King's removal from the scene permitted it: Wellesley to Grenville, 21 October 1801, Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. For-
terms stronger than they in fact were. On this issue, at least, Wellesley could look for some support in the cabinet, especially among Camden, Westmoreland, Mulgrave and Melville. He could also hope for the concurrence of Canning, the Whigs, and Grenville. There was sufficient support among important people in parliament to form a government pledged to Catholic relief, if the parliamentary strength available to the Prince Regent could be counted on as well. Wellesley was confident that the Prince was safe on this point.

The Regent’s oldest friends were Whigs deeply committed to the idea. He had spoken of the need for concessions before, and indeed as early as 1788 had been cheered in Dublin for his bold opposition to his father on this point. Among the Pittites Wellesley could claim to be the oldest champion of the Catholic cause. The platform of Catholic relief seemed to offer a secure basis for isolating Perceval and removing him from office.


Perhaps Wellesley should have pledged himself only to the Catholic relief question. But of course there was the peninsular campaign. Had Wellesley been willing to abandon Iberia perhaps during the winter or spring of 1812 a government might have been constructed on the platform of Catholic relief. Wellesley refused to limit himself to the single issue, however, and therefore lost an opportunity to enlist the support of the Whigs. To Wellesley's credit even when relations with Wellington turned terribly sour in the middle of 1812 he did not abandon his enthusiasm for Spain.

What might have happened had Perceval declared the Catholic question an open one before Wellesley resigned in February, as Perceval did subsequently under pressure and as Liverpool proceeded to do the following summer? It might have blunted Wellesley's attack on Perceval. Almost certainly it would have placed Wellesley in an extremely awkward position, for so intense was his animosity towards Perceval that even a concession as enormous as agreeing to Catholic relief would not have appeased Wellesley. Wellesley would still have resigned; Perceval would not have given way on all three of Wellesley's demands: Spain; the Regent's household; and Catholic relief.

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Ibid., pp. 191-92.
Wellesley chose to confront Perceval on these three issues. Why did he choose January 1812 as the time to break with the government or to overthrow it if he could? Contemporary commentators and historians of our own day have generally agreed that the time was well-chosen. By now it was clear that the King would not recover, and that the Catholic issue must revive. The government was in difficulty in the wake of the dispute over the Regent’s finances. The Regent was thought to be eager to change his ministers so as to reinforce the impression that he would not pursue his father’s policies. Wellesley for his part wanted to emphasise to the Prince Regent that he would not follow blindly the majority view of the cabinet after the end of restrictions. The almost effortless tranquility which attended Perceval’s conduct of affairs, even during passage of the household bill, strongly suggested to Wellesley that Perceval might also survive agitation on the Catholic issue, despite the weakness of his position, if he could induce the Prince Regent to postpone consider-


8 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 270.
Wellesley recorded in his own notes that he had succeeded, despite obstructions laid down by the cabinet, in restructuring priorities on the continent, and that his plan would prosper or fail on the basis of how much support parliament was prepared to offer. Finally, Wellesley wanted to force the issue of Perceval's claims on the Prime ministership while the Prince Regent remembered clearly Wellesley's sympathy for the Regent's financial problems. Wellesley tried to demonstrate that this issue was the "last straw," as it were, in a long series of humiliations engineered by Perceval to force Wellesley's resignation from the government.

One important consideration militated against resigning at this particular time. This was the first occasion on which Wellington was wintering in Iberia without being faced with an imminent threat of annihilation at the hands of better equipped and more numerous French forces. One wonders whether Wellesley might not have remained at his post could he have foreseen the tremendous forward movement

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9 Ibid., p. 275.
11 Walpole, Perceval, II, 259-60.
of British arms in Spain during the next eighteen months. He noted bitterly at a later date that all the credit for the success of the Iberian policy accrued to Liverpool; worse yet, had Perceval survived the assassin's bullet, he would likely have been honoured on this account. There is no suggestion in any of Wellesley's correspondence at the end of 1811, however, that he might have delayed submitting his resignation on the basis of prospects in Spain alone. Even before further honours were announced for Wellington Wellesley had made his decision to leave the government, although he was certainly disconcerted at the speed at which Perceval contrived to push him out. Perceval may have seen the wisdom of dismissing Wellesley before the onset of the spring campaigns in Iberia; perhaps he, better than Wellesley, anticipated good news from the war-front.

It is not clear whether Wellesley expected Wellington to support his brother by resigning his position in Spain. Wellington certainly goaded Wellesley to take a hard line in the cabinet and thus was responsible at least in part for Wellesley's decision to resign. When news of Wellesley's resignation reached Spain Wellington wrote to his brother in an approving tone which suggested that he expected to see Wellesley vindicated and restored to office at an
early date. But subsequently he made it quite clear to the cabinet that he had no intention of submitting his resignation, and that Wellesley's determination to resign had not met with his approval. This somewhat self-serving inconsistent course angered Wellesley, but he continued to support Wellington zealously. Perhaps Wellington realised that his own resignation would have been intolerably heavy-handed; his failure to do so, nonetheless, must have upset the Marquess' calculations.

Was Wellesley prepared to go into opposition, at least for a short time, or did he expect that Perceval would retire? The chronology of events clearly suggests that Wellesley was shocked to see Perceval continue in office. Wellesley was fishing in troubled waters, and he assumed that the Prince Regent was his companion. To him a new coalition involving Canning and the Whigs or Grenville, or some of these elements, was entirely feasible. Indeed, Perceval later admitted that he was surprised to see himself still at the helm at the end of the crisis. Wellesley entered into and precipitated the confrontation quite determined

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12 Wellington to Wellesley, 12 March 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 303.

to remain in office, to remove Perceval, and to vindicate his policies. It is equally clear that he misjudged the motives of the Prince Regent, the popularity of Perceval in the house of Commons, the position of his family, and the attitude of the Whigs and Grenville. These were all serious miscalculations indeed.

III: Fruitless Negotiations: 7-22 January 1812

Parliament reconvened 7 January 1812. Because restrictions on the Prince's powers as Regent were scheduled to lapse within the space of two weeks it was urgent that Perceval be dislodged immediately. The Regent and Wellesley both favoured changes. Wellesley wanted Perceval removed to an office commensurate with his abilities as Wellesley perceived them. "He is an able man . . . but he is not fit to be Prime minister of England," Wellesley declared in January. Perceval was the most "unfit man of any of the same or nearly the same capacity" Wellesley had ever met with.14 Of course this was only part of the problem, but perhaps on this point the Regent agreed with Wellesley. Certainly the Regent proved inconsistent in every other respect. He did not want to throw himself entirely into the

hands of the opposition. He told his friend William Adam that he hoped "to unite as many persons of talent in the government of the country under its present difficulties, as possible." No one knew quite what he meant by this; almost surely he did not. With restrictions about to lapse, however, the Prince could not remain quiet without destroying what little remained of his tattered credibility. He determined to extend an invitation to the Whigs.

The invitation was supposed to be extended 8 January, the day after parliament met. He was under pressure to do so from Wellesley, who despite his public protestations to the contrary hoped that Whigs, Canningites and some Tories would consent to serve under him. From the other side many Whigs starved for office hoped that the Prince would urge them to come into office. Among them were not necessarily included Grey and his friends. Grenville was also reluctant. He gave notice on the evening of 7 January that he planned to raise the question of the ministry's policy in Ireland. By doing so he agitated the Prince and plans for extending an invitation were postponed.

During the first two weeks of January Wellesley waited in almost daily, even hourly, expectation of a change in the composition of the ministry. Nothing happened, expected that the conservative Lord Chancellor Eldon and the Duke of Cum-
berland became more frequent guests at Carlton house.

Wellesley, however, was also closeted with the Prince for extended periods, including five hours on 2 January, just before parliament opened.

Wellesley enjoyed one small success. He outwitted Lady Melbourne in their competition to supply the somewhat hypochondriacal Regent with a new physician. Knighton had gone with Wellesley to Spain and Wellesley secured him this position in lieu of his inability to compensate Knighton for services rendered on that occasion. Knighton proceeded to become one of the most powerful men in the country, and Wellesley liked to think (inaccurately as it turned out) that Knighton was completely loyal. McMahon, the Prince's confidant and secretary, assured Wellesley at the beginning of January that for all sorts of reasons, including the labours of Knighton, "Wellesley would be at the head of the government as soon as restrictions ended."¹⁵

The household bill passed both houses of parliament without a problem. Perceval triumphed here, and the Prince was allegedly impressed with the slight influence Wellesley was able to exert in the Cabinet in an effort to increase the income reserved to the Prince. As for the Catholic

issue Perceval decided to postpone bringing it before the cabinet until the Regent expressed an opinion on it. Nothing, Wellesley concluded, was likely to disturb Perceval's control of the ministry unless Wellesley seized the initiative.¹⁶

This was the state of affairs when on 16 January Wellesley notified Earl Bathurst that he wished to speak with him at once. He wished to submit his resignation, he told the Earl, and chose Bathurst as a vehicle rather than addressing Perceval directly on the pretext that in 1809 Perceval had extended an invitation to Wellesley through Bathurst. This procedure was, of course, calculated to give offence to Perceval. Bathurst, however, was not immediately available. Wellesley therefore walked on to Carlton house, and in a move calculated to embarrass Perceval even more grievously, he told the Prince Regent of his desire to retire from office. He expressed the hope that the resignation might be handled in such a way as not to prevent "a reunion under happier circumstances." This was generally construed to mean that Wellesley's resignation would take effect only if Perceval was confirmed as Prime minister when the restrictions ended. If Perceval was shifted to a lesser office Wellesley pledged himself to support a new government

¹⁶Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 274.
Wellesley judged his interview with the Prince to have been a distinct success: he left Carleton house convinced that as soon as the restrictions expired the Regent would invite him to form a new government. So certain was he of this that he made plans to offer the Admiralty to Wellesley Pole and sketched out a plan for nominations to other offices. But at Carleton house the Castlereagh interest, working through Lord Yarmouth and the "interior cabinet," lobbied against Wellesley for fear that he would deny office to Castlereagh. They protested, quite rightly, that most of the cabinet and many Whigs would refuse to serve under Wellesley.

Certainly Wellesley's illusions should have been corrected when he saw Bathurst the following day. He repeated his intention to resign and asked Bathurst to inform Perceval. Bathurst opposed the decision vigorously, even angrily. In his memorandum for Richmond in Dublin Bathurst recorded that Wellesley gave as his reasons the lack of the lead which he had expected to enjoy in the cabinet, aversion to executing the opinions and suggestions

17Ibid., p. 275.
18Wellesley to Henry, Earl Bathurst, 17 January 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 175, and Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Bathurst MSS (London:
of others, and an unwillingness to have his drafts revised. Bathurst retorted that everyone else had his drafts changed. Wellesley conceded that this was so, but that he found it impossible after his experience in India. He confessed to Bathurst that he had wanted to resign since October 1810 because of deficiencies in the Spanish policy. On the Catholic question he looked forward to some changes but he realised that Catholics would have to make concessions as well.²⁹

Bathurst immediately spoke to Perceval, who absorbed Wellesley's slight and replied in a civil tone that he would not try to change Wellesley's mind after hearing that Bathurst had not been able to do so. Perceval asked that Wellesley's son Richard be permitted to remain at his office in the Treasury.²⁰ Bathurst recorded that Wellesley seemed pleased enough with Perceval's response, and that he was satisfied that the resignation process had been as painless as possible.²¹

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²⁰Perceval to Wellesley, 17 January 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 175.

²¹Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 275.
Wellesley was clearly under the impression that while he had registered his decision to resign, he did not expect Perceval or the Prince Regent to insist that he surrender the seals at an early date. He was confident enough of this to put aside his current backlog of work at the Foreign office. Up to the day before he confided his intentions to the Prince, moreover, he had continued to act as if he planned to remain a prominent member of the government. Even after submitting his resignation he went to the Regent with a project to give Grenville the committee he wanted to investigate Catholics' claims for relief. He reported that there was enough support in the cabinet that under pressure Perceval might give way.\(^{22}\) When Perceval resisted and extracted from the cabinet a vote of confidence in his own policies, Wellesley insisted that his dissent be recorded and transmitted to the Prince.\(^{23}\) These were not the actions of a man prepared to walk out of public office in the near future.

Over the next ten days Wellesley participated actively in cabinet meetings and met with the Prince alone and in

\(^{22}\) Buckingham to Grenville, 13 January 1812, printed in Fortescue, X, 191

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 2 February 1812, printed in Fortescue, X, 204.
the company of Perceval. On 21 January the cabinet weighed the likely impact of Grenville's promise to debate the Irish government's policies towards Catholics. Wellesley urged the cabinet to overturn Perceval and to support a plan of concessions. The cabinet voted only to resume discussion later. The next day Wellesley closeted himself with the Prince for four hours. He came away persuaded that he had obtained the Regent's support for a committee authorised to discuss four points: the feasibility of offering Catholics emancipation on a piecemeal basis; the question of a crown veto on the selection of bishops; the possibility of opening military and revenue offices immediately and deferring provision for their clergy until later, and postponement of the issue of parliamentary representation. As Buckingham observed, the questions suggested that Wellesley was trying to fashion a formula of Catholic relief which would strike a middle ground between Whigs' demands and Tories' opposition.  

After seeing the Regent, Wellesley met with Liverpool and Eldon to persuade them to grant Grenville's request for a committee if amended to meet the provisions allegedly established in his discussions with the Regent. The Prince

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reportedly approved all this, and indeed was enthusiastic in his support. He described Wellesley's arguments and plan as "admirable" and "exactly" the same as his own thinking.25 At the Regent's invitation Wellesley, Liverpool, Eldon and Perceval met at Carleton house on 23 January to discuss the entire question in the abstract. Wellesley again argued in favour of a committee to discuss Catholic relief, as proposed by Grenville. Liverpool and Eldon were thought to have supported him.26 Again Wellesley came away pleased. He told his friends and admirers at Apsley house that the Prince had "made up his mind to the amelioration of the condition of the Catholics, in a very material degree, if not totally, as the first act of his government," and that if Perceval could not accept this then he would have to go.27

On the basis of the Regent's warm encouragement Wellesley put to paper a proposal for Catholic relief designed to strike a middle ground between immediate concession and steady resistance. According to a paper which

25Dardis to Buckingham, January 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 191.

26Ibid., 1 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 215-17; Buckingham to Grenville, 23 January 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS., X, 192.

27Dardis to Buckingham, January 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 193-94.
Dardis supplied Buckingham, Wellesley tried to meet the objections of the conservative body of the cabinet by promising that Catholics would accept certain restrictions on the autonomy of their church. When Buckingham read the report he labeled it "silly" and concluded that the fact that Wellesley was forced to stress Catholics' concessions demonstrated that the Tories could not at heart divorce themselves from the "no Popery" mentality. Whether Buckingham spoke for most Whigs cannot be determined, but as it transpired he reflected the sentiments of Grey and Grenville accurately enough on this occasion. And if the compromise did not concede enough to Catholics to meet Whigs' demands, it remained too radical for Perceval. On 25 January he proclaimed his total dissatisfaction with Wellesley's plan. The deadlock seemed complete.

Or was it? Perceval could pursue either of two courses, and he tried both in turn. He could demand that the Prince accept Wellesley's resignation immediately or he could profess to have been converted to Catholic relief and continue to lead the government. The danger of the first

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28 Buckingham to Grenville, 23 January 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 193.

29 Ibid., 2 February 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 204.
was that he might be dismissed forthwith. The problem of the second was that he must contrive to demonstrate convincingly how it was possible to be converted to the principle of Catholic relief without agreeing at the same time to Wellesley's plans to implement Grenville's motion.

At first Perceval moved to oust Wellesley from the cabinet. On 21 January he met with the Prince and reported that wounds were too deep to permit a reconciliation with Wellesley, even if certain political differences could be settled. He added that the cabinet all wished that the Prince would not take the trouble to mediate between the Marquess and them. The Prince asked how he should reconcile his earlier commitments to advocates of Catholic relief and to his friends among the Whigs if he let Wellesley go. Perceval had no ready answer. Perceval in turn demanded that Wellesley's resignation be accepted so that the ministry could get on with business at hand; he wanted to seals of the Foreign Office transferred to Castlereagh.

The Prince was agreeable enough to this but he warned that if an offer was not made to Canning at the same time Wellesley would go into "damned furious opposition." Canning and Wellesley would unite to bring down the government, and soon would succeed.

Perceval was reluctant to lay on his ears. He approached
Castlereagh with an invitation to take the Foreign office, holding back for the moment on trying to cope with Canning. Castlereagh responded that he would not be a party to any stopgap government, and thus would decline any invitation at the moment. Perceval concluded that he could not remove Wellesley at once, and told the Prince on 24 January that he would follow the Prince's advice and leave things where they were for the moment. The Prince in turn expressed strong support for any measures which would keep Wellesley in office. This prompted Liverpool to write to Wellington in Spain announcing that everything was proceeding in an amiable spirit and that his brother would remain in the government at least temporarily. He added, however, that it was his opinion that in the event of a continuing deadlock between Perceval and Wellesley the Prince would be inclined to remain with Perceval.30

Liverpool's forecast proved accurate, but the Prince seems to have made some effort, perhaps an insincere one, to undermine Perceval. On the same day that Perceval conceded to the Prince that he could not summon Castlereagh to replace Wellesley he asked the Regent to authorise him to declare in the house of Commons that he possessed the

the Regent's exclusive confidence. The Prince not only refused this request, but he revived his project of an embassy to leaders of all factions calling for a government of the "Ing's friends." Such a government, drawn from Whigs and Tories alike, would look to Canning and Wellesley for leadership and balance sufficient to keep each major group from securing predominance in the Regent's councils. If the Tories withdrew or refused to abandon Perceval in his demands for exclusive confidence, a government of Wellesley and Canning and the Whigs was likely to follow. If the Whigs refused there was a slight chance that Wellesley and Canning would join the main body of the incumbent ministry, but only if Catholic relief was conceded and some arrangement was made to remove Perceval as Prime minister.

If Perceval was upset, he did not show it; perhaps he felt confident that the Whigs would save him from Wellesley. On 28 January Grenville heard that the Duke of York would come with an offer from the Regent. "In the evening of our days," as he told Earl Grey, he had little stomach for office and hoped that it would prove easy enough to reject all invitations. So negative an attitude on Grenville's part made it easy enough to find reasons why the Whigs should not prove accommodating: Ireland; fiscal policies; and
above all the "desperate and hopeless character" of the effort in Spain. Nonetheless, the invitation was to prove one of the most curious chapters of a very curious era in British politics.

III: Brief Respite: The Emergence of the Catholic Issue

The Regent's overtures to the Whigs did not take concrete form for another week. In the interim the Catholic issue intervened with a force which promised to shape the course of parliamentary politics for the better part of two decades. The demented King's scruples now seemed obsolete, and there was no way to avoid an early confrontation over Catholics' claims. If Wellesley had long ago made it clear to his closest friends that he sympathised with the Catholics in their demands he had at the same time studiously avoided any public reference to the matter. Discretion had been easy; India had shielded him from the crisis of 1801. Now by attempting to negotiate accept- tance of a modified form of Grenville's motion he was deeply involved in this most difficult of questions.

It is clear now that Wellesley was emboldened to enter the fray by virtue of what he perceived to be the Regent's unrestrained enthusiasm for a settlement of the problem. When the question had begun to loom as a dark
cloud over the end of the restricted regency the Prince had summoned Wellesley. Wellesley had informed him, according to Shawe's account, that he agreed with Pitt that the Union would be an incomplete arrangement without some adjustment of the Catholic claims. But that he concurred with Mr. Pitt in the impropriety of urging the measure in the King's time, considering his advanced age, and after His Majesty's conscientious scruples on that subject were known. That this objection, however, would cease as soon as the full authority of the crown should devolve upon the Prince Regent at the close of the restrictions. 

The Regent in characteristic fashion threw himself entirely into the cause:

Lord Wellesley was made to repeat his intended arguments over and over again; the Prince Regent always swearing the suggestions were all his own (as is usual when anything pleases him), and Lord Wellesley was so deeply committed before Parliament met, that even if he had been so inclined, he could not with credit have abstained from declaring his opinion publicly. The Prince Regent desired he would state in the House that he was authorised to say that the opinions he had stated were those of the Prince Regent. Lord Wellesley excused himself by saying it would be highly unconstitutional, and that he was of opinion that the introduction of the King's name was very reprehensible, and had done much mischief. 

All of this suggests that Wellesley had anticipated the crisis and had given considerable thought to some solutions. Shortly after Wellesley declared that he planned to resign the cabinet began discussing the motion proposed by

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31 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 270.
32 Ibid.
Grenville and to be offered by Lord Fitzwilliam, as has been seen. The dispute between Perceval and Wellesley aside, the cabinet was uncertain whether to resist the motion, or to proceed with an inquiry and then to oppose concessions. Wellesley of course urged his colleagues to accept the idea of an inquiry. When it became clear that the cabinet was inclined to procrastinate, Wellesley determined to proceed alone with what proved to be the first of three impressive speeches. 33

The first speech was delivered on 31 January, right in the middle of the contest with Perceval. Wellesley began by deprecating the militant behaviour of Catholics in their efforts to lay petitions before parliament. He then defended himself against charges that his support for Catholic claims was designed merely to embarrass the cabinet. He had long been interested in the question, he assured his listeners, even if "in a period of peculiar and extraordinary embarrassment, he had suspended the active exertion of opinions on this subject," a suspension which had been "most painful and irksome." These matters thus settled, Wellesley moved to the heart of the matter. Although "every state possesses a right to restrain whatever is

33 Dardis to Buckingham, 1 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 216.
dangerous to its security," such restraints were evil in themselves and could be justified only by necessity. In many respects Catholics had already obtained a predominant share of political power in Ireland because they could inherit property, vote, enter the armed forces or join the bar. By continuing to exclude them from certain remaining offices the Protestant establishment simply contributed to its own insecurity, for it "could never be safe while such a force of discontent was arrayed against it." At the moment, Wellesley concluded with a surprising turn, Ireland was too distracted to accept the concessions he advocated, and for that reason Lords Fitzwilliam and Grenville should withdraw their motion. Later, conditions might well be different.  

In this virtuoso performance Wellesley supported "virtually every side of the argument except that of absolute opposition to any concession at any time." It was liberal and conservative. It gratified Catholics but praised the church of Ireland. It sustained the policy of the ministry but encouraged the opposition. It "made a noise" and the Regent complained that Wellesley should have identified him with it. Grenville, more penetrating in his analysis,  

341 Hansard XXI (31 January 1812), 434-46.  
35Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 271
realised that Wellesley had spoken from the heart on the question of concessions and only played with the conservative parts.\(^{36}\)

Canning delivered an effective speech on the same question in the house of Commons at the same time. The ministry survived, but Wellesley and Canning were not without hope that the interest generated by their speeches would persuade the Regent once and for all that he must now choose the course of unconditional surrender to the Whigs on one hand or complete opposition to change (along with Perceval and his friends) unless he took the middle road proposed by Wellesley and Canning. As Canning put it succinctly, the Prince now had "a person in each house of parliament who has spoken what he must wish to be considered as his opinions - and if he now chooses to put the government into mine and Wellesley's hands I should not now hesitate to undertake it."\(^{37}\)

Wellesley had good reason to be pleased with his performance. Grenville told his brother that "it was the best thing that he has yet done."\(^{38}\) Canning concluded that

\(^{36}\)Grenville to Buckingham, 3 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 222.

\(^{37}\)Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 310.

\(^{38}\)Grenville to Buckingham, 3 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 220-222.
that the vote on the Catholic motion demonstrated the government's weakness. The Whig motion had been defeated 229 to 135, but Canning broke down the vote for the benefit of his wife in such a way as to make it appear that the majority for Perceval was completely illusory. Canning was confident that the Catholic issue would soon be carried. "My speech has carried it," he observed exultantly. He gave credit to Wellesley, in part for the quality of Wellesley's parliamentary performance, but more because Wellesley had now proclaimed his hitherto implicit pro-Catholic stance. Wellesley Pole conceded that the debate had sundered traditional party connections and that there was now a "very general inclination" to consider Catholic claims.

IV: Cabinet Warfare Resumed

By the first week of February Perceval had detected the shift in the wind and this opened up the second possible strategy, that of conceding the justice of Catholics' claims. In the middle of January his political fortunes had reached a very low point. His lame defence of that vexatious household bill proved most unsatisfactory. He was exhausted and contemplated resigning, but was dissuaded...
from doing so by his relative Lord Arden. By 20 January
his spirits had revived; he would stake "the whole existence
of the country" on his policies. On 22 January he wrote
to Wellington declaring that he was determined to fill
Wellesley's vacancy at an early date. Slowly he realised
that the Regent's mind was far from settled. He made clear
his grave doubts that Wellesley, were he able to turn out
the incumbent ministry, would not be able to supply one
in its place. Such arguments rattled the Regent and
reinforced his indecisiveness. Perceval went further.
He now hinted that he might be willing to compromise on
the Catholic issue. Such a hint blunted Wellesley's
claims, for the cabinet far preferred to follow Perceval
than Wellesley in any move to grant concessions. On 28
January the Grenville clan received reports that Perceval was

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39 Dardis to Buckingham, 21 January 1812, printed in
Buckingham, Regency, I, 189-90.

40 Buckingham to Grenville, 23 January 1812, printed in
Fortescue MSS, X, 192.

41 Perceval to Wellington, 22 January 1812, printed in
Walpole, Perceval, II, 261.

42 Dardis to Buckingham, January 1812, printed in
Buckingham, Regency, I, 191.

43 Buckingham to Grenville, 26 January 1812, printed in
Fortescue MSS, X, 195; Grenville to Grey, 28 January
1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 192.

44 Buckingham to Grenville, 24 January 1812, printed
prepared to make the question of Catholic concessions an open one, and that he expected this to silence Wellesley. 45

Wellesley seems to have been slow to realise that Perceval was prepared to shift his strategy; his confidence in the Regent was now unbounded. 46 Canning, although elated by his parliamentary performance and that of Wellesley, soon came to fear that Wellesley would sacrifice all. Perceval, he noted, had survived the household fiasco. By offering to resign Wellesley had already played into Perceval's hands. This had given Perceval an opportunity to negotiate in good faith with Castlereagh and with the Sidmouth group. These elements might be enough to persuade the Regent that Perceval was far better placed to provide a stable government than was anyone else.

In brighter moments Canning contemplated the composition of a new ministry under Wellesley's and his command. How detailed these conversations were was reflected in a letter which Canning wrote to his wife on 4 February. Canning was still prepared to sit in the cabinet with Castlereagh provided that Castlereagh was not given the War department.

45 Grenville to Grey, 28 February 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 197.

46 Wellesley Pole to Charles, Fourth Duke of Richmond, 29 January 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 67, f. 977.
Canning and Wellesley both thought that Castlereagh would be useful in the house of Lords. Could Liverpool be enticed to join the new government? He would be a positive feature of any new cabinet, and Wellesley told Canning that at the moment he seemed most accommodating. Wellesley was willing to let Liverpool take the lead in the Lords: indeed, Wellesley confessed, he "would rather a thousand times only have to come down and take my part in the debate on great occasions," leaving the rest to Liverpool.

Would Liverpool object to concessions to Catholics? Wellesley thought not. "I doubt whether his objections go like Perceval to the Virgin Mary." 47

All these musings meant nothing unless the Regent dismissed Perceval. He would not, but at last he was prepared to parley with the Whigs. This came about on 5 February.

It is difficult at this distance, despite all the studies of this episode, to determine whether the Prince was sincere. He probably was. He did not like or admire Perceval but he abhorred the uncertainty involved in finding new ministers. Perceval had, however, advanced the prospect of admitting the Sidmouith faction. The Prince attributed to Sidmouth the break-up of the Talents ministry

47 Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 312.
in 1807, and told Wellesley that when Perceval mentioned Sidmouth's name one of Virgil's phrases had immediately come to mind: "I stood amazed. My hair stood on end and my voice stuck in my throat." Such facility with the classics probably did not exist in the case of the Prince, but it is clear that he loathed Sidmouth and despised Perceval for suggesting him. He was also "fearful of exposing himself to the charge of broken faith if he repudiated his pledges to the Catholics," and to the unpopularity which would attend abandonment of his old friends among the Whigs. In addition, the Tories appeared to be simply too weak to hold onto office against the Whigs and Wellesley and Canning.

But the Prince was no longer the staunch ally of the Whigs that once he was. He wanted a true "broad bottom" government, and this meant that the Whigs as well as the Tories must make substantial concessions. He favoured Catholic relief but no longer did he want it conceded immediately - indeed, now he doubted that it should come before the King died. This was his frame of mind when he finally commissioned his brother the Duke of York to approach the Whigs on 13 February.

\[48\] Ibid., p. 307.
What followed was perhaps the most bizarre and spectacular foray into politics made by the Regent during his colourful career as Britain's sovereign. On 13 February, after looking at various drafts for a week, he wrote to York reviewing the splendid successes achieved in the war. He insisted that these triumphs be acknowledged as the sine qua non for any reconstruction of the government. He invited York to ask "some of those persons with whom the early habits of my public life were formed" to "constitute a part of my government." York was instructed to pass the letter to Grey, who would inform Grenville. A copy was sent to Perceval. 49

Grey and Grenville had no difficulty in responding in the negative. Grenville was determined to dismiss the overture and told Grey that he had never seen a paper "so highly offensive." 50 The emphasis on praise for a war which the Whigs had opposed in many of its aspects during the previous decade and more was certainly not calculated to appease Grey. 51 Grey hastened to assure Grenville that he was even "more incensed" than was Grenville at "the


50 Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 315.

51 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 14 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 228.
unworthy trick" of directing the letter to Grey rather than to Grenville as the acknowledged head of the opposition. Their reply was short: the country required a "total change" and differences were "too great" to admit a union of all the Regent's old friends with members of Perceval's government. They cited their differences with Perceval on the Catholic question as one stumbling block, but curiously enough did not mention the "sine qua non" of the war at all.

The flat rejection did not suffice, it became apparent, to quash the Regent's initiative. The Duke of York interpreted the omission of adverse comment on the war to mean that a union under Wellesley and excluding Perceval was quite possible. Wellesley heard of this and went directly to the Prince to urge him to deny that Perceval possessed his exclusive confidence, a claim which Perceval hinted he enjoyed despite the Prince's refusal to concede it. The Regent agreed to this and York told Grey and Grenville that Perceval would not necessarily be a member, much less Prime minister, of a new government. Nevertheless Grey

52Grenville to Buckingham, 15 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 231.
53Ibid., pp. 233-34.
and Grenville persisted in their refusals. 55

The origins and objectives of the Regent's initiative to the Whigs have been the subject of intense historical analysis and speculation. Perceval's early biographer maintained that the draft had originally been written by Perceval at the Prince's behest to justify to Grey and Grenville why a comprehensive administration was not possible and that this accounted for the long and laudatory reference to the conduct of the war. By turning it into the basis for an invitation to the Whigs, according to this version, the Regent was contriving to insult Perceval, and had Perceval been any less insensitive to the Prince's black humor he would have resigned. 56 But Bathurst recorded a different interpretation. According to him, the Regent initially wanted to make Grey and Grenville an "insincere" offer. Perceval refused to be a party to such a sham proceeding. Later the Regent decided to make an offer which the Regent himself considered sincere enough to warrant sending to Grey, whom he liked, rather than to Grenville, whom he did not care for. 57

55 Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, to Buckingham, c. 15 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 236.

56 Walpole, Perceval, p. 265.

Some observers have concluded that the Prince was simply confused and did not have a plan. It is possible, however, as Professor Michael Roberts has suggested after a detailed study of the documents, that the Regent was in fact proving himself to be a master politician and that he was quite in control of the situation. If indeed the Prince wanted a strong government which would include personal friends and as many moderate men as possible, and if at the same time he wished to carry on the war and to defer the Catholic question, this overture was quite appropriate. The offer, Roberts holds, was obviously not a sincere one. It was designed to elicit a rejection from the Whigs, and would also discard Wellesley without at the same time stripping the Perceval ministry of its pro-Catholic Pittite elements. An all-Whig ministry would have undermined the Spanish strategy; a ministry excluding pro-Catholic elements would have barred Castlereagh and ended the chance in the future of attracting Canning. If a Tory ministry with an open attitude towards Catholics is what the Regent wanted, then he was indeed successful.\footnote{Michael Roberts, \textit{The Whig Party, 1807-1812} (London: Macmillan and Co., 1939), p. 379.}

Was the "Duke of York" letter, then, designed in large measure to rid the Regent of Wellesley? If the
letter was intended to anger Perceval, then of course there was no specific intention to exclude Wellesley. If meant as a genuine effort to gather the Prince's old friends around him it may also been excluded Wellesley and achieved its purpose. However, if the offer was an exercise in calculated insincerity, then the impact on Wellesley's political ambitions could only be negative. Grenville opined, perhaps correctly, that the government of the Regent's friends would have left no room for Wellesley. It is more likely, nonetheless, that Perceval was not unaware of the dim prospect of a favourable response from the Whigs. It may have been, as Perceval's most recent biographer suggests, a clever stroke on his part in connivance with the Prince to clear the deck, meant neither to be too sincere or to seem too ridiculous. If the Prince retained some element of affection for his old colleagues, then an obviously insincere proposal would not do. He may well have considered the offer a genuine one, as indeed the Duke of York obviously did. 59

Wellesley had said that he would not serve under Perceval, but he would serve under another minister. Under these conditions was there any reason to contemplate

59 Gray, Perceval, p. 444.
a maneuver designed to eliminate Wellesley? It is quite possible that the Regent concluded that Wellesley had alienated so many Pittites that he could not function at the head of a ministry, and that he was so unpopular with the Whigs that he could not serve in any capacity in any cabinet. Wellesley's reasons for resigning, all of which Bathurst communicated to Perceval, and which Perceval would not have hidden from the Regent, included the very telling complaint that he had not been given the lead in the government which he had expected. This pretty well ruled out any post by the primary one, either formally or informally. Beyond this, as Roberts notes, the Prince "perhaps realised that Wellesley's threatened resignation was a matter of pique and personal jealousy for which differences with Perceval about the Peninsular war were only an excuse."60 Perceval was not opposed to the war strategy, and in spite of all the Regent's alleged commitments to the Catholic relief issue the war issue was paramount. Wellesley had inculcated in the Regent an appreciation of Spain, and when the Regent realised that Perceval was not opposed to him on this, he preferred to stay with Perceval. This, at least, is one possible explanation.

60Roberts, Whig, pp. 381-82.
The reaction of the various interested parties to the Duke of York's letter was unusually violent. Most shocked of all was Wellesley, who waited in imminent expectation of being called to office on the basis of the ejection of Perceval. He expected to be asked to extend an invitation to the Whigs, arrange the adhesion of Canning and perhaps Castlereagh, and urge the retention of the pro-Catholic Pittites. Even without the Whigs Wellesley thought that he could form a viable government of the "king's friends," the Canningites, the Castlereagh interest and his Pittite colleagues. Canning, whose reaction paralleled Wellesley's was "violent" against Perceval. He regretted only that Grey and Grenville did not "sufficiently temporise with" the Prince Regent to get Perceval out before they too sent in their refusals. The Regent's friend Earl Moira, no Whig but pro-Catholic, concluded that the Whigs had been treated so shabbily that he declined an offer of the garter and retired to private life. To the Whigs the Regent's behaviour confirmed their suspicions as to the instability of his character.

The role of the Whigs was indeed crucial. They showed

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61 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, c. 17 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 240.

62 Buckingham, Regency, I, 260-61.
so little desire to gain office that the Prince's sincerity or lack of it was never really tested. In his letters and memoranda Grenville seemed dedicated to emphasising points of difference to a degree which would insure that no reconciliation could take place. But it is also clear that Grenville miscalculated the Prince's next move and underestimated Perceval's resourcefulness. He was perfectly accurate in describing the connection between Perceval as irreparably sundered. But he was also convinced of the "utter impossibility" for forming a Tory government which excluded Canning and Wellesley. Nor could he persuade himself that in the last resort Wellesley would relinquish office, or that the Prince would let him go. Thus the Perceval ministry, with Canning on board, would stagger forward for the remainder of the session. Beyond that perhaps the Whigs would be able to dictate terms.

Grenville's prophecy seems naive when contrasted to the reality of the Liverpool ascendancy stretching from 1812 to 1827. But in part he was correct. The Prince gave not a moment's thought to Wellesley's call for a government neither Tory nor Whig in its leadership.

63 Fortescue MSS, X, 216.
Wellesley would "go out in a blaze of glory," the Prince confided to the Archbishop of York. But out he would go. Perceval would indeed stagger on, and had he not been removed from the scene in untimely fashion, he might have remained in office a very long time. Perhaps he would have filled the role in history which was conceded instead to Liverpool.

As soon as the Prince received word that Grenville and Grey had refused to join a broad bottom ministry, the Prince called in Perceval. Wellesley, he complained, had never offered to form a ministry and at any rate was most unlikely to have succeeded. The Whigs had deserted him. Perhaps he toyed momentarily with the idea of commanding Perceval to draw up a program for Catholic relief. If so, he did not entertain such thoughts for long. Catholic claims would be postponed at least until the old King died. Perceval must manage.

V: Into Opposition

Wellesley was not prepared to participate in any further

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64 Archbishop of York, memorandum of conversation with the Prince Regent, 19 February 1812, Fortescue MSS, X, 222.

65 Bathurst to Richmond, 14 February 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1310.
backstairs maneuvering. He submitted his resignation; the Prince refused it. He asked the Prince about rumors afloat that Perceval had been confirmed as Prime minister. The Prince denied them; nothing had been settled. Wellesley thereupon advised him that the rejection of Lords Grey and Grenville made the adhesion of Canning and Castlereagh more important than ever. This could not be effected under Perceval. Canning would not enter the government with Perceval so confused as to how to handle the Catholic issue and with Wellesley dedicated to opposing Perceval. But both Canning and Perceval would serve under him, Wellesley added. He was willing indeed to hold any office, or none at all, in order to help the Prince put together a new government, but he would not serve under Perceval as Prime minister. If the Prince would not have him, Moira should be approached.

Bathurst recorded in his notes that after the meeting the Regent admitted that he had confided to Wellesley that he did not have the courage to inform Perceval that his services as Prime minister were no longer needed, and that he had asked Eldon to do so. The chancellor replied that he would resign if Perceval did not remain as Prime minister. Thereupon the Regent decided to remain with

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66 Gray, Perceval, pp. 444-45.
If Bathurst were right, Wellesley's ambitions were dashed by a want of royal nerve; all the maneuvering and dodging had come down to this.

Bathurst's account was in error, although it erred in a way designed to give Wellesley little solace. In fact Perceval had been confirmed as Prime minister before Wellesley saw the Prince Regent on the 16th in an attempt to submit his resignation; the rumors were true. Sometime between 13 and 15 February Perceval convinced the Regent that he should be confirmed as Prime minister. According to Merrick Shawe Perceval confided to his friends on the 15th that he would remain at the helm. The Whigs also received the word. Thus when Wellesley went to the Regent on the 16th he had good reason to press the Prince on the matter. His pressure was probably sufficient to frighten the Prince into denials; in addition, the Prince may have hoped that some way could yet be found to keep Wellesley in the ministry, or to send him to Ireland or to India.


68 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 277.

69 Temple to Buckingham, c. 15 February 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 236-37.

70 Buckingham to Grenville, 16 February 1812, Fortescue MSS, X, 216.
If Wellesley went away satisfied that no permanent commitments had yet been made to Perceval, he was soon enough abused of this notion. On the morning of the 17th Wellesley received a visit from Lord Eldon. Eldon volunteered that there had been some misunderstanding about the Prince's assurances the day before; in fact, the rumors were accurate. Eldon tried to smother it with an offer which he brought from the Prince to appoint him Irish viceroy. Wellesley did not let him proceed far. He begged Eldon to inform Perceval that his recent conduct had been "unmannerly, disrespectful and contrary to the tenor of his own professions" towards Wellesley. Furthermore, Wellesley complained, he could not answer for his behaviour if Perceval came into his presence while he was still a member of the government. But so soon as I am no longer in office, so much obliged shall I feel myself for his having been the cause of removing me from the degrading situation of serving under him, that all resentment towards him shall entirely cease."71

Eldon rushed off to report this conversation to Perceval. Wellesley hurried to the Prince to demand that his resignation be accepted, or Perceval removed. Wellesley

71 Buckingham, Regency, I, 261.
lectured the Regent: he would not "have presumed to offer any advice on the subject of forming an administration, adapted to the present crisis," if he had realised that the Prince had already acted upon his own. He declared that he would not serve under Perceval another forty-eight hours. The Prince pleaded with him not to resign for a couple of days; the arrangement was "merely temporary."

Wellesley excused himself, and retired to the antechamber, where he confronted the Prince's secretary McMahon. McMahon, Wellesley charged, had along with all the others mislead him the previous day about the Prince's commitments, and waved a copy of what Wellesley claimed to be was the Prince's note inviting Perceval to remain in office. According to the account given in Buckingham's Regency memoirs, McMahon "immediately turned pale and red" and appeared to be shocked at the news. Then Wellesley departed.

An anecdote which Wellesley allegedly related to the Prince in the course of this second and stormy interview suggests that even at this point Wellesley held out hope that Perceval would be dismissed. On an earlier occasion Wellesley charged that Perceval in his desire to see Wellesley resign had constructed an elaborate web of intrigue in which

to trap Wellesley. According to Wellesley, Perceval had insisted in January that Wellesley's resignation could be deferred only if the Prince pledged Wellesley to secrecy on the question of his intention to resign. Wellesley had already told three of his closest associates of his plans, and he thereupon swore them to secrecy. According to Wellesley Perceval violated his own pledge, and told Wellesley Pole what his brother intended to do. Wellesley Pole thereupon raised the matter with Thomas Sydenham. In correcting Wellesley Pole on a point of fact Sydenham revealed that he knew the details of Wellesley's bid to resign. Sydenham begged Wellesley Pole not to disclose this to Perceval, but Wellesley Pole judged that chances for a reconciliation between the Prime minister and his brother were good if he could point out to Perceval the misimpressions under which Perceval laboured in one or two instances. Perceval immediately rushed to the Regent to complain that Wellesley had broken his pledge. The Prince considered the charge frivolous, and immediately told Wellesley that Perceval was a scoundrel. Wellesley now reminded the Prince of Perceval's deficiencies, and presented further evidence that Perceval was labouring

73 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 277.
in other and equally perfidious ways to blacken Wellesley's reputation. The Prince listened, reaffirmed his affection for Wellesley, and was glad to see him leave the room.

And indeed Perceval was labouring. As soon as he heard from Eldon of Wellesley's vituperation he summoned the cabinet. The cabinet listened to Eldon's story and agreed that Wellesley must go. On 18 February Perceval asked the Prince to accept Wellesley's resignation immediately. The Prince acquiesced, but again in such a way as to confuse the situation. He told Eldon that it was incorrect to maintain that "an appointment had taken place." This obviously referred to Perceval, but the Prince could not bring himself to deny explicitly that he had asked Perceval to remain in office. He also sent Tyrwhitt, perhaps without Perceval's knowledge, to repeat Eldon's earlier office of the Irish viceroyalty. Wellesley angrily refused it. Wellesley for his part

74 Perceval to the Prince Regent, 18 February 1812, Aspinall, George IV, I, 19.
75 Bathurst to Richmond, 18 February 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1311.
76 Wellesley to Eldon, 18 February 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 193.
77 Buckingham, Regency, I, 261.
sent a note to Eldon expressing his satisfaction at being released "from a situation already painful, and which must soon have become ignominious." 78 He conveyed similar sentiments to the Prince. 79 On 19 February at one o'clock he exited in style by delivering his seals in full dress at Carlton house. Liverpool was delegated to accept them. Wellesley recorded, to his enormous disgust, that Liverpool wore his hunting boots.

At the beginning of the year Wellesley had thoroughly disliked Perceval. It is not an exaggeration to say that by the middle of February an element of hatred had intruded into their relationship. When surrendering the seals Wellesley told the Regent that men like Perceval should "be hooted out of society." 80 In his own memorandum written immediately after the event he rated Perceval "incompetent" to be Prime minister. 81 He doubted that Perceval could ever be taught anything. 82

78 Wellesley to Eldon, 18 February 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 193.

79 Wellesley to the Prince Regent, 18 February 1811, Windsor MSS 19275-76; and BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 195.

80 Buckingham, Regency, I, 262.

81 Wellesley, memorandum, 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 201.

82 Ibid.
Wellesley could not endure the thought of retaining any further connection to Perceval. He instructed Richard to surrender his office. Richard did so, and at the same time resigned his seat for East Grinstead, which was in the Treasury interest. Wellesley's other followers in the house of Commons began immediately to vote with the opposition. This hatred led Wellesley into an incautious informal approval of Sydenham's "fatal paper" on Perceval. Wellesley's friends wanted a statement which they could use to defend Wellesley in and out of Parliament. They prepared one, and a copy came to Perceval through Wellesley Pole, who either was angered at his brother's conduct or was eager to maintain his credibility with the incumbent ministry. Wellesley Pole said that as a member of the government he was obliged to act as he did, and Wellesley agreed. Ten days later Perceval was assassinated. The paper would be used subsequently by Liverpool as a reason, valid or not, why he and his friends could never work with or under Wellesley.

Wellesley never rose to a comparable pitch of anger.

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84 Aspinall, George IV, I, 9.
towards the Prince, even though a case could be made that the Regent was the master dissembler. Even as he surrendered his seals Wellesley again offered his services, and recommended that the Prince take up the Catholic relief issue at once. He was certainly aware that the behaviour of the Prince had helped to persuade the cabinet to force Wellesley to implement his threat to resign. Wellesley may not have determined whether the Prince's overture to the Whigs through the Duke of York was calculated to put Wellesley at the head of the government or to destroy the possibility of such a coalition. He read the mind of the Prince better than did some of his colleagues, but he could not fathom the Prince's intentions. Wellesley was the Regent's first victim when he became free of parliament's restrictions. There would be others. He did not know whether the Prince had blunted Wellesley's ambitions because of cynical hatred or innocent incompetence. Later Wellesley would again trust in the Regent's blandishments, and again he would be cruelly deceived.

VI: Aftershocks

Even after 19 February Wellesley may well have thought that the Prime minister's hold on the Prince was only temporary. Perceval's command of a parliamentary majority
was precarious; agitation for Catholic relief was rising quickly. Wellesley had before him an opportunity to vindicate his conduct and to condemn that of Perceval. He was also now free to agitate for Catholic relief in conjunction with the Whigs and his friend Canning. It was far from certain that Perceval could hold his own ministry together on this question, much less command a majority in the house of Commons. An impressive presentation of his own position, an exposition of the principles which guided his conduct while in office, and an elucidation of his list of grievances against Perceval might yet turn events to Wellesley's favour. The times called for a major speech.

There were other reasons as well for addressing parliament. As Canning and others noted, "liberties taken with his character" required a formal declaration from Wellesley that his role in the recent negotiations had been an honourable one. Wellesley's friends pressed him for a statement. He refused on the grounds that propriety dictated that the explanation be given only in parliament. Canning forced Wellesley into pursuing this course of action by instructing his friend Lord Boringdon, who had given notice of a motion on the state of the nation, to frame it in such a way as to call upon Wellesley to give
his reasons for quitting the government. On 19 April, two
months after his resignation, Wellesley finally went to
the house of Lords prepared to speak. The house was
filled with peers and many members of the other chamber
as well. Wellesley rose after Boringdon, but the chancellor
looked to another speaker, glad enough to divert attention
from Wellesley. A wrangle over precedence followed, the
heat increased, and Wellesley failed to deliver his
philippic.

Like Wellesley's failure to speak on several previous
casions when what he said might have changed the course of
his own public career, his loss of nerve now devastated his
reputation. A universal expectation that Wellesley was
"willing to make an effort to retrieve his personal impor-
tance" had raised fears in the government's ranks that
his speech might well jeopardise their majority. 85 For
two long months Wellesley's failure either to attack Perceval
directly or to concert the efforts of his own interest with
those of the opposition prompted considerable ill-feeling
when some measure of sympathy might have been expected
in these quarters in light of his treatment at the hands

85 Charles Abbot, diary entry, 19 April 1812, printed in
Charles Abbot, Baron Colchester, Diaries and Correspondence
(3 vols.; London: Murray, 1861), III, 374; Auckland to
Grenville, 19 March 1812, Thomas Grenville to Grenville,
March 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 227, 229.
of the Prince Regent. The government was of course delighted. Bathurst exulted that Wellesley's feebleness in opposition showed "how unfit he is to be at the head of a government." And now by failing to speak he let down the Whigs in "their hour of need." The government went on to win the vote of confidence on Boringdon's motion by a handsome margin. Grey, who prepared his own speech as an affirmation of Wellesley's complaints against the government, went away entirely alienated. A month later, when Wellesley attempted to secure Grey's assent to a new coalition, Grey refused to have anything to do with Wellesley.

Drafts of the speech as they exist in Wellesley's correspondence provide a good indication of what Wellesley planned to say on this occasion. Wellesley discussed the timing of his resignation, including his intention to have resigned at the moment when the onset of the King's insanity

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86 Richmond to Wellesley Pole, 27 March 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 74, f. 1784.
87 Bathurst to Richmond, 27 March 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1312.
89 Grey to Grenville, 20 March 1812, Fortescue MSS, X, 229.
made this impossible. Wellesley planned to question Perceval's incessant dedication to the false principle of parsimony in the peninsula, and he hoped to advertise his own achievements at the Foreign office in preparing the encirclement of Napoleon. His work as Foreign secretary, he planned to say, would have been dramatically successful if Perceval had not made economy more important than the objective of vigorous prosecution of the war.

A final section of the speech was to be devoted to Perceval's unhandsome conduct in attempting to force Wellesley to resign at once rather than remain in the cabinet several months longer so that the country would have the benefits of his talents.

Much of the proposed speech has a ring of truth about it, although Wellesley carefully avoided any reference to his own efforts to displace Perceval. This might have occasioned some embarrassment if Perceval had chosen to reply, and he might have felt obliged to do so in light of the specificity of the charges. It is not easy to see, however, where Wellesley would have gained political advantage as opposed to personal comfort. A documentary on his championship of the war in Spain would have served

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only to arrest that slow movement towards the Whigs which could be detected in the weeks immediately preceding Perceval's assassination. An exposé of cabinet scandals would not have helped him with the Pittites. Although Wellesley normally read his speeches, we have no extant copy of what might have served as his final draft. We cannot measure would might have been his impact on his expectant audience.

Wellesley had failed again at the critical moment. Two days later he recovered enough to give the second of three lengthy expositions on the Catholic question. His effective presentation of 31 January had not been forgotten, least of all by Wellesley. Out of office, Wellesley was now fully prepared to move away from identification with the war and towards concessions to Catholics. Very much as he had moved into the front rank of the Pittites in 1807 and 1808 by identifying himself with the war and with Spain, he now made his bid to bridge the gap which separated him from the Whigs and Grenville by proclaiming that the time had come to grant justice to Catholics. The new issue would automatically embarrass Perceval, whose policy of admitting Castlereagh to the cabinet and making the Catholic question an open one did not conceal his

91 Wellelsley to Thomas Tyrwhitt, 20 July 1811, Aspinall, Wales, VIII, 50.
his opposition to it. He would not abandon the war, and indeed he could not do so without serious injury to his somewhat tattered public reputation. But if he could accommodate the full measure of Catholic relief sought by the Whigs, provide a plan for implementing it which would appease the moderate Pittites, and point to his brother's increasing string of military successes in Spain as evidence that vigorous support of the peninsula campaign could bring about an early end to the war, it might still be possible to oust Perceval.

CHAPTER XIII:

BID FOR POWER
I: Invitation to Rejoin the Cabinet

Wellesley's career as a member of the house of Lords and exclusion at the same time from membership in the cabinet can be said to have been fairly launched on 21 April when he delivered the second of three major speeches on the Catholic question. Although overly long, the text of it sparkles with lapidary phrases and acute analysis. He focused on the pernicious effects of penal laws ("for what of religion, without charity to man?"). He defended the concept of an established church ("Religion is not a mere matter of commerce between man and his creator, but a lively motive of public action.") By recourse to analogy he demonstrated the absurdity of the Test acts and reminded his listeners that for Catholics as for everyone else the prospect of public honour was the best way to secure the allegiance of the disaffected. His companions in the house of Lords had "passed through various honours, if not to the advantage, at least to the approbation of the country." Could they in good conscience assure Catholics that these honours were mere baubles? "If you would have real security against spirituals in the Roman Catholic

1 Great Britain, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, First Series, XXII (21 April 1812), 614.
Church of Ireland," Wellesley ventured, "you must give them temporals." Nor was it fair to judge Catholicism by the extremes of its doctrines in one or two instances; one does not judge the English constitution by pointing to the logical conclusion inherent in it that the King can do no wrong.

Wellesley took his listeners back into history. It was no longer valid to quote William of Orange in defence of the penal codes than it was to cite scripture in support of the African slave trade. Wellesley dismissed allegations that veneration of the Pope challenged civic virtues: the Pope's subjugation to Napoleon had not discouraged the Spanish from rising against the dictator of Europe. He offered some devastating comments on the deficiencies of the Church of Ireland ("bishops without clergy, churches without clergymen, and clergymen without churches. . . . Can a church so circumstanced possess internal strength for its own defence against the mass of opposition excited against it?").2 And he concluded his speech by asking how was it "possible to bring both parties into a temperate consideration" of so enflamed an issue "if

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we refuse to deliberate upon the question?"  

The strategy was, as Canning put it, to force the ministry to propose a solution to the crisis, and not to put the opposition in a position where it must offer a plan which the ministry could conveniently oppose.  

More important, Wellesley's speech on the Catholic question 21 April established in almost final form his own opinion on this issue. Fifteen years later he was pleased to be able to report that his ideas had not changed in the interim; he was waiting for the country to enlighten itself to his standards. The tone of the speech reflected a speedy recovery from the brusing shocks of the struggles against Perceval in January and February. The opposition benches chuckled when he applied liberal doses of sarcasm to emphasise a point. Perhaps they saw in at least one of his observations - the question of honours - some evidence that Wellesley could smile at his own weaknesses.  

Coming so close on the heels of Wellesley's failure to

31 Hansard, XXII (21 April 1812), 628.  
4 George Canning to unnamed correspondent, 5 April 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 316.  
6 Hansard, XXII (21 April 1812), 614.
illuminate the dark corners of the recent negotiations with the Prince Regent and Perceval, the speech seemed to suggest rather forcefully that had he managed to speak on the previous occasion he might well have put the government on the defensive. Grenville saw new potential for Wellesley in the political life of the nation.7

Opportunities for undermining the Perceval ministry were not wanting. The regent had accepted the Sidmouth faction most reluctantly. The Addingtonians demanded three places in the cabinet. Perceval apologised to everyone that this was more than could be justified by any standard, but the price he had to pay to include Castlereagh and to sustain a ministry which had no chance of getting Canning and no desire to attract the Whigs must be high. The Grenvillites convinced themselves that Wellington was so frustrated in Spain that he had "neither men, nor money, nor provisions, nor forage for any active operation," that he too would soon concede defeat.8 This impression clearly came from a too avid reading of Wellington's letters to the Marquess.

7 William Grenville, First Baron Grenville, to Thomas Grenville, 22 April 1812, BM, Add. MSS 41853, f. 241.

No one could fathom the strategy of the Prince. He forced Perceval to accept the possibility of concessions to the Catholic cause, yet he barred the Whigs from taking office. He rejoiced at Wellington's success at Ciudad Rodrigo; Wellington became an earl and was granted the means to support his new dignity at the very moment Wellesley left office. Yet the Prince supported Perceval in demanding economies in Spain. Looking at all this the Whigs were confident that the Prince was once more discussing with Wellesley the possibility of forming a government on the basis of Catholic emancipation. This time Canning was also involved. Rumors circulated reporting Wellesley's willingness to abandon the Spanish issue. Huskisson was reported to have been sent at Canning's request to Wellesley to convince him to retreat at least part way on that sensitive issue and to offer to form a government based solely on the Catholic question. The Whigs consulted among themselves and decided that they could support such a government, even though they might not be able to join it.  

The alternative, a direct invitation to them from the

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10Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 12 May 1812, Fortescue MSS, X, 246.
Regent, seemed unlikely; the Regent, in any case, was under the impression that his Duke of York letter had been a sincere one.

The political cauldron boiled over on 11 May when Perceval was assassinated in the house of Commons by an irate pension-seeker. The rump of the cabinet met and addressed themselves to the Regent's query whether they were able and willing to carry on without major changes. They were willing to try, but they recommended the adhesion of Wellesley and Canning or Grey and Grenville. In the Regent's mind Perceval's death seemed to remove the difficulties earlier posed for Wellesley, and Canning's support seemed likely. Observers thought that Wellesley and Canning would either join the existing ministry or between them reconstruct the government. These predictions neglected to weigh the impact of a letter betraying the intensity of Wellesley's aversion to the late and lamented Prime minister, and of Wellesley's pervasive unpopularity within the cabinet.

Wellesley claimed that he did not write the letter.

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12 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 12 May 1812, BM, Add. MSS 41853, ff. 250-51.

13 Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 12 May 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 247.
It is not clear whether he did nor not. In his long memorandum on the subject Herrick Shawe talked of Sydenham. There were, however, two Sydenhams, Thomas and Benjamin, both in England at this time. Thomas was the more important, and it was he whom Wellesley wanted to be given a post in the Perceval ministry of October 1809. But Benjamin was the more intimate companion to Wellesley; indeed, by 1812 Thomas seems to have removed himself completely from Wellesley's influence. If a Sydenham authored the paper, it is likely to have been Benjamin.

This may be an academic question. The manuscript copy of this paper in the British Museum resembles Wellesley's script, as has been noted. This on the face of it is most curious, because Shawe later held that when enflamed about criticism of his conduct towards Perceval between 1809 and 1812 Wellesley pencilled "about a dozen lines complaining of Mr. Perceval's imputing an improper motive for his actions." According to Shawe Sydenham took these scribbles and from them developed the fatal paper.

There is a chance that the script of the manuscript in the British Museum was that of Shawe himself; Shawe's hand, whether or not as a result of years of service

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14 This unnumbered item is contained in Wellesley MSS 37296 in the British Museum.
as Wellesley's secretary, was very close to that of Wellesley. But Butler, who enjoyed the added advantage of working with the Carver papers where Wellesley always wrote in his own hand, declares flatly that the script was indeed that of the Marquess. Beyond this, the manuscript is corrected in Wellesley's peculiar way (he rarely revised his own originals, so perhaps another party did in fact write the first draft), and yet Shawe asserts that he did not revise it at all. The corrections intensify the strength of the criticism against Perceval, and are most certainly Wellesley's own. Thus the Shawe version must be suspect; perhaps the passage of years excuses this. Yet Wellesley himself also denied that the paper was his own work. He claimed that it contained "an imperfect view" of his motives, and hoped that he would be invited in parliament to explain the conditions which produced it. Later, in early June, he was afforded the chance. He conceded that some of the remarks in the letter had dropped from his lips in the "heat of conversation" and as a reaction to the "vilest calumnies" laid against him.

It might be more accurate to see the paper as compensation in some respects for the speech which he had failed to

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deliver in early April. At any rate, he was horrified at seeing it published, but while some of the remarks were such that he would want to recall, he admitted that he could not "substantially retract" them. If Shawe was correct in his review of the circumstances surrounding publication of the letter, Wellesley was indeed the victim of some bad luck and his associates made a commendable effort to have the letter suppressed. It is interesting, nonetheless, that Wellesley's principal reason for wanting to retract it was the matter of timing rather than substance. Despite what must have been intense pressure by Wellesley's colleagues to wash his hands of the whole of it, Wellesley refused to do so. The manuscript in his papers suggests perhaps that in conscience he could not do so. The rump of Perceval's ministry therefore had before them Wellesley's unexpurgated testimony of his feelings towards Perceval, and they could not but revolt in some measure against the prospect of seeing him once more a part of the government.

When necessities of politics challenge the sentiments

of the heart the former usually win. They did so in this case. Had Wellesley contrived to offer in the house of Lords prior to 16 May an explanation for the letter such as he supplied 5 June, much of the animosity which flavoured relations between Liverpool as Perceval's interim successor and Wellesley during the negotiations of 16-20 May might have been avoided. But this was not possible, and the government extended to Canning and Wellesley an invitation which they hoped would not be accepted. The recipients of the invitation, for their part, were as eager to be able to reject the offer as they were to receive it. They were convinced that their rejection would precipitate the collapse of the ministry. In this they were both right and wrong.

Certain the loss of Perceval demanded that new support be obtained somewhere. The cabinet was far from sure how much and what kind of additional support was appropriate. Only Mulgrave was certain that the government would collapse unless either Wellesley and Canning or Grey and Grenville were invited. Camden, Ryder and Melville thought the chances of survival were small. Bathurst concluded that proceeding alone would be "dangerous to P[rin]ce] and country." Castle-reagh hoped that if the proposition was offered to Wellesley and Canning and rejected by them the government might
survive. Sidmouth, Buckinghamshire, Eldon and Liverpool were less despairing; Westmoreland was certain that it could go on without fundamental restructuring.\footnote{Richard Grenville, Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, Memoirs of the Court of England During the Regency (2 vols.; London: Hurst and Blackett, 1856), I, 304.} Not one of the cabinet was prepared to serve under Wellesley; on this point there was agreement.

This informal pole was taken at the time of Perceval's death. The cabinet's dilemma was that any invitation to the Whigs could cause Eldon to resign immediately. Sidmouth would be forced to depart if concessions were made on the Catholic question. Bathurst and Buckinghamshire were also likely to resign in this case. At any rate, the Prince opposed extending an invitation to Grey, although he was less indisposed towards Grenville. Grenville would not have accepted office without Grey, even if the cabinet had seen the wisdom of giving way completely on the Catholic issue. There was, therefore, no "debate" as to whether an invitation should go to Wellesley and Canning. If additional strength was required, there was no option.

At first Liverpool and Castlereagh opposed negotiations with Wellesley and Canning; they were resigned to defeat instead. Liverpool even suggested that he withdraw from
politics for a few months until the Catholic question was settled. The cabinet instead preferred to attach to any invitation to Wellesley and Canning the stipulation that the Catholic question remain an open one and that Liverpool be retained as the head of the ministry. This constituted a vote of confidence in Liverpool of the most generous type, because it must have made it clear that this substantially diminished chances that either Wellesley or Canning would respond favourably. Equally likely was their conviction that if they made an offer and received a negative response, they might be able to struggle along. In this they miscalculated, as far as the near term was considered, but Whig divisions and Wellesley's next round of ineptitude would bring them long term success.

Castlereagh even sought to impose further conditions. He went so far as to submit a letter of resignation to the Regent to express his opposition to inviting Canning. At length he was persuaded to remain in the ministry by being assured that a condition for Canning's entry would be that Castlereagh remain leader of the house of Commons and continue as Foreign secretary. Furthermore, as if to insure that the offer would prove as unattractive as possible, the cabinet instructed Liverpool to go first to Canning with their proposal, a procedure which was
certain to offend Wellesley. 19

Liverpool called on Canning 17 May and immediately afterwards talked to Wellesley. Wellesley's attack on Perceval had not yet reached the public prints; an incomplete version would appear during the next two days and a full text would be published on the 22nd. Not unnaturally Canning and Wellesley had already come together to discuss the prospect of an invitation to join the ministry. Canning told Wellesley that the allocation of offices should not be their grounds for refusal, but rather their estimate of the ministry's ability to survive. They concluded that it could not go on without them. Therefore while publicly they planned to decline on the grounds of incompatible policies, in private they were determined from the beginning not to accept office. 20

An invitation reluctantly tendered and eagerly rejected was no prescription for successful negotiations.

Liverpool's terms reflected the cabinet's consensus of opinion that the adhesion of Wellesley or Canning should not prejudice the position of incumbents. Liverpool told


20 Canning to Wellesley, 16 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 326.
Wellesley that the Catholic question would remain "open" and that he could discern no major differences of opinion on any other issue. There was the possibility that military operations on the peninsula might be extended "to a certain degree." Sidmouth and his friends would remain in the government. Canning gained the impression in his conversation with Liverpool that Castlereagh might not remain at the Foreign office but that Wellesley would definitely receive the War office. Castlereagh would have control of the general business of the house of Commons.

Canning responded to Liverpool by noting that the guarantees made to Castlereagh, even short of the Foreign secretaryship, raised serious problems for him. Wellesley for his part asked whether the government planned to invite the Whigs. Liverpool replied that he had not been authorised to do so. Wellesley hinted that he would like to be leader in the house of Lords, which might have implied that he preferred to serve under someone in the house of Commons rather than under Liverpool, or, more likely, that

21Wellesley, Minute (corrected by Liverpool), 17 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 344.


23Arbuthnot to the Prince Regent, 18 May 1812, printed
he wished to be Prime minister. Wellesley also told Liverpool
that while Canning and he were not bound by each other's
decision Wellesley would not enter the government unless
a fair proposal was made to Canning.24

Wellesley and Canning returned negative responses the
day after meeting with Liverpool. Canning's objections
to being placed in a position in the house of Commons
inferior to that of Castlereagh and his opposition to
further delay in consideration of Catholics' claims
constituted the main part of his negative. The retention
of Sidmouth was also a problem, although this would have
resolved itself automatically had the government been pledged
to Catholic relief.25 Wellesley for his part based his
rejection squarely on the Catholic question, the inadequate
exertions in the peninsula, and the failure of the adminis-
tration to strengthen itself by the inclusion of some
Whigs.26 His rebuke of Liverpool's objection to any dis-

in Aspinall, George IV, I, 80.

24 Wellesley, Minute (corrected by Liverpool), 17 May
1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 344.

25 Michael Roberts, The Whig Party, 1807-1812 (London:
Macmillan and Co., 1939), p. 383; Charles S. Parker, ed.,
Sir Robert Peel, From His Private Papers (3 vols.; London:
J. Murray, 1891), I, 67-70; Bathurst to Richmond, 19 May
1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1315.

26 Bathurst to Richmond, 19 May 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS
70, f. 1315.
cussion of Catholic claims as inappropriate at the moment was persuasive and eloquent: "my opinion is that a cabinet might be formed on an intermediary principle respecting the Roman Catholic claims, equally exempt from the dangers of instant, unqualified concession, and from those of inconsiderate, preemptory exclusion. The entire resources of the empire might be applied to the great objects of the war with general consent, upon a full understanding of the real exigency of the present crisis; and concord and union at home might secure ultimate and permanent success abroad." Wellesley omitted all mention of a lead in the house of Lords. But so vehement was he on the need to conciliate the Whigs that he was already contemplating making an offer to the Whigs if the Prince Regent would permit it.  

Wellesley visited the Regent the same evening. He sought, and half expected to obtain, permission to negotiate with the Whigs to form a government of his own. But he underestimated the Regent's antagonism towards Grey, which seemed to build with each passing week. The

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28 Granville Leveson Gower to Lady Bessborough, 19 May 1812, printed in Castalia Rosalind Granville, Countess Granville, ed., The Private Correspondence of Granville Leveson
discussion was heated. Wellesley continued to advocate treating with the opposition, even after the Prince strongly warned against it. Wellesley told the Prince that the country's interest and that Prince's own honour required it. He came away hopeful that the Prince would change his mind. 29 Canning delivered the same sentiments to the Regent in an interview on the 19th. 30

Rumors of these negotiations soon reached Stowe. Lord Grenville reacted uneasily to the news of the assassination. He confided to his brother that if Wellesley and Canning formed a government, as he expected they eventually would, and if they met Whig objections, then he "would not easily induce" himself to oppose it. But he would not join such a ministry. 31 Thomas heartily agreed: indeed, he took comfort in seeing the Prince repair to Wellesley and Canning if this would allow the Whigs to escape the burdens of office. "I cannot teach myself," Thomas Grenville observed, "to believe that the


Thomas Grenville to George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, First Marquis of Buckingham, between 13 and 19 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 310.

the time is yet come in which you and Lord Grey can find yourselves possessed of means enough to enable you to meet the desperate difficulties that you would have to contend with in government."32 Perhaps the day would come when the Whigs could take power.

There was no joy when Dardis reported that Canning and Wellesley refused to join Liverpool; now the Prince would be forced to apply to these independents and the Whigs would be invited to adhere. But the collapse of negotiations also came as a relief to the conservative members of the cabinet. In acknowledging Canning's native responses Liverpool again cautioned Wellesley that this was not the proper time to discuss Catholic relief. All his colleagues, he added, agreed with him on this.

On 21 May Wellesley again wrote to Liverpool to ask that he merely support an inquiry respecting "circumstances" which would be suitable to permit a discussion of Catholic claims. Again he took issue, this time with crushing logic, with Liverpool's assertion that the issue

31Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 17 May 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 246.

32Thomas Grenville to Grenville, c. 22 May 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 247.
had to await a change of conditions in Europe. The letter was clever not only in that it undercut Liverpool's position on resistance even to discussion of an appropriate time for debating Catholic claims, but because it set the stage for his own subsequent overtures to the Whigs. Wellesley's position seemed formidable. His brother Wellesley Pole certainly thought so. On 20 May he resigned as Irish chief secretary, citing deference to his brother and conversion to the Catholic issue as his principal reasons. All this took Richmond completely by surprise. Wellesley himself was so delighted that he vowed to give William a cabinet post if a government could be formed. At the very moment of the triumph, however, Wellesley saw the publication of two sets of documents. Either one of them was sufficient to destroy prospects for Wellesley to form a ministry. Together they explain why Wellesley was to spend the next nine years in political isolation and obscurity.

The first document contained Wellesley's comments

33 Parker, Peel, I, 67-70.
34 Wellesley Pole to Liverpool, May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 398.
35 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 284.
on Perceval. The paper had already circulated in manuscript. Shawe declared that Wellesley Pole had shown it to Perceval and that most of the cabinet had read it. But the public had not seen it, and backbenchers took offence at this attack on the Perceval at the moment when his mortal remains were being interred. The second publication offended the quick as well as the dead. On 20 May correspondence between Wellesley and Liverpool concerning the cabinet's invitation to Wellesley and Canning to join the ministry appeared in the Morning Chronicle. Liverpool had agreed to Wellesley's proposal that these letters, dated 17-19 May, should be made public. Unfortunately, Wellesley's last letter, dated 20 May, was also included. It appeared without Liverpool's permission, and, Liverpool maintained, could be read in the papers even before it reached him in the posts. In part a genuine misunderstanding was involved. Wellesley had not expected Liverpool to raise again the Catholic question when he acknowledged receipt of the refusal by Canning and Wellesley contained in their letter of 19 May. In Wellesley's mind this letter called for a reply, and this was supplied the next day. Liverpool on the other hand had agreed to publication of the correspondence on the assumption that his own letter of the 19th would close the exchange.
Wellesley was determined to have the last word and this precipitated the final breach as far as Liverpool was concerned. The Prime minister told his colleagues that "it was not safe to be in the same room with him." Liverpool's frame of mind was certainly not improved by the fact that Wellesley had scored high enough in the exchange of letters to prompt his colleagues to inquire why Liverpool had referred at all to the Catholic question in his 19 May letter. Liverpool also had in the Perceval letter a compelling reason to declare that he would no longer contemplate cooperating with Wellesley. Now it became an excellent excuse to defy the Regent if he pressed further for a comprehensive government with Wellesley a part of it.

But it became obvious immediately that Liverpool could not form a government while he resisted concessions to Catholics and denied office to some of the opposition. On the night of 20 May a conservative backbencher, Stuart Wortley, offered a motion calling for a "strong and efficient administration." Stuart Wortley had been one of Pitt's followers, and more recently had been an admirer of Perceval. He was also sometimes identified with Canning; Canning indeed may have urged Stuart Wortley to demand

a stronger ministry. The debate which followed revealed a lack of sympathy for the government's attempts to attract new support without making any policy concessions. The motion carried by a majority of four. Although not directed specifically against the Tories — many Tory backbenchers voted for it — the motion was seen by Liverpool as a condemnation of his interim ministry.

Liverpool and his cabinet then met, and the Prince Regent consulted with some of them. They conceded their inability to form a stronger administration and offered their resignations. The Regent called for Wellesley's help and told Liverpool's ministers to tend to the business of their offices in the interim. At long last it appeared that Wellesley would form a cabinet, although no one could predict who would join.

II: Wellesley and Canning Propose a New Coalition 22-24 May

The Prince Regent summoned Wellesley and Canning on 22 May, one day after Liverpool's ministry had been narrowly defeated by a coalition of Pittites, Whigs, and independents all confused and discouraged by the current complicated state

37 Aspinall, George IV, I, 876.
38 Brock, Liverpool, p. 20.
39 Buckingham, Regency, I, 308.
of political affairs. The Prince gave neither Wellesley nor Canning a commission to form a new government. At first he also insisted that they not treat with the Whigs. The Regent told Wellesley that he wanted a government based on a fusion of the incumbent ministry and the followers of Wellesley and Canning. Principles of the new ministry were to include vigorous support in the peninsula and immediate consideration of Catholic claims. By placing the initiative in Wellesley's hands he hoped Liverpool's friends would abandon their disinclination to treat with Canning and him. The published correspondence, however, soon made this impossible. Bathurst wrote to Richmond that in the wake of the Perceval letter Wellesley would receive little support in the cabinet; for Bathurst this correspondence was "sufficient reason to have nothing to do with him." He held out some hope, as a result, that in the long run Liverpool's beleaguered, and now defeated,

40 Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 98.


42 Wellesley to the Prince Regent, 24 May 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 85-87.
ministry would regain control. Arbuthnot, at that time not yet so hostile to Wellesley as he would later become, also doubted that Wellesley and Canning would be able to gain a significant measure of support in the old ministry. Wilberforce, whom Wellesley had helped on the slave trade question, noted in his diary that "even worldly people" took offence at the thought of Wellesley leading the country and observed that his political influence was exaggerated. The Prince conspired to weaken Wellesley's position by denying him a mandate to form a government. His commission to sound out various factions gave him no leverage for bargaining purposes.

Because of Wellesley's unpopularity Canning assumed the initiative. He assured Wellesley that he would not abandon the principles they had enunciated in discussions with Liverpool, and that indeed he would not demand office for himself. Wellesley may have believed that Canning

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43. Bathurst to Richmond, 22 May 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 70, f. 1317.

44. Charles Arbuthnot to William Huskisson, 23 May 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, f. 229.


was about to abandon him. The old Perceval cabinet made no effort to hide the fact that they would welcome Canning if he would separate himself from Wellesley. Nor could the correspondence between Liverpool and his friends have offered Wellesley much reassurance. Canning wrote to Liverpool on the 23rd to broach the idea of a union based on Catholics' claims and the war in Spain. Liverpool replied curtly that a discussion of principles was unnecessary "particularly after what has recently passed." The entire ministry was opposed to Wellesley. Canning asked for further clarification, and Liverpool acknowledged that the Perceval letter had completely alienated his colleagues.

A parallel correspondence with Melville produced the response that while Melville accepted the two principles enunciated by Canning he would not serve under Wellesley. Melville had been one of Wellesley's allies in the cabinet.


49 Liverpool to Canning, 23 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37396, f. 431, and printed in Anon., Authentic, p. 21.

50 Liverpool to Canning, 23 May 1812, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, I, 390-91.
and this revealed how detrimental to the Marquess' political fortunes the letter was.\(^{51}\) Canning thereupon wrote to Liverpool and to Melville on 24 May stating that Wellesley need not be a part of the administration of his personality was a principal cause of difficulty. He hoped that their decision would be reconsidered.\(^{52}\)

Wellesley's position had weakened considerably, perhaps far more than he realised. Wellesley was apparently not aware of Canning's willingness to proceed without him. Liverpool was alarmed, because by basing their refusal on the matter of personality the cabinet gave Canning additional ammunition with which the Regent might be persuaded that there must be negotiations with the Whigs. Canning's position, on the other hand, was also delicate. He cautioned Melville that he did not have Wellesley's permission to say that he was willing to stay out of the government. But he betrayed every fear that Wellesley's shadow would darken his own political future. Four days later, when the Regent made an attempt to entice Canning separately, he wavered momentarily but then steadied.

\(^{51}\) Roberts, Whig, pp. 384–85; Melville to Canning, 23 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 9; and printed in Anon, Authentic, p. 22.

\(^{52}\) Canning to Melville, 24 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 1; Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 100–106.
If the Liverpool government had demonstrated greater promise of survival, however, perhaps Canning would have succumbed.\textsuperscript{53} To Wellesley, meanwhile, he merely registered his surprise that antipathy to the Marquess should have proven so strong.\textsuperscript{54}

While Canning negotiated with the former ministry, Wellesley closeted himself with Grey and Grenville. Could the Whigs respond enthusiastically to a man who had only a commission of investigation?\textsuperscript{55} Probably not, and by denying Wellesley the power to construct a government the Prince made it easier for the Whigs to hide their true motives. As has already been noted, Grey and Grenville approached the newest chance to enter office with that fatal lack of enthusiasm which led them to reject Perceval's proposals in 1809 and the Regent's in February 1812. On 17 May, when Liverpool was opening negotiations with Wellesley and Canning, Grenville confessed to his brother Thomas that neither Grey nor he would consent to serve under either Wellesley or Liverpool. They feared that if the

\textsuperscript{53}Buckingham, \textit{Regency}, I, 332.

\textsuperscript{54}Canning to Wellesley, 24 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 431.

Prince made an appeal to them on the basis of a need for a comprehensive government their denial would be made more difficult and would call for laying down specific principles as their basis for refusing. Under present circumstances they were forced to rely heavily on their differences with Wellesley and Canning over the policy in Spain to shield them from the embarrassment of a coalition which Grey and Grenville believed would be but a trap prepared for them by an "unseen and pestilent influence behind the throne." Despite this, Wellesley's offer on 23 May came precariously close to what they wanted, and rejection proved more difficult than anticipated. If opposition to Wellesley on personal grounds had been less, and the enthusiasm of the Regent had been greater, a coalition might indeed have resulted.

On the evening of 23 May Wellesley and Canning reported to the Prince that their program of a government based on "conciliatory adjustment" of Catholics' claims and "adequate vigor" in the peninsula had been rejected by members of the

56 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 17 May 1812, BM, Add. MSS 41853, ff. 256-58.

recent ministry. Only William Dundas, speaking for the Scottish members, continued to hold that Wellesley and Canning "were necessary for the efficiency of the government." Even they, however, would tender their support only after they saw a new government firmly established. Wellesley admitted that opposition to him was based on a personal consideration; later he was to refer to these feelings as "dreadful animosities." He hoped, nonetheless, to be able to present a more favourable report the next day, which indicates that Wellesley held out the hope of overcoming the Whigs' reluctance as soon as they realised that Canning had completed his negotiations with the Tories and had failed to secure an agreement.

Wellesley's negotiations with the Whigs prior to meeting the Regent late in the day on 23 May had produced a negative response, but not a definitive one. The Prince was not told therefore that all hope of a coalition ministry need be abandoned. And immediately after seeing the Prince Wellesley sent messages to Grey and Grenville,

58 Wellesley to the Prince Regent, 24 May 1812, Aspinall, George IV, I, 85-86.


60 Wellesley to the Prince Regent, 23 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37296, f. 437.
Moira, Erskine and Sheridan. Afterwards he solicited the opinion of other Whigs. He saw Grey first and Grenville immediately thereafter. The conversation left Grey and Grenville with the impression that there was still little chance of a meeting of minds on the Spanish question and not much promise of a substantial concession to the Catholics. But Wellesley had only begun to warm to his task, for the written memorandum of the conversation, submitted to them either late the same day or early on the 24th, was "much less forbidding." Regarding Ireland the "moderated concession" had been changed into an "immediate consideration of the Catholic claims, with a view to their final adjustment." In Spain rather than an "increase" in effort there was to be only an "adequate" effort. 61 Their reply to Wellesley's memorandum, therefore, was perforce more conciliatory than their earlier oral response. It showed total agreement on the first point and greater likelihood of success on the second. Grey and Grenville delivered this to Wellesley at on 24 May.

Wellesley was obviously pleased at this reply.

61Grey and Grenville, memorandum, 24 May 1812, printed in Anon., Authentic, pp. 31-34; Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 24 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 316-17.
It balanced some opposition on the part of Henry Brougham, who was busy behind the scenes drumming up objections to being "put in the same boat" with Wellesley and Canning. It put the equivocal replies from Moira and Lansdowne in a more positive light, for both had intimated that they would be guided by the outcome of negotiations with Grey and Grenville. It probably did not hurt Wellesley's cause in Whig circles that the Duke of York was opposed to their initiatives. And Canning, after confirming that all prospects for a union with Liverpool were dead, placed even greater emphasis on the need to come to an understanding with the Whigs. Authority from the Prince to negotiate was required. Grenville and Grey had protected themselves by noting that since Wellesley had authority only to investigate and not to negotiate, they did not feel themselves bound as yet by any observations they might make to Wellesley. It was important to see the Regent at once.

On the evening of the 24th Wellesley and Canning


63 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 24 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 318.
again visited the Regent. He was appalled at the high prospect of success implied in the reply from Grey and Grenville. He still refused to give Wellesley authority to proceed to form an administration. The Prince had anticipated correctly that the Whigs would not bend their principles to treat with Wellesley, and that indeed they were reluctant to treat at all. But he had not expected that Wellesley would retreat as far as he did on the Spanish issue, putting the Whigs in a position where they could hardly refuse.

The next day the Prince summoned Eldon, Yarmouth and Cumberland. Through them he urged Liverpool to reconsider his own resistance to serve under Wellesley, and to urge his friends to change their minds as well. He also demanded verbally reasons why Wellesley was unpalatable as a leader and refused to accept rejections based on personal grounds. Liverpool and his colleagues managed to have these answers commuted to written statements. Melville replied that he was now prepared to serve "with but not under Wellesley."

This was seen as a parody on Wellesley's formula in the

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64 Moira to Wellesley, 26 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 27.

65 Prince Regent to Liverpool, n. d., BM, Liverpool MSS 38247, f. 328; Aspinall, George IV, I, 87.
January and February negotiations, and as repeated in
the famous letter published 22 May. The others referred
to public issues, especially to Catholic emancipation. 66
By these devices they were able to report back through
Liverpool on 27 May that they still would not serve with
Wellesley. 67 Another attempt to treat with Canning
separately also failed. 68

Wellesley and Canning, meanwhile, rested their case.
The Whigs were confused initially. After the generally
conciliatory negotiations on 24 May there was no further
word from Wellesley. Soon enough reports reached the Whig
salons of the Prince's continued opposition to any negotiations
with them. 69 In Parliament Liverpool's caretaker govern-
ment continued to advertise Wellesley's manifold deficiencies.
Also on the 25th Stuart-Wortley was reported prepared to
repeat his call for an efficient government. This time he

66 Melville to Liverpool, 28 May 1812, printed in
Aspinall, George IV, I, 90-98; Bathurst to Liverpool,
29 May 1812, Bathurst MSS, p. 176.

67 Minute of the Cabinet, 27 May 1812, printed in
Aspinall, George IV, I, 90.

68 Grenville to Buckingham, 27 May 1812, printed in
Buckingham, Regency, I, 328-29.

69 Ibid., 24 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency,
I, 318.
planned to expose the Prince's refusal to permit installation of a government in which the Whigs participated. Wellesley prepared to go out of town, determined to leave the Prince to his own troubles.

In the later afternoon of the 26th, however, the Prince again summoned Wellesley. According to an extraordinary entry printed in the Regency volume, the Prince noted that Wellesley had failed to come to terms with Liverpool and his ministers and with the Whigs. An astonished Wellesley replied that he had not failed in negotiations with the Whigs, for he had never been granted authority to treat. The Prince then said that he was determined to sustain Wellesley on Catholics' claims and not to permit an administration to be formed on an opposite principle. Most extraordinary of all, he claimed that Eldon had come around to Wellesley's views on this question; Melville had also been prevailed upon to "waive his personal repugnance" against Wellesley. Liverpool had been disciplined. Differences would be reconciled immediately.

Of course they could not be. Liverpool and his

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71 Grenville to Buckingham, 26 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 321.
friends continued to reject the thought of such cooperation. If in fact Buckingham's report was correct it suggests that the Prince was indeed "very much altered, much depressed, and nervous." Moira told Wellesley that the Prince's conversations were "desultory and irregular" and that he was trying "to evade the admission of unpleasant truths." And Wellesley himself was alleged to have told the Prince that by such actions he was in real danger of losing his throne.

The Regent's conduct, especially his directive to Liverpool that he was to carry on and his own opposition to the Whigs, forced Wellesley and Canning to conclude that their commission to seek the basis for a new government was now at an end. Canning inquired of Melville on 26 May if this was so. Early on 27 May Canning was told that the old government was back in office. Others who were close to the Prince reported that the old government

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74 Creevey to Mrs. Creevey, 26 May 1812, printed in Gore, Creevey, p. 96.

was "finally extinguished." Wellesley and Canning chose to believe that their commission was ended, and so informed Grey and Grenville.

In truth all reports were incorrect to varying degrees. At noon on the 27th the Prince concluded that without some new initiatives he must face the prospect of an extended period with no government at all. So desperate was his predicament that he summoned even Sidmouth for consultations. After further thought the Prince conceded, or seemed to concede, the need to treat with the Whigs. Sheridan, who had remained on cordial terms with the Prince, urged him to lift his opposition to Grey. Liverpool admitted that he could not see his way to forming an administration. Moira, who had not visited the Regent since the previous January when he had retired to the country

76 Moira to Wellesley, 27 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 31.

77 Canning to Melville, 26 May 1812, enclosed in Wellesley to Grey, 27 May 1812, printed in Anon., Authentic, pp. 36-38; Grenville to Buckingham, 27 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 329.

78 Richard Brinsley Sheridan to Wellesley, 26 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 29.

79 Charles Abbot, Baron Colchester, Diaries and Correspondence (3 vols.; London: Murray, 1861), diary entry, 27 May 1812, II, 384.
after the Prince's proscription of the Whigs, was summoned at Wellesley's suggestion. Moira and the Prince were reunited in a lachrymosal scene. At the end of it Moira extracted from the Prince a promise "to give a fresh authorisation to Lord Wellesley as soon as he had satisfied himself on some points necessary towards his decisions." 80

Meanwhile the Whigs were showing signs of willingness to cooperate. In the house of Commons their spokesmen denied allegations that they had rejected any overtures from Wellesley either on public or personal grounds; this was construed as an admission that they saw no insuperable bar to office. Wellesley and Canning thereupon compared their notes and composed a new memorandum which clarified points of difference between their earlier individual presentations. 81 As soon as Wellesley had seen the Prince and received permission to negotiate with the Whigs he went to Sheridan's house and showed him the terms which Canning and he were prepared to offer. An hour later Wellesley returned and offered Sheridan a place

80 Moira to Wellesley, 27 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 27, 31.

81 Grenville to Buckingham, 27 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 329.
in the new ministry. Sheridan refused, probably because he believed that Grey was still proscribed. Sheridan sent a note to the Prince asking whether this was the case. The Prince apparently assured him it was not. Sheridan passed the memorandum to Grey and Grenville. They professed to be satisfied with the changes made in the offer which Wellesley disclosed to Sheridan for their consideration, and they noted in particular that it bound the prospective ministry to introduce legislation on the Catholic question during the upcoming session of parliament. They were not displeased with Wellesley's willingness to remove himself to Ireland.

Wellesley's negotiations were abruptly terminated either late in the evening of the 27th or early the following morning. The role of Moira now became crucial. Moira's instincts were Whig but his party affiliation was

82 Hansard XIII (27 May 1812), 556.
84 Buckingham, Regency, I, 331.
85 Dardis to Buckingham, 26 May 1812, Buckingham, Regency, I, 323.
tenuous. He professed to be simply a friend of the Prince and employed his influence between 1810 and 1812 to urge him to accept the Whigs as partners in a coalition. By retiring to the country in January Moira signified that he believed the Prince to have deserted his ancient allies and principles. Now, at Wellesley's insistence, he was once more at the Regent's elbow, and indeed found himself mothering his distracted friend almost around the clock. It was a responsibility which he did not relish, and a burden which he felt far exceeded his talents.

At first Moira's presence seemed salutary. On the 26th he laboured to correct the Prince's apparent misimpression that Grey and Grenville had already flatly refused to join a Wellesley-Canning ministry. The Prince probably feigned this, and for a brief moment he allowed himself to be persuaded that Wellesley should treat with the Whigs. On the 28th this power was withdrawn, or rather, the Prince declared that it had never existed.

On 29 May Moira told Wellesley that the Prince would again issue a commission to treat. He warned however that

86 Moira to Wellesley, 26 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 25-26; Grenville to Buckingham, 27 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 330.

87 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 28 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 332-34.
he had had a "sharp skirmish" regarding Grey and could not be certain that the Prince would not change his mind. The caveat was appropriate. The Prince wavered all day 30 May, and Moira and Wellesley sat by him.

On the 31st Moira again found it necessary to assure the Prince that Grey and Grenville must be approached. Moira confessed that in all his discussions he had not been able to divine exactly what lay at the root of the Prince's aversion to Grey, and thus he could not resolve the problem satisfactorily.

On 1 June an outside factor pressured the Prince into making a decision. The house of Commons assembled again to pass judgement on a government which had already been defeated once on a motion of confidence, and which had already twice surrendered its commission. The role of the Duke of York in obstructing formation of a new ministry was raised; he was alleged to be working behind the scenes to prevent his brother from permitting discussions with the Whigs. Upon hearing news of parliament's dissatisfaction

88 Moira to Wellesley, 29 May 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 81.
89 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 30 May 1812, Buckingham, Regency, I, 335.
90 Moira to McMahon, 31 May 1812, printed in Aspinall, ed., George IV, I, 102 and 102n.
91 Roberts, Whig, p. 388.
the Prince gave way, but not completely. Wellesley was given his commission to treat, and he expected to form a government. But he was forced to labour under restrictions which the Whigs would cite as reasons for refusing to join his ministry. In this device the Prince would find a way to keep the Whigs at bay a while longer yet.

On the face of it, excluding the restrictions to be imposed by the Regent, there certainly seemed to be every prospect of success. Wellesley himself seemed sincere about repairing to Ireland, leaving Canning as the Prime minister. The joint memorandum from Wellesley and Canning to Grey and Grenville impressed Thomas Grenville as leaving "nothing to prevent discussion" whenever the Prince saw fit to permit it. On the Spanish question, which was bound to be the most troublesome, there had been considerable softening of attitude on Wellesley's part and some concessions by Grey. The correspondence of the leading Whigs ceased, at least for the moment, to betray that antipathy towards Wellesley which it was accustomed to show. And yet the

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93 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 28 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 334.

negotiations which began on 1 June between Wellesley and the Whigs were terminated on 3 June and no ministry resulted. What happened?

On 1 June Wellesley informed Grey that the Prince Regent had authorised him to form a government based on those principles of Catholic relief and adequate support for the war in Spain which they had discussed in some detail beginning 24 May. But there were conditions. The Prince Regent wished Wellesley to be first Lord of the Treasury, with Moira, Erskine and Canning in the cabinet. Grey and Grenville were to choose incumbents for four offices in a cabinet of twelve or five in a cabinet of thirteen, including themselves. The Regent did not object to the presence of either Whig leader in the cabinet. Wellesley would be free to choose the remainder. On 3 June Grey and Grenville replied in the negative. They took great exception to the "novel" idea of parcelling out offices rather than following the traditional course of negotiating for all offices. They would not treat

95 Wellesley to Grey, 1 June 1812, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58.

96 Wellesley to Grey, 1 June 1812, printed in Anon., Authentic, pp. 53-55.

97 Grey and Grenville to Wellesley, 3 June 1812, printed in Anon., Authentic, pp. 57-61.
until the Prince saw fit to "give us full powers in making the arrangements in every part of the government." 98

Wellesley reported to the Regent on the same day that he could not construct a coalition with the Whigs and offered to surrender his commission. The Regent accepted it immediately and gave it in turn to Moira. Wellesley was granted permission to announce in the house of Lords what had transpired. 99

Conflicting explanations for the failure of these negotiations appeared at the time they took place and historians continue to speculate on this extraordinary episode. The immediate cause of the collapse of talks was the method suggested by the Regent for constructing the cabinet. Grey held that the terms defied the normal procedures for putting together a ministry as a cohesive entity in which all acts were the common responsibility of the whole, and where offices were apportioned after a collective consideration of the major groups. Wellesley's plan would promote disunion and jealousy, and undermine "party government." 100 While it may be conceded that the


99 Moira to Wellesley, 3 June 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 96.

100 Brock, Liverpool, p. 21.
proposal was "an extreme form of coalition government," many observers maintain that it differed in degree rather than in kind from all governments of the period: every ministry was essentially a coalition of various party groupings. In most cases certain offices were regarded, at least implicitly, as already reserved when negotiations began. This normally included the office of Prime minister, who received his commission from the King and proceeded to construct a government around himself. But other offices were also reserved. In 1806 Grenville himself excluded Foxites from offices closely identified with India. The coalitions of 1782 through 1784 were almost as extreme in form as Wellesley's proposal. It might be wondered at that Grey and Grenville did not put forward a counter proposal before rushing to oppose the arrangement offered by Wellesley.

Did Grey and Grenville object to the persons nominated by Wellesley and the Prince Regent? Canning held that if one added to the four nominees directly selected by Grey and Grenville the names of Erskine and Moira, who were Whig in their views, the Whigs would command six of twelve, or seven of thirteen, positions in the cabinet. Arbuthnot

thought that the Whigs would in fact "swamp" the cabinet, because they could count on Wellesley and Canning on the Catholic question. But the Whigs charged "exclusionism," which might be interpreted to mean that they were not permitted to choose the Prime minister. The Regent was not willing to have a Whig as his Prime minister in any case. He obviously did not even trust Wellesley to do his bidding, and the Whigs were likely to obtain a more sympathetic hearing from Wellesley than from another Pittite.

Between 23 May and 30 May it is unlikely that the Whigs somehow changed their minds so as to believe that whatever the level of desperation attached to the Prince's position they would be able to nominate the first Lord of the Treasury; yet this did not prevent Grey and Grenville from supplying some measure of encouragement for a coalition.

Several variations on the conspiracy theme have been put forward. One is perhaps worth mentioning because it circulated within Wellesley's own political family. It

102 Arbuthnot to Huskisson, c. 1 June 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 236-42.

103 Colchester, diary entry, 2 June 1812, Diaries, II, 385; Shawe to Prendergast, 4 June 1812, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 115-18; 1 Hansard, XXXIV (1812), Appendix, p. vi; Ibid., XXIII (3 June 1812), 345, 450.
held that the Prince was the dupe of Hertford house and the old Perceval interest. This interest, attached to the Regent through his mistress, became convinced after the publication of the Perceval letter that Wellesley would not be able to succeed in forming a ministry under any circumstances. Because it was valuable to neutralise Canning, however, the Hertfords persuaded the Prince to permit Wellesley to try to form a ministry, but under onerous conditions laid down by the Regent himself. The experiment failed, and Canning as well as Wellesley went into the wilderness.  

More elaborate yet is the conspiracy theory suggested by Professor Roberts. Here the master conspirator was the Prince Regent himself. The Prince was well aware that the Whigs did not trust his motives. He therefore put forward a plan "to which no reasonable man could object" because he knew that in such a matter the Whigs would not behave like reasonable men. The Whigs took the bait and by rejecting Wellesley's offer alienated many moderates in their own ranks. This was a positive development for the Prince, who now discarded Wellesley.  

104 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 284.

105 Roberts, Whig, p. 393.
holds that this is what Wellesley really meant when he referred to "dreadful animosities" in his speech of explanation on 5 June: he was trying to place the blame on the Prince, who simply refused to tolerate the prospect of Grey gaining access to the cabinet. 106 But when pressed to be specific about "dreadful animosities," he switched to an older adversary in these negotiations, Lord Liverpool, and to Liverpool's use of the Perceval letter to keep his colleagues from accepting Wellesley's offer of 23 May. Since Liverpool was engaged in none of the last round of negotiations, it might mean that the charge was not meant initially to be laid against him at all.

Perhaps the Whigs concluded that the objectives of the new ministry would not be compatible with Whig interests or were internally compatible. Creevey who was more eager than most observers to see the experiment fail, listed reasons why the government as outlined by Wellesley would not be viable. In the first place Canning supported continued maritime restrictions on neutral powers as incorporated in orders-in-council, while Grenville strongly opposed them. Grenville was a strong critic of the war, and especially of the campaign in Iberia, but Wellesley remained its champion. Even though he moderated

1061 Hansard XXIII (3 June 1812), 335.
his support in May, he would likely have again increased his commitment whenever his brother asked for assistance. Grey was opposed to all secret influence, which was the Prince's special weakness, as shown in his strenuous effort to maintain control over the household when this subject was debated in December. Finally, and this was obviously a reflection of Creevey's personal prejudices, the Prince, Wellesley and Canning were opportunists who had "betrayed everyone," in contrast to a "man of honour" like Earl Grey. 107

Creevey's thesis may be too extreme, but it contains a large element of truth. It is hard to see Grey and Grenville bowing before Wellesley as he snapped the whip over the heads of his colleagues, or subordinates, in order to convert them into loyal supporters of his own policies. This was not India. The cabinet would have been composed of strong-willed individuals and the need for negotiations would have overridden all else.

Was there a lack of conviction among the Whigs that Wellesley held the confidence of the Regent? Tierney told Shawe, according to an account in Wellington's papers, that "the cause of many of the opposition holding back was their doubt of the Prince Regent's sincerity towards

107 Creevey to Mrs. Creevey, 2 June 1812, printed in Gore, Creevey, p. 98.
Lord Wellesley, and that they would have acted differently if they had seen the Treasurer's staff in his hands."108 Wellesley was certainly too trusting when it came to the Regent; he had been burned enough times to have known better. The Prince was notoriously unstable in his friendships, as Grey could attest. It was not difficult to see that the Prince resisted the idea of accepting Wellesley as his prospective first minister until all chance of Liverpool carrying on seemed to have vanished. The Whigs could certainly complain that they were treated far below their political station by being approached indirectly rather than by the Regent himself. And his formula for the new ministry, with the Prince giving out offices, was also unlikely to inculcate much confidence. On the other hand, if the Whigs hoped to come to power at any time in the foreseeable future, they were unlikely to find a public figure who combined as much sympathy for their views with a willingness to see them vindicated as Wellesley. They had almost no chance of nominating their own leader and expecting the Regent to demonstrate much confidence in him.

It may be, as Roberts also suggests, that the Whigs simply were not keen to take power, at least in any case.

unless they had the full enjoyment of it. Their correspondence is replete with odes of thanksgiving for lucky escapes from being forced to take office. Thomas Grenville feared that Wellesley's written offer of 23-24 May was so generous that the Whigs might actually be drawn into office. On the other hand, it is quite obvious that they expected the full enjoyment of office if they were to suffer the brutality of running the ministry. They were, with 160 M.P.s in their favour and supported by some of the greatest landed magnates of the nation, not an inconsiderable force in their own right. Wellesley's offer may have been too handsome in terms of its concessions to the ideological principles to be rejected outright, but perhaps it was too stingy in terms of the power they expected to wield in the cabinet.

Certainly an important reason for the failure of the initiative was Wellesley himself. The Whigs were prejudiced against a coalition with any of the Pittites, and Canning was no friend of Grenville. But there is much harsh truth in Bathurst's assertion that "the chief objection (and I fairly think the best) is the impossibility of Lords Grey and Grenville allowing Lord Wellesley to be at the head

109Brock, Liverpool, p. 21.
of the Treasury. Creevey put it more crudely: who could stoop to serve a bankrupt and upstart when they themselves were drawn from the finest families of the land? Wellesley had burned his bridges. Grenville was no longer his friend; they had ceased to correspond and Wellesley's last gesture of friendship towards the family which had placed him on so high a footing was to bring back some sheep from Spain for Grenville's pastures. Grey and Wellesley had always been at odds politically, and the debates in which they engaged were not free from personal aspersions. Wellesley's obsequiousness to the Prince while the house bill was being prepared was most unpalatable to Grey; here principle and increasing antipathy to the Regent reinforced each other. There was the heritage of impeachment, the failure of Wellesley to join forces with Grenville rather than with Portland, and Wellesley's reputation for trying to dominate his colleagues. Who would want to serve in a ministry without someone like Wellesley at the head? Wellesley had reaped a whirlwind of opposition.

110 Bathurst to Richmond, 4 June 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 7, f. 1307.

111 Gore, Creevey, p. 55.
News that the Whigs would not accept Wellesley's offer left him little alternative but to repair to the Regent for further instructions. He could not ask for the services of Sidmouth because of his opposition to Catholic relief. Castlereagh's presence would bar Canning. An appeal to the Whigs to defy Grey and Grenville would not likely succeed, but if it did it would alienate the Canningites, who would not enter a ministry dominated by the Whigs. There was no hope among Liverpool's colleagues; that prospect had been tested. Wellesley had failed to form a ministry.

III. Aftershocks: Moira's Bid and "Dreadul Animosities"

Wellesley reported to the Regent on the evening of 1 June that Grey and Grenville had refused to discuss plans for the construction of a new government because of their opposition to the manner in which the cabinet was to be constructed. The Regent immediately concluded, as perhaps he was eager to do, that all hope for negotiations was at an end. It is not clear whether Wellesley then surrendered his commission in disgust, or whether the Prince appropriated...

112 Sidmouth to the Prince Regent, 28 May 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 92-93.
It was certainly transferred to Moira with unseemly haste. Wellesley was understandably upset at this, since it was he who had reconciled Moira to the Regent only a few days earlier. The Regent authorised Moira to declare himself Prime minister rather than merely negotiator. If he was willing to exploit his position, Moira could expect to form a government with considerably less difficulty than Wellesley. He was not inclined to press his advantage, however: Moira "as a brave soldier, but the greatest political coward in the world." He was terrified at the prospect of forming a government, and promptly decided that he would try instead to reopen negotiations between Wellesley and Lords Grey and Grenville.

On 3 June Moira wrote to the Whig leaders declaring that Wellesley's formula for nominations to the cabinet was not to be construed as ruling out other methods of choosing a cabinet; it was intended merely to demonstrate how eager Wellesley had been to promote the influence of the Whigs in the new government. Canning had been included because Wellesley would not have taken office.

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113 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 283.

114 Ibid.
without him. Moira and Erskine had been included to suggest that the offer of four of five places to the Whigs had not been limited by Wellesley's own demands to place his friends: Moira was a close friend of the Whigs and Erskine was a Whig. The government was not to be animated by a "counteraction" of parties but by the same principles. 115 Moira also took the occasion to stress that his inclusion was not intended to circumscribe Grey's wishes or requirements. 116 Wellesley approved Moira's letter. He also sent a separate note proposing explanatory observations, but acknowledging that negotiations had been removed from his hands. Wellesley wrote again on 4 June to state that the Prince had not authorised further conversations, but he hoped that they might take place. Grey replied by saying that they did not wish to renew a discussion on points already decided, and would not do so unless the Regent required it.

Moira was as eager to be rid of the onus for forming a government as Wellesley was to be restored his commission. He found the situation intolerable. Animus to Wellesley

115 Moira to Grey, 3 June 1812, printed in Anon., Authentic, pp. 61-64.
116 Buckingham, Regency, I, 342-43.
had driven people to take positions they would not otherwise have assumed. The Whigs were behaving as "ill and possible."

Moira told his brother that their "unhandsome impatience at their not having everything at their own disposal makes them feign off upon petty distractions and little captious forms. I regard it as impossible to settle anything with them." 117

On 5 June, as a means of concluding the long and fruitless negotiations, Moira invited Grey and Grenville to review differences which had manifested themselves in the previous week's conversations. This Grey and Grenville refused. They cited Moira's want of authority to negotiate the whole range of questions which might arise therein. On the following day Moira declared that he had obtained just this authority from the Prince. 118 This placed the Whigs in a difficult position, if their principal objective was to avoid entering office with Wellesley or without full control of the government. They had already raised objections to control of the nominations to the Prince's household. Now, on 6 June, they proceeded to

117 Moira to Sir Charles Hastings, 4 June 1812, Hastings MSS, III, 295.

118 Grenville to Buckingham, 6 June 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 353.
make this the principal point. They asked Moira whether the prospective cabinet would enjoy jurisdiction over household appointments, which the Prince had virtually conceded to Lady Hertford and to her nest of conservatives. To their dismay they were told that the Prince had made no stipulation here against cabinet jurisdiction. 119 As they anticipated, however, Moira went on to declare that he personally could not concur in conceding jurisdiction to the cabinet, and talks concluded. 120

Writing to his brother the same afternoon, Grenville conceded that the escape was a narrow one, and that the Whigs were not yet out of danger. "My apprehension," he confessed, was that the household officers would resign. 121 He need not have worried. Moira was faced with the choice of throwing himself on the old government or conceding all to the opposition. 122 The latter he would not do, for he

119 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 3 June 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 344.
120 Grenville to Buckingham, 6 June 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 353; Anon., Authentic, pp. 71-83; Moira to the Prince Regent, 3 June 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 105; Moira to Grey and Grenville, 6 June 1812, Windsor MSS, cited in Roberts, Whig, p. 394.
121 Grenville to Buckingham, 6 June 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 353.
122 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 5 June 1812, Buckingham, Regency, I, 350.
would not concede household appointments to the government. Wellesley, on the other hand, would have pressed the Prince to place these at once at the disposal of the cabinet; he had no desire to protect the Hertford interest, with its connections to Castlereagh, against a government inspired by Canning, and Whigs and himself. Moira saved the Prince from a ministry dominated by the Whigs; in doing so he frustrated Wellesley's highest hopes.

But this is to blame Moira for failing to take the lead in a situation which he found most distasteful, and one which he had done nothing to assume. He told Wellesley that if he managed to construct a government he would resign it forthwith into Wellesley's hands and go to Ireland as viceroy, which he most wanted to do. But after the Whigs spurned his last offer Grey and Grenville thought that he would try to construct a ministry composed of Wellesley, Canning, Sheridan, Melville and a couple of lesser figures. This unlikely prospect was soon doomed. Moira refused to rise in the house of Lords and announce that he was Prime minister, as the Prince had authorised him to do. Moira's

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123 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 283.

124 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, 3 (?) June 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 344.
friends reacted angrily to his reticence and condemned him as naive and inept. Moira concluded, however, that he could not gain the Whigs unless he surrendered every point of dispute to the Whigs, and to lead a ministry composed of men such as Eldon and Sidmouth would compromise his principles. Wellesley assured Moira that he stood ready to help him in every way and encouraged Canning to persuade Moira to change his mind. But after all that happened, Wellesley confessed to Canning, he could not join a Moira ministry himself. Canning may have detected a note of insincerity in Wellesley's advice regarding Moira, for he failed to take the initiative.

Thus the house of Commons again prepared to entertain an address to the Regent on 9 June concerning a new ministry. The need was more acute than every, especially in view of the sudden deterioration of relations with the United States. To the surprise of almost all, Liverpool rose in his place and announced that the Regent had appointed him first Lord of the Treasury and had given him authority to complete the remaining details. Moira faded from view;

125 McMahon to the Prince Regent, 4 June 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, 106.
126 Moira to McMahon, 4 June 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 104.
like Wellesley he was destined to make his reputation not in Britain but in India. 128

What role did the Prince play in the failure of Moira's initiative towards the Whigs, and can it be identified with the Regent's conduct towards Wellesley? Again the most intriguing explanation has been advanced by Professor Roberts. It is not impossible that the Prince and Moira conspired to insure that the Whigs would refuse office because of a hitch on the household question. On the face of it the Whigs stood to gain virtual control of the government in every other respect, and Moira himself was even willing to let one of them have the lead. If so, the Whigs fell into a trap by relying too heavily on their own pretensions. Certainly the Prince's wishes to exclude the Whigs if he could had been established at the onset of talks in middle May. But Moira, until the end of May at any rate, was certainly willing to treat with them. Roberts believe he became hostile towards them because of their treatment of Wellesley, because of their objections to Moira being included in the list of Wellesley's nominees for the government, and because of their insincerity in

128 Hansard XXIII (8 June 1812), 357.
the negotiations of 3 to 5 June. On the 6th, therefore, Moira was determined to be insincere in turn, knowing that when negotiations with the Whigs failed he could turn to the Tories. On the 7th, however, when it was necessary to proclaim his determination to form a government or succumb to the challenge planned for the 8th in the house of Commons, he lost nerve and Liverpool took over.

If this explanation is correct, then Moira and the Prince at some point contemplated the formation of a ministry composed of Tories, Wellesley, Canningites and a few of the Prince's friends, such as Moira. It was an attempt to achieve without Wellesley's leadership what the Regent had wanted Wellesley to succeed in doing at the beginning: keep out the Whigs. This explanation at least does something to restore the reputation of the Prince in the wake of his role in February, for here at least he wanted Wellesley in the ministry under Moira. It does not, however, explain why Moira lost nerve, unless we can see in Wellesley's refusal to serve under Moira after his own commission had been extinguished so suddenly a suggestion in Moira's mind that his own efforts now could not succeed.

If Moira's failure of nerve resulted from Wellesley's refusal to join the ministry, then in turn Wellesley's interpretation of the Prince's decision to entrust the negotiations to Moira on 3 June may need re-examination. In this scheme the Prince must be seen as not opposed to Wellesley but to the Whigs; he did not want Wellesley out of government, but he did not want the Whigs in. Wellesley had extracted from Grey and Grenville on 23 and 24 May a qualified acceptance of office. This frightened the Regent. He withdrew or "suspended" the commission. When he discovered once more on 27 and 28 May that Wellesley could not negotiate successfully with the Liverpool group, he sent Wellesley back to the Whigs with his cabinet formula, hoping that the Whigs would see this as part of a plan for the Regent to protect his household offices. They did, but could be dissuaded from it. The Regent did not want to see them dissuaded, and called in Moira, whose own instinctive opposition to cabinet superintendence of household appointments was longstanding. Moira negotiated with the Whigs and barely escaped forming a government.

Moira's negotiations were designed to meet all Whig complaints that they had not been treated handsomely. 131

131 Moira to McMahon, 4 June 1812, Windsor MSS, cited in Roberts, Whig, p. 400.
Because Liverpool and his friends had not declared that they could not serve with (as opposed to under) Wellesley and because Wellesley had prior to 1 June volunteered to serve under Moira, perhaps the Prince saw a way to have both the Tories and Wellesley. In terms of this explanation, Wellesley's own pretensions, when he changed his mind and refused to serve under Moira, had the effect of excluding him from office. Had he been willing to serve, and had Moira constructed a ministry, Wellesley might indeed have had that substantive "lead in the cabinet" which he had expected in 1809.

In 1812 it would have been a rash judgment to predict in 1812 that Wellesley would never be Prime minister, but there is a sense of finality to the debate and commentary of his contemporaries in May and June 1812 which conveys exactly that impression. Part of it was recorded for the public in the debates in parliament concerning the recent negotiations. On 3 June Wellesley informed the house of Lords that his negotiations had collapsed. He blamed the failure on "dreadful animosities" but offered no further explanation. Two days later the question was again raised in the house of Lords. It was suggested in debate that Wellesley had not intended to precipitate a controversy by the use of the term "dreadful
animosities." Wellesley's friends thought that he had used the term in a moment of frustration and would not want it taken too seriously. Grenville was certain that the phrase had dropped "incidently" from Wellesley's lips. Wellesley had promised to make a more detailed explanation if this was demanded, and Earl Stanhope rose to request that he do so. Stanhope uncharitably compared Wellesley's career to date to that of a "daisy, a flower, that appears in bloom in the morning, that dies at night, and is no more thought of." There were no secrets of state involved in Wellesley's meteoric rise and fall which would militate against full disclosure. Grey tried to distract Stanhope by assuring the chamber that personal considerations were not involved as far as he was concerned. Moira hinted that he would be most unhappy if the term was thought to apply to him. Others speculated that it must refer to the Prince. Wellesley's supporters tried to silence the issue by holding that Wellesley had probably initially "conceived too sanguine an idea of success." But Wellesley was not unhappy to see the issue

1321 Hansard XXIII (5 June 1812), 339-42.
133Ibid., pp. 339-50.
revived; indeed he confessed that he had remained away 3 June to allow an uninhibited discussion. On 8 June, in response to Stanhope's inquiry, he elaborated on his charge. He noted that his negotiations had involved "three great principles": Roman Catholics' claims; the peninsular war; and inter-party relations. These were amenable to negotiation; he had not referred to "dreadful animosities" carelessly. He blamed the failure of negotiations on Liverpool and his friends; they posed "the only obstacles" and their conduct was attributable "only to animosity towards me." Their attitude was perhaps not intentionally hostile, but it was indeed so.134

Lord Harrowby rose to dispute Wellesley's interpretation in very sharp language. Grey in replying to Harrowby adverted to Harrowby's tone as verification of what Wellesley claimed. Wellesley then quoted Liverpool as saying that it was useless to examine Wellesley's offer in detail because after what had passed regarding Perceval no one would serve under Wellesley anyway. Liverpool, Wellesley concluded, was no friend: he "has represented me as shifting and shirking, and wishing to shelter myself under apologies made to others."135 The charge of "dreadful animosities"

134Ibid., pp. 360-61.
135Ibid., pp. 362-66.
should stand. It did so; Holland on the opposition benches recorded after the debate that Wellesley's "wit, spirit, vigor, and eloquence was most decisive."\textsuperscript{136}

An examination of the private correspondence of Wellesley's contemporaries leaves no doubt that Wellesley's allegations were correct. But they might have been applied to a larger circle than merely that of Liverpool and his friends. References to Wellesley's real and imagined deficiencies and idiosyncrasies burdened much of the private correspondence of members of Liverpool's cabinet during this period. The Duke of Richmond was much less cautious than most of his colleagues; he forwarded to various members of the cabinet some comments on Wellesley which they found complementary to their own views, but which they were generally too discreet to repeat. Richmond held that Wellesley had lowered himself to such a degree by publication of his Perceval letter that he was "not fit to be one of the committee to regulate Whyte's."\textsuperscript{137}

He was treacherous and disloyal, spoiled for every other

\textsuperscript{136}Wellesley, \textit{Wellesley Papers}, II, 7.

Bathurst was Richmond's most faithful correspondent, and he responded in much the same spirit. He agreed that Wellesley could not be trusted, and that he would not support Wellesley if the Marquess became Prime minister, even from the backbenches. He did not even know whether he could endure the pain of serving as colleague to Wellesley in the cabinet. Harrowby, Eldon and Liverpool also put on paper enough evidence to substantiate Wellesley's charge of "dreadful animosity" towards him personally.

Wellesley probably came out of the negotiations in somewhat better odor among the opposition than when he went in. Grenville responded with some language reminiscent of days gone by when Wellesley conceded much ground on the question of the peninsular war in his attempt to meet the opposition's demands. Grey, who before the negotiations shared Creevey's gossipy tidbits about Wellesley, assisted him handsomely in the 8 June debate by denying that Wellesley's conduct towards his group had been animated by any but the highest motives. He hazarded the view that Wellesley had been manipulated by others, a point which

138 Richmond to Bathurst, 5 June 1812, Bathurst MSS, pp. 177,178; Richmond to Ryder, 27 May 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 74, f. 1780.

139 Bathurst to Richmond, 2 June 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 1318; Richmond to Bathurst, 1 June 1812, Bathurst MSS, pp. 176-77.
Moira disputed. The Whigs were certainly impressed by Wellesley's willingness to go to Dublin as viceroy if this would facilitate discussions, and after July 1812 the Whigs would work with Wellesley somewhat more comfortably than they had earlier.

Wellesley's reputation among those who were allied neither to the Liverpool Tories nor to the opposition was influenced strongly by his problems with women and by his lack of money. In a conversation with Wellesley the Prince was reported to have commiserated with him at the "grossness of female connections being averted to in political controversies." To his credit Wellesley answered that while he had female connections enough, he was not attempting to hide them, and that he took ample care "that no woman whatever should ever have anything to say to him upon the subject of politics." Wilberforce was personally well-disposed towards Wellesley (they continued to cooperate in parliament on the slave trade question) but he observed that Wellesley's life style undermined his influence in the country.

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140 Hansard XXIII (8 June 1812), 374-81.
141 Thomas Grenville to Buckingham, c. 12 May 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 309.
142 Buckingham, Regency, I, 333.
Wellesley's financial calamities moved towards their inevitable climax at a sharply accelerated pace after his separation from Hyacinthe; in 1816 he would declare bankruptcy on a scale impressive for the age. These considerations, perhaps more than allegations of political unreliability and the Perceval letter, seem to have been very important here. As Arbuthnot noted, many politicians of moderate views saw little difference in political principle between Moira and Wellesley, but they "all feel it a point of honour" not to serve in any administration Wellesley might attempt to construct. Wellesley had become, by virtue of his ambition, his battles with Perceval, and his domestic problems, too volatile a political commodity for even the Regency period. The Perceval letter and subsequent negotiations produced a long-term change in Wellesley's relations with his closest ally, George Canning. It is difficult to determine in 1812 who was more disadvantageous to the other. Wellesley had a host of adversaries, but Canning was a strong opponent of Perceval's friends. Canning was also heartily disliked by the Sidmouth interest, 

143 Arbutnot to McMahon, 29 May 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 99.
and he was still isolated from Castlereagh. Among the Whigs Canning was more unpopular than Wellesley; indeed, Wellesley was often mistrusted because he was thought to be in Canning's pocket. For reasons far from clear Grenville and Canning had been on bad terms for years.

There was, nonetheless, an area in which Canning's prospects were infinitely brighter than those of Wellesley. Canning's effectiveness as a debater and speaker in the house of Commons was of immense value to any administration which could command his allegiance, and his threat in opposition was enormous. Wellesley was less valuable. Canning had certainly laboured quite as assiduously as Wellesley in May to break up Liverpool's government and to reject offers from Liverpool, but even Richmond, who wanted nothing to do with Wellesley, conceded that if Canning's services could be secured this must be done, despite his misbehaviour.\footnote{Richmond to Ryder, 5 June 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 74, f. 1781.} Of course Canning had been the beneficiary of Wellesley's incessant efforts to get him into the cabinet. Wellesley had failed, and in failing he had undermined his own political viability. Now in many respects Wellesley was of diminishing importance to Canning, and indeed he was an incumbrance in Canning's
own efforts to restore himself to office. The events of May and June 1812 impressed on Canning Wellesley's deficiencies as a politician then and for the future. They also proved to him that Wellesley was of limited usefulness in furthering his own political ambitions.

Wellesley's unsuccessful bid for power during the spring of 1812 ended his role as the leader of the family. Wellington was already launched on an independent career, and by the summer of 1812 his successes in Spain, although not unrelieved by disaster, were weighty enough to free him from dependence on an advocate in the cabinet. The war in Spain generated its own momentum; it became popular with the masses. Complaints about Wellesley's family interest were sublimated to political and military necessity. Henry Wellesley wrote to Arbuthnot that both he and Wellington considered ministers' conduct towards their older brother "unjustifiable." But they did not resign, pleading the inconvenience it would cause to the public good. One suspects that they were not

145 Bathurst to Richmond, 4 June 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS, f. 1307; Richmond to Lord O'Neile, 5 June 1812, Richmond MSS 66, f. 1112.

146 Canning to Wellington, 5 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 292.

147 Henry Wellesley to Charles Arbuthnot, 5 July 1812, printed in Arthur Aspinall, The Correspondence of Charles
unhappy to be in Spain and autonomous. It was best for the family interest that they did not confirm their family's critics' worst suspicions by resigning in an attempt to coerce the country into accepting the leadership of the Marquess or to demonstrate their own power. Richmond, who was close to Wellington, held that the family would "hold him cheap if he resigned," and others agreed.

William was a bit unlucky. He had resigned his office as Irish chief secretary in a burst of enthusiasm upon digesting Wellesley's speeches in favour of Catholic relief and upon concluding that Wellesley would come to power on the strength of them. He began retreating towards the Tories as soon as Liverpool reconstituted his cabinet. Wellesley Pole remained on friendly terms with the Marquess, but after 1812 he was no longer connected to him politically.

After June 1812 there remained to Wellesley his political principles, his small and diminishing band of followers in parliament, his gradually weakening friendship

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149 Richmond to Bathurst, 23 May 1812, Bathurst MSS, p. 174.
with Canning, and his debts. He was no longer regarded as the leader of the family. His vital contribution to fighting the great war had already been registered, and Spain's cause had begun to prosper. There was Catholic emancipation to work for, but success here was yet far off. There would be more attempts to take the lead in the country, but none would amount to much. Whether by accident or design the Prince had drawn off enough Whig support to give Liverpool the wherewithall for a government. Under Liverpool the Pittites would move to reconstitute themselves as an efficient political force. Castlereagh, Sidmouth and the Dundasses would support. Windham, the most difficult, was dead. The Saints were reliable. Only Grenville, Canning and Wellesley remained outside the fold, and all of them would in their own time see the wisdom of making their peace with Liverpool. Indeed, "eventually all moved towards Liverpool," as Roberts has noted. Unfortunately there was no room for Wellesley in this arrangement for a long time. He moved into the political wilderness. 150

150 Roberts, Whig, p. 346.
IV. Into the Wilderness June-September 1812

In 1812 "Wellesley was broken in fortune and reputation, and soon retired into pompous obscurity." Roberts' observations are widely shared by other historians, but they tend to paint a picture of Wellesley's withdrawal from the limelight which is much too severe in tone. Wellesley was not without hope that events would reverse his tide of misfortunes; until the end of 1812 he held out hope of better times ahead. A few people still rated him the best of a bad lot of leaders. The Duke of Northumberland, no friend to the Marquess, hoped that there was some way to "prevent his bad qualities from frustrating what otherwise his great abilities would perform." He added that a remarkable feature of Wellesley's career was the dedication of his "great abilities, firmness, and energy" to the advancement of his brothers. Surely now they would aid him.

They did not, and after June 1812 it was a question of survival, a dilemma which Wellesley managed to handle ineptly. It was the first time since the 1780s that

\[\text{151} \quad \text{Ibid.}\]

\[\text{152} \quad \text{Northumberland to McMahon, 26 May 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 87-88.}\]
he had faced the prospect of political obscurity, and he was forced to cope with imminent financial collapse at the same time. At age fifty-two he had become, unwillingly and ungraciously, an elder statesman.

During the first few months of "exile" Wellesley continued to behave as if he would soon return to public office. Indeed, such expectations were not unreasonable. He resumed an active role in parliament and gave the third and final speech on Catholic emancipation. Canning and he attempted to sort out problems in their relationship in anticipation of an election. Wellesley also tried to determine what was the nature of his connection to his family in the wake of the bruising battles of January and February and again in May and June. And inevitably he kept his ear to the ground in the hope that an office would be forthcoming. He also made it known that he would be willing to reduce his own pretensions to a more realistic scale.

His July 1st speech in parliament on the Catholic issue was his most effective in the series, and none was by any standard an inconsiderable achievement. This, the third long declamation on the issue in half a year, maintained the theme that the Catholic issue merited the close and dispassionate attention of parliament. It
repeated little of what had been offered in earlier presentations. This time the emphasis was on the practical absurdities and dangers which stemmed from a consistent and almost religious refusal to admit that changes in the penal laws might be appropriate. The original provisions of the code, argued Wellesley with eloquence, were intended to be temporary and were "to expire with the occasion." They were shaped in an age when a "popish pretender" threatened; he no longer did so. Because the laws were no longer germane, they perpetrated a "gross injustice" which, if once justified by the "clearest proof of necessity," could no longer be sustained unless that underlying necessity could also be demonstrated. Wellesley could only wonder "whether the system is so perfect in theory, so beautiful in symmetry, so sound in principle, so admirable in frame, and so strongly and evidently marked with the characters of wisdom" that it would justify not even taking the subject into consideration.\footnote{Hansard XXIII (July 1812), 814-31.}

The speech was powerful and the rejoinders were weak.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 846-47.} The speech made the proper impression. In the house of Lords a motion to pledge its members to support
a committee the next session was defeated by only one vote. Canning had already carried an identical motion in the house of Commons by a vote of 235 to 106, and a majority of the largely conservative peers almost succumbed. Liverpool's government was clearly staggering, and it was saved by a pretense of no contendere on the Catholic question. Liverpool concluded, painfully and reluctantly, that an effort must be made to put Canning and Wellesley into the government.

The ministry's principal strength during the summer rested on news from Spain. Writing from Dublin, Richmond shared Liverpool's astonishment that so many members of the government should go along with Wellesley on the Catholic issue. It said something for the force of the arguments of Wellesley and Canning that men such as these should so quickly have overcome their loudly declared aversion to associate with Wellesley in any cabinet. But Wellesley rescued Liverpool from the edge of the abyss with his victory over Marmont at Salamanca on 22 July. The government quickly appropriated credit for the victory.

155 Richmond to Liverpool, 5 July 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 74, f. 1802.
156 Mælleson, Wellesley, pp. 192-93.
Lord Moira attempted to turn news of the victory to Wellesley's account by advancing arguments both ungenerous to the ministry and slighting to the significance of the battle itself.157 But if Wellington had already moved far towards abandoning Wellesley, Wellesley still took immense pride in his brother, and refused to hear of anything which cheapened the victory. He was delighted to be carried in an arm chair through the streets of London as a surrogate military hero. He rushed to the Countess of Mornington to tell her that Wellington would receive a marquisate.158 Despite Wellesley's unintentional support the government could not go on, it appeared, without additional support; the news from Spain might not always prove so helpful and timely.

In the beginning of July Liverpool opened lengthy negotiations with Canning. From the beginning it was clear that the object of the government was to secure Canning's services. Wellesley was a factor in the subsequent negotiations, but he was not the primary consideration.159 The move to broaden the base of support was bound to prove

158 Malleson, Wellesley, p. 192.
159 Sheridan to Thomas Sheridan, 30 June 1813, quoted in Price, Sheridan, III, 175.
objectionable to many incumbents, because he had already
exhausted potential accessions from the conservative side,
and many still hoped that it would possible to draw from the
center without including either Wellesley or some of the
Whigs. Liverpool received a good deal of gratuitous
advice on what he should do, and sending Wellesley to
India was one piece frequently repeated. Liverpool
himself preferred to be straightforward and realistic,
and by doing so he would succeed in placing responsibility
for the failure of negotiations on Canning's shoulders.
This would have the additional effect of demoralising
Wellesley, who desperately now wanted to return to office,
and of splitting the non-Whig component of the opposition.
And Wellesley would discover to his pain that there was
no desire to appropriate his own services without those
of Canning.

Canning was also eager to return to office, but
he posed obstacles for himself. He had not yet digested
the unpleasant fact that Castlereagh had superseded
him in the hierarchy of the Pittite pantheon. Canning's

160 Richmond to Bathurst, 28 June 1812, Bathurst MSS, p. 182.
161 Ibid., 14 June 1812, Bathurst MSS, p. 180.
devoted followers could not decide how to handle Castlereagh. Leveson Gower confessed that he could not determine whether any offer Liverpool might make and which implied that Canning must be subordinate to Castlereagh should be taken as an opportunity to triumph from within, or should be rejected in hopes that the government could be destroyed from without. The Wellesley connection, moreover, offered serious problems. Wellesley Pole was dropped from the government without ceremony in early July. Subsequently he stood closer to Canning than to Wellesley, in part because he wanted to return to office and thought that Canning could help him more, and in part because he felt himself somehow betrayed when Wellesley had not achieved office. His pretentions, wildly inflated as they were, suggested to observers that the Wellesley group as well as Canning had not yet come to terms with the altered circumstances. For Wellesley Pole proper compensation would be an office in the cabinet, a prospect which Canning agreed with others was a bit inflated for


164 Dardis to Temple, 4 September 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 403.

165 Arbuthnot to William Huskisson, 24 July 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 37378, f. 277.
such as William. 166 It is no wonder that Peel said what Canning must increasingly have come to feel: that Wellesley was "a sort of appendage to Mr. Canning - incumbrance, perhaps the latter would say." 167

The Marquess himself was now prepared to accept almost any office. He had not yet unbreasted himself of the full story of the recent negotiations, and Wellesley's friends and enemies believed that he might derail the young Liverpool ministry if he could be induced to make a detailed explanation in parliament. Wellesley was not inclined to do so, and Canning for one urged him not to reopen old wounds. 168 Despite Wellesley's hints to the contrary, Canning continued well into the summer to labour under the misconception that Liverpool could not survive in office without his services, and even looked upon the new Prime minister with a "lurking affection." 169

Canning's relationship to Wellesley came to be

166 Canning to Huskisson, 16 July 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, f. 267.
168 Dardis to Temple, 2 September 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 398.
dominated by his attitude towards Liverpool. Canning was
eager not to displease Liverpool. Wellesley's "dreadful
animosities" were to be kept in reserve if needed, but
they were not to be exploited at the moment. Wellington's
Spanish successes were also seen as a vindication of the
policies of the Marquess, and might be used to help
Wellesley and Canning both in their quest for office. 170
Canning entered negotiations with Liverpool, therefore,
still committed to concert with Wellesley's plans, but
determined to orchestrate the Wellesley connection to
meet the challenge posed by Castlereagh and others to
his bid for influence in the cabinet equal to his preten-
sions. 171

Liverpool got in touch with Canning late in July.
His invitation was cast in general terms. Canning's response
betrayed little anxiety. He asked whether the invitation
included Wellesley and was quickly assured that it did.
Canning thereupon declared that Wellesley and he were
"inviolably bound" to a policy of vigor in Spain and
to a consideration of the Catholic question in the

170 Moira to McMahon, 21 July 1812, printed in Aspinall,
George IV, I, 128-29; McMahon to the Prince Regent, 25
November 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 185.

171 Huskisson to Arbuthnot, 2 July 1812, BM, Huskisson
MSS 38738, ff. 259-60; Arbuthnot to Huskisson, 14 July
1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 263-64.
approaching session of parliament. Liverpool offered a "schedule" whereby first Canning and Castlereagh were to be reconciled. Overtures to Wellesley would follow. Wellesley would discuss with Sidmouth their differences on the Catholic issue and attempt to frame a measure "acceptable to the moderate men of all parties."

Liverpool promised to reserve a cabinet seat for Wellesley Pole. 172

The first stage of Liverpool's plan produced the first stumbling block. Castlereagh agreed that Canning should be restored to the Foreign office, but in turn he demanded that he continue to enjoy the lead in the management of the house of Commons as successor to and representative of the late Perceval. Canning preferred to let talent find its own level, but Castlereagh would not be moved, and their meeting ended without agreement. The Prince intervened to restore consultations, and Liverpool sweetened the invitation extended to Canning by offering a cabinet slot to Leveson Gower as well. Canning then suggested that the lead in the Commons be given to one of Sidmouth's supporters, but Castlereagh refused to agree to that proposition either. Canning

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172 Dardis to Temple, 2 September 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 398.
Canning next sought some dignity to balance Castlereagh's position, but nothing proved suitable. Canning even suggested that he take the Home department instead of the Foreign office if Castlereagh would surrender his leadership role in the Commons. Castlereagh refused this too. Negotiations ceased.

Recriminations, albeit delivered in quiet voices, soon followed. Canning concluded that Liverpool was not sincere because he asked Liverpool what would happen if he agreed to all of Liverpool's terms. Liverpool reportedly answered that he would then seek the approval of the cabinet. Canning believed that the cabinet would block any scheme in which four of their number were going to lose their posts. The real reason for negotiations, concluded Canning, was to keep Wellesley silent on the events of May and June until parliament was safely prorogued. Wellesley intensified Canning's unhappiness. At no stage did he participate in the Canning conversations with the ministry, but when he was apprised of the failure of negotiations his disappointment knew no limits. He

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173 Canning to Liverpool, 19 July 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 275-76.

174 Buckingham, Regency, I, 400-401.

175 Richmond to Bathurst, 1 August 1812, NLI, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1590.
was convinced that the cabinet wanted his services. Indeed,
Dublin was full of rumors that Wellesley was coming, and
table talk had it that Richmond had taken fright and was
predicting disaster for Ireland. Wellesley tended to place
the blame on Canning rather than on the ministry, and in
August it appeared that they might part company. Wellesley
could with some justification believe that his own preten-
sions had been sacrificed to Canning's unreasonable demands.
Canning thereupon encouraged reports that Wellesley was
lobbying against him and Wellesley Pole, and this was
certain to injure prospects for all of them.

Almost as soon as negotiations were suspended Canning
felt a twinge of remorse for having declined Liverpool's
offers. He acknowledged that it was "perhaps the handsomest
offer that ever was made to an individual." He was not
unaware of the deleterious impact on others; it was "not

176 Dardis to Temple, 4 September 1812, Buckingham,
Regency, I, 403.

177 Parker, Peel, I, 33; Auckland to Grenville, 25
August 1812, Fortescue MSS, X, 293.

178 Canning to Wellesley, 25 August 1812, BM, Wellesley
MSS 37297, f. 174.

179 Peel to Croker, 30 October 1812, printed in Croker,
Correspondence, I, 41.

180 Brock, Liverpool, p. 125.
pleasant to reflect that a point of honour (if it be one) of mine is the occasion of such a martyrdom" of his friends' expectations for office. For the impoverished Wellesley it was indeed tantamount to martyrdom.

The failure of negotiations confirmed that Wellesley's estrangement from the Liverpool ran as deep as the bitter tones of the May-June negotiations suggested they would. It was necessary that Wellesley address himself to other political arrangements. Apparently on Canning's advice, Wellesley send his friend Benjamin Sydenham to Spain to seek the advice of Arthur and Henry. Wellington confided in Sydenham that he expected Canning to make a deal with Liverpool, and that this arrangement would exclude Wellesley. Richard should beware. He observed that the Marquess could not form a powerful party of his own, with or without Canning's cooperation. He hoped that Wellesley would resist any temptation to join the Whigs, but he feared that reconciliation with the ministry was remote. He advised Wellesley Pole to make amends and to return to office.

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182 Benjamin Sydenham to Henry Wellesley, 12 September 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VIII, 422.
183 Benjamin Sydenham to Thomas Sydenham, 13 September 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 423.
Wellesley Pole had acted "precipitately and unadvisedly" in resigning office to join the Marquess; it would be difficult to repair the damage but there was no alternative. As for himself, he had resolved not to mix with politics. As the commander of a successful army in the field he would serve under anyone, "even Grenville and Grey." Wellington had spoken. He had issued his own declaration of independence, and for the first time he had taken the lead in the superintendence of the family's political fortunes. His advice was to save what could be saved, and, in effect, to abandon the Marquess. Henry's observations were not recorded. Perhaps he remained diplomatically silent.

So the Marquess was left to fend for himself. The obvious strategy to be investigated was bound up with the Whigs. Was a union possible, and if so, would it prove profitable? Wellesley could take some comfort in knowing that he was on better terms with Grey and Grenville, especially the latter, than was Canning. If he had any room to maneuver at all, it was here. Wellesley had

184 B. Sydenham to Henry Wellesley, 12 September 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 422.

185 Benjamin Sydenham to Thomas Sydenham, 13 September 1812, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VII, 423.
been generous in the earlier negotiations; the Whigs had declined for want of appetite.\footnote{186} Had Wellesley and Canning been able to form a government based on Catholic relief, flexibility on the Spanish war, and resumption of cash payments by the Bank of England, Grenville would have been reluctant to oppose it. His true position would have been made even more difficult if Grey refused to join such a government or to give it generous support. But Grenville would probably have played the retiring role of elder statesman. Indeed, the lack of ambition betrayed by Grey and Grenville had alienated many of their followers in June. And under the leadership of the Marquis of Buckingham as patriarch the party's prospects were slimmer than ever. Wellesley was not interested in strapping himself to the mast of what appeared to be a floundering ship, at least until he had determined whether Canning's vessel might be made to float. Until then, Grenville could be confident that if the Whigs came to power, almost in spite of themselves, they would find Wellesley cooperative, even submissive.\footnote{187} But they would not find him to be an unconditional ally until Canning's prospects had disappeared.


\footnote{187}{Buckingham, Regency, I, 405-406.}
An examination of the available options confirmed that there remained no alternative to an alliance with Canning. The prospect was as depressing as it was inevitable. Many of Canning's friends insisted that their leader would forfeit all public esteem by subordinating himself to Castlereagh. Even after the failure of the July negotiations, however, Canning himself hoped for office and for that reason dared not alienate the government. In August he wrote to Huskisson opposing Wellesley Pole's active efforts to construct an anti-ministerial faction among the old independents. This, he asserted, would play into the cabinet's hands, which would contend that Canning and Wellesley had opposed the Prince and Liverpool all along. The alternative was steadfast support for the government on issues which did no violence to their own principles. Canning was disappointed that in the wake of the victory at Salamanca the government did not see fit to invite them in and regretted that the cabinet was prepared to use Wellington as their agent against Wellesley. Nevertheless, there would be no prospect of office if the Canningites and Wellesleyites decided

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188 Huskisson to Arbuthnot, 17 July 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 271-72.
to go into opposition. 189

But Wellesley's position deteriorated steadily. He desperately needed money; one more year at Apsley house, Buckingham's informer predicted with disarming candor, would be all that Wellesley could afford before "passports and Sicily." He longed for Dublin castle: "the dominion of the whole country; the magnificence he could exercise, and above all, the indolence in which he might indulge, would . . . be infinitely more gratifying to him than a scantily paid premiership, and a conflicting cabinet." 190 The words quoted were not Wellesley's, but the sentiments undoubtedly were. But he had been sacrificed to Canning's resentments, or, to put it less politely, to Canning's "selfish knavery." 191 It was uncomfortable to see the government filling all the posts which had been "disposable" during the summer. To Wellesley Pole this meant that the ministry was prepared to fight the next election without asking Wellesley and Canning for their support. 192 This was correct.

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189 Canning to Huskisson, 19 August 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 38738, ff. 322-23.
190 Dardis to Temple, 6 September 1812, printed in Buckingham, Regency, I, 405-406.
191 Ibid.
192 William Wellesley Pole to Huskisson, 28 September 1812, BM, Huskisson MSS 39739, f. 45.
Parliament was prorogued in July. The Regent conceded that an election was appropriate, and it was set for October. The ministry's decision to exclude Wellesley and Canning and their friends from the list of supporters meant that Wellesley and Canning were almost forced to depend on each other, whatever their differences of opinion. Fortunately, relations were on the mend by summer's end. There was even a happy note. Wellesley's daughter Mary Hyacinthe announced her intention to marry Edward Littleton, a well-to-do country gentleman who had joined the Canningite cause in August. Littleton provided Wellesley a durable link with the Canningites. When Canning resumed his upward movement in British politics, Littleton's importance to Wellesley increased, and in part Wellesley was to owe his appointment as Irish viceroy in 1821 to the connections provided by Littleton.

The election of October 1812 was in many respects a classic example of the instance in which a ministry which enjoyed the confidence of the crown tried to gain the confidence of the nation. Liverpool was forced to

confront a dozen distinct groups and to gain or retain the allegiance of as many of them as possible. One of these parties, or rather two of them, were governed by Wellesley and Canning. Who remained faithful to the ill-starred Marquess after the failure of negotiations three times in the space of seven months? What factors governed their loyalty? The evidence is fragmentary. Wellesley could count on Culling Smith, Richard Wellesley and Sir Henry Conyngham. Alfred Montgomery was returned for Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) in the Wellesley interest with the assistance of Sir Leonard Thomas Worsley Holmes.\(^1\) Wellesley was pleased with Holmes' cooperation; indeed it was a "most capital stroke" and one guaranteed to "terrify the enemy."\(^2\)

To these three could be added several from India. Anstruther had already broken away, but there were a couple faithful clients such as the Sydenhams and several M.P.s who had accumulated their fortunes in India while Wellesley ruled and who had come to admire the viceroy's policies. On the face of it Wellesley's India interest should have

\(^1\)John Nash to McMahon, 2 October 1812, printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 158.

been considerably larger. That it was not can be attributed in part to Wellesley's earlier vow not to employ in India favourites or relations of powerful political figures.

"The integrity of my own character," he had written loftily to a supplicant, shielded him from such temptations. Were that not sufficient, he had "vanity enough to be resolved to sacrifice every consideration (but the public interest) to the preservation of a just and well-founded fame." Deference to the dictates of such "well founded fame" now meant that Wellesley could not draw on the support of many M.P.s who otherwise might have been expected to support him.

Four or five M.P.s of Irish background comprised the remainder of Wellesley's interest about 1812. Several reasons can be adduced why Wellesley's interest here was small and unreliable. After the act of Union most Irish members supinely sustained the government of the day. Much in the manner of their Scots brethren, they remained loyal at the proper price. Between 1818 and 1820 Robert Peel and Charles Grant prepared a memorandum showing that seventy-two Irish members who supported the

196 Richard Colley Wellesley, Earl of Mornington, to Sir Chichester Fortescue, 2 May 1797, printed in "Some Letters of the Mornington Family, 1780-1806, Mostly to Sir Chichester Fortescue," County Kildare Archaeological Society, XII, 45-46.
government of the day, along with their closest relations, held one hundred seventy-five offices, pensions, sinecures, and other appointments in Ireland. Such well-compensated loyalty often kept a ministry on its feet.

Irish magnates of Grattan's parliaments were not successful for the most part in transferring their influence to Westminster. Borough interests had been abolished, and with them went the traditional key to Irish special groups' durability. The great families who had influenced more than ten and on occasion more than twenty M.P.s in Dublin prior to 1800 could muster only three or four at Westminster. This being the case, it is not difficult to see that Wellesley's Irish interest, which measured only three or four in Dublin, should not be substantial at Westminster. In fact, however, Wellesley's Irish contingent proved to be more numerous than most. In 1818, for example, only twenty-eight Irish M.P.s opposed the government. Among them were the small groups identified with Henry


198 Evan Nepean to Philip Yorke, Third Earl Hardwicke, June 1804, BM, Hardwicke MSS 35715, f. 107.

Grattan's son, John Newport, Henry Parnell, and Christopher Hely-Hutchison. These gentlemen were dedicated to principle and were comparatively faithful in attending to parliamentary duties. For several reasons Wellesley's Irish lobby was distinctly less reliable. Wellesley could no longer afford to support them, so that pecuniary temptations from other quarters found them easy prey. They attended haphazardly, as did the bulk of the Irish M.P.s. Most importantly, they were liable to identify themselves with Wellesley Pole rather than with the Marquess if a difference of opinion developed between them.

Of course Irish M.P.s were not completely dead to principle. They championed the Prince Regent (remembering his conduct in 1789?) in January 1811 on the household bill. Many of them supported Catholic relief, but usually only if Catholics could exert pressure in their constituency. Such pressure was sporadic. In the election of 1812, as it happened, the Catholic board made an effort to advise Catholic tenants how to vote. According to Professor Jupp, in only two counties in their evidence that the board's instructions were obeyed. Richmond reported to London that one of these was Queens, where Wellesley

200 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
Pole was informed that unless he pledged himself to support Catholic emancipation the board would turn the election into a riot. What role this played in preventing Wellesley Pole from deserting his brother and Canning prior to the election is not clear. Wellesley Pole made his peace with Liverpool after the poll. Wellesley's interest lost some of its Irish supporters.

Canning's disciples were more reliable. Canning claimed about twelve followers, as did Wellesley. In one respect his interest was more vulnerable because some of the seats were in the gift of the Treasury. But the Canningite band included talent and demonstrated, even after the failure of negotiations in June and July, an ability to recruit young M.P.s. Edward Littleton, as has been seen, was one of these. He "could not proclaim himself a Tory of the Liverpool school" and yet refused to be a Whig. There were others, so a ray of hope remained in this desperate time. A disciplined interest, no matter how small, could still be potent in a closely balanced house of Commons.

In a marriage built on the rocks of desperation,

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201 Ibid., pp. 66-67.

Canning and Wellesley approached the election by forging "the strictest political union... attended with all the formality of stipulations, and witnessed by the leading friends of both." Under the terms of this agreement neither was to accept office unless a fair offer was made to the other. Each would "use his utmost efforts to exercise his parliamentary influence for the purpose of raising the standard of a distinct political party" before the next general election. Neither would enter into any union with the opposition until the strength of the various parties had been determined in the next meeting of parliament. With some good spade work on the hustings and some hope that the ministry might stumble, Canning and Wellesley looked forward to picking up a large number of independents and others alienated by either the perfidy of the government or the ineptitude of the Whig leadership. In the event, Canning's friends lost in six of fifteen constituencies, but Canning won three seats himself, so that the strength of his interest was not materially affected. Wellesley's group remained at ten.

Canning seemed highly pleased with the outcome;

certainly his own popularity had been vindicated.\textsuperscript{204} Wellesley was more guarded in his outlook.\textsuperscript{205} Canning lost no time in communicating to the Whigs his belief that Wellesley and he now constituted a viable parliamentary interest of twenty-two seats, and that the entire reason for the election - to destroy them - had been nullified.\textsuperscript{206} By early November Wellesley was claiming that seventeen members were pledged to him, with Canning enjoying the unqualified support of another dozen or more.\textsuperscript{207} The inflated numbers claimed by Wellesley perhaps included Wellington in the house of Lords and a couple of his followers. If so, they might well have been excluded because they proved of no use to Wellesley. By the time parliament met Wellesley's interest was certainly no larger than ten.

As soon as the poll was completed the Canning-Wellesley electoral alliance began to betray signs of internal weakness. During his spirited campaign in Liverpool

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205} Canning to Wellesley, 17 October 1812, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 179.
\textsuperscript{206} Brougham to Grey, 24 October 1812, printed in Henry Brougham, Life and Times (3 vols.; Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1871), II, 71.
\textsuperscript{207} Buckingham, Regency, I, 409.
Canning identified himself completely with Pitt and his policies. This diminished chances of working with the Whigs later on. Wellesley wrote to Canning complaining of this strategy of "exclusionism." He also conveyed the same sentiments to leading Whigs. He declared that he would never join a government in which Whigs were not invited to share. 208

The other side of the coin was Wellesley's relationship to the Whigs during the closing months of 1812. Correspondence which passed between Buckingham and Grenville in November and December hinted at a union with Wellesley in the near future. The Grenvilles' clients and agents contributed periodic reports that Wellesley was prepared to sacrifice his connection with Canning and to revamp his principles to meet Whig requirements. As early as 22 October, when the poll was still in progress, Sir Robert Adair wrote to Earl Grey that it had been stated to him by Wellesley "in a circuitous but yet in a sufficiently authorised manner" that "his sentiments with regard to the present ministers were more than ever in unison with yours" and that a union with Grey and Grenville was as practicable now as he had conceived it.

208 Ibid., p. 410.
to be the previous June." Wellesley was impressed, according to this report, by the need for systematic and concerted opposition to Liverpool and his friends. He feared that Canning would never bring himself to accept this course of action.

Grey greeted this news with an enthusiasm not seen earlier. He urged Adair to assure Wellesley that Grenville and he shared the sentiments of the Marquess. There were, nonetheless, two problems: Canning; and Spain. As for Canning, Buckingham observed that there was "no doubt but that he [was] playing with Lord Wellesley exactly the same game as with everyone else." He probably would never become a true ally, but his talents were such that in the house of Commons the Whigs could "do nothing as an efficient body without him." Could the Whigs induce Canning to "see that his objects of ambition may be forwarded as easily and perhaps as rapidly" by cooperating sincerely with Grey and Grenville as "by embarking with those who are so utterly incompetent to the sal-

209 Sir Robert Adair to Grey, 22 October 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 314.
210 Buckingham to Grenville, November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 318.
vation of the country? It was most unlikely.

On the Spanish issue the Whigs doubted Wellesley's sincerity as well as Canning's willingness to cooperate with them. Wellesley's brother was about to vindicate completely the Spanish policy, but the Whigs as usual relied on such intelligence which predicted an early French triumph. Wellesley may indeed have wavered in his support during the autumn, in large measure because of what he considered to be Wellington's ingratitude. But when pressed by the Whigs on the "one great fundamental point" on which "a combined opposition must rest" Wellesley disappointed his potential allies. Dardis reported that Wellesley was so angry at Wellington, and so hampered by brother William's claims, that he was prepared to pursue an entirely new course.

Wellesley may have moved to the brink of a break with his ancient policies, but he faltered at the threshold. In part he realised that Wellington's prospects in Spain must brighten as Napoleon marched deeper into Russia. In greater

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211 Ibid., 27 November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 317.

212 Ibid., November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 318.

213 Temple to Buckingham, November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 319.
part, however, Wellesley found it impossible to break with Canning. By early December Canning was prepared to censure Wellesley for negotiating furtively with the Whigs. He resented published reports which suggested that Canning was simply Wellesley's principal disciple. Indirectly he accused Wellesley of leaking information about differences of opinion between them.\textsuperscript{214} It did appear that the connection between Wellesley and Canning was "much less close than is commonly supposed."\textsuperscript{215}

There was a struggle within Wellesley's own circle of disciples as well. The rift with Wellesley Pole widened. Wellesley was quoted saying that Wellesley Pole was "totally unfit" for politics but that he did not know how to be rid of him.\textsuperscript{216} Wellesley may not have expressed himself so strongly, but it was no secret that Wellesley Pole was convinced that Wellesleyites must coalesce with the incumbent government. Wellington was alleged to have written "the strongest and a very angry letter" urging Wellesley to

\textsuperscript{214}Canning to Wellesley, 19 November 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 185.

\textsuperscript{215}Grenville to Buckingham, 24 November 1812, printed in Buckingham, \textit{Regency}, I, 415-16.

\textsuperscript{216}Temple to Buckingham, November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 320.
join the government. Wellesley in turn wrote "as strong and as angry a reply" preemptorily refusing to have anything to do with the Liverpool ministry. As a result of this exchange Wellesley found himself extranged from Wellington, whom he concluded "had determined to take the most decidedly hostile part against him and in the most offensive manner."\footnote{Ibid., p. 319.}

Henry, on the other hand, along with the Sydenhams, Merrick Shawe, Culling Smith, and others were identified as proponents of a union with the Grenville party.\footnote{Buckingham, Regency, I, 411.} Of all of them, perhaps Shawe was the most influential. His mature and remarkably dispassionate analysis of the events of these years, written in 1814, shows that he opposed the connection with Canning. In his opinion the relationship injured both parties, and he hoped that Wellesley would make amends with Grenville.

Shawe may have promoted another effort to find a common ground between the Grenvillites and Wellesleyites during the autumn of 1812. At the end of October someone in the Wellesley interest told Grey that Wellesley was ready to negotiate. Canning knew of it and even supported
the iniative. 219 The reaction of the Whigs underscored the cleavage which existed between the old leadership of a few peers and the parliamentary interest led by Ponsonby. Ponsonby and his colleagues were sorely distressed by the failure of negotiations in May and June. In part they blamed Grey and Grenville. But at Stowe the Grenville clan once more debated the prospect of increasing the size of their party as if it was something to be avoided at all costs. Grenville first looked at Canning, in whom he had "no confidence." Would Canning see fit to oppose the Prince Regent "consistently and faithfully" as befitted opposition?220 He doubted it. But to balance Canning's unreliability was his skill in debate, a skill which the Whigs "in some degree" could "not well do without."221 Perhaps he could be made to mend his ways.222

One alternative was to work with Wellesley alone. Grenville no longer held him in the esteem he once did,

219 Grey to Grenville, 1 November 1812, printed in *Fortescue MSS*, X, 299.

220 Ibid., 17 November 1812, printed in *Fortescue MSS*, X, 313.

221 Grey to Adair, enclosure to Grenville, 17 November 1812, printed in *Fortescue MSS*, X, 316-17.

222 Buckingham to Grenville, 27 November 1812, printed in *Fortescue MSS*, X, 317-18.
but he could work with Wellesley, as he could work with "fifty others." If forced to choose between Canning's unreliability and Wellesley's impotence, Grenville preferred Wellesley. Such a union, unhappily, would not yield much.  

In November, after witnessing Liverpool's success at the polls, Grey and Grenville agreed that negotiations with Wellesley based on "mutual accommodation and advances" would be appropriate. What would be the basis for this union? On the face of it, there was little that was different from May 1812, when obstacles seemed insurmountable. All parties agreed on the Catholic issue. But the government remained committed to helping Wellington in Spain and Wellesley was enraptured at his brother's string of victories. Inevitably discussions turned to some formula regarding Spain which would meet the pretentions of both sides. Wellesley was willing to press the issue of bungling in Spain, if evidence supporting this charge

223 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 5 November 1812, BM Add. MSS 41853, f. 291.

224 Grey to Grenville, 1 November 1812; Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 8 November 1812; Grey to Grenville, 17 November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 299, 308, 313.

225 Buckingham, Regency, I, 411; Grey to Adair, enclosure to Grenville, 17 November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 316-17.
could be uncovered. The Whigs were once more prepared to believe that the Iberian campaign was about to collapse, and that relations between Wellesley and Wellington had deteriorated so sharply that Wellesley could be counted on to attack his brother in parliament. But the Whigs launched their campaign of heated criticism of the war precisely at the wrong moment: Napoleon was retreating from Moscow.

Before the end of the month Canning intervened to put an end to prospects for early serious discussions. He feared that Wellesley's negotiations with the Whigs were leading him to take a position of "unqualified hostility" to the ministry, and this he considered dangerous. Their interest was too small to carry the weight which such a position implied, and in Wellesley's case unless he could refer to some powerful authority such as the Marquess of Wellington, there was nothing to be gained. To fall into the opposition by this device would be to lose "the vantage ground which we occupy in public opinion." Canning hoped Wellesley would agree with him that while they wanted to

226 Temple to Buckingham, enclosure, in Buckingham to Grenville, November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 318-19.

227 Temple to Buckingham, November 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 319.
"force the ministry to a capitulation" they did not want
"to put the whole garrison to the sword." A few of them
should be "left alive to man the lower part of the works
if the fort should ever be put into our hands." The
best contribution that Wellesley could make would be to
take the position of "a retired statesman taking a distant,
commanding, and unimpaired view of the state of the
country" rather than acting "as a determined opponent"
of the ministry. A week later, in what was a report
probably inspired by Wellesley or Canning, McMahon was
able to assure the Prince Regent that "notwithstanding
the many rumors to the contrary, I have good authority
for believing that neither Lord Wellesley, nor Canning,
have the most distant intention of joining the opposi-
tion." Despite all the thunder, McMahon's assessment
was to prove fundamentally correct.

VI: Wellesley and Canning in Opposition, 1813-1814

Notwithstanding the successes scored in the election

228 Canning to Wellesley, 19 November 1812, BM, Wellesley
MSS 37297, f. 185.

229 Canning to Wellesley, 12 November 1812, printed in
Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 126-27; Canning to
Wellesley, 19 November 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297,
f. 185.

230 McMahon to the Prince Regent, 25 November 1812,
printed in Aspinall, George IV, I, 185.
of October 1812, the government was thought to be in serious
difficulty when parliament convened at the end of November.
The ministry had secured the services of neither Canning
nor Wellesley, and of course it received no help from the
Whigs. The Whigs were numerous and the Catholic issue
could be used to bludgeon the ministry. Wellesley was
reported to be practicing his speeches before the mirror
in anticipation of a lashing attack against the govern-
ment's Iberian policies, and was "fully prepared on Ireland
and America as well." His enthusiasm, indeed, prompted
some worry in whig circles that Wellesley might not prove
manageable either by the government or by the opposition.
Nonetheless, the Whigs steeled themselves to reap the
whirlwind if they could.231

During the 1813 session Wellesley roamed wider in
search of issues than he had done before. In addition
to the Iberian question, which remained his primary area
of concern, he addressed himself to deficiencies in the
policy towards America, to the contested application for
renewal of the charter of the East India company, to the
validity of retaining and strengthening sedition laws,
to the Catholic issue, and to events on the continent.

231 Grenville to Buckingham, 28 November 1812, Buckingham,
Regency, I, 416.
Later he would oppose the corn laws and establish himself as an early advocate of free trade. He never spoke extemporaneously, and his subjects were never frivolous. In well prepared speeches he demonstrated an impressive depth of understanding and perhaps a consistently better command of the principles of oratory than at any time in the past. In all instances, even when he proceeded to take positions contrary to earlier pronouncements, he correctly measured the speed and direction of the principal political, sociological and economic developments of his age.

Spain remained primary. At the end of 1812 he was quite uncertain what position he should take. He could not abandon a policy which was truly so much the product of his own persistence and vision. But Wellington's ingratitude, as he saw it, was becoming more visible almost daily. Wellington was still producing spectacular victories and even more impressive retreats. Even Wellesley felt compelled on the occasion of a vote of thanks for Wellesley's victory at Salamanca to take note of his "brilliant retreats." 232. But he maintained complete confidence in his brother's ability to turn the tide, and as news of

232 Hansard XXIV (November 1812), 145.
Napoleon's Russian disaster poured in, it was not difficult to revive popular interest in the Spanish cause. The prospect of a dramatic breakthrough here roused Wellesley to exert himself again and again to demand from the government greater support for Iberian military operations. It was poor political tactics; the Whigs despaired of ever being able to cooperate with the Marquess. But Wellesley gave precedence to principle when he was convinced of the legitimacy of the cause, and his own vanity made the task easier.

Until March 1813 Wellesley's efforts on Wellington's behalf involved some pain and considerable humiliation to himself. As Foreign secretary Wellesley was thought always to reflect Wellington's views when speaking of Spain. After the summer of 1812 Wellington enjoined his officers and himself from any communication on the issue except through the government. When Wellesley rose to complain that Wellington was being deprived of essential support, therefore, no one listened, because Wellington himself seemed quite satisfied. According to Grey to Grenville, 5 March 1813, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 335.

Canning to Wellesley, 5 February 1813, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 193.
to see his brother's private despatches on Spain. Wellesley lamented that the government found it necessary to refuse even to surrender copies of general reports which were normally available to all members of parliament. At one point Wellesley was angry enough to invite Grey for discussions as to the feasibility of a committee of inquiry on the campaigns of the previous year. After the battle of Vittoria and the flight of French forces to the northern side of the Pyrenees, however, Wellesley could no longer complain of a lack of support for Wellington. Spain and Wellington became a cause dear to the entire nation, and the ministry could neglect the campaign in the peninsula only at its peril.  

On 12 March 1813 Wellesley treated the house of Lords to a long valedictory on the Spanish strategy. This confirmed in Grey's mind that Wellesley was incurably attached to the cause, and at length even the Whigs decided to give up the struggle. Wellesley could claim that through his support Wellington received more supplies than ever. By May 1813 Wellington was ready to lead British and Spanish troops over the mountains and into France itself. It reinforced the ministry in its thinking that Wellesley

235Grey to Grenville, 5 March 1813, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 334-35.
need not be given a place in the government or accommodated in a post overseas. 236

Wellesley also set about to establish himself as critic of the government's policy towards America. His own policies while in office failed to impress on the cabinet, the parliament, and the country the danger that Americans in their unhappiness at the orders in council might be prepared to go to war. Now he attempted to show that simply revoking the maritime restrictions would not end the conflict. He even maintained that by conceding America's demands regarding freedom of the seas Britain's trade would be destroyed. America entertained a "deadly hatred" of Britain and a "deadly affection" for France. 237 If by this tack Wellesley hoped to satisfy the Whigs in their efforts to attack the ministry's war policy, something which he could not do with conviction in terms of Spain, he was to be disappointed. Grey gently discouraged Wellesley here, saying that there was little public interest in the American question. Wellesley dropped the subject. 238


237 Hansard XXIV (November 1812), 32-37.

238 Grey to Wellesley, May 1813, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 205.
Wellesley turned to the issue of renewing the East India company charter. This debate surfaced like a painful tropical malady every twenty years. By 1813 Wellesley had been away from India for more than seven years. Many of his policies, under such vicious attack in 1806, had been vindicated. His enemies agreed that on balance Wellesley had done well in India. Wellesley's tenure there had also changed the nature of the debate over the future of the company. The company had been forced to acknowledge that the British government was in fact the supreme power. Wellesley had done his part to weaken the company's prerogatives, but they were far from extinct. In 1813 there was strong sentiment to destroy the company's trade monopoly so that merchants denied access to the continent by virtue of Napoleon's blockades might participate in Indian commerce. This pressure complemented Wellesley's own efforts as viceroy to open the Indian trade to the world. Now, however, Wellesley rose to defend the company. Without denying the merits of free trade, he delivered an eloquent defence of the company's achievements and urged that termination of the monopoly, if this was called for, not be made an occasion to weaken the company to such a degree that it could no longer pursue its larger mission of government and civilisation in India. "There never was an organ of
government in the history of the world so administered as to demand more of estimation than that of the East India company." There were defects, but peace had been brought to India, a judicial system had been introduced, the French had been removed and the process of civilisation had been accelerated, all under the auspices of the company. 239

To sustain these achievements Wellesley urged that the company be given a semi-public character and spared the harsher hand of retrenchment which the ministry proposed be brought against it.

Wellesley's opinions were calculated to please only a minority of his listeners. The ministry opposed intruding upon private property and increasing the company's expenses. The Whigs wanted the company to be abolished altogether. The company looked to increasing its powers but wanted to retain its commercial monopolies at the same time. 240 Wellesley's speech reflected vision in addressing itself to long-term problems and potential areas of expansion within the company's operations. But parliament and the public cared relatively little for India even in

239 Hansard XXV (9 April 1813), 675-99.

times of scandal, and in 1813 Wellesley's observations went unheeded. Westminster was determined to demonstrate that the vast eastern empire could be run on a shoestring. After his own tenure as viceroy it certainly moved towards strict economy, and gradually the army deteriorated to such an extent that by 1840 it could not adequately meet even India's peacetime requirements.\footnote{Raymond Callahan, \textit{The East India Company and Army Reform, 1783-1798} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), passim.} The civil administration ceased to command the respect of India's vast indigenous population. Educational policies, which Wellesley had based on the principle of revitalising and refining India's native languages and culture, was supplanted by a system of utilitarian and vocational training in English.\footnote{See John Clive, \textit{Macaulay: the Shaping of the Historian} (New York: Random House, 1973), Chapters XII ("Indian Education: The Minute") and XII ("Indian Education: The Consequences").} The ancient system, allowed to decay despite Wellesley's call for reform and circumspection in 1813, would collapse fifteen years after Wellesley's death in 1842.

Many observers saw in Wellesley's speech of April 1813 the first of a series of missives on Indian affairs. Perhaps, they observed, Wellesley would dedicate his principal efforts to serving Britain as a surrogate elder
statesman for the subcontinent. He did not; indeed, he never spoke again at length in parliament on Indian affairs. His interest turned to educational and cultural matters. He served as a patron of the Royal Asiatic society after 1823 and later became engaged in a serious study of Sanskrit. He refused at least two invitations to return to India as viceroy. What might have been Wellesley's career in later life if he had taken up India as his primary public concern?

In his position as an independent opposed to some of the ministry's most important policies, allied to Canning but relatively uncooperative with the Whigs, Wellesley had the worst of all worlds. His speeches were effective; the government was clearly annoyed at this imperious gadfly. He made an important impression in the house of Lords. But he moved no closer to power and indeed as the months passed he found himself farther away from office than ever. He seemed resigned to opposition. Slowly arrangements were made for the sale of almost all his remaining properties in Ireland and even his house in London. His followers melted into Canning's camp or clustered around Wellesley Pole, who held out hope to them that he at least would be invited to take office at an early date.

The diminished Wellesley interest could not continue to

243 Auckland to Grenville, 5 December 1812, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 320.
work in harness with Canning alone and expect to stem the tide. Occasionally other opportunities seemed to present themselves, only to vanish overnight. In 1813 the Prince suggested that Wellesley be sent to Portugal as minister. The cabinet demurred and Thomas Sydenham was despatched instead. 244 There were rumors that Wellesley was much in demand for other posts: the Tsar wanted him as ambassador to Russia in 1813; the Austrian chancellor hoped to see him accredited to Vienna. 245 But nothing materialised, and the Wellesley interest became more dispirited day by day.

The initiative for a radical transformation in the Wellesley-Canning "middle road" strategy came from within Wellesley's own interest. In July 1813 Wellesley Pole advised Canning to terminate his connection with the Marquess, and then to set out on his own to get back into office. Canning agreed with Wellesley Pole and went a step further: he set his own party free. This was most unexpected and the Canningites were not entirely pleased. Although small, Canningites constituted probably the largest personal interest in the house of Commons in 1813. These dozen

244 Brougham to Grey, 24 October 1812, printed in Brougham, Life, II, 70.

zealots were also the most tightly disciplined of the floating parties and thus not without influence. Thus Canning's followers were more miffed than relieved by Canning's act of emancipation. They shared Grenville's view that because these small parties were supposed to be based on certain shared principles the leader should not enjoy a unilateral right to dissolve such a group. But Canning persevered. He had underestimated the strength and durability of Liverpool's ministry and was depressed by memories of his own refusal to take office a year earlier. Wellesley Pole's route of humble contrition was in his mind the only answer. If he could not repair his own fortunes by such a strategy, at least he might be able to help his friends.

In some respects the disbanding of the Canningites was less than what met the eye. Canning meant Liverpool to read it as evidence that he no longer constituted part of the opposition to the ministry. According to Wellesley Pole Liverpool received these tidings with the "greatest


satisfaction." Grasually, indeed, the Canningites received their rewards. They surfaced inside the government, where they became Canning's men once more. Huskisson was granted the first commissionership of Woods and Forests. Peerages went to Boringdon and Leveson Gower. Offices were distributed to other leading Canningites. Canning himself was promised the first vacant cabinet office, and while waiting for this accepted "a splendid and pointless embassy to Lisbon." Canning praised Liverpool for his compassion and generosity and concentrated his criticism on the Whigs. All connections with the opposition were broken. To Canning hatred of the Whigs became "tenfold greater than that of any part of the opposition to the government or than any part of the government to us." 

The Marquess decided not to follow Canning's example, and he coupled his decision with strong criticism of Canning's strategy. Well might Wellesley complain that Canning had been bought, along with Wellesley Pole,
who became master of the Mint in September 1814. They had, Wellesley maintained, reduced their demands "absurdly." This Wellesley would not do. The Whigs circulated the story that Wellesley planned a broad-based assault on Canning's damaged reputation. He did nothing. Wellesley and Grenville simply proved slower to see the wisdom of Canning's strategy and waited five more years until they did the same.

VII: Opposition and Isolation 1815-1816

From 1814 to 1816 Wellesley continued to play an active and truculent role in parliament. Canning no longer stood at Wellesley's elbow to caution him against unnecessarily incensing the ministry. The Whigs proved to everyone's satisfaction their inability to match wits with the Liverpool ministry on the principal issues of the day. Wellesley was therefore very much his own master, but there was very little to be master over. His closest connections gradually slipped into government service under the Canningite label. As a result, Wellesley's parliamentary performances took on the air of a forensic exercise, with all the consistencies and straining for effect this entailed.


254 Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 10 December 1814, BM, Add. MSS 41853, f. 301.
Despite all this Wellesley offered some remarkably solid observations on what should be the destiny of Britain and Europe. Much of his time was spent attacking the treaty of Vienna and Castlereagh and all his works. But he also came forward as an advocate of free trade in corn and showed considerable talent as an economist.

But the question of the moment was the war, or the end of it. Wellesley gave four major speeches in the space of one month when in April 1815 Napoleon slipped away from Elba and headed towards Paris. Wellesley had already opposed portions of the 1814 treaty. It was too harsh on France and was likely to breed a resentment against the Bourbons which would lead to their expulsion. He had not, however, pursued this theme vigorously in 1814, even though Grey at one point suggested that they concert their opposition on this question.255 Napoleon's escape came just as parliament was preparing for a general discussion on the provisions of the treaty of Vienna.256 Suddenly the ministry needed an address to the Prince Regent calling for renewal of war to defeat Napoleon. On 7 April Wellesley

255 Grey to Wellesley, 18 May 1814, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 240.

256 Hansard XXX (21 March 1815), 305-306.
registered his protest against the treaty by calling it not a system "but an undigested mass of mutilated materials."

In picking up the threads of his theme of the year before Wellesley observed that "the labours of the congress" had been "devoted to establish a system of gross injustice and absolute discordance." France saw itself as a pawn of foreign interests and as a result the Bourbons were immediately unpopular. His conclusion, which flatly contradicted the government's call to war, was a shocking one to most of his audience. He advised that Bonaparte be allowed to remain in France as the nation's constitutional sovereign.257 Parliament disagreed.

The question of whether to resume the war had in fact been largely decided by the government without reference to parliament, as Liverpool was later forced to admit.258 The idea of throwing away almost twenty years of effort against Napoleon in the space of a few weeks was more than most people in Britain could bear. There was, at any rate, an obligation under the allies' agreement of 1814 calling for renewed war if Napoleon returned. The issue found

257 Ibid. (7 April 1815), 366-69; Pearce, Memoirs, III, 307.
258 Hansard XXX (27 April 1815), 883-85.
Grey and Grenville on different sides. Grenville supported resumption of war, and thus began a more conservative line of political conduct which would take him back to the ministry by the early 1820s. Grey held that the peace of 1814 had merely restored a ruinous system and Wellesley agreed with Grey. If Napoleon was no worse than the government installed by the allies, then there was no reason to defend the Bourbons. Wellesley's logic had an unmistakable ring of justice to it, but few were impressed. Wellesley was particularly incensed that Grenville did not see the light and his efforts to encourage a split between Grey and Grenville proved to be ill-timed. Grey was prepared to ally himself with Wellesley on this particular occasion but not in a wider sense, and the two of them launched a vigorous attack on the entire Vienna system.

Wellesley's attack consisted of two long speeches in addition to his extended remarks about "mutilated materials" on 7 April. After moving on 10 April for the production of papers relative to Napoleon's escape from Elba he launched a direct attack on 12 April on the ministry's treatment of

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259 Grey to Wellesley, 31 March 1815, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 4.

260 Wellesley to Grey, 3 April 1815, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 5; Grey to Wellesley 2 April, 1815, and 6 April 1815, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 236-38.
of Napoleon's escape and on their explanations for Napoleon's easy return to Paris. The 12 April speech was divided into two sections. At first Wellesley reviewed with "great vehemence" the decision which led to Napoleon's royal exile in Elba. It had been dangerous to place Napoleon in charge of an island so close to France, and Castlereagh and others were "abject and wretched in intellect" for holding that Napoleon had ceased to command the loyalty of the French people. The Bourbons had failed to give Napoleon the funds guaranteed by the treaty. This increased the exiled emperor's popularity among French soldiers and provided him an excuse to return to France. A much wiser course would have been to have given careful attention to Napoleon's activities, combined with a more generous subsidy.

The damage had been done, and in the second portion of his presentation Wellesley addressed himself to the future. Because the treaty was "the most dangerous and the most disgraceful that his country had every concluded" there was every reason not to renew it. Now that Napoleon had

261 Hansard XXX (10 April 1815), 463; Annual Register, LVII (1815), 13; Yonge, Liverpool, III, 180.
263 Ibid.; 1 Hansard XXX (12 April 1815), 545-58.
returned, Europe would be wise to let him hold the throne, where he could consolidate the benefits of the revolution without perpetuating its vices. Liverpool blinked or winced upon hearing this; Wellesley vowed to continue "notwithstanding the contemptuous sneer" of the Prime Minister.  

In addition to denying that he had brought to the house of Lords the wherewithall to produce that contemptuous sneer, Liverpool in his reply reminded Wellesley that Napoleon would not have surrendered if he had been promised a more onerous captivity, and held rather weakly that a naval blockade of Elba was not possible because no war was in progress. He defended the conduct of the Bourbons in implementing the relevant treaty obligations and wondered why Wellesley had not been more forthright in his opposition to the treaty a year earlier. At the conclusion of the debate it was clear that the peers had enjoyed Wellesley's mordant and somewhat inconsistent presentation, but they rejected his motion fifty-three to twenty-one. Only three days later Wellesley rose again to demand that the government explain in detail its objectives at the

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264 Ibid., p. 549.

265 Ibid., pp. 545-58.
Congress of Vienna. Liverpool cut off debate by declaring that all would be disclosed and discussed when circumstances permitted. On 27 April the Lords resumed consideration of an address to the Prince Regent on this matter. Wellesley questioned the ministry's motives in asking parliament to request resumption of war. He accused Liverpool of being insincere; he had hidden from parliament the fact that the treaty of Vienna, the provisions of which had not been fully disclosed, included stipulations calling on the allies to attack and vanquish Napoleon if he returned to France and for labelling him a common enemy under these circumstances. The ministry, Wellesley concluded, was in fact already committed to war and the address to the Regent was inconsequential.

Wellesley's anger directed itself once more to the nature of the treaty itself. He described it this time as "so obscure as to be almost unintelligible." By its provisions Napoleon was to be "placed without the pale of civil and social relations and rendered liable to public vengeance" should he return. Now France had rallied to him; was France by virtue of this response also outside

266 Hansard XXX (17 April 1815), 646-48.
267 Ibid. (27 April 1815), pp. 876-78.
the "pale of the law." Liverpool took refuge in "executive privilege" on the first point and parried the status of Napoleon by simply reaffirming that Napoleon's removal would be the object of the resumption of war; the Bourbon question could be put aside. Grey rose to declare that as far as he was concerned the government's failure to reveal its treaty obligations or to provide all other relevant information prior to a vote on the Regent's address meant that no vote was binding. The address was approved, but Wellesley had delivered a lively, impassioned and incisive critique of the deficiencies of the Vienna system. An avid opponent of Napoleon for two decades, Wellesley became in the final analysis an advocate a settlement which he considered appropriate to the special requirements of France.

Wellesley also continued to comment on relations with the United States. War began in June 1812 and ended in December 1814. The peace settlement contained no reference at all to the maritime questions which had occasioned it. On 13 April 1815, between two lengthy

268 Ibid., pp. 879-82.
269 Ibid., pp. 886-90.
speeches on the congress of Vienna, Wellesley found time and energy to give what may stand as his most persuasive exposition of foreign policy from the vantage point of the opposition benches. Moderate, even disarmingly mellow in tone, the speech raised several fundamental questions about British objectives during the war and the defects of British negotiators at the conference table. He was astonished that Britain should demand that the United States dismantle its northern boundary defences as a sine qua non for further negotiations. He claimed to be more astonished yet that British negotiators should justify this demand by insisting that otherwise British North America would fall into the hands of the United States. He criticised the burning of Washington and Britain's proposal to use the Indian tribes to provide a buffer zone. He attributed Britain's failure to discuss maritime rights to "the principle of the ministers of this day, that because questions required great application, and zeal, and vigor, and diligence, they were to be shrunk from." Wellesley applied for the relevant papers. This was denied after a feeble and useless reply from Bathurst.

More important than the points raised for purposes of parliamentary sparring was Wellesley's manifest grasp of the potential of the new republic, his familiarity with
geographic and demographic realities, and his sensitivity to the importance of attempting a conciliation of mass opinion in a republic. As it happened, the treaty proved sufficient, but perhaps only because in 1817 it was supplemented by a Great Lakes agreement very much in line with what Wellesley had suggested in this speech.

Materials for yet another parliamentary performance are contained in Wellesley's papers. It is interesting to speculate what Wellesley's amplified presentation might have looked like, for in his memorandum on the peace dated 20 April 1815 he developed in a sketch the thesis that Britain had missed an opportunity to construct a united Italy as a counterweight to France. Wellesley accused the government of having broken faith with Murat, the Napoleonic ruler of Naples who was much the superior of the Neapolitan Bourbons. The Genoese had also been deserted; they had been dependent on Britain and would now be thrown on the mercies of France. He predicted that the movement for Italian unification and independence would grow, and that revolts would follow. 270 His memorandum makes no direct reference to his own policy in Italy while Foreign secretary, but it must be supposed that a major speech on the subject

270 Wellesley, Memorandum on the Peace, 20 April 1815, BM, Wellesley MSS 37294, ff. 49-50.
would have developed his own ideas that Britain should force such regimes as Sicily which were dependent upon Britain to adopt more liberal institutions, \(^{271}\) and that Britain should not be reluctant to provide timely and appropriate assistance to independence movements elsewhere on the Italian peninsula.

There is a temptation to compare Wellesley's frustrations in the Mediterranean with Palmerston's policies at a later date; towards the end of Wellesley's life Palmerston and he met from time to time to discuss the European scene. For the moment, however, Wellesley could talk only to Grey, whose policies for Sicily in 1806 were implemented by Wellesley on a grander scale in 1810. In 1814 Wellesley raged at the "bundle of dirty paper, with which the ministers have polluted the tables of both houses." The papers justified the ministry's decision to restore the Bourbons to Naples; the decision, as Wellesley warned them, was a serious mistake. \(^{272}\)

Wellesley displayed a grasp of the essential elements of the corn law debate, one of the few purely economic questions which seems to have attracted his attention except in India. From 1804 to 1814 the average price of wheat in England was ninety shillings per quarter; this reflected the food shortage occasioned by war and aggravated by a series

\(^{271}\) Wellesley to Grey, 8 May 1815, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 7.

\(^{272}\) Ibid.
of poor harvests. In June 1814 a committee of the house of Lords was appointed to evaluate the impact of restrictions on importation of grain and cereals. It recommended a complete end to imports when the domestic market price fell below eighty shillings. This enraged the urban population. Successive attempts to repeal legislation guaranteeing a minimum market price failed. On the occasion of the effort to do so in March 1815 Wellesley and Grenville drew up a protest which prefigured the practical application of the basic tenets of *laissez-faire* economics.  

Sixty-five years later a review of Wellesley's work argued that this protest "comprised all the arguments that have since become commonplace, and clearly evolves all the arguments on which all free trade measures have subsequently been based."  

As it happened, those who advocated religious toleration often found themselves also favouring unrestricted food prices. But the protest itself makes it perfectly clear that Wellesley's position was dictated by an understanding of and conversion to the emerging free trade ideology.

In 1816 Wellesley continued his parliamentary role as

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champion of provocative causes, although his parliamentary activity was less pronounced. In March he delivered a major speech on the virtues of economy to make a motion by Lord Lansdowne on the subject. His fellow peers smiled at this homily from the author of deficits in India and fiscal chaos in his domestic finances. Wellesley raised the somewhat cumbersome standard when he declared that "parsimony was the panoply of peace." At the time the cabinet was pressing for funds to maintain an establishment of 25,000 troops in Ireland and a sizeable garrison in the empire. In a clever ploy guaranteed to arouse the anger of Castlereagh, Liverpool, and the ministry as a whole, Wellesley offered fulsome and sarcastic compliments on the peace settlement of Vienna. This, "the most glorious peace that had ever been negotiated by any statesman," was sanctified by Liverpool's own "eulogium." Why, he wondered, was an increase of four or five thousand men needed in Canada if the treaty of Ghent was so satisfactory. Even if the settlement in North America was as defective as Wellesley had maintained earlier, this increment would offer no additional security to British North America. Canada instead must rely on American good faith, the natural protection afforded by the Great Lakes and the climate, and the threat to the United States posed by the British navy. In other parts of the world the navy
must form the same function.

Wellesley's strategy, in fact, became the basis for British military policy in the new world and elsewhere. The Indian situation was somewhat different, for a substantial resident military presence was necessary. Nonetheless, maritime supremacy became the deterrent of last resort.

Only in Ireland was the navy singularly inappropriate. Here Wellesley addressed himself to the reasons which dictated so large a military establishment. On the continent Europe now enjoyed the "blessings" of the Holy Alliance; what danger could be anticipated from those European powers "leagued together as they were by holy treaties, and sworn not even to lead their armies to battle, except in the pure spirit of Christian charity?" At home, finally, it was absurd to check the growth of a military spirit abroad by encumbering the nation with a large army. This was indeed a strange way to teach "a great moral lesson to Europe, that military establishments were extremely dangerous."275

Wellesley's speech was contrived to tweak the ministry's nose. The phrases were witty and the logic was sometimes strained. Sidmouth, usually no champion on the field of rebuttal, found a good number of points on which to challenge

275 Hansard XXXIII (15 March 1816), 327-51.
Wellesley. Lansdowne's motion was defeated by a vote of 139 to 69. It is not easy to determine how sincerely Wellesley intended to follow his advice on economy. Nevertheless, it is remarkable how close to the orthodoxy of nineteenth century British liberalism Wellesley came in this effort, closer than any major Whig had come up to this point. Also impressive was his ability to combine this new reverence for economy with a plan for imperial management. Each part of the empire, if governed by firm but enlightened social policies and accompanied by a minimal interference in trade and commerce, would sustain its own instruments of social control. Britain itself should maintain a strong navy available for deployment around the world. The continent, which Wellesley himself had introduced as the proper forum for a successful war against Napoleon, now once more was relegated to the periphery of British strategy. Wellesley's "panoply of peace" speech may not have been one of his most sincere, but in retrospect it proved to be one of his most impressive demonstrations of an ability to forecast future trends. 276

The more powerful his speeches, the more isolated Wellesley became. By 1816 he had reached a point where

276 Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 134.
there was virtually no chance of office. His advised that Napoleon be allowed to remain in Paris after his escape from Elba precipitated an estrangement from Wellington; after the Duke's victory at Waterloo Wellington must have felt even more distressed that his brother would have promoted the claims of a man who was prepared to lead France to further carnage. Canning was too broken in spirit to make an effort to assist Wellesley. Indeed he devoted his attention almost exclusively to his own department and thought of leaving everything behind and going to India as viceroy. Littleton, Wellesley's principal link with the Canningites, was temporarily depressed about his political prospects and looked upon his father-in-law as an old and broken man. 277 Under Buckingham's mismanagement the Grenvilleites ceased to be a party. Their membership eroded. A rift could be discerned in the Grey-Grenville connection, and differences increased when they confronted the question of suspending civil liberties to cope with rising domestic unrest. 278 The cabinet, which had been incensed and sometimes terrified by Wellesley's speeches in 1812, now ceased to be concerned. Verbal exchanges in the house of Lords


between Liverpool and Bathurst on one hand and Wellesley on the other became increasingly petty and unedifying. Rumors circulated that Wellesley would get an embassy, but Wellesley himself could not accept a boon from the Liverpool ministry.

Wellesley's domestic situation darkened. In 1816 his daughter Anne was involved in a scandalous elopement with one of the Bentinck sons, and Wellesley could not summon resources and connections sufficient to save the family from the disgrace which the inevitable divorce proceedings entailed. In the same year, a grand auction of all the remaining Wellesley properties in Ireland brought to an end the great Meath estate which had been the mainstay of the Wellesleys and Colleys during the eighteenth century. Receipts from the heavily mortgaged property were directed to Wellesley's legion of creditors, and his utter bankruptcy was advertised to the world. The horror of living without money had become a reality. Hyacinthe

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279 Shawe, memorandum, January 1814, printed in Wellington, Supplementary, VI, 286.

280 Dublin Evening Post (18 August 1814), p. 3; Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 2 August 1814, printed in Fortescue MSS, X, 389.


282 C. C. Ellison, "Notes on the Rise and Fall of a
died. She had lived with Mary Hyacinthe and her husband since their marriage in 1812. Wellesley had not seen her for six years and showed no signs of emotion when informed of her death. Wellesley's own health was bad, and he took stock of his depleted resources as if in preparation to depart the world.

IX: End and Beginning

Who could have predicted in 1816 that ahead there lay another career for Wellesley? He was already fifty-six but he was destined, for all his bouts with ill-health, to live the better part of another three decades and to be remarkably sound in mind and body until the very end. He would attend the funeral of almost all his contemporaries or enjoy the opportunity of delivering one last snub by staying away. Castlereagh, Canning, Liverpool, Huskisson, Bathurst, Grenville, Sidmouth, the Prince Regent and many others would retire and die while Wellesley slowly revived. He would find himself moving in a new circle and battling with a new generation of leaders: Peel, Melbourne, Palmerston and Althorp would become prominent names in a corres-

ondence which dated all the way back to Grattan and Townshend and Shelburne. Wellesley would astonish the world by marrying again and marrying happily. His finances would improve, although not steadily, and there would be an affecting rapprochment with that greatest of all enemies, the East India company. He would not become an easy man to work with, but he learned late in life how to be a colleague as well as a leader, and his service to the country would be distinguished in its own way. Old bitterness would remain: the question of honours would rankle him until he died. A remarkable quarter century lay ahead.
CHAPTER XIV:

RECOVERY

The sale of virtually all of Wellesley’s personal possessions by auction in 1815 attracted wide notice in both London and Dublin. In London, Wellesley disposed of Ashley house and most of its furnishings. In Dublin, three days of auctions resulted in the sale of one seventy-five-acre tract of land in the neighborhood of Arden. At the end of it all Wellesley retreated with his wife smaller to some ancient accommodations in Knightsbridge.

Wellesley had an aversion to poverty. He was not careless with his possessions in the sense that he was ignorant of financial matters, he simply lived beyond his means, and made a habit of it. In part his excesses were those of a man of public affairs. The state provided its leaders some compensation in the form of annuities and allowances, but it was assumed that private resources would be drawn on as well. Wellesley’s estates were not ill-managed, they provided an income appropriate to their size and quality for that age. But they never produced enough to meet Wellesley’s requirements.

After India every year succeeded theInns of Court the mode of mort-gage was observed regularly. Incapacity was certain after Wellesley’s incapacitation from Specie, for she insisted, with some passion, on receiving a large annual stipend.
I: Bankruptcy

The sale of virtually all of Wellesley's temporal possessions by auction in 1816 attracted wide notice in both London and Dublin. In London Wellesley disposed of Apsley house and most of its furnishings. In Dublin three days of auctions resulted in the sale of some seventy-five parcels of land in the neighborhood of Trim. At the end of it all Wellesley retreated with his wine cellar to more modest accommodations in Knightsbridge.

Wellesley had an abhorrence of poverty. He was not careless with his possessions in the sense that he was ignorant of financial matters; he simply lived beyond his means, and made a habit of it. In part his expenses were those of a man of public affairs. The state provided its leaders some remuneration in the form of sinecures and emoluments, but it was assumed that private resources would be drawn on as well. Wellesley's estates were not ill-managed. They produced an income apprropriate to their size and quality for that age. But they never produced enough in a year to meet Wellesley's requirements.

After India every year increased the burden of mortgages and interest payments. Bankruptcy was certain after Wellesley's separation from Hyacinthe, for she insisted, with some justice, on receiving a large annual stipend.
Wellesley's bad humor from 1810 to 1816 must be attributed in part to the inevitability of bankruptcy. It came and he was suitably chastised. But he survived the humiliation, and although his debts were not entirely extinguished, he was never again in a situation quite so desperate. Hyacinthe died in 1816, which in financial terms (and otherwise) afforded some consolation. Wellesley emerged from the ruins of his fortune prepared to do battle for the causes he cherished.

Bankruptcy proceedings, although unfortunate to their victims, are invaluable to biographers. An examination of Wellesley's accounts and a review of the methods Wellesley employed to cope with the need to rearrange fundamentally his financial affairs shed considerable light on his life style and interests after his return from India. In the eyes of most contemporaries the bankruptcy proceedings marked the close of Wellesley's public career and many openly rejoiced at his misfortunes. In fact, however, they marked a second spring.

It will be remembered that Wellesley was heavily in debt when he sailed to India in 1797. During his absence compensation for the borough of Trim, the sale of Dangan Castle, and savings derived from his handsome Indian salary permitted brother William to retire the debts. Wellesley was
reported to have a surplus of £100,000 when he returned from India in 1806. If so, the handsome nest egg was quickly reduced. He provided his daughter Anne a dowry of £11,000 when she married in 1806. A like amount, perhaps more, accompanied daughter Hyacinthe when she married Edward Littleton in 1812. Wellesley also claimed that he was forced to expend £30,000 of his personal fortune defending himself against Paull's charges.

Wellesley also encountered problems collecting revenues from the office of the chief remembrancer of the court of exchequer in Ireland. He was awarded revisionary right to the office in 1797. Lord Clanbrassel, the incumbent, died shortly thereafter. But the entrenched deputy, Sir John Macartney, refused to divulge his accounts despite intense pressure from Wellesley Pole. After a protracted and acrimonious exchange Macartney caved in, but the onset of rebellion and other developments prevented the office from producing the annual sum of £1000 which Wellesley expected.

Upon his return from India Wellesley also began searching for a proper residence. Apparently Wellesley first contemplated purchasing a country home. In 1800

Lord Grenville had given some thought to securing for Wellesley the option of purchasing the late Edmund Burke's country estate at Beaconsfield. This property was only three miles from Dropmore, and the proximity underscores how close to Grenville Wellesley was at the time. Thomas Grenville pleaded with his brother to let him have it instead, and promised to raise £20,000 as a full payment. The project does not appear in any of Wellesley's correspondence and it is possible that Grenville never broached it with the viceroy.

When Wellesley returned from India he rented Grenville's London residence, Camelford house. This was a temporary arrangement designed to take advantage of Grenville's shift to Downing street. Wellesley promised to vacate Camelford house by 1 January 1808. Grenville's ministry collapsed earlier than anticipated, and by the spring of 1807 Wellesley was being pressed to move. In September he purchased Apsley house from Bathurst. The choice was apparently Lady Wellesley's. The house possessed a park in front and back, and its location in a semi-rural area rather than in the fashionable west end of London helped to keep the price down. But at £16,000 the price was

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2 Thomas Grenville to William Grenville, Baron Grenville, 5 October 1800, printed in Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of J. B.
still much higher than Wellesley could afford. The house also demanded considerable immediate repair, much of which was completed only a few months before Lady Wellesley moved out.

Apsley house also proved to be an expensive house to staff and maintain. And Wellesley preferred to live elsewhere for a considerable part of each year. In the summer he went to Dorking and usually remained there until October. He identified good health with bouts of sea bathing at Ramsgate. For many months, therefore, Apsley house was surrendered to Wellesley's retainers, many of whom were quite as extravagant as their master.

By 1812 Wellesley's financial distress was widely known. Many assumed that Wellesley would abandon all principle in order to gain the viceroyalty of either Ireland or India. He was offered Dublin but did not go; even in his parlous financial constition Wellesley refused to bend. As a result, when Wellesley finally faced the grim reality of bankruptcy in 1816, the liquidation was


3William Eden, Baron Auckland, to Grenville, 23 September 1807, printed in Fortescue MSS, IX, 138.


5Anne Wellesley, Countess of Mornington, to Wellesley,
The sale began in January 1816 when the Trim lands were offered at auction. The manor of Dangan consisted of twenty-four lots with rents ranging from £5 to £770 each. Two lots in the manor of Mornington (two miles from Drogheda), 5 lots in the manor of Ballynaglossan, and 24 lots in the lordship of Moyare were advertised as yielding rents ranging from a pittance to £500. The north and south manors of Trim, separated by the River Boyne, were sold along with public houses, a bakery, and some tenements. In all, 12,000 English acres were offered and total rents were estimated at £12,000. Wellesley retained on 1137 acres and a life tenancy of 120 acres in one parcel. Because all the lands were heavily mortgaged, the receipts realised by the sale went exclusively to retiring leins on them. Unfortunately, because of the intense agricultural depression which settled on Ireland immediately after Waterloo, Wellesley received considerably less at the sale than otherwise he might have expected.

Iris Butler has captured the melancholy tone of

1 November 1810, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, ff. 126-27.

all these proceedings. Perhaps this is overdrawn. There is no evidence that the "gentleman's residences" which she thinks might have made homes for the sons were in fact even habitable. Wellesley himself, whatever his protestations about the joys of estate ownership, never seems to have had a genuine desire to retire to the country. At a later date Henry Goulburn commented on Wellesley's aversion to the countryside, and nothing in Wellesley's habits prior to 1816 betrays a desire to live on the land.

More painful perhaps than the sale of Irish properties was the dismantling of his assets in England. After the sale at Trim, Wellesley's debts still exceeded £175,000. He met a portion of this by selling Wellington Apsley house for £42,000. This was certainly a handsome profit on the purchase price of £16,000, and it has often been interpreted as an act of generosity on the Duke's part. It was not likely an indirect demonstration of ducal charity but a fair market price; Wellesley had embellished the estate considerably and London prices for such establishments had risen rapidly during the war. And of course Wellesley needed considerably more money;

his creditors laid claim to furniture and Wellesley was reduced to the indignity of corresponding with creditors and banks over matters from which Wellesley instinctively shied away. He was reduced to applying to the Duke for a loan, a request which Wellington apparently refused.

The death of Hyacinthe made a material difference. It relieved Wellesley of the demands on his purse to support her; the settlement had cost him not less than £6000 per annum. Wellesley derived £70,000 by selling the East India company annuity which had previously been pledged to Hyacinthe. Hyacinthe for her part had husbanded her resources very well. As Butler aptly points out, she had had no reason to complain of Wellesley's generosity; there remained in her estate numerous jewels and a legacy of some £40,000. This she divided among the children, with the wayward Anne having been excluded in 1815. This endowment was timely, for the Marquess himself was forced to suspend all subsidies to the children.

Bankruptcy proceedings marked a substantial change in Wellesley's relationship to his children and to his brothers. When Hyacinthe died he attempted to seize her papers and laid claim to many of her possessions, saying that they had been removed from Apsley house illegally. The charges were untrue, and the children (especially
Richard) deeply resented these slurs on their mother's memory. Wellesley retreated to an isolation in which the companionship of his natural son Edward Johnstone seems to have provided the principal comfort. Eventually Mary Hyacinthe would mend fences on behalf of the other children, but for the most part family relationships never recovered their warmth.

Most dramatic of all was the change in the relationship between Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington. Certainly Wellesley's elation at Wellington's successes was genuine. Wellesley superintended the choice of his brother's coat of arms when he became a Marquess in 1812. Wellington objected to the choice of the Union Jack for an augmentation of arms (too pretentious, he thought), but he left to parliament the opportunity to veto the even more extravagant idea of a French eagle. Wellesley celebrated Wellington's victories and praised his brother's exploits in correspondence. But when Napoleon abdicated on 12 April 1814 Wellesley was no longer able to claim precedence in the family. Wellington became a civic god,


9Butler, Eldest, pp. 474-75; William Wellesley Pole to Wellesley, 12 July 1813, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 134.
and Wellesley's praise was submerged in the enormous chorus. In May 1814 Wellington became a Duke; in June he was greeted deliriously upon reaching London. He received large estates on the continent and handsome endowments of other sorts. The King of the Netherlands made him a prince; Alexander addressed him as "mon cousin." A grateful and adoring nation purchased Stratford Saye in his name.\(^{10}\) Some thought was given to purchasing Dangan on behalf of the Irish nation; it was still in the hands of that rascal O'Connor and had not yet burned.\(^{11}\) Dangan excepted (Wellington showed no interest in the proposal) nothing was denied him: embassies; military honours; and a cabinet office.

It was perhaps inevitable that Wellington would begin to play the role of family patriarch. Precient witness to this were Edward and Mary Hyacinthe. In the summer of 1818 Hyacinthe confided to the Duke that she had not seen her father for two years. Wellington agreed with his niece that Richard had caused this estrangement by demanding (unsuccessfully) that the children accept Wellesley's claims concerning Hyacinthe's possessions and that they

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\(^{10}\) *DNB*, XX, 1100.

hand over her legacies to him.\footnote{12} But he also seems to have been shocked by the intensity of the animosity and resolved to do something about it. Littleton recorded in his diary a dinner at Apsley house in July 1818. The children came and Wellesley brought Johnstone. Johnstone was unwanted and unwelcome; it demonstrates how desperately lonely Wellesley must have been if he found it necessary to bring his natural son. The dinner passed off well enough despite what Littleton characterised as Wellesley's display of ill-temper. Thereafter relations between Wellesley and the children improved somewhat. Butler suggests that credit might go to Wellington for this, but one suspects that Littleton played the crucial role.\footnote{13}

In the larger arena, however, Wellington completely overshadowed the Marquess. He secured the Vienna embassy for Henry in 1822.\footnote{14} He also arranged for William a peerage and an office with cabinet rank. He took command when

\footnote{12}{Edward Littleton, Baron Hatherton, Diary, Stratford, County Record Office, Hatherton MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 498.}

\footnote{13}{Ibid.}

\footnote{14}{Henry Brougham to Earl Grey, 16 September 1822, printed in Henry Brougham, \textit{Life and Times} (3 vols.; Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1871), II, 456.}
William's wayward son squandered the Tyngley fortune. And he even sponsored Richard's children when they sought preferment in the church or an office in the government. Wellesley's sense of pride was deeply wounded, and he isolated himself from some of the unpleasantness by moving up the Thames to Richmond.

II: Diversions

With all pretence to wealth now gone, Wellesley was forced to adopt a much more modest style. His creditors kept close watch on his expenditures and his remaining sources of income permitted no extravagances. But within these limits he succeeded in keeping a good table. London coffee houses relished the snippets of conversation which were reported from the dining room at Richmond. Much of the time Wellesley's wit was expended on his durable friends Shawe and Culling Smith, or wasted on Johnstone. But others were included; there are enough entries in the journals of prominent people of the period to show that London's finest attended if invited. Stratford Canning, who had earlier refused to cross Wellesley's doorstep because Wellesley had not replied to his despatches, recorded impressions of an evening with Wellesley. They walked in the garden. Wellesley's conversation teemed
with interesting observations. "Our conversation was chiefly political," he recorded, "and in the whole course of it, at one time figured the commanding statesman, at another the accomplished orator, to say nothing of wit, scholarship and the recollection of bygone events."\(^{15}\)

Conversation was an inexpensive diversion. So was Wellesley's rededication to the joys of the classics. After 1812 Wellesley's interest in Greece and Rome revived and he began to mine the riches of Indian culture. In one sense this avocation served to relieve his unhappiness; neatly copied epigrams were employed to flay the political enemy.\(^{16}\) But this was a minor stimulus. Wellesley read Greek with "off-hand ease" and he wrote in both Latin and Greek elegantly and comfortably.\(^{17}\) In 1818 Wellesley's gifts were celebrated in an unexpected quarter when Dr. Goodall, headmaster of Eton, declared in testimony delivered before a parliamentary committee on education that Wellesley had been the preeminent Grecian of his day.\(^{18}\) Others


agreed, and testified to the fact that Wellesley's talents, far from atrophying, broadened into new areas after 1812. He perfected his Latin and astounded friends by reciting long excerpts from Dante in a pure and classic Italian.\(^{19}\) He matched wits with Richard Whately on matters of political economy when both resided in Dublin after 1830.\(^{20}\) He broached to the bishop of Durham the possibility of learning Hebrew and justified this project by reminding the prelate that it was a sure vehicle to a more perfect appreciation of the beauties of scripture. His interest in Sanskrit sharpened and he became patron of the Royal Asiatic Society founded by Alexander Johnston after his return from Ceylon.\(^{21}\)

Wellesley's papers contain some long poetic compositions written between 1812 and 1821. Several were melancholy: an English language effort in 1817 lamented that there was "no cheering hope, to make the present pain less painful" and chided ambition for having raised him up so that the sub-


\(^{21}\) Johnston was born and raised in south India. After studying law in England and on the continent he returned to India. He became Judge Advocate General of Ceylon in 1800 and held a series of posts there for twenty years: DNB, X, 940-41.
sequent disappointment should be felt more keenly. But on the whole his works did not have a funereal ring to them, judged by the small volume of his favourite pieces published only a year before his death.

Although Wellesley's love of the classics afforded respite from the many frustrations encountered in his public career, he did not allow this avocation to isolate him from others. Quite the contrary: Wellesley's deepest friendships were often forged through a shared love of the classics, and he used them to bridge the gap between himself and a younger generation. This had been true of his relationship to Grenville in the early years. When Grenville's friendship was lost, there appeared Henry Brougham's. Brougham supplied invaluable aid and comfort between 1815 and 1820, not only in terms of legal advice, but also in the more valuable area of companionship and conversation. Later this ripened into a long friendship in which a discussion of the classics formed an invaluable part. Wellesley also took pleasure in encouraging students to master the classics. About 1815 he began the salutary custom of giving a volume or two from his library to young men whom he thought demonstrated

ability in their studies of the Greeks and Romans. He was attentive to the needs of Eton on this score.

After 1812 Wellesley also intensified his commitment to reading history. Before departing for India he had read everything available about the east, and much of Rome and Greece. In India he claimed to have kept himself occupied in the hot season by rereading his favourite books. He must have read a great deal about Iberia upon his return to England because in 1809 his knowledge of the region was prodigious. After 1812, however, Wellesley followed a more eclectic pattern: Rome and India; a bit on China and even a few items on the Americas. He read avidly until the very month of his death.

III. Politics and Parliament

Wellesley never disappointed his critics. When he returned to parliament in the wake of bankruptcy proceedings he preached the need for economy in the


conduct of the nation's affairs. The nation's attention, meanwhile, was focused on the postwar depression, and it prompted the Liverpool to advance the current orthodox solutions: protection of domestic producers; suppression of unrest; and reduction in expenditures. Suppressing agitation required expanded law enforcement instruments, and this in turn called for an increase in the budget.

Wellesley's hatred of Liverpool and all his works was at its peak, and prospects for office were so remote that the restraint which this once exercised on his behaviour no longer counted for much. In 1817, therefore, Wellesley delivered three of his most mordant speeches. The cabinet was not rattled; Canning was back in office and the Whigs were more disorganised than ever. But in retrospect it is clear that Wellesley had chosen his ground carefully. The country was prepared to hear of the virtues of parsimony in government. Although not as emotionally charged an issue as Catholic emancipation, the issue of economy was more useful. No one opposed it; the idea that depression should be conquered by deficit spending was entertained only by an insignificant few.  

Bentley, 1838), I, 88.

Perhaps most prominent of this small band was Robert Wilmot Horton, Derby M.P. during the 1820s and colonial undersecretary. He engaged in a vigorous adversary correspondence with Malthus and occasionally was in touch with Wellesley.
condemn the peace of Vienna abroad and to oppose antiseditition legislation at home. And short of closing down the government altogether the ministry could always be charged with a continued addiction to wasteful expenditure of some sort.

Wellesley's approach followed the pattern of his attack on the Catholic issue in 1812. During the session which commenced in January 1817 he delivered three long speeches in the House of Lords, two at the beginning and one near the close of the session. All three centered on the need for fiscal restraint. Each was devoted to a different aspect of the question and there was little repetition. Wellesley's efforts were partially obscured by parliament's preoccupation with instances of domestic unrest.

Two of Wellesley's speeches were delivered in the context of opposition to suspension of *habeas corpus* and the imposition of restrictions on the press and assemblies. The message in both was that conditions were due to defective economic policies and must be cured by changing these policies rather than by suppressing evidence of dissatisfaction. In all three speeches Wellesley enjoyed the support

of the Whigs, but he remained a free agent. The champion of Catholic emancipation now became the voice of fiscal restraint.

What attracted Wellesley to venture with such audacity into economics, and where did he imbibe classical economic theories? Wellesley's friends included no prominent economists. He read in this field only occasionally. He had been a vigorous opponent of restraints on the freedom of commerce between Ireland and Britain in 1785, and in India in 1800. Monopolies were pernicious, he observed. He condemned the corn laws. His record combined an inconstant interest with a consistency of principle. He was unlikely to abandon the new doctrine of *laissez-faire* but his decision to pursue the matter vigorously clearly reflected a determination on his part to oppose the ministry and all its works.

By necessity Viscount Sidmouth's "sedition laws" were also part of his discussion; debate on these indeed provided the excuse for him to expound on economics. He held that the evidence presented by the ministry to support repressive measures was insufficient to warrant such drastic legislation and indeed suggested that the government itself was stimulating much of the unrest. His position here was philosophically consistent with his economic policies, but it was vulnerable by virtue of his own admission that there were times when such
repression was appropriate. His technique was thus a mixture of common sense and heavy doses of disparagement about the agitators' potential. He succeeded so well that his main thrust against financial extravagance was often obscured. Nonetheless his speeches made their mark. As the nation sank deeper into depression the government's position gradually weakened. Eventually, to Wellesley's surprise, he would be invited, much as Canning had been invited, to return to the fold.

By 1817 the nation's economic prospects indeed appeared bleak; who would have dared to suggest that Great Britain's most impressive economic achievements still lay ahead? New machinery was being installed in the textile mills, and at first the transition proceeded quietly enough. But when machines invaded the older industries of Yorkshire and the Midlands the opposition of skilled labourers intensified. The Luddites, who had first appeared as early as 1811, now gained wide support among the masses. Army intervention and ferocious penalties did not suffice to eliminate destruction of machinery. Seditious circles multiplied and called for political as well as economic changes. The Tories responded by raising corn prices in order to keep

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marginal farms in production. This raised the cost of bread to near famine price levels.

Against this somber background Wellesley launched the first of his speeches on economy. On 29 January 1817 he challenged the "courtly professions" of self-praise offered by the government, calling them merely a substitute for national policy. The country had gloried long enough in the defeat of Napoleon. It was a "criminal forgetfulness of duty" to withhold assurances of an immediate inquiry into the misfortunes of the labouring classes. Such an inquiry, Wellesley assured his listeners, would demonstrate the need for "a rigid reduction of every possible expense" to cope with the fact that the current misery was not a temporary condition. The economic crisis, he predicted, would deepen, in part because of an undisciplined resort to paper currency, and in even larger part because the treaty of Vienna had conceded to Britain none of the rights of economic access to regions abroad which the nation required for its future prosperity. 28

The speech was less impressive than the two which followed. Wellesley interrupted himself frequently in order

to offer fulsome compliments to various military heroes and to praise a constitution which had stimulated his family's public service. He warned against annual parliaments and universal suffrage, but he condemned sedition acts and infringement on personal liberties. There was an air of searching for something to say and a hint of insufficient preparation. Wellesley indeed offered no more convincing a formula for Britain's economic malaise than anyone else. He condemned easy money policies and onerous military expenditures. He supported in principle some type of assistance to the depressed classes, and called for an expansion of markets overseas. Judged by modern norms this program was hobbled by internal contradictions. It was redeemed by Wellesley's lively sense that Britain must depend upon world trade to survive and that no constitution was so glorious in all its parts as to withstand forever the anger of an economically depressed working population.

Wellesley's message was calculated to appeal to a wider constituency than that which he had addressed in his Catholic relief speeches of 1812. At that time he had asked the ruling classes to defy the "no-papery" prejudices of the lower orders. Now he appealed to the parliament on behalf of this same lower class, and by doing so he hoped
to disorient the conservative constituency which sustained Liverpool. The strategy was obviously designed to destroy the incumbent ministry, not to prompt an invitation to him to join it. Wellesley's criticism of Liverpool was too harsh and his condemnation of the ministry's policies was too sweeping to leave room for an accommodation. At this time he did not see a return to office along lines of Canning's strategy.

Within one month Wellesley was prepared to press further his program of economy. The occasion was the second reading of Sidmouth's sedition bill. Grey and the Whigs launched a massive attack on the bill. Wellesley put himself in the Whig camp for the moment. On 24 February 1817 Wellesley attacked Sidmouth's proposals as grossly inappropriate to the needs of the day. The task of the Home secretary was not, Wellesley believed, to infiltrate agents into groups composed of desperate but largely harmless desperate men. Suspending *habeas corpus* was no answer in the long run and could not be justified even as an interim measure unless treason could not be curbed by application of ordinary law. Sidmouth, he feared, had decided to suppress manifestations of dissatisf-

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faction rather than address himself to their causes: "if you would really removed sedition," Wellesley noted in paraphrasing Bacon, "you must remove the matter of sedition."

How should this be done? Wellesley reviewed the current economic situation and pointed directly to the treaty of Vienna. How had Britain been "reduced . . . to a condition little better than that of Ireland in the worst of times?"

War had stimulated Britain's productive capacity but its traditional markets had been restricted temporarily. These markets, freed from Napoleon's yoke by British arms and money, were now being barred from Britain by nations eager to build up their own manufacturing capacity at Britain's expense. This could have been prevented; Britain had had the right at Vienna to "demand that commercial preference and intercourse" which had generated the resources applied so generously by Britain to effect the liberation of Europe. The discontent of Britain's working classes, therefore, stemmed from "their astonishment and indignation at an arrangement in which not one stipulation in favour of British prosperity was guaranteed." Jacobinism therefore flourished again.\(^{30}\)

There was no way to rectify deficiencies in the peace.
settlement, but Wellesley enjoyed the chance to flagellate Castlereagh and Sidmouth. Sidmouth he cast as incompetent and bumbling rather than sinister and reactionary, as the Whigs saw him. Wellesley was not bothered by Sidmouth's measures as much as Grey was; he might not have opposed them at all if he had not wanted to act in concert with, thought not as a party to, Grey's assault on suspension of habeas corpus. Wellesley had delivered one of his earliest major speeches in support of Pitt's resort to such measures in 1794. In India he had curtailed civil liberties frequently enough to prompt Foxite condemnation. He firmly believed that civil order underlay all progress and liberty. But he saw a corresponding necessity for measures addressed to the cause of disturbances. He could not be sure that the Whigs shared these aims. Wellesley's prescriptions for economic reform, therefore, were not part of the Whigs' program.

It is difficult to determine what Wellesley expected to gain by his assault on Sidmouth. From March until late May Wellesley was quite ill and many of his letters were despondent and distracted in tone. Wellesley wrote to Grey that parliament seemed to respond without enthusiasm.

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31 Hansard XXXV (24 February 1817), 551-74.
32 Wellesley to Grey, 20 February 1817, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 56, f. 10.
to the ministry's illiberal measures, but that there was certainly no movement afoot to overturn Liverpool's cabinet. Majorities were consistent; the ingenuity of opposition speakers and the brilliance of their arguments made little difference. The Catholic issue excited no interest. Wellesley was satisfied that the nation's depressed economy offered the best grounds for attack, and if it could be married to a defence of Englishmen's liberties then so much the better. But if the Lords and Commons in their collective wisdom could not be induced to wake to the perils faced by their countrymen Wellesley saw no loss in jarring them by resorting to an ad hominum attack upon some of Liverpool's friends.

When Wellesley rose to deliver his third major speech of the session on 19 June he directed his attack directly at Sidmouth and Castlereagh. He did not abandon his call for economical reform and indeed he provided some specific suggestions. But he was determined to keep his fellow peers awake by giving vent to his frustrations against Sidmouth, whom he thought equal to Perceval in incompetence,

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33 9 May 1817, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 12.

34 Grey to Wellesley, 16 May 1817, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 264.
and to Castlereagh. It proved to be an extraordinary performance.

On 10 June Grey told Wellesley that the government was more firmly committed than ever to repressing agitation by suspending habeas corpus and other traditional guarantees. Wellesley rose to address the Lords nine days later with this in mind. He spoke sarcastically of the ominous danger to the country’s security posed by Sidmouth’s rebels: their magazine of "a half dozen bullets in a blue stocking;" and their strategy of enlisting "white-robed virgins" to capture the bank of England by smashing wine bottles on its vaults. Their army was defeated by a single vigilant soldier. Was suspension of habeas corpus needed to suppress this? Wellesley thought not. The principal provocation, indeed, arose from Sidmouth’s informers, whom the Home secretary had supplied with ammunition and a plan for half-witted sabotage. Such proceedings, designed to afford the masses an opportunity to be impressed by a salutary display of British justice, had produced instead only a half dozen bedraggled conspirators. This was Sidmouth’s monument.

Wellesley’s speech was noticed. The peers chuckled at his description of the absurd plots foisted on the disconsolate agitators by Sidmouth’s agents. They enjoyed Sidmouth’s embarrassment and Wellesley’s mock gravity. The reaction of
public was predictable; the *Dublin Evening Post* concluded that Wellesley planned to retire completely from politics and that after this last bid to alienate the ministry he could do nothing else. Others, however, expected Wellesley would sit as a Whig when parliament convened in 1818. When two friends of Henry Wellesley were unseated on petition the world interpreted this as clear evidence of Wellesley's determination to join with Grey in concerted opposition. Since a general election was imminent it was certain that Wellesley's alienation from Canning would become final.

IV: Rapprochement

Wellesley was not much in evidence in British politics from the summer of 1817 to the end of 1819. His correspondence on political subjects was very limited; indeed, it was smaller in volume than in any period over the next twenty years. His June 1817 attack certainly sundered even the most rudimentary connections with the ministry. He was flattered when in May 1818 Buckingham approached Wellesley with a plan to form a strong neutral party in parliament. To him this

35 *Dublin Evening Post*, 26 June 1817, p. 2.

indicated that the Grenvillites at any rate were willing to bury their differences with him. Wellesley nevertheless refused, and Buckingham dropped the idea. 37 But he was not yet prepared to retire from politics completely; Liverpool concluded on the basis of the autumn election return that Wellesley's supporters probably increased from ten to almost fifteen. 38

Unknown to Wellesley the Liverpool ministry was beginning to move towards a position which admitted of the possibility of Wellesley's return to office. Canning's adhesion to government, during which he played a conspicuously contrite and submissive part, had not repaired the ravages of 1809. Canning and his followers remained a faction apart despite Canning's 1814 decision to dismantle his parliamentary interest. In examining the results of the poll of 1818 Liverpool went so far as to link Canning with Wellesley rather than with the government.

Liverpool was prompted to reassess Wellesley's position because of other reasons as well. The ministry's energies


38 Robert Banks Jenkinson, Second Earl of Liverpool, to Robert Peel, 7 November 1818, BM, Peel MSS 40181, f. 28.
were flagging. Sidmouth's unpopularity was intense but his parliamentary support was crucial in the absence of substantial new assistance from other quarters. Grey and Grenville and the Whigs represented one alternative reservoir of support and for a brief period the Whigs had seemed to be reviving in strength. In 1818 George Tierney replaced Ponsonby as leader of the Whigs in the house of Commons. He immediately revitalised the party and increased pressure on the Tories. By the following spring it was widely believed that the ministry might succumb to the Whigs' onslaught. But a test vote in May found the Whigs much weaker than expected. Tierney's influence was destroyed and party discipline once more decayed.

The Grenvillite interest showed signs of moving away from the Whigs and by waxing more conservative it became more attractive to Liverpool and his colleagues. Tierney's failure as leader and Buckingham's passionate desire for a dukedom also prompted the family to reexamine their relationship to the government. But Liverpool quickly concluded that their demands were excessive. Where could he turn?

In September 1819 Wellesley's relationship to the ministry suddenly changed. It is unclear whether Wellesley

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39 *Annual Register*, LII, 149.
or Liverpool took the initiative; later the Whigs alleged that Wellesley had in effect been bribed to move away from the Whigs by the promise of office. It is possible that Wellington played a part. At any rate in September Wellesley's natural son Johnstone was invited by Liverpool to become comptroller of the stamps, and Wellesley urged him to accept. Wellesley hinted to Liverpool that a more lucrative office would not be refused and Liverpool obliged by promising that Johnstone would be kept in mind when something better became available.

Wellesley did not consider Johnstone's accepting a place as binding him to the government. In October Wellesley volunteered to Grey that he considered the country's situation to be critical. Grey responded two months later by soliciting Wellesley's help "in holding a course equally opposed" to the radicals and to the ministry. The request was nothing out of the ordinary, for Grey and Wellesley had been cooperating informally for three years and had thrice delivered speeches in tandem on the government's economic policies and suspension of civil rights. On 17

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41 Grey to Wellesley, 16 November 1819, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 18.
November, however, Wellesley informed Grey that he could no longer play a part in concert with the Whigs. The state, he told Grey, was now in "immediate peril;" he now favoured curbs on popular assemblies and saw the need for suspending habeas corpus.\footnote{Wellesley to Grey, 17 November 1819, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 19.}

Wellesley's change of attitude, whether prompted or not by Liverpool's kindness, was at least comprehensible. Only the most sanguine observers of the British scene reacted without a sense of alarm to the events of 1817 to 1819. In retrospect it does not appear that the manifestations of unrest were dangerous in themselves, but the national malady of which they were symptoms was a serious one. Wellesley had ridiculed Sidmouth's tactics so lustily in 1817 that a change of heart inevitably prompted accusations of insincerity. He had not at that time, however, declared his opposition to the suspension of habeas corpus as an absolute principle. He had supported such measures in the 1790s and he justified his position then by pointing out that a nation at war was forced to be more cautious than one at peace. The situation now, he concluded, was akin to war.

Wellesley declared his change of heart in the house of
Lords on 30 November 1819 in response to a Whig motion to investigate Sidmouth's stewardship as home secretary. Wellesley declared bluntly that parliament had been convened on this occasion for the simple reason to take measures to preserve itself. There was not time to determine what were the causes of the present crisis; the agitation must be contained and the constitution rescued from danger. He saw a conspiracy "extensive in its diffusion" tending towards "the overthrow of society, the destruction of the rights of property, and the demolition of the whole frame of government." The "peaceable and quiet demeanor" of the radicals, which in 1817 had been put forward by Wellesley as sufficient reason for belittling Sidmouth's alarms, now "ought to aggravate the alarm." Nor could their "absurd theories" be dismissed lightly; "how much mischief had arisen to the world from practical attempts to accomplish impracticable schemes." Finally, even if the plots were limited to a "few visionary individuals," they were so pregnant with mischief for the nation that they must be met. 43

The speech marked the beginning of Wellesley's return to public life. He opposed Grey's motion politely but forcefully. He pictured Sidmouth as a defender of the

43 Hansard XLI (30 November 1819), 431-42.
constitution and made no attempt to reconcile all of this with his past condemnations. He supported the government and bravely ignored his own previous complaints that it had failed to cope with the industrial depression. He even suggested that the depression was not perhaps as serious as he first had thought. By conceding nothing he sought to portray his conversion as sincere, sudden, and complete. It was not entirely convincing but the government could not help but appreciate the effort. Sidmouth became an advocate of inviting new support from moderates out of office, and he urged that Wellesley be included in this group.

During 1820 Wellesley moved closer to office. Liverpool professed a willingness to bury differences with Wellesley. Several developments encouraged the Prime minister to become ever more accommodating. Liverpool was eager to retain Canning and he may have overestimated the importance of Canning's ties to Wellesley. The Prime minister was less enthusiastic about Peel than he had been formerly, in part because Peel had determined to remain out of office from 1819 and thus to deprive the government of badly needed assistance in the house of Commons.

Most important, George IV became angry at the Tories in 1820 when they refused to condemn the Queen's alleged
adulterous behaviour. In June 1820 the new King despatched his private secretary Sir Benjamin Blomfield to invite Wellesley for discussions on the divorce matter. So great was the King's unhappiness at the failure of Liverpool to defend him more vigorously that he contacted Lansdowne and Holland among the Whigs and Buckingham as well. Buckingham hoped that he might be asked to form a government pledged to support the King on the divorce issue. This was silly and impossible. But the opportunity thus provided Wellesley to talk to the excitable and distracted monarch was a useful one. The King flattered Wellesley by soliciting his "private advice and support as an old attached friend" and by speaking kindly of him at a levee. Wellesley enjoyed the prospect of mending fences by being of some assistance in this unseemly royal matter.

As it happened, events progressed at a pace beyond control of either Wellesley or the King. Liverpool introduced a bill of pains and penalties in the house of Lords.

44 Mitchell, Whigs, p. 144.


47 Wellesley to Sir Benjamin Blomfield, 11 May 1820;
he would have preferred not to - in order to prove that the Queen's life was so irregular as to justify depriving her of her titles and rank. Wellesley's new friend Henry Brougham conducted the Queen's defence with enormous skill, and if the King hoped to silence Brougham by working through Wellesley he was mistaken. Liverpool's bill became increasingly unpopular as discontents of all shades of opinion, with Canning and the Whigs among them, lined up in support of the Queen. The bill was hurriedly withdrawn. The King waxed angry and threatened to form a new government, and he called in Wellesley again in July 1821. Wellesley was in no position to construct a new ministry, and presumably advised against it. Fortunately for the nation if not for the Queen, she died in August, only two weeks after she was barred from attending her husband's coronation. The crisis subsided and Liverpool was still in command.

But Liverpool was not slow to draw a lesson from all this: the ministry could not continue without additional support. Much more important to Wellesley than the King's proclamation that the Marquess was once more "himself" was Liverpool's emerging determination to weld the followers

George IV to Wellesley, June 1820, printed in Aspinall, George IV, II, 328, 346.
of Perceval, Sidmouth and Canning into one ministry.\textsuperscript{48} If possible he would reconstitute virtually all the Pittite interest by soliciting the support of Wellesley and Grenville.\textsuperscript{49} But Liverpool did not rush, and the delay saw his hand strengthened. The King's nerves gradually steadied. The Whigs' embarrassment at their own ineffectiveness in exploiting the Queen's dilemma could not be concealed, and they were demoralised. The Grenville interest concluded that alliance with the Whigs meant perpetual consignment to the political wilderness, and on behalf of his family and friends Buckingham offered Liverpool the services and support of his parliamentary group. Liverpool listened politely, and by autumn, when Buckingham again pleaded for office, at least for himself, it was clear that the bulk of the Grenville interest could be purchased, perhaps on easy terms.\textsuperscript{50}

Wellesley was innocent of any such negotiations during most of 1821. Liverpool wanted Grenvillite support but Buckingham was perfectly unacceptable as a colleague in


\textsuperscript{50}John Ernest Cookson, Lord Liverpool's Administration:
the cabinet or in Ireland. Grenville was not enthusiastic about adhering, and his sensitivity to breaking with the Whigs would prove difficult to deal with unless his attachment was part of a larger combination with all the forces of the center. Wellesley, therefore, was an important factor. There is circumstantial evidence suggesting that Wellington also urged Liverpool to include his brother in any arrangement, and that the Irish viceroyalty would be the most appropriate post. The Duke held talks with Littleton in mid-November at Littleton's estate about what to do with Wellesley, and shortly thereafter the cabinet agreed to include Wellesley in a plan for broadening the ministry's basis of support. One 21 November therefore Buckingham was offered a dukedom and one Grenvillite, Williams-Wynn, received a seat in the cabinet. Wellesley was offered Ireland and his friend Plunket became Attorney general in Dublin. Grenville chose to remain out but professed to be pleased by the offer to Wellesley and Plunket. Peel was brought in as Home secretary to preserve


51 Brock, Liverpool, p. 149.

52 Grenville to Williams-Wynn, 7 December 1821, Aberystwyth, Doed-y-maen MSS; Buckingham to Wellesley, 3 December 1821, BM, Wellesley MSS 37510, ff. 189-92; Londonderry, Buckingham and Grenville, memorandum of meeting, 5 December 1821, cited in Cookson, Liverpool's, pp. 335-36.
Liverpool's enlargement reflected his much underrated skills as the greatest floor manager of the age. The adhesion of Peel and Williams-Wynn and Plunket relieved Castlereagh of the unpleasant burden of facing the opposition in the house of Commons virtually alone. Liverpool could complain subsequently that Williams-Wynn was long-winded and Plunket too distracted, but between them they commanded a vital center interest. Returning Peel to harness was vital, even if it increased the danger that Canning might leave the government. Sidmouth, who opposed parts of the enlargement, was induced to remain when Goulburn became Irish chief secretary. Wellesley travelled to Dropmore to convince Grenville that the retention of Sidmouth was merely a mark of respect and that Sidmouth would not act as a bulwark against Catholic emancipation. Wellesley in his infectious enthusiasm for office even succeeded in persuading Buckingham and Williams-Wynn to tender support even if Grenville subsequently decided

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54 Buckingham to Wellesley, 3 December 1821, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 189.
to oppose.  

Apart from frenzied preparations to relieve Talbot in Dublin, Wellesley seems to have spent most of his time mending fences with almost all elements in the political arena. Canning was happy to see Wellesley back in office, although he could not refrain from noting that had he accepted office in the summer of 1812 Wellesley would have been appointed viceroy nine years earlier. The King rejoiced at Wellesley's good fortune and celebrated the rapprochement between Sidmouth and Wellesley. For his part, if the King understood correctly, Wellesley "made a kind of apology for his former secession." Sidmouth and Wellesley themselves washed away old animosities by consuming bottles of claret and enjoying each other's reminiscences. Even the Whigs put a rosy interpretation on Wellesley's fall from opposition: in Ireland Wellesley would ameliorate the plight of the Irish even if he could not hasten enactment

55 Robert Stewart, Marquess of Londonderry, to Liverpool, 9 December 1821, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 163-64.


58 Croker, diary entry, 11 January 1822, printed in Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 147.

59 Wellesley to Sidmouth, 11 December 1821, printed in
of Catholic emancipation. Nine years in the wilderness had ended.


CHAPTER XV:

LORD LIEUTENANT 1821 - 1827

A great deal has been written about Ireland during the 1820s. It is somewhat surprising that Wellesley's rule has not received much attention. After the act of Union the role of the viceroy declined at a faster rate than had been the case during the late eighteenth century. In the crucial years, most of consolidating the Irish parliament, the viceroy's role had of necessity ceased altogether. The Irish chief secretary had gone to India and after the act of Union he was universally recognised as the efficient officer of the Irish government. Proposals to abolish the lord lieutenant surfaced from time to time. The most serious initiatives had coincided with the act of Union, and the viceroyalty survived more because of a distaste for arousing Irish sensitivities in removing both the parliament and the executive at the same time than any consideration of administrative efficiency. A quarter century later another effort to abolish it in the name of economy also failed, the viceroyalty's salary was more to Irish members of a new administration who were sensitive to some appreciation of the need for a politically efficient executive. Wielding reserve power sufficient to meet the country's periodic emergencies.

The Irish viceroyalty occupied an independent endowed
I: Introduction

A great deal has been written about Ireland during the 1820s. It is somewhat surprising that Wellesley's role has not received much attention. After the act of Union the role of the viceroy declined at a faster rate than had been the case during the late eighteenth century. In one crucial aspect, that of conciliating the Irish parliament, the viceroy's role had of necessity ceased altogether. The Irish chief secretary had risen in importance and after the act of Union he was universally recognised as the efficient officer of the Irish government. Proposals to abolish the lord lieutenancy surfaced from time to time. The most serious initiatives had coincided with the act of Union, and the viceroyalty survived more because of a disinclination to assault Irish sensitivities in removing both the parliament and the executive at the same time than any consideration of administrative efficiency. A quarter century later another effort to eliminate it in the name of economy also failed; the viceroyalty's value as hostage to Irish memories of a more autonomous past was married to some appreciation of the need for a resident officer wielding reserve powers sufficient to cope with the country's periodic emergencies.

The Indian viceroyalty demanded an incumbent endowed
with personal authority sufficient to meet emergencies which could not be put off pending receipt of instructions from home. After 1800 this was certainly not true in Ireland, and in some respects the existence of an executive with pretensions to autonomy complicated matters. The new order - a strong chief secretary and a viceroy relegated to ceremonial functions and barred from the exercise of real power - was first put in place when Robert Peel took office in 1812 and when Earl Whitworth succeeded the Duke of Richmond as viceroy the following year. Peel's successor, Charles Grant, failed to exercise a similar personal ascendancy over Whitworth's replacement, Earl Talbot. Grant and Talbot exacerbated the already delicate situation when their opposing philosophies led to open quarreling. In 1821 Sidmouth as Home secretary took fright at the inability of Talbot and Grant to draw together. Talbot's conservative and Protestant bias challenged Grant's liberalism and sensitivity towards Catholics' claims. When this division within the very walls of Dublin castle was perceived by Ireland's competing groups, they moved inevitably to exploit the weaknesses inherent in the ancient system.

Unfortunately ministerial politics demanded, at least until the Catholic question was laid to rest, that the Irish administration in some sense reflect both sides of the
question. It was never easy to predict the strength of personality in any particular combination of viceroy and chief secretary. This was once more demonstrated in the relationship between Wellesley and his chief secretary Henry Goulburn from 1821 to 1827. Wellesley accepted the office at a time when it was clearly declining in real power. In a sense he proved to be a victim of the illusion of power. He enjoyed all the trappings of a surrogate monarch. His commission was replete with extravagant but obsolete privileges. It bothered Wellesley that this should be the case, and on several occasions he defended a proposed course of action by referring to his medieval prerogatives as described in his patent. He had, in fact, little substantive power beyond that which he could wield by exploiting his own prestige. It bothered him to play the role of resident advisor to Whitehall rather than Bengal potentate. His fulminations were sifted by Peel in his capacity as Home secretary and the most preposterous demands were buried quietly. Whitehall tended to laugh at Wellesley and many of his contemporaries did the same. Perhaps the Irish poet Furlong in a sabrous ditty best captured that combination of foolish bravado and frustrated brilliance which so often seemed to constitute the principal theme of
Wellesley's viceroyalty:

Who that hath viewed him in his past career
Of hard-earned fame could recognise him here?
Changed as he is in lengthened life's descent
To a mere instrument's mere instrument;
Crippled by Canning's fears and Eldon's rules,
Begirt with bigots and beset with fools.
A mournful mark of talents misapplied,
A handcuffed leader and a hoodwinked guide;
A lone opposer of a lawless band,
The fettered chieftain of a fettered land.

More recent accounts have given Wellesley somewhat higher marks for the policies he espoused. But these interpretations have also concluded that circumstances well beyond his control dictated that he be little more than a cypher in Ireland. He displeased the Protestants, one observer noted, without enjoying either the opportunity or gaining London's permission to conciliate the Catholics. Galen Broeker emphasises Wellesley's impotence. He concedes that a number of important reforms were instituted under his viceregal superintendence but he holds that Wellesley had little to do with them. "The great viceroy of India was fated to be a mediocre Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, a noble figurehead, while the actual administration passed even more than in the past into the hands of the chief

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secretary and the home secretary. 3

This may be too harsh a verdict. Perhaps Wellesley was not, as the Quarterly Review claimed in 1880, the best viceroy since Lord Chesterfield. 4 But he may be credited, as has been suggested in several modern studies, with attempting to strengthen in Ireland a new middle group of liberal Protestants and prosperous Catholics in the hope that changes could be effected gradually rather than by revolution. 5 In this he differed in part from Earl Fitzwilliam and the Duke of Bedford, with whom he is most often compared. "While they accomplished nothing but retained their popularity," one historian has written, "Wellesley, a more able man, accomplished a good deal at the expense of his popularity..." The most solid contribution was to eliminate Orange influence at the castle by a thorough reform of the entrenched Irish bureaucracy. 6

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Change here was essential to the policy of conciliation which he was sent to Ireland to support. William Lamb, who served briefly as chief secretary under Wellesley in 1827, thought that Wellesley's contribution to the reform of local and central Irish government was substantial and indeed decisive. If so, it does much to redeem Wellesley's Irish years and perhaps lends credence to his own incessant complaints that his enemies were aided and abetted from within the walls of Dublin castle itself in the efforts to prove that he was unequal to the post of viceroy. At any rate the effect of his adversary relationship on entrenched Irish interests was to mark the records of his administration with a correspondence often animated by ridicule, backbiting and small scale treachery in Dublin, and by a patient and humorless condescension in London. Such themes do not good administrative history make, and Wellesley's reputation has suffered as a result.

II: Wellesley and Whitehall

The choice of Wellesley for Ireland had surprised almost

\[7\] R. R. Madden, Castle and Country, p. 5.

everyone, including Wellesley. The realisation that Grant and Talbot had checkmated each other and thus immobilised the Irish government was recognised belatedly in London. Rural "outrages" had risen in number like sea waves driven by an Atlantic storm, receding each time only to reoccur with even greater force: tithes, famine, lawlessness, Catholic grievances and Orange stubbornness constituted the main ingredients of the Irish recipe of despair. Liverpool's cabinet had survived nine years by treating Catholic relief as an "open question." This formula was no comfort to Catholic Ireland. What was needed was a government in Dublin dedicated to impartial application of the law without concession of Catholic claims that impartial justice by its very nature must include relief from Catholics' disabilities.

Wellesley was rescued from oblivion because he still carried the reputation of Indian potentate in his luggage, not because he had championed the Catholic cause in parliament. Goulburn was attached to him, or Wellesley was attached to Goulburn, to insure if possible that vigorous application of impartial justice would not endanger the privileged position of Protestants. Could the law which denied equality to Catholics (and in some respects to Dissenters) be so applied as to grant the underprivileged
only the rights permitted under those laws? The debate between Peel and Goulburn on one hand and Wellesley on the other was framed by the internal inconsistency which all this represented.

How sure could the government of Ireland be that Wellesley would not defy London as he had once defied the East India company? He was old and hungry for office; this was one guarantee. Would he prove loyal to the cabinet and deferential towards Peel? Could he transcend the impotence which a self-contradictory Irish policy imposed on his office? On the face of it chances that he could make a success out of this were small and certainly this dismal reality had reduced the number of candidates for the post of Lord Lieutenant to those most eager for office and most hopeful of either reviving fading reputations or establishing new ones. Liverpool was a tolerant man and would have conceded Catholics' claims had Catholics not constituted so obstreperous and so restless an element in Ireland; he sincerely wanted justice applied evenhandedly. Peel was from his long association with Ireland more aware than most of the difficulty posed by "general mistrust and hatred of all constituted authorities" to the task of main-

Liberals in the cabinet insisted that the ancient notion of governing Ireland through factions was "wrong in principle and mischievous in practice." Notwithstanding Wellesley's own foibles, therefore, the viceregal responsibilities which he undertook were not likely to prove easy.

Labouring under these disadvantages, Goulburn, Wellesley, Peel and the cabinet were not always on amicable terms. But their good will and experience were such as to give the project some chance for success. The cabinet was internally discomfitted by the Catholic question, and it was content initially to see Irish affairs excluded from its discussions in the hope that somehow the prescription "to administer the existing laws in a spirit of mildness and impartiality" would by itself sweep away Ireland's problems. They looked primarily to Peel as Home secretary to supply the want of resolution on their part. Their confidence was well placed. The young man had shown considerable promise as Irish chief secretary from 1812 to

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12 Gahan Broeker, Rural Disorder and Police Reform in
1818. It was alleged that he understood the technical aspects of Ireland's problems better than the impulses of the people. In his favour, nonetheless, was an impressive record of curbing the worst excesses of the patronage system, establishing an Irish constabulary, and reducing the number of sinecures. Ireland was more efficiently governed by the Protestant interest in 1818 than it had been in 1812, and would be even more so in 1827 than in 1821; Peel took much of the credit for this.

Henry Goulburn was a less impressive version of Peel, but he was cast in very much the same image. Stolid, upright, eager to listen but reluctant to surrender his Orange sympathies, he stood at Peel's right hand until Peel died in 1850. He was a technician in politics, labouring long over the intricacies of tithe legislation, conquering political imponderables by applications of methodology rather than by bringing to bear on the question any manifest genius. Goulburn was Peel's alter ego.13

Peel and Goulburn shared none of Wellesley's grand past and grandiose illusions; Wellesley abhorred their rigid conservatism and careful colourlessness. Differing views on Catholic relief was part of the problem, but not


13 Ibid., p. 131.
all. Beneath an outward politeness Goulburn and Peel treated the viceroy with an "icy courtesy." Peel thought him lazy and vain. On the basis of dealing with Wellesley in Ireland Goulburn added the characteristics quick-tempered, remote, indecisive, insincere, and possessing a talent for appearing ridiculous. He clung, Goulburn thought, to the remnants of a reputation as a statesman. Wellesley in return suspected that Goulburn was part of a conspiracy to frustrate his policies and to insure his public disgrace. Peel and Goulburn engaged in a private correspondence which sometimes improperly excluded the viceroy. Wellesley did succeed in dismantling a network of secret informers who reported their version of Irish developments (a "mischievous system of false alarms," he called it) to Orange sympathisers at Dublin castle and even directly to London. He could not, however, separate Goulburn from Peel. All participants attempted to hide their differences, but the ideological gulf between Wellesley and Goulburn encouraged Protestant and Catholic agitators alike to exploit the differences.


16 Shawe to Sir William Knighton, 18 September 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 303.
between them. By 1827 Wellesley had largely conceded details of administration to Whitehall and had heightened his "habitual susceptibility" in equal measure. Peel and Goulburn, on the other hand, saw the old ascendancy thrown on the defensive. And Wellesley had endured if not flourished for a span of six years, a tenure only several months shorter than his Indian viceroyalty.

Wellesley's relations with Whitehall were dominated by two issues: Catholic emancipation and crucial unrest. Both of course threatened to undermine law and order in Ireland, and religious controversy pervaded the whole. Firmness in applying the law was not enough; legislative remedies were demanded and could not be supplied easily. Counsels were divided and the solutions devised proved inadequate to the problems. Pledged to administer but not to innovate, Wellesley vented his frustrations on his patient but unsympathetic chief secretary. He alternately bombarded London with lengthy reports full of recommendations or ignored the cabinet altogether. He did not, nevertheless, defy London directly and therefore he survived. It is perhaps remarkable

17 Reynolds, Catholic, p. 108.

in light of all this that Wellesley and his colleagues accomplished as much as they did.

III: Wellesley and the Orange Movement in 1822

Catholic emancipation, both as an abstract question and as a dimension of early nineteenth century politics, had already helped to derail Wellesley’s march towards the Prime ministership. By 1820 he had succeeded in holding a statesmanlike silence on this issue for several years. He claimed, as he could, that after 1812 he had refused to agitate the issue. His testimony as given in his triad of speeches in 1812 remained his considered opinion until the Catholic emancipation act of 1829. But as he was "disposed to pursue the middle path" it was doubly convenient while viceroy that he should not speak publicly on the question. It would have been even better, in Liverpool's eyes, if Wellesley could avoid even thinking about it.

Wellesley's disguise was penetrated almost immediately, because he celebrated his arrival in Dublin at the end of 1821 by dismissing Saurin, the entrenched Solicitor general. Peel apparently was not apprised beforehand that Liverpool

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19 Robert Stewart, Marquess of Londonderry, to Charles Arbuthnot, 8 January 1822, printed in Charles Arbuthnot, Correspondence (ed. A. Aspinall, Camden Third Series; Vol.
had acceded to Wellesley's request to dismiss Saurin.  

Wellesley rushed to appease Peel by advertising his admiration for Goulburn. This demonstration of calculated insincerity probably made no impression on Peel, but he swallowed the bitter pill of Saurin's dismissal without flinching. He was, at any rate, only at that moment coming into office himself, and could hardly complain until Sidmouth had formally surrendered the seals. When in mid-January he kissed hands as Home secretary he wrote immediately to compliment Wellesley on "that union of energy and talent which enabled you in not less exalted stations to triumph over the most appalling difficulties." Such virtues, predicted Peel, would prove most useful in Ireland. Wellesley returned some fulsome thanks and stressed their points of agreement. It was an auspicious enough beginning.

LXV; London: Royal Historical Society, 1941), p. 29.


21 Arbuthnot, Correspondence, p. 29.

22 Peel to Wellesley, 18 January 1822, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS II, f. 13.

23 Wellesley to Peel, 23 January 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40324, f. 7.
Until July 1822 Wellesley was relatively free from worry; Sauren's dismissal excited the displeasure of the Orange lodges but nothing more transpired. Wellesley appealed for and received an insurrection act, which both the Orange lodges and many Catholics agreed was justified by the unsettled state of the country. On 11 July, however, Daniel O'Connell wrote to the viceroy declaring that Catholics in Ireland were disappointed in Wellesley's performance to date. Wellesley had come to Ireland pledged to administer the law. But Catholics were grieved to discover that even administration of the law continued to be partial to Protestants. O'Connell alleged that decoration of King William's statue on College Green was illegal and asked that the practice be banned.  

Wellesley did not comply with this request. The statue was dressed in provocatively high style, a demonstration of flaunting insolence which prompted Wellesley afterwards to seek Peel's support for a permanent ban on this ancient custom in the future. In the interim O'Connell proceeded to publish his letter to Wellesley. This reinforced Peel's conviction that such a ban should not be imposed; it would appear to be a concession in the face of O'Connell's

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25 Dublin Evening Post, 13 July 1822, p. 3.
threats; other celebrations, moreover, would be devised to commemorate the victory on the Boyne.  

By September the pro-Catholic press was again agitating the issue, looking towards Guy Fawkes. Wellesley pressed his request for a ban again on 14 October by asking Goulburn to apply to the Attorney general for an opinion as to whether decoration of the statue was legal. He was advised by Plunkett, and Peel subsequently agreed, that Wellesley's powers were ample enough to prohibit the decoration. On 29 October Wellesley issued a ban on the November celebration. The order was defied by the police intervened. At a civil banquet the same evening the usual toasts to Orange lodge hagiography were omitted. The viceroy, it appeared, had scored an impressive victory over the Orange lodges at slight cost to the public peace. He had maintained Peel's support and the cabinet's approbation. And he had gone far to conciliate the Catholic interest.

26 Robert Peel to Wellesley, 21 July 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, ff. 312-18.

27 Dublin Evening Post, 24 September 1822, p. 3.

28 Wellesley to Henry Goulburn, 14 October 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 38103, f. 60.

One month later occurred the famous "Bottle" or "Threatre" riot. The item thrown at Wellesley has been variously described as a misdirected missile intended to protest the deficiencies of the evening's performance or an attempt to assassinate the viceroy. Wellesley's reaction bordered on the hysterical. The deadly instruments, an empty bottle and a watchman's rattle, became to him evidence of an Orange lodge conspiracy to remove him from the Irish scene. It was an act of treason, or so he concluded. Goulburn was soon put to work describing every heinous detail for the benefit of the cabinet, but he wrote in private that Wellesley's theories were quite beyond the grounds of credibility. Two juries in succession, both rich with Orange lodge sympathisers, refused to convict the culprits. To Wellesley's disgust the trials became a forum for vindicating Protestant rights and for condemning Wellesley. Even Goulburn waxed indignant "at the corruption of a grand jury who could so deliberately perjure themselves." But Wellesley was much the angrier and

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30 Goulburn to Peel, 21 December 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 302-307.
31 Madden, Castle, I, 59.
32 Goulburn to Peel, 18 December 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 300-302.
33 Ibid., 2 January 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, ff. 37-40.
34 Ibid.
much more personal in his perspective. "My course must now be to probe all the machinations of my enemies to the quick," he proclaimed to Goulburn, "and, at the hazard of my life, to vindicate my authority."  

The incident had clearly gotten out of hand. Lord Redesdale, the former Irish Chancellor, noted that while the riot was "indecent and savage" it was certainly not treasonous. As more details became known it also became clear that the charge of treason thus loosely construed would comprehend everyone who was a member of one of the Orange lodges. This, Redesdale commented, "appeared to all moderate people ridiculous." And Wellesley appeared determined to make the whole matter seem even more absurd. Messages poured in congratulating him on his miraculous escape. Wellesley prepared a message of thanks for the edification of the Irish nation. So magnificent was such testimony, he wrote in his draft, "as would adorn the close of a long and active life with such lasting glory that if the assassin be not yet disarmed, my personal interest

35 Wellesley to Goulburn, 1 January 1823, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, Acc. 319, II/22.


37 Ibid., 7 January 1823, printed in Colchester, Diaries, III, 265.
would be that he should strike now." Fortunately Goulburn was still in London to convince Wellesley that this would make him look foolish in England. As it was Canning was alleged to have lost no opportunity to laugh at Wellesley's expense. Wellesley's "escape" prompted Princess Lieven, who reported every London event to the continent, to declare that the viceroy had behaved "like a fool"; but then the whole thing was "pure Wellesley."

Wellesley's anger subsided gradually. Goulburn was glad to report in late January that the viceroy's illness had prevented him from submitting a report when he was still under the inflammatory influence of Edward Johnstone. Finally on 20 February he prepared a memorandum for Peel in which he conceded that there was no proof of a plan to commit murder, but that conspirators "bound by secret oaths taken in secret societies" had planned to expose the Lord

38 Wellesley, draft of speech, 26 December 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 115-16.

39 Goulburn to Peel, 1 January 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, ff. 1-2.


42 Goulburn to Peel, 16 January 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 18.
Lieutenant to "imminent peril" and to "force the government of Ireland" to cease enforcing legal restrictions against the Orange lodges. Finally in March, some three months after the event, Peel sent Wellesley his first sharp criticism of the viceroy since he had become Home secretary. It was clear, he advised Wellesley, that the charges placed against the rioters had been excessive, and that had more appropriate charges been preferred instead, the rebuffs handed the government by two juries could have been avoided. Innocent Orangemen were indignant at Wellesley's attempt to make all of them appear guilty. There was nothing to be done now, Peel concluded, except to abandon legal proceedings. In the end, all that Wellesley could show for the episode was a letter from the King laden with bathos and a collection of addresses from the Irish counties written in the rococo style.

Wellesley's lack of a sense of proportion in this instance was clear. He may have believed himself to be an assassin's target; Goulburn observed that his excitement at


44 Peel to Wellesley, 10 March 1823, printed in Parker, Peel, I, 499; and in BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 342-48.

45 The King to Wellesley, 30 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37414.
was almost uncontrollable. He may have wished to force the Orange lodges into a showdown; they had certainly behaved with an impunity which galled the master of India. The theatrics in part may have been directed to Peel in an effort to convert him to Catholic emancipation. Undoubtedly they reflected his sense of frustration at being a viceroy in chains. The effect was to demonstrate at any rate that even-handed justice was a difficult feat indeed when juries were staffed by Protestants and when even the castle bureaucracy championed a policy of restrictions against Catholics.

Peel was forced to deal in parliament with the after-shocks of the "Theatre" riot. Wellesley's use of the insurrection act during 1822 to quell rural violence had generated little interest in parliament. But when in the aftermath of the fracas the Solicitor general brought in ex-officio information against suspects the Whigs clamored to censure William Conyngham Plunket on the grounds that these procedures violated private liberties. Fortunately for Peel their opposition to ex-officio procedures found them in alliance with extreme right wing defenders of the Protestant ascendancy, an alliance which the Whigs as a whole could not abide. At length they substituted instead a motion to investigate
the conduct of the sheriff of Dublin. This the cabinet rejected on the grounds that it was directed only against Orange lodges. Wellesley himself favoured an inquiry, and the cabinet found itself pledged to produce a bill against secret societies framed to include both Catholic and Protestant groups. It was a position which generated little enthusiasm in the cabinet, and very little indeed with Peel and Goulburn.

IV: Wellesley and the Catholic Association: The First Phase 1823–1824

Wellesley found himself hobbled and isolated as a result of his overreaction to the bottle riot when he began reporting on the embryonic Catholic association in June 1823. Unfortunately, the bottle riot coincided with and probably contributed to a sharp diminution in the amount of information Wellesley was forwarding to Peel. There were only two reports on the state of disaffected elements in Ireland between the end of 1822 and June 1823, and only three more prior to 9 December 1823. Goulburn, more methodical, continued to contribute his observations.


47 Peel to Wellesley, 6 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 316–20.

48 "List of Peel's Despatches to the Marquess Wellesley
Wellesley's reticence reinforced Goulburn's conviction that no distinction could be drawn between rural hooliganism and agitation for Catholic relief. 49 It led Grenville and some on the opposition benches at Westminster as well as Catholics in Ireland to conclude that the Orange interest had regained the upper hand; Goulburn, they held, was too strong for the Lord Lieutenant, even with "a fair neutrality on the part of the ministers." 50 Canning agreed. Wellesley's silence of course also enhanced Goulburn's value in the eyes of the conservative faction in the cabinet; Liverpool told Arbuthnot that Goulburn was not only "invaluable" in himself but perfect for Wellesley. "His purity and correctness of character make amends for the defects of the other." 51 Wellesley was therefore on the defensive when the Catholic association made its appearance on the Irish scene.

To his credit Wellesley seems to have been the first to perceive that the Catholic association was the seed from which a mighty tree could grow. As early as May 1823 Wellesley

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50 Buckingham to Plunket, 21 December 1823, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 141.

51 Liverpool to Arbuthnot, 2 October 1823, printed in
applied to his Solicitor general Henry Joy for an opinion on whether the Catholic association was illegal. Joy replied that its constitution appeared to violate neither the common law definition of unlawful assembly nor the 1793 act against representative societies.\(^{52}\) Plunket agreed, as did Peel.\(^{53}\) In June Wellesley wrote to Peel predicting that the new body, though yet feeble, would shortly constitute a formidable problem for the government and recommended that legislation be devised to curb it in its infancy.\(^{54}\) In July Wellesley again referred the matter to his law officers in an attempt to determine whether O'Connell had violated the law. Again they replied that he had not.

For the remainder of the year Wellesley turned his attention to other matters. Peel was left to brood over the heavy packet of despatches on this question which Wellesley had despatched in June.\(^{55}\) Peel was not easily

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Arbuthnott, Correspondence, p. 45.

\(^{52}\) Henry Joy to Wellesley, 12 May 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37301, ff. 57-58.

\(^{53}\) Peel to Wellesley, 16 May 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40324, ff. 156-57

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 29 June 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37301, ff. 154-56.

\(^{55}\) Gash, Peel, pp. 383-84.
persuaded that O'Connell could fashion a mass organisation capable of evading the government's powers as set down under the 1793 convention act, an 1819 act regulating public meetings, and the insurrection act, which was duly renewed. The law officers could not be induced to change their minds. Wellesley therefore initiated a system of regular reporting from within the precincts of the Catholic association. The first transcriber was soon discovered, but he was quickly replaced, and hundreds of pages of testimony were compiled concerning every detail of the association's public and private affairs. On the basis of these reports Wellesley concluded at year's end that his June 1823 predictions were correct. After consulting Plunket and Joy he drafted a bill for Peel's inspection in January 1824.

Peel's position had not changed. He argued that in view of the precarious state of the Catholic question it would be difficult to secure approval for legislation

56 Ibid.
57 Wellesley to Peel, 30 November 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 9-15.
"so insignificant a body." He remained convinced that existing legislation was "sufficient to enable you to contend with any probable evil which may arise out of the proceedings of the association." Furious at Peel's refusal to take his advice more seriously, Wellesley once more retreated into a period of silence on the Catholic issue.

Events, nevertheless, continued to underscore the growing importance of the association. If Wellesley fell silent, Gregory did not, and his reports eventually prompted Peel to urge Goulburn to confer with Wellesley about the movement. Goulburn consulted Wellesley in April. Wellesley continued to sulk but Plunket was sent over with another draft bill designed to suppress dangerous confederacies. Peel eventually rejected this one as well, but he was clearly bothered about the Catholic movement, as he had not been before.

Wellesley kept his own counsel almost to the end of 1824. He vented his anger on his good friend Plunket immediately after his January draft bill on associations was rejected:

60 Wellesley to Peel, 22 June 1823, National Library of Ireland, Wellesley MSS 322.

61 Goulburn to Peel, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 35, 39, cited in Gash, Peel, p. 387.
This country is in the most tremendous condition, and I am left without support or countenance to submit to the kicks of the ass and the dirt of the monkey. The suppression of my despatch on this great question is an ignominy, an insult not to be endured. It is a sequel of the same plan of extinction, which, on the questions of the statue, the riot, the Orange, the ribbon confederacies, by concealing my opinions, reduced me to the condition of a villain and slave on a mock throne, and rendered me an object of ridicule and contempt to a country which would have hailed me with respect if I had not been crushed by pretended candor at Whitehall.

Wellesley was determined to resign:

From such a condition I pant release. Although far gone in years, much broken in health, and much afflicted in spirit, I have powers enough remaining to meet any and all of my compeers in my place in the house of Lords ... free from office and prepared for battle.62

To Peel he declared that because of differences of opinion among his own advisors and the absence of any clear directive from the cabinet, he was not able to take any positive measures against the Catholic association or any other dangerous body.63 Hid did not resign, however; his finances were such that he could not afford to. Goulburn endured his silence patiently, attributing it mistakenly to Wellesley's desire to protect his alleged reputation "as an able writer and great statesman" by mulling over "every point until the moment is passed when a knowledge of his sentiments

62 Wellesley to Plunket, 19 March 1824, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 145.

63 Gash, Peel, p. 388.
would have been useful."64 It was not this at all. Events would gradually vindicate the "enchained" viceroy's demands for new powers until then he would pursue a course of ostentatious helplessness.

Wellesley ignored Peel and Goulburn, but he did not also neglect the Catholic association. His sulking smacked of theatrics, but not more. He continued to read reports pouring in from his agents. The exercise was profitable. By the end of 1824 Wellesley had refined his own perspective; as Professor Galen Broeker has noted, "it was Wellesley who was finally able to separate the activities of the agrarian secret societies from those of the association, thus enabling the Irish government and the cabinet to drop their military preparations and concentrate on less spectacular methods of breaking the power of O'Connell and his organisation."65 When O'Connell at length overstepped the bounds of legal propriety and wished that a "Bolivar" might appear in Ireland Wellesley was prepared to resume an active role in coping with the great emancipator.

Suddenly in November Wellesley found himself at the center of new efforts to match wits with O'Connell. By the

64 Goulburn to Peel, 26 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 235-36.
65 Shawe to Liverpool, 6 December 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40304, cited in Broeker, Rural, pp. 164-65.
end of 1824 the association had grown ominously powerful. Priests collected the rent, or dues. Catholic and Protestant gentry joined the association in order to protect their political flanks in upcoming elections. The country became perfectly quiet. The law officers could not yet discover evidence of violation of existing laws or any disturbances to the peace; thus Wellesley reported to Peel in November. Proceeded by Goulburn's increasingly alarmist reports, this probably convinced Peel that more drastic legislation was in order. Now Peel, a full year behind Wellesley, picked up the threads of the viceroy's argument: the association threatened to control Ireland; it could not be curbed by existing legislation; an appeal to parliament would focus attention on the gravity of the danger.

Peel's conversion was complete. Unfortunately, Wellesley could not forebear reminding Peel that a year earlier he had "submitted to the judgement of superior wisdom and authority" when a contrary point of view was urged, and that it was now perhaps too late to rectify


67 Wellesley to Peel, 30 November 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 9-15.

68 Gash, Peel, p. 389.
the error. He reminded Peel that he "had not shrunk from vigorous measures" and that now the responsibility for the intolerable state of affairs rested with others "who had a different view of the danger." This angered Peel and Goulburn. Peel repaired to his records and reminded Wellesley that neither draft of legislation for the suppression of associations submitted by Wellesley had contained a statement recommending these measures to the cabinet. Wellesley's practice of simply sending over complicated bills without any expression of his own views, Peel told Goulburn, was "not a manly and straightforward course and it leaves you and me in a position in which we ought not to be placed." Goulburn agreed; Wellesley was "always the first to impute the difficulty to others." 

This interesting little exchange does not reflect great credit on any of the participants. Wellesley certainly need not have condemned Peel for having changed his mind; after all, this was what Wellesley set out to do. Peel's

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69 Peel to Wellesley, 18 December 1824, NLI, Wellesley MSS 322; Wellesley to Peel, 20 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 205-206.

70 Peel to Goulburn, 2 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 161-62.

71 Ibid., 22 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 218-19.

72 Goulburn to Peel, 8 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 173.
defence contrived to suggest that Peel had no inkling that legislation prepared and forwarded by Wellesley reflected the viceroy's views; this is very strained; and it says something about Goulburn's undeviating loyalty to Peel that he would accept it.

Agreed on measures, however ungraciously, Wellesley and Peel thus quarreled over questions of honour. The spat was unedifying and not very useful, but it reflected the intensity of the antagonism between Peel and Goulburn on one hand and Wellesley on the other. Peel and Goulburn gained no credit by attempting to implicate Wellesley their reasons for previously opposing special legislation against associations. Wellesley had sent Plunket, his closest friend, to London with the legislation; surely the cabinet needed no further evidence of Wellesley's support than this. Blame lay on both sides.

A flurry of correspondence between Wellesley and Peel in November and December 1825 marked an end to Wellesley's isolation. Peel demanded a categorical statement of support on the need for new powers to cope with the Catholic association. Wellesley supplied this on 10 December.73 Wellesley added, however, that the legislation

73 Wellesley to Peel, 10 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 31-45.
must include the Orange lodges as well. Despite a disinclination on their part to punish the Orange lodges, Peel also added his formal approval to the Wellesley proposal 15 December. By private letter Wellesley discouraged plans to convene a special session of parliament and added that "some preliminary inquiry will certainly be necessary previous to any legislative enactment." In this Wellesley was probably tweaking Peel's nose; if it took a year and more to convince Peel of the necessity of such legislation, surely the country would demand to be convinced as well. Wellesley also managed to scandalise Goulburn by suggesting that he as Lord Lieutenant have a private meeting with leaders of the Catholic association in an effort to find a compromise settlement.

Peel addressed himself to Wellesley's proposals and soon put to paper his reasons why an inquiry was both useless and dangerous. His efforts went for naught, as perhaps he anticipated, for Wellesley proceeded to submit

74 Wellesley to Peel, 10 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 31-45.

75 Peel to Goulburn, 15 December 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 284-85.

76 Wellesley to Peel, 4 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, f. 25; Gash, Peel, p. 391.

77 Goulburn to Peel, 31 December 1825, BM, Peel MSs 40331, f. 281.
the proposal for an inquiry officially, as Peel had complained in the past that the viceroy was too often negligent in doing, and thought no more about it. The cabinet decided against an inquiry. Goulburn took the bill to parliament as soon as it convened early in 1825.

While Peel, Goulburn and the cabinet wrestled with a bill capable of containing O'Connell's association, Wellesley and Plunket moved against O'Connell himself in another area. The Catholic hero had celebrated the winter season by voicing a hope that a "Bolivar would see his way clear to redeem Ireland from its oppressors." The hope thus expressed not only implied that Ireland would welcome a liberator, but it delivered a blow to Canning's policy of sympathetic neutrality towards the liberators of Latin America. It is difficult to determine whether the implied treason or the implied criticism of Canning's foreign policy angered the cabinet more. Peel and Goulburn probably resented the affront to the established government; Wellesley perhaps wanted to vindicate Canning. The suitable response in both cases was to prosecute O'Connell. By doing so the

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78 Peel-Wellesley correspondence, 6-11 December 1824, Public Record Office, Home Office MSS 100, f. 211.

79 Parker, Peel, I, 356.
prevailing impression in some quarters of government connivance in support of the association in return for its assistance in maintaining law and order would be challenged. A bold strike would take the wind out of the sales of Protestant extremists, including a Protestant demagogue particularly bothersome to Wellesley, the Reverend Harcourt Lees.

In characteristic fashion, Wellesley decided to prosecute O'Connell before consulting the cabinet. He justified his precipitous action by explaining that he did not want the cabinet to conclude that Canning had pressured him smite O'Connell for having referred to Bolivar. 80 He also proposed to bring charges against Harcourt Lees on the grounds that he was urging Protestants to arm themselves in preparation for an imminent Catholic revolt. Wellesley was well aware that juries would not bring in a verdict of guilty against a leading light of the Orange movement, and he probably also anticipated that O'Connell would also be set free in order to embarrass the Irish government. If they did, it would vindicate Wellesley's complaint that a lack of support for an aggressive policy in London allowed the forces of the extremists to conduct their affairs with impunity. 81

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80 Goulburn to Peel, 15 September 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 111-12.
81 Ibid.
soon fathomed the testy viceroy's true motives. He told Goulburn that the prosecutions were likely to fail, and that the embarrassment would be painful. But he manfully went on record in support of Wellesley's plan. To no one's surprise, both Harcourt Lees and O'Connell were acquitted in turn. Plunket's list of triumphs as Attorney general, as Peel noted wryly, was indeed a short one.

Peel, Goulburn, Canning and the whole cabinet laboured to secure passage of the bill against associations, and the King affixed his assent on 9 March 1825. Wellesley responded by conveying an impression of profound and fatalistic pessimism about the prospects for success. If this attitude was meant to secure his reputation against the possibility that the bill would not work, Wellesley's attitude was soon

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82 Gash, Peel, p. 381; Peel to Wellesley, 18 December 1824, NLI, Wellesley MSS 322.

83 Peel to Liverpool, 30 December 1824, Parker, Peel, I, 356; Reynolds, Catholic, pp. 122-23.

84 Wellesley to Peel, 10 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 31-45; Peel to Wellesley, 27 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37307, f. 78; Wellesley to Peel, 20 December 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 71-72.

85 Wellesley to Peel, 19 January 1825, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 136-50; Peel to Wellesley, 31 January 1825, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 181-85; Wellesley to Peel, 3 February 1825, BM, Wellesley MSS 37303, ff. 189-93.
exactly where Wellesley stood, or if he had any opinion at all. Goulburn at length decided that Wellesley was insincere in his behaviour, that he did not in fact want to face O'Connell in legal proceedings. He confided to Goulburn that new evidence suggested that the Catholic association had begun to weaken during the summer of 1826 and that now, in December, the trend was unmistakable: its rents were declining, and Catholic agitation was moving into less subtle, more violent, and perhaps more desperate channels. Prosecution under these circumstances would only enflame Catholic opinion and arrest the movement's deterioration.

As Goulburn concluded uncharitably but perhaps correctly, Wellesley was eager "to throw the responsibility of acting or forebearing on anyone besides himself." Goulburn and Peel condemned Wellesley's motives, but they accepted his conclusion. Plans to prosecute O'Connell and his lieutenants were dropped.

There was room for criticism of Wellesley's conduct towards the cabinet on grounds other than simply the Catholic

93 Goulburn to Peel, 23 December 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 223.

94 Goulburn to Peel, 17 December 1826, printed in Parker, Peel, I, 429.

95 Peel to Goulburn, 15 December 1826, enclosing note from Wellesley to Peel, 5 December 1826, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS II/16; Gash, Peel, p. 399; Goulburn to Peel, 23 December 1826, printed in Parker, Peel, I, 431.
issue. Wellesley certainly relished playing the cat and mouse game with Peel. He could offer as his defence the premise that Peel solicited Wellesley's advice, or was glad to receive it, when it supported his own prejudices. The viceroy certainly resented finding his powers so circumscribed. As in India or as Foreign secretary, he was better equipped psychologically to make decisions than to offer advice to others and to accept their judgement in return. He had some reason to complain of a want of support from London; the government had been notoriously unhandsome, for instance, in helping Wellesley to pick up the pieces when the effort to prosecute O'Connell for the "Bolivar" speech failed. And on the larger question of how to handle O'Connell and his association Wellesley was not alone in wavering when faced with the prospect of prosecutions; in a moment of unusual candor Peel admitted that legal opinion in Ireland and England never supported a vigorous policy of prosecutions under the act. 96 For the record Peel blamed Wellesley. He wrote in a memorandum prepared for Wellington's cabinet in 1828 that "the position of the government in abandoning the law without having made a trial of it" was "very embarrassing." The executive

96 Peel to Eldon, 10 March 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40315, ff. 295-96; Reynolds, Catholic, p. 119.
government had remained a "quiet spectator of the increasing evil" and was "too much afraid of the possible failure of an attempt to enforce the law." Peel would have been better served had his wisdom showed itself in 1824, when the embryonic association might have been snuffed out. As Reynolds has pointed out, Peel was as adept as Wellesley in playing the game of avoiding prosecution when the association was insignificant for fear it might grow, and of fearing prosecution when the association was strong because failure to convict would prove embarrassing. And finally, Wellesley did not fail to point out that in January 1827 Peel testified in parliament that the ministry had approved entirely the policy of the Irish government under Wellesley relative to O'Connell and the association.

Two other points might be made. Perhaps more emphasis should be placed on Wellesley's early observation (June 1823) that an assault on the Catholic association must be made early or not at all. Once O'Connell had demonstrated to the satisfaction of his coreligionists that the Catholic association

97 Peel, memorandum for the cabinet, 31 March 1828, BM, Peel MSS 40430, ff. 4-9; Plunket to Canning, 18 December 1825, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 224-26.
98 Peel to Wellesley, 3 January 1826, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304, ff. 1-6.
99 Wellesley, memorandum "prepared in consequence of his
would work as an instrument for mass protest, there was little enough that the Irish executive or even the ministry could do. More important perhaps is whether "steady inaction" would not be the best long-term policy in any event.

Catholic emancipation was debated and then conceded in an atmosphere of high tension but extraordinary peace. This was an enormous accomplishment and Wellesley presided in Ireland during a large part of the crucial final phase.

Wellesley would later rank O'Connell (along with Melbourne) as one of the two most unbearable scoundrels he had encountered in British politics. This opinion, however, was the product of an unfortunate episode in 1834, not earlier. In a sense Wellesley probably did take to heart O'Connell's protestations in 1824 that he and the Catholic association were loyal to the crown. Goulburn and Peel recoiled in horror at that time at the prospect of entrusting any portion of the management of Irish affairs to men such as O'Connell. In the decade of the 1820s Wellesley himself might have been willing to bring O'Connell into his confidence, had he been free to do so.

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100 Goulburn to Peel, 10 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 175.

101 Goulburn to Wellesley, 11 March 1826, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304.
When Canning swallowed his pride and returned to the cabinet in 1816 he did so by foreshewing any hopes for early settlement of the Catholic issue. His adhesion, nonetheless, raised Catholics’ hopes that the Liverpool ministry might yet see the wisdom of granting Catholic relief. Until 1820 Canning cultivated his ministerial garden so quietly that he was almost forgotten in Ireland. His relations with the Whigs were uncomfortable, for he had subjected himself to the humility of accepting Castlereagh’s supremacy in the house of Commons without even the prospect of satisfaction on the Catholic issue. Wellesley, at least, could boast some shreds of independence, though his poverty and isolation were such that he envied rather than despised Canning.

Canning could not remain forever the humble supplicant. He championed the Queen on the adultery issue in 1820 and earned the King’s enmity for it. Canning resigned. Liverpool took great pains to prepare for the crucial debates on the government’s policy towards the now deceased Queen in February of the following year. Castlereagh recovered from a series of unimpressive performances as leader of the house of Commons and helped to steady the government. But with Britain’s depression deepening, even a series of parlia-
mentary successes could not retrieve the government's fortunes with the likes of Canning, Brougham and the Grenvilles in simultaneous opposition.

By the end of 1821, therefore, Canning's assistance was again being sought. Canning was in a position to bid for relatively high stakes, because the King was disgruntled enough to think of summoning Lord Grey.

After the King visited Dublin in the autumn of 1821 it was determined that Canning should go out to India. Canning's reasons for going were several. The salary (£30,000 per annum) was attractive, and he was promised a peerage upon his return. More to the point, he saw no future in the Liverpool cabinet. The house of Lords under no circumstances was prepared to concede a measure of Catholic relief, and because George IV refused to part with his Liverpool system, prospects for passage of legislation nullifying restrictions on Catholics were remote.

Castlereagh committed suicide 12 August 1822, even as Canning was boarding ship for India. Castlereagh's death dramatically altered all prevailing assumptions. Any reason for denying the office of Foreign secretary to Canning

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103 Arthur Aspinall, "Canning's Return to Office in September 1822," *English Historical Review*, LXXVIII (1963),
would also see him refuse to proceed to India. The King continued to oppose Canning, but apparently Knighton gradually weakened his resistance. 104 Otherwise only Eldon and Sidmouth voiced objections. Peel professed that he did not wish to stand in the way of Canning's ambitions. If Canning was not admitted, everyone agreed, he would certainly take into opposition not only his immediate colleagues but some portion of the Grenville faction as well. It was also assumed that Wellesley would resign as Lord Lieutenant. Canning and Wellesley would command about forty votes, and, allied to the Whigs, "it would be impossible that any government should stand three weeks," or perhaps even a day. 105

Canning therefore received the Foreign office and the lead in the house of Commons, the "whole inheritance" of the deceased Castlereagh. But Canning returned to office without any further guarantees on the Catholic question. He enjoyed what had been conceded to the accommodating

544n. Aspinall states that there is no direct evidence that Knighton played a pivotal role, but his influence over the King was extraordinary at this time, and Knighton strongly supported Canning now and later.


Grenvillites but no more: a right to initiate a discussion of the Catholic question in the cabinet or in the house of Commons. But his subsequent successes as architect of a foreign policy which gloried in the independence of the Latin American states refurbished his reputation as a liberal and by inference reaffirmed his commitment to Catholic emancipation. His power in the cabinet increased, and by 1824 he and not Wellesley had become the chief hope for the Catholic cause.

Canning's marvelous and unexpected revival altered Wellesley's situation. After 1822 Wellesley grappled with the danger posed "by the noisy fury" of the Catholic association and "the polemical clamor of conflicting religious zealots." Whenever Wellesley moved against the Catholic association Grenville complained that Wellesley was being dominated by Goulburn "despite a fair neutrality on the part of the other ministers." Canning tended to agree and began to lecture Wellesley's friends on the need for the viceroy to pursue, or at least appear to pursue, a more...
decidedly Catholic line. Liverpool indulged Canning's "liberal" foreign policy initiatives, and this was interpreted as evidence that Liverpool could be persuaded to move forward on the Catholic question as well. This, however, Canning could not do, and he tended to satisfy his urging to advance the Catholic issue by applying pressure on Wellesley instead. The Catholic question remained an open one, but there was as yet no movement. With Canning's fortunes on the mend prospects increased for a resumption of active debate within the cabinet. If this happened, London might be unable to supply any clear policy directives to Wellesley in Ireland.

In 1824 Canning betrayed openly his dissatisfaction with the dormant status of the Catholic question. O'Connell's Bolivar speech, while embarrassing to him personally, demonstrated how difficult it would be in the future to isolate foreign policy from domestic issues. Wellesley reinforced Canning's prejudices. He declared to the cabinet's conservatives that he could not proceed forever to conduct affairs in Ireland if the cabinet refused to face the

109 Canning to Plunket, 27 December 1823, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 144.


111 Parker, Peel, I, 356.
Catholic issue squarely. 112

In the summer of 1824 Canning threw a scare into Liverpool by announcing that he would like to pay a visit to Wellesley in Ireland. This request alarmed the conservative faction of the ministry. Goulburn could not but think, along with other Tories, that a Catholic plot was about to hatch. "He cannot come for the sake of passing a week in retirement with Lord Wellesley, whom he has delighted to laugh at," Goulburn observed. Fortunately, he added, although Wellesley was making elaborate plans to build up interest in Canning's visit, most of Dublin society planned to snub him. 113 Liverpool probably doubted Canning's discretion if faced with an enthusiastic Irish audience. But he gave Canning permission to go after extracting "promises of good behaviour." Canning insisted that the visit was necessary if he was to be informed fully about the Catholic question. He promised that the visit would be strictly private and that he would go nowhere without the viceroy in tow. 114

Canning kept his word; the visit passed off entirely

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112 Wellesley to Sidmouth, 5 March 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37302, f. 173.

113 Goulburn to Peel, 9 September 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 105.

114 Brock, Liverpool, pp. 245-46.
without incident. No record of conversation between Canning and Wellesley seems to have survived. It is probable that O'Connell was much discussed, and Canning may have been reinforced in his opinion that without early concessions to Catholics Ireland might prove ungovernable. Wellesley undoubtedly tried to impress on Canning directly what Peel up to this point had not wanted to hear: that the Catholic association was already the most powerful extra-governmental force in Ireland and in many respects was the nation's primary agency of social control.

Early in 1825 events in parliament forced the cabinet to address itself to the Catholic question. The initiative came from Francis Burdett and others, but Huskisson, Canning and Plunket spoke in parliament in favour of bills which promised full political rights to Catholics and financial support for their clergy. At first Liverpool dispaired of holding the government together. Catholic relief attracted large majorities in the house of Commons. Liverpool was dissuaded from resigning only just in time to help stem the tide in the house of Lords.

115 Failure of the Catholic emancipation issue in the Lords

115 For a full discussion of events see Machin, "Catholic," p. 465.
led most observers to anticipate the early resignation of both Canning and Wellesley. In supporting the bill Canning had remained within the limits of the ministerial compact; Wellesley, however, was forbidden to take a stand on the issue and the King condemned his valiant attempts to support Canning and to remain neutral at the same time as "deceptive."\textsuperscript{116} Canning was persuaded at length not to resign.\textsuperscript{117} In a special cabinet session, however, Canning declared that if in the future Ireland should be agitated because of the cabinet's refusal to concede Catholic demands, and if fresh penal legislation was called for as a result of these disturbances, Canning would resist such measures and retire from office.\textsuperscript{118}

This did not qualify as a forthright stand: "Canning's stand," Hobhouse confided to his diary, "is as much like a fall as possible."\textsuperscript{119} It certainly made Wellesley's work more difficult. In letters to Plunket the viceroy bemoaned his shackled condition. Canning recognised, nonetheless, that an attempt to form a pro-Catholic government would still fail; the house of Lords and the King himself were

\textsuperscript{116}The King to Peel, 1 February 1825, Parker, \textit{Peel}, I, 370.


\textsuperscript{118}J. C. Hobhouse, diary entry, 27 May 1825, cited in Machin, "Catholic," p. 481.

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid.
still violently opposed. An open system must continue for an indefinite period; an election would most likely reinforce the "no-popery" cause. For his part Wellesley was left to deal with the storms of the Catholic issue in Ireland while Canning sailed the comparatively placid seas of British foreign policy.

VI: Wellesley and Law and Order

It has been observed that the grievances of Catholic landlords and middle classes were political, but that those of the Irish peasantry were economic. Both groups were united in their antipathy towards Britain, but for different reasons. The island's condition called for ruthless land reform, but such an assault on property rights would have angered the very group of Catholics who demanded access to political power and who used lower class unrest to further these ends. If large scale land reform was unlikely, radical political concessions were even more remote. As long as political power remained largely in the hands of the wealthy landed interest and gentry in England they were unlikely to part with either the basis of their

120 Machin, "Catholic," p. 482.

political power or the benefits derived from that base. In Britain the potentially explosive situation was gradually eased as industrialisation provided landless peasants a chance to find new sources of employment. But the industrial revolution came only to Ulster, and on a small scale at that. What could be done to bring tranquility to Ireland?

Sidmouth had panicked in November 1821 not because he feared an explosion over the Catholic question but because of reports of civil unrest. Wellesley was sent to Ireland notwithstanding his dangerously pro-Catholic sympathies because it was thought he could exercise his naturally authoritarian temperament to maintain law and order there. In the absence of any inclination by the cabinet to press for substantial political or economic reforms, there was little Wellesley could do to ameliorate Ireland’s distress except to apply the law efficiently and fairly.

When Wellesley reached Dublin on 28 December 1821 he found the city in a state of alarm. The castle gates were shut and the guard had been strengthened at key points in the city. Wellesley immediately concluded that both Catholics and Protestants were fearful of an attack by each other and claimed later that within a few days tranquility had been restored to Dublin by leaving the castle doors open
and exuding an air of confidence. Out of Dublin the situation was even more serious. Limerick, Cork, and Tipperary were reported to be in a state of virtual anarchy, with "banditti" controlling the countryside and ravaging at will. Wellesley later claimed that his inspection of conditions here convinced him that these disturbances "had no connection with political or religious causes." They were related instead to onerous rents, tithes, and a general appetite for plunder.

In his first several months Wellesley pestered London with solutions for these problems. He recommended several important innovations in law enforcement procedures; he tried hard to procure reliable, timely and abundant information from all parts of the island; he berated local magistrates, a most unreliable lot, and he may have frightened some of them into a more efficient execution of their duties; he introduced Catholics into the magistracy; and, in the fashion of the times, he recommended severe sentences, especially transportation.

In Peel's eyes Wellesley's most important task was to supply the ministry with adequate and reliable information.

122 Shawe, "Sketch," printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 301.

Before 1821 the government had much reason to be dissatisfied with the quality of the information at its disposal. Even as the Earl of Mornington Wellesley had often been surprised to discover how different, usually for the worse, Irish affairs looked from the vantage point of London rather than Dublin. Dublin castle had long relied on a network of informers who supplied the usual collection of horror stories about Catholic outrages either without any pretence of analysis or perhaps with a heavy pro-Orange bias as a substitute. There was, inevitably, a strong inclination to see a conspiracy in everything. Not only were the reports unsatisfactory in themselves, but they were often directed to the wrong parties. Many were sent to the staff of Dublin castle, where the strongly entrenched Protestant bureaucracy suppressed a few and relayed the remainder to those sympathetic to their point of view. Wellesley complained that many despatches, including those most hostile to Wellesley himself, often went directly to London without even the courtesy of a copy to him.124

Wellesley’s initial display of energy was directed towards putting an end to all this. He devoted most of January 1822 to dictating a series of despatches on all

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124 Annual Register, LXIV (1822), 13.
aspects of Ireland's law and order problem: magistrates; incidences and causes of peasant unrest; tithes; defects in existing legislation. In this period Wellesley established a salutary system for monitoring the condition of Ireland. He discouraged the employment of secret informers, who were often motivated by private grudges. Instead he depended on local officials and published their reports, a practice which inclined them to honesty. The new police establishment provided additional sources of information. Even his opponents agreed that Wellesley's use of the information thus obtained was commendable. Gregory noted that Wellesley insisted on elaborate and analytical presentations, and that he read them thoroughly. Before writing a dispatch, Goulburn recorded, Wellesley encouraged members of his staff to express their views in great detail. He listened patiently. Later, after completing the draft, he was much less inclined to suffer others' suggestions. He had made his decision.

Certainly Peel was pleased. These were submitted to him on 3, 11, 19, 27, 29 and 31 January 1822.

125 Shawe, "Sketch," printed in Aspinall, George IV, 303.
127 Goulburn to Peel, 17 December 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 305.
Goulburn that the reports were "very detailed, very unaffected," and free of exaggeration. These, plus "an affecting account of two or three burnings, cardings" etc. would meet parliamentary requirements for whatever enforcement legislation the ministry might request. Other despatches which passed over Peel's desk were enriched with Wellesley's marginal notations. Peel had no reason to complain of a dearth of material; indeed, there was probably too much to digest readily. Peel and Liverpool passed the bulk of the material on to parliament. Opponents of granting Dublin castle wider policy powers still complained, perhaps ritually, that these reports were not detailed enough.

Suddenly, he tired of his reporting function. In the middle of February he concluded that his reports on the state of Ireland were often self-contradictory. More perspective was required, and he decided to submit future

129 Peel to Goulburn, 24 January 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 13.
131 Peel to Wellesley, 16 February 1822, printed in Patriot, Peel, I, 311.
132 Ibid., 9 February 1822, p. 3.
133 Ibid., 14 February 1822, p. 4.
reports bimonthly. Inevitably complaints began to arrive from London, especially when Wellesley's productivity slackened in other respects as well. In June Goulburn complained to William Gregory that Wellesley had not answered Goulburn's inquiry regarding the feasibility of reducing famine through an expansion of public works projects. Wellesley wrote on the back of the letter that "Mr. Goulburn and Mr. Peel receive regularly by every mail every necessary and practicable information." They did not, and thus began a series of complaints from London which Wellesley alternately ignored and stifled with sheaves of reports ranging from valuable suggestions for practical improvements to "progressive relief" from "every vexation which the legislative or executive power can remove." Peel's opinion, however, was somewhat less complimentary, and after 1822 he approached every session of parliament in trepidation lest he not receive enough information to support bills Goulburn and he planned to sponsor.

Wellesley's role in fashioning new law enforcement

134 Wellesley to Peel, 1 May 1822, NLI, Wellesley MSS 322.
135 Gregory, Letter-Box, p. 190.
136 Wellesley to Peel, 9 April 1823, printed in Parker, Peel, I, 501.
legislation during the 1820s has long been a matter of some dispute. While he held office parliament imposed an insurrection act for three consecutive years, enacted the Irish county constabular act, and reformed the magistracy. Of the three, the insurrection acts were perhaps the least innovative. Wellesley himself upon arriving in Ireland hoped not to have to ask for it. His "new confidence" policy, however, never permeated the provinces. By mid-January 1822 it was necessary to arrest and indict a large number of "banditti" apprehended in the south. Wellesley recoiled at the prospect of imposing a large number of death sentences and recommended transportation in most cases instead. 137 Juries were less tender-hearted, and by mid-February the assizes had produced thirty-six capital convictions. 138 Peel and Goulburn feared that Wellesley might proclaim a general amnesty before a salutary number of executions had taken place. 139 Wellesley indeed proceeded to grant an amnesty in return for a surrender of lethal weapons. By May he was prepared to concede defeat in the use of conciliatory tactics and eventually took a much

137 Wellesley to Peel, 21 January 1822, London, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 203.

138 Plunket to Wellesley, 26 February 1823, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 203.

139 Broecker, Rural, p. 138.
On 3 January 1822, less than a week after his arrival, Wellesley began the process which would lead to an insurrection act. He told Sidmouth, now in his final weeks as Home secretary, what he already suspected; that violence was widespread and special powers were needed to combat it. An application for what was commonly called as "insurrection Act," or more accurately a special act to suppress violence, was debated between Goulburn and Wellesley in the middle of January and was sent to Peel on 24 January. The immediate problem was Munster, where in Wellesley's words chaos "bordered on rebellion." The young people in north Cork had fled to encampments in the hills; it was fortunate that the "banditti" were poorly organised. Wellesley's alarm was such that he allowed Goulburn to shape the terms of the proposed bill, something which surprised and pleased Peel. Goulburn supplied a bill which placed stronger policy powers in the hands of local magistrates than Wellesley

140 Wellesley to Peel, 27 April 1823, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 208.
141 Wellesley to Sidmouth, 3 January 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, ff. 11-12.
142 Wellesley to Goulburn, 18 January 1822, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, Acc. 319, II/22; Goulburn to Peel, 18 January 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 7; Wellesley to Peel, 31 January 1822, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 203; 2 Hansard VI (1822), 104-50, 163-219; Broeker, Rural, pp. 134-35.
143 Wellesley to Peel, 29, 31 January 1822, PRO, Home
would have preferred. The cabinet approved the proposal by 5 February but limited its duration to the current session of parliament in order to make it more popular. A separate bill authorised suspension of habeas corpus. In parliament the Whigs suggested that Wellesley himself be given almost unlimited powers but that the largely Protestant magistracy not be granted additional prerogatives. Wellesley obliged Peel by forwarding further reports predicting open rebellion among the peasantry unless he received additional powers. Both bills were approved as submitted 11 February with a limit of one year.

The provisions of the insurrection act were Draconian. A quorum of several justices of the peace in an affected area could request that the Lord Lieutenant declare a county or borough or town to be in a state of disturbance. Magistrates were empowered to arrest "suspicious" persons in any area so proclaimed. Magistrates were also permitted without

Office MSS 100, f. 203; Broeker, Rural, p. 134.

144 Goulburn to Peel, 24 January 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 13.

145 Peel to Wellesley, 5 February 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 152.

146 2 Hansard VI (1822), 104-50, 163-219.

warrant to enter houses in proclaimed districts from one hour after sunset to one hour after sunrise. An important feature of the act was the use of troops in these situations. The effectiveness of the army as a mechanism of social control had long been blunted, Wellington told Peel, because they had been spread too thin over the Irish landscape. Now they could be concentrated and used effectively as long as the district was subject to terms of the act.  

Penalties were severe, and arrests were authorised for a wide variety of acts. The possession of arms constituted sufficient reason for arrest and incarceration until the first act lapsed in August 1822. Those apprehended outside their dwellings during the curfew period might be transported for seven years. Punishments were also reserved for secret oaths and seditious publications. Restrictions were imposed on the importation of arms for seven years.  

Ireland divided along political lines as to the appropriateness of the acts. Some agitated areas witnessed

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149 Patriot, 14 February 1822, p. 2.

150 Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, 3 George IV (London 1822), pp. 1-12, 15-23.
contests between factions of the local leadership as to whether their districts should be proclaimed. At every level there was fear that the powers of the act would be used excessively. The large number of death sentences meted out by a special commission sitting in Cork proved to be a sobering factor. In London there were fears that Wellesley would exploit his own extensive authority; power to suspend habeas corpus was the most worrisome, and Goulburn was happy to be able to assure Peel that Wellesley was resorting to it sparingly.

In parliament Newport threatened to produce a motion on the state of Ireland which would focus attention on the government's policies. He did not; Goulburn concluded that Newport realised that he would be defeated easily in any vote; Newport himself said that although he saw no point in attempting to restoring law and order without redressing grievances at the same time, he preferred the awesome powers to be in Wellesley's hands than entrusted to someone else.

151 Patriot, February 1822, p. 2 and 5 March 1822, p. 4; Dublin Evening Post, 12 March 1822, p. 3, and 14 March 1822, p. 3.
152 Wellesley to Peel, 9, 16 February 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, ff. 174-76; Spencer Walpole, History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815 (5 vols.; London, 1878-86), II, 277.
153 Goulburn to Peel, 4 May 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 61.
154 Richard Wellesley to Wellesley, 25 April 1822, BM,
less sensitive to Ireland's real problems.

At length Ireland became more tranquil. Perhaps the measures were effective. Perhaps starvation dampened the spirit of rebellion, as Wellesley assured London it would. Britain enjoyed a modest recovery from the post-war slump and this ameliorated conditions in Ireland at least slightly. And it may be that reform of Ireland's law enforcement mechanisms had their effect. But the improvement was only marginal. The insurrection act was renewed in 1823 after Wellesley urged strongly that it must be retained. Wherever its provisions were suspended, he reported in what was a dismal comment on long term prospects for Ireland, violence resumed. Some areas, he predicted, would remain troublesome almost indefinitely.

As a concession to his friends in the Whig interest

Wellesley MSS 37315, ff. 268-69; Goulburn to Wellesley, 23 April 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 94-95.

156 Wellington to Peel, 27 February 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40306; Peel to Wellesley, 12 April 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40324; Broeker, Rural, pp. 138-39.

157 Wellesley to Peel, 1 May 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, f. 108.

recommended upon the first occasion of applying to parliament for renewal of the act that the power vested in him to suspend habeas corpus be dropped. He asked instead for legislation to deal with secret societies more effectively than was possible under the insurrection acts. Government agents, he reported, had put various groups under strict surveillance and had watched their leaders engage in secret oathgiving ceremonies. It was difficult under current conditions to curb this practice, and he urged that English legislation dating from 1799 related to this practice be extended to Ireland. Under the English act all members of organisations linked to secret oaths were liable to transportation, even if oath-taking and oath-giving could not be proven.  

Peel does not seem to have thought much of Wellesley's proposal.

By 1824 the case for renewing the insurrection act was losing some of its persuasiveness. In the first place it was not very effective against those of the disaffected who worked alone: arsonists, in particular, were difficult to apprehend. It was also disturbing that agitation

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159 Wellesley to Peel, 27 June 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, ff. 246-27.

160 Wellesley to Peel, 8 April 1823, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 208.
seemed to be related more directly to agricultural conditions than to the application of special legislation. Wellesley exasperated London by refusing to declare himself for or against renewal for the year 1824 until the eve of the parliamentary session. They he advised Peel and Goulburn that he would prefer a formula which granted him powers which he could hold in reserve. Peel was not pleased with this performance, but he agreed to ask for another extension of the act.

Goulburn drew from the correspondence of 1823 on this subject that he should begin early in 1824 to secure a further renewal for 1825. He assumed that Wellesley and Peel would support the extension and he made all the necessary plans to sway parliament. But in November Ireland settled into an almost universal peace. Wellesley gave himself much of the credit for the tranquility. He adverted to the reform of law enforcement agencies and to several other initiatives on his part. "Every measure, insurrection act, police, tithe bill, revisions of the magistry, petty session, better administration of the law, has succeeded beyond

161 Blacker to Goulburn, 30 July 1823, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 204.

my most sanguine hopes." Peel had already concluded that neither parliament's temper nor Wellesley's "in reserve" proposal was worth the difficulties attendant upon renewal. The government decided to rely on the reforms which Wellesley had seen fit to praise so highly.

What was Wellesley's contribution to some of the reforms he listed? Wellesley took credit for the Irish constables act of 1822, at least for those portions of it which reduced the control exercised by the largely venal local magistracy over policy resources. Professor Broeker has attributed to Peel an outline for a new corps responsible to and serving under the direction of the Lord Lieutenant, by virtue of a plan Peel recovered from his tenure as chief secretary and forwarded to Wellesley in 1822. This communication, probably one from Peel dated 12 April, was not particularly elaborate and conceded less power to the viceroy than Wellesley sought. But Wellesley's correspondence includes a despatch to Peel dated 31 January

164 Goulburn to Peel, 16 September 1824, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 210.
165 Broeker, Rural, p. 104.
166 Peel to Wellesley, 12 April 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, f. 54.
promising to submit a proposal for reform of the police and magistracy within a few days, and talking of it in enough detail to suggest that he had in hand a detailed draft. He may not have sent it, but he may have drawn heavily on his own thinking when subsequently he discussed the bill with Goulburn. He did impress on Goulburn the need to reduce local influence, and most of the provisions which were eventually deleted may well have been his. If so, then Wellesley's influence was limited largely to implementing rather than writing the legislation.

Originally the bill was intended to provide new resources to complement the ancient yeomanry and the peace preservation force created in 1816. The yeomanry was strongly identified with the Orange movement, and the peace preservation force had been flunted by local magistrates' resistance to the concept of control by a central authority. By placing the entire magistry under the authority of castle-appointed officials, Peel, Goulburn and Wellesley hoped to combine the virtues (few as they were) of the yeomanry as a permanently operating police force and those of the peace preservation force, which was subject to more centralised

167 Wellesley to Peel, 31 January 1822, NLI, Wellesley MSS 322.

168 Broeker, Rural, pp. 146-47.
control but could be employed only in a proclaimed area. The dramatic modernity of the bill united against it many Whigs and Ireland's gentry. The former feared the dangers posed to the constitution by concentrating such power in the viceroy's hands. The latter feared the loss of traditional patronage privileges and camouflaged this in part by claiming that the proposal was designed to augment the viceroy's patronage powers in an awesome way.

These objections did not suffice to destroy the bill; Ireland's conditions demanded nothing less than a centrally directed police force. Nonetheless, a great many of the stronger elements of the bill were eliminated. Thus as enacted it limited the viceroy's right of appointment to a small number of senior positions. Magistrates were to fill the remainder. The viceroy could dismiss some magistracy appointees and in this way exercise something of a check over the calibre of Ireland's new national agency for promoting law and order.

Wellesley considered the bill inadequate, but even as such it was preferable to none at all. It was possible

169 Annual Register, LXIV (1822), 43-48.
170 Broeker, Rural, pp. 146-47, 234-35.
171 Wellesley to Goulburn, 16 June 1822, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, Acc. 319, II/22.
to effect some important changes if Wellesley chose to interpret certain provisions of the law to his advantage. It relieved him, in the first place, of a need to rely on the yeomanry corps, which he flatly refused to use because of their Orange connections. He allowed the yeomanry to join the new organisation, but he would not permit them to dominate it or wear their traditional insignia. He hounded magistrates and satisfied himself that many of them had come to fear him enough to abandon some of their disgraceful patronage practices. They appointed at least a few capable law enforcement officers. On the whole Wellesley was satisfied with his progress. Some colleagues in a position to evaluate the efficacy of the changes agreed. In writing to the Marquess of Lansdowne in August 1827 William Lamb (the future Prime minister Melbourne) considered Wellesley to deserve a great deal of credit in this area, and indeed feared that much of what he had accomplished might be lost under a Lord Lieutenant "who has not the same knowledge either of the principles or of the details of business of this nature."  

172 Wellesley to Peel, 22 June 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40324; Broeker, Rural, p. 122.

173 Senior, Orangeism, p. 200.

Reform of the magistracy itself was a simpler exercise, and here the initiative clearly did not rest with Wellesley. The Irish justices of the peace had long sported a scandalous reputation; the bench was "filled by brewsters, maltsters, distillers and blackrent landlords." 175 Peel had concluded shortly after his arrival in Ireland in 1812 that a revision of the magistracy lists was in order. In 1816 Saurin had urged him to proceed slowly, for the reforms envisioned would be "very wounding for the feelings of many loyal good men" who might lose their seats on the bench. At any rate, he added, no reform could leave men of rank and fortune off the bench, although they were the "chief mischief makers." 176 Peel had desisted. Now, however, Peel was prepared to suggest to Wellesley a complete revision of the list, even though this might mean that in some areas no one would be qualified to sit on the bench. 177 Wellesley accepted the proposal but insisted that all further suggestions for reform receive his approval. Peel was indeed eager to have Wellesley submit his own recommendations and assured Wellesley that the government was prepared to act on

175 Thomas Flynn to Peel, 30 April 1816, BM, Peel MSS 40253.
176 Saurin to Peel, 4 April 1816, BM, Peel MSS 40211.
177 Peel to Wellesley, 12 April 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298.
Passage of the constables act of August 1822 increased the need for revision of the lists inasmuch as the magistrates retained the right to appoint the constables. By the end of the year a new list of magistrates had been prepared. Wellesley admitted that in many respects the new list was "not perfect" and would require "frequent and careful reconsideration." But Wellesley believed that even the publicity which attended the revision process had prompted an improvement in Irish magistrates' conduct. His optimism was misplaced. When agitation for Catholic relief increased sharply after 1825, the magistracy proved inadequate to its task. Wellesley's correspondence continued to reflect a healthy lack of confidence in the magistracy, but as long as parliament opposed concentration of authority in the hands of the viceroy he doubted little could be done. He tried to manage without the services of the magistrates rather than pursue further reform. The problem, as he saw it, was one of defective institutions: in Ireland as in India, the proper solution was reform from above rather than change the existing system.

178 Peel to Goulburn, 12 September 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 133.
179 Wellesley to Peel, 29 January 1823, PRO, Home Office MSS 100, f. 208.
180 Broeker, Rural, pp. 150-51; Saurin to Peel, 4 April 1816, BM, Peel MSS 40211.
Part of the reason for endemic unrest in rural Ireland was connected to the tithe. In theory the tithe was based on the ancient formula that ten percent of the renewable produce of the land (crops and fruits, for example, but not minerals) was reserved to the support of the established church. The system was extraordinarily cumbersome and in much of Europe's tithes had been commuted to a money payment or abolished by other means either at the Reformation or during the French revolution. In the British Isles, however, the tithe for the most part was assumed by the appropriate Protestant churches. Early in the eighteenth century the Irish house of Commons, entirely Protestant in composition but not always on amicable terms with the clergy of its own church, extinguished tithe on pasture by the highly irregular procedure of a resolution of the house. The tithe, therefore, remained for all practical purposes as a tax on the largely Catholic cultivator class. Beginning in 1760 the established church encountered increasing resistance among Catholics and law enforcement authorities were not always quick to vindicate clerical rights. Periodic attempts by friends and foes of the church to reform the
system failed and when Wellesley went to Ireland in 1821 
agitation for fundamental reform was rising to a crescendo.

In a memorandum on the tithe question prepared in 
1827 Wellesley claimed to have addressed himself to the 
issue even before being invited to go to Dublin as viceroy, 
and to have been preparing himself to champion the cause 
of reform in parliament. 181 At first he tended towards 
revamping only the collection procedures to as to replace 
the unpopular tithe proctors by a uniform valuation system. 
Liverpool responded enthusiastically to this idea, but 
because it also called for a resumption of tithes on pas-
turage, many Irish landlords resisted stoutly. 182 Within 
a few weeks of his arrival in Dublin Wellesley convinced 
himself that a more comprehensive plan was called for. 
Early in February 1822 he wrote to Goulburn outlining his 
suggestions for converting tithes into a permanent rent 
on the land. Goulburn replied that the ministry was thinking 
in terms of an investigatory commission on tithes and that 
meetings would be held in London to try to persuade the Irish 
bishops that if the government did nothing radicals would

181 Shawe to Knighton, 18 September 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 309-10.
182 Ibid.
take the initiative. Goulburn urged Wellesley to submit his proposals in as detailed a fashion as possible.

Wellesley was not yet prepared to contribute a comprehensive plan. He conceded to Goulburn that "the state of the collection of the tithes is certainly a primary and most vexatious cause of misery to the lower order of the people in Ireland." To act precipitously, however, would simply aggravate the problem. He left Goulburn, Peel and Liverpool to humor the Irish bishops in London. In parliament, meanwhile, Joseph Hume and his associates pressed the government to introduce tithe legislation. Goulburn pleaded for delay but the house of Commons shared Hume's impatience. In the wake of their consultations with several Church of Ireland bishops Liverpool, Peel and Goulburn offered parliament a plan of voluntary composition of the tithe for a period of twenty-one years. The composition rate - or commutation of the tithe from payment in kind based on an annual evaluation of the crop to a fixed money payment - would be determined by an agreement between land-

183 Goulburn to Wellesley, 13 February 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 200.

184 Wellesley to Goulburn, 23 February 1822, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, Acc. 319, II/22.

lords and the clergymen in each parish.\textsuperscript{186}

The proposal was a limited one, but it was clear that the tithe issue was a question whose time had finally come for serious consideration. Westminster had never grappled seriously with the issue; there had been several isolated attempts to look into it, most notably under the Whigs in 1806-7. The issue was so complex and so many vested interests were identified with it that no solution satisfactory to all was likely to emerge. Ideological considerations - the sanctity of private property included - coloured the problem. The Irish church was instinctively suspicious of reform in any quarter. Many Irish landlords wanted to use the tithe question as a stick to beat the church; others were owners of tithes and shared the church's position. Was compulsion justifiable? Would the largely Catholic tenantry see tithe reform as an invitation to further property changes?

Not every aspect of the question can be considered here; even today many historians consider the Irish tithe question to be one of the most complex issues of nineteenth century Irish history. The debates which attended Goulburn's bill offer an opportunity to consider some of the points which excited most attention. Hume's friends, supported by a large contingent of

\textsuperscript{186} Goulburn to Wellesley, 5 and 14 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, ff. 207-208.
Irish landlords, feared that the ministry would regard this restricted proposal as a complete and sufficient settlement of the tithe question. In Ireland it was observed that voluntary settlements would rarely be implemented in areas where tithe agitation was most severe. William Magee, bishop of Raphoe and soon to become archbishop of Dublin, summoned several prominent ecclesiastics to the capital to prepare a protest. In his letter to Wellesley he addressed himself at length to the government's leasing bill. The bishops were alarmed at the prospect of leasing tithes at a time when because of widespread resistance to payment they were unusually depressed in value. Leases scheduled to endure for twenty-one years would therefore constitute an "open injustice;" perhaps a more modest period, such as seven years, would be acceptable to the church. The bishops also urged the ministry to resist

187 Goulburn to Wellesley, 14 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, ff. 207-208; Ibid., 23 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 209; Ibid., 29 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 210; Wellesley to Goulburn, 23 February 1822, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, II/22; Ibid., 5 July 1822, Surrey Record Office, Goulburn MSS, II/22; 2 Hansard VII (1822), 1029-37; "Draft of a Tithe Bill with Marginal Comments," c. 15 April 1822, enclosed in Elrington to Peel, 22 April 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40321, ff. 50-61.

188 Beresford to Wellesley, 23 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 344.
proposals for a parliamentary inquiry into tithes. A royal visitation, Magee observed, would be the "only safe, just and efficient mode of conducting" such an inquiry. ¹⁸⁹ Magee's suggestions were practical and reasonable. Archbishop John de la Poer Beresford, who would soon preside as Primate over the Irish church and do so until the eve of disestablishment, took a higher line and angered Wellesley in so doing. Of course it must be realised, he declared to Wellesley on 23 March, that tithes were not the cause of present discontent. The Churches of England and Ireland, moreover, must be treated as a single unit, and in Ireland especially ecclesiastical property was "powerfully interwoven" with British rule. ¹⁹⁰ Goulburn persevered throughout the spring, but his bill was gradually shorn of its most important provisions. Churchmen and landlords, opposed on almost every count when it came to collecting the tithe, came closer to agreement that Goulburn's bill might threaten spoliation of private property, and not merely ecclesiastical property. ¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ William Magee, Bishop of Raphoe, to Wellesley, 9 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 295.

¹⁹⁰ Beresford to Wellesley, 23 March 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 344.

their influence the bill was amended to become simply a convenient procedure for voluntary composition and was passed into law in this form. But Goulburn's initiative generated interest in more thoroughgoing reform, and a motion to pledge the government and house of Commons to consider further tithe legislation during the next session failed by a margin of only seven votes. Wellesley concluded that it was time for him to produce his own comprehensive tithe scheme. 192

Wellesley began by soliciting the advice of brothers Wellesley Pole (now Baron Maryborough) and Wellington, of Irish ecclesiastics and landowners, and of those local officials whose opinions he valued. 193 Maryborough and Wellington looked at their tenures as chief secretaries and consulted their ideological baggage; they both concluded that nothing could be done except to enforce the clergy's prerogatives, because every plan involving compulsion violated property rights. Most Irish churchmen came to the same conclusion. 194 Beresford continued to

192 Gash, Peel, p. 379.
object in particular to any attempt to distinguish Irish
tithes from tithes in England. After digesting all
these opinions Wellesley inclined to echo the pessimism
of many who were convinced that no formula for ameliorating
the tithe problem would prove satisfactory. By autumn,
however, his optimism reasserted itself. He assembled a
massive body of statistical material, some of which he
passed on to authorities in London. And by early
November he had prepared a comprehensive tithe plan
designed, he thought, to allay clergymen's fears while
satisfying landlords and tenants alike.

Wellesley's plan was both sweeping and simple. Each
parish would be subject to a comprehensive, compulsory and
uniform composition ("The word commutation is (I find)
unpleasing to a churchman's ear, so I have commuted it
for composition," Wellesley told Peel) for twenty-one
years. To relieve the clergy's fears, the composition would

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289-90; William Magee, bishop of Raphoe, to Wellesley, 9

195 John de la Poer Beresford, Archbishop of Dublin, to

196 Wellesley to Goulburn, 5 July 1822, Surrey Record
Office, Goulburn MSS, Acc. 319, II/22; Dublin Patriot, 19
March 1822, p. 3.

197 Goulburn to Wellesley, 15 June 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS
37299, ff. 213-14; 2 Hansard, VII (1822), 1147-98.

198 Wellesley to Peel, 21 November 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS
37300, f. 69.
be subject to revision every seven years at the average
amount and value of produce for the preceding seven years.
In each parish or union of parishes a select vestry of
landowners, with the beneficed clergymen presiding, would
determine how much tithe revenue was required to meet
parish operating costs. A crown commission under the viceroy
would arbitrate disputes between incumbents and vestries.
Both sides could appeal the decision to the quarter sessions
or another authority, and rates would be subject to revision
every third or seventh year to accommodate fluctuating
prices. 199

Wellesley's plan was apparently based on the outlines
of a proposal for a tithe settlement fashioned in 1807
by William Stuart, Primate from 1801 to 1822, when he died
of accidental poisoning. It was also remarkably similar to
the formula finally adopted by parliament in 1838 after
another fifteen years of rural agitation had seriously
undermined the Church of Ireland's ability to resist
radical reform any longer. In 1823, however, Wellesley's
ideas met with serious opposition within the ministry and
without. The first and most important problem was Wellesley's
call for the use of compulsion. Liverpool was quite uncer-

199 Wellesley to Liverpool, 17-18 November 1822, BM,
Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 23-29, 31-37; Wellesley to Peel, 21
November 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 69.
tain whether such a provision should be incorporated into any tithe reform bill. Upon presenting Wellesley's bill to the cabinet he recommended that compulsion be contemplated only after a suitable pause, at which time either a commission or the viceroy could impose a settlement.

Even this delicate approach to the principle of compulsion proved unsatisfactory. Powerful opposition to both Wellesley's and Liverpool's versions surfaced within and without the ministry. Wellesley was willing to leave to Liverpool and the cabinet the final determination as to what type of compulsion was most palatable, but he was convinced of the need for compulsion in some form. Liverpool acquiesced momentarily, and Goulburn drew up a tithe reform plan based on Wellesley's proposal, including provisions for compulsion.

Goulburn produced a final plan in which compulsion was to be used only as a last resort. Liverpool was sanguine that this would allay concern. It did not. At the end of January 1823 Wellesley hinted to Beresford what the

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200 Liverpool to Wellesley, 9 December 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 88-96.

201 Goulburn to Peel, 18 November 1822, BM, Peel MSS 20328, ff. 234-36.

202 Liverpool to Wellesley, 6 February 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 239.
government contemplating in terms of tithe legislation.

Beresford responded on 3 February with a "calm and judicious" letter, as Wellesley described it sarcastically. "The Primate," Wellesley confided to Goulburn,

is evidently resolved not to admit any alternation of the present system of tithes, which his Grace adores. His language and accusatory tone certainly deserve no mercy; but what he deserves it would not become me to inflict. . . .

Beresford's letter of 3 February was only a foretaste of stronger things to come. Two weeks later Wellesley was subjected to an intemperate if eloquent lecture: "this bill is in principle unjust and unconstitutional and in operation would be irritating, vexatious, and impractical," he observed.

It is built on theoretic and fallacious principles. It sets at naught the rights and interests of the clergy and if enforced will involve every parish in Ireland in tumult and insurrection. I am perfectly aware of the dangers to which the Church of Ireland is exposed but I rely on the providence of God and on the firmness of his Majesty and his ministries of both countries who have made a noble stand for thirty years against Jacobinical principles, will not soon give way to the torrent which would destroy the landmarks of all property. . . .

This was strong stuff, and more was to follow.

On the next day Beresford received word that Goulburn had prepared a bill for tithe composition without waiting

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203 Beresford to Wellesley, 3 February 1823, EM, Wellesley MSS 37300.

204 Ibid., 14 February 1823, Dublin, Church of Ireland, Representative Church Body library, Beresford.MSS.
for the Primate's comments upon the plan. He wrote
an angry letter to Liverpool. Such behaviour, Beresford
thundered, simply confirmed that the ministry knew that the
plan would be hostile to the church. "For a century past
it was the policy of every administration to uphold and
strengthen the established church. Now there is no attention
whatever paid to its concerns, but on the contrary it is
given up to popular clamor." ²⁰⁵

Liverpool left to Wellesley the unenviable task of
mollifying Beresford. He apologised, but he observed as
well that had the government not prepared its own bill
the radicals would have taken the initiative. "I need scarcely
attempt to impress upon you the inconveniences and evils"
this would have meant, Wellesley lectured the Primate.
The landowners of Ireland would have tried to impose on
the clergy the "most disadvantageous terms." At any rate,
the proposal prepared by Goulburn was "not to be considered
final." Wellesley hoped that in the future Beresford's
suggestions would not be directed to defeating the bill but
to making it "as little objectionable as possible." ²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Beresford to Liverpool, 15 February 1823, Representative Church Body Library, Beresford MSS.
Wellesley's response was detailed and specific where Beresford's had been sweeping in its condemnation. He conceded that the ministry was of two minds on the use of compulsion. Beresford seized upon this point when he wrote again to Liverpool on 25 February. His objections were not "wild ravings," he told Liverpool. He had been ignored, and although he was a "legitimate advisor" in Irish affairs he had no voice at all. Wellesley and Goulburn had consistently ignored the counsels of the church, and Beresford supplied specific instances at proof. He warned Liverpool that the clergy's dissatisfaction would not easily be contained, and that disguising commutation with an unprovocative terminology. He preferred that tithes be abolished rather than manipulated. 207

Despite Wellesley's best efforts and in flat contradiction to his claims that most of the bishops and clergy would support his tithe reform package, opposition to the bill increased steadily. Goulburn placed the proposal before the house of Commons 8 March. 208 Two archbishops and fourteen bishops converged on Dublin to sign a forceful

207 Beresford to Liverpool, 25 February 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 298.

208 Goulburn to Wellesley, 8 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 331.
protest. The protest was delivered to Liverpool through "private channels." The bill, claimed the bishops, would dissolve the unity of the English and Irish churches and strip the Irish church of all "security for the preservation of that identity in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government which, to both countries, is the great bulwark of the reformed Catholic faith."\(^{209}\)

The protest was very sharp, and even Beresford pleaded illness as an excuse not to sign it. His sentiments certainly supported the manifesto even if he considered the protest politically dangerous. Goulburn recorded some "violent" protests from other quarters.\(^{210}\) Wellesley's papers include a lengthy exposition from Magee. He dwelt at length on the opportunity afforded landlords to use the provisions of the bill to destroy the church. In their present impoverished state the clergy would rarely resist whatever settlements the landlords forced the vestries to offer their clergy. There were no fixed standards to guide the vestries, no means whereby the bishops might support their clergy, no way to stop the uninterrupted progress of the Roman Catholic

\(^{209}\) Goulburn to Wellesley, 8 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 331.

\(^{210}\) Ibid.
religion during the next twenty one years. The bill secured "to popery within a short interval the undisputed dominion of ... Ireland."\textsuperscript{211}

A few bishops supported the measure, but very few indeed.\textsuperscript{212} Goulburn also encountered steady opposition from Irish landlords. Far from believing that they would be placed in a position to suppress the church, many of them concluded that the bill would guarantee to the clergy an unparalleled degree of economic influence in Irish affairs. They were particularly upset that agistment would no longer be exempt. Their resentment spilled over into a hastily convened meeting of Irish landlords and M.P.s at the Thatched House tavern in London. They proclaimed their refusal to permit an assessment of tithes on their pasturelands and in effect dared the ministry to attempt to enforce it.

This was enough for Peel. He urged Liverpool to modify the bill so as to meet some of the objections posed by Irish ecclesiastics and to appease Irish landlords.\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{211} Magee, Notes on Tithe Bill, 3 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 327 ff.

\textsuperscript{212} Goulburn to Wellesley, 5 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 316.

\textsuperscript{213} Gash, Peel, p. 380.
When the tithe bill faced its second reading in June, he explained to Wellesley that provisions for compulsion had to be deleted: so many members of the house of Commons were so "adverse to the compulsory clause that it was deemed advisable not to risk a decision on a point on which we were morally certain of being left in a minority." Wellesley remonstrated that the bill could not succeed without it, and the government made a feeble attempt to restore compulsion when the bill reached the house of Lords. Wellesley admitted that the gesture was merely cosmetic; parliament was not prepared to accept compulsion.

Irish landlords were mollified. Removing compulsion assured them that they could protect their interests; agistment was to be included in the property to be assessed for any new tithe settlements, but the rate of assessment could be governed in large measure by landlords' wishes. Wellesley claimed that landlords would be found willing to bear an increased share of the tithe if they could thereby purchase peace in their districts. He was correct in this.

Beneficed clergymen continued to complain of the bill,

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214 Goulburn to Wellesley, 7 June 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37301, f. 118

even with compulsion deleted, and Goulburn and Peel conveyed their impressions to the cabinet. Nevertheless, the bill became law and as such received a more favourable reception than many had anticipated. By November 1823 vestries had applied for composition settlements in some 871 parochial unions and parishes. In 550 of these no decision concerning a rate of composition was made before the end of the year. Of the remaining, some 15 reached an agreement, and 142 had proceeded to appoint commissioners to administer the settlement.

A modest element of compulsion was added in 1824. By 1827 tithe settlements had been reached in most Irish parishes and unions, and Wellesley rightfully claimed some credit in that he had used all the facilities at his disposal to encourage vestries to enter composition schemes. His contribution was especially strong in the area of arbitration, and subsequently he listed Irish tithe reform as one of his most important achievements in Ireland. He was out of Ireland before the system

216 Goulburn to Peel, 18 November 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 234-36.

217 Goulburn, memorandum, 10 November 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37301, f. 387.

collapsed, and upon returning in 1833 again urged his original plan of universal compulsion and commutation.

Wellesley's involvement in the tithe question is of interest to those who would study the man, for it affords the observer an opportunity to measure him in an area of endeavour not normally associated with his accomplishments. His papers include several detailed drafts and numerous amendments. They reveal a singular capacity to master an extraordinarily complex issue, one which defied many other prominent Irish and British statesmen. That he was interested is apparent. The tithe problem had darkened the Irish scene since his birth and had become perhaps the most important inspiration for pamphlet writers during the period in which he was still active on the Irish scene. His recommendations made few concessions to the sensibilities about property rights among the landlord classes from which he himself had emerged, and fewer yet to the clergy of the church which he was pledged to defend. His prescription was impartial, almost technocratic. His willingness to challenge the sacred cow of property rights meant that his plan was too advanced for the age, but when the Tory ascendancy at length came to a close, his ideas moved closer to implementation. 219

As viceroy Wellesley was granted a long list of powers and prerogatives, only a few of which were still practicable by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Dublin was moving steadily closer to London in terms of communications: Spring Rice reminded the house of Commons at one point that postal service between Dublin and London was faster than was the London-Edinburgh service. The erosion of autonomy which this represented limited viceregal powers. In Dublin itself, on the other hand, a deeply entrenched bureaucracy circumscribed the reforming seal of the occasional liberal viceroy and diluted the impact of viceregal initiatives when they were opposed by the traditional Protestant ruling class. There had been few enough viceroys whose record in politics reflected as much sympathy for Catholics' claims as Wellesley's. He was, in addition, the first Lord Lieutenant in at least a century to have been born in Ireland. As a young Irish politician he had counted Grattan among his friends and the Grenvilles as his benefactors. He had promoted the idea of a role for Catholics in the military and in government. A decade before assuming his post in Dublin he had emerged as a leading exponent of Catholic Emancipation. He came to Dublin, therefore, to face a castle bureaucracy naturally suspicious of his intentions.
For his part Wellesley assumed that most of them were his opponents, perhaps even his enemies.

Certain functions of viceregal government were not likely to be much affected by an inherent antagonism between Wellesley and the castle bureaucracy. In May 1822 Wellesley was granted £50,000 for a public works program designed to stimulate employment and reduce distress. He raised another £250,000 by private subscriptions and donated £500 himself. For this he was praised in parliament and honoured in Ireland; his staff at the castle extended support. They were also eager to help when Wellesley conducted surveys and gathered material for reports. They sustained him when he applied the insurrection acts vigorously or prosecuted the Catholic association's leaders.

But on many points Wellesley found himself opposed by the permanent staff. They resented, sometimes with good reason, the intrusions of his illegitimate son Edward Johnstone and other members of Wellesley's entourage. They were

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220 Dublin Evening Post, 21 May 1822, p. 3.

221 Goulburn to Wellesley, 9 July 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, f. 278; Annual Register, LXIV (1822), 38-39; Dublin Evening Post, 21 May 1822, p. 3.

222 Dublin Evening Post, 4 January 1823, p. 2.

accustomed to managing the bulk of Ireland's large patronage operation along lines designed to reinforce the influence of the established ruling class in general and their own importance in particular. They sustained a semi-official connection with the Orange lodges which Wellesley vehemently opposed. They urged continuation of the traditional subsidies to the syncophant section of the Irish press, and above all they guarded jealously their own prerogatives and security of employment.

Who comprised the Irish administration during Wellesley's time? The principal officers of state included the chief justice, the Lord chancellor, the Primate (particularly when in the absence of the viceroy the government was placed in commission), the Attorney general, the Solicitor general, the permanent under secretary, law officers and a collection of household officials of doubtful usefulness to Wellesley or to Ireland. The principal officers were appointed by succeeding ministries, or their appointments were renewed. They were, therefore, congenial enough to the incumbent viceroy until a growing difference of opinion within the cabinet over the Catholic question made it fashionable to divide these offices between the two factions. This policy was still nascent when Wellesley was appointed, and some incumbents had held their offices
for extraordinarily long periods. Below them were the "permanent officials" who owed their longevity in office to an intimate knowledge of the dynamics of Irish administration and, during the long Tory ascendancy, to their sympathy with conservative politics.

Some fact and much fiction attended contemporary impressions of Irish administration. Conservatives found the bureaucracy congenial, generally able, and dedicated to maintaining the British connection. Certainly their experience was often invaluable to successive viceroys, who knew little or nothing of Ireland when they first reached Dublin, and where patterns of administration were peculiar even by early nineteenth century standards. Even Wellesley, who openly opposed the political philosophy of many of his subordinates, was forced to endure their company or suffer the loss of virtually indispensible services. Those who sympathised with Catholic grievances claimed that the influence of the permanent officials was overgrown and pernicious. In 1826 Spring Rice told Wellesley's assistant Colonel Shawe that the staff of Dublin castle comprised "a small knot of men, powerful with the arts of counteraction and conversant with official details of business, active and energetic in mischief but from want of sympathy and common interest
with the mass of people incapable of doing good."  

Spring Rice's grievances were, however, perhaps less justified than they would have been a decade earlier. As Professor R. B. McDowell has noted, there is no evidence that even the most determined upholders of the Protestant ascendancy managed to convert a viceroy to their views or to checkmate their influence when in high office.

Under Wellesley, the first ostensibly pro-Catholic viceroy in fifteen years, the permanent castle bureaucracy tended to close ranks behind Goulburn and Peel. Peel as Home secretary exercised more direct influence in Irish affairs than many of his predecessors, and he did so intentionally. Goulburn, therefore, played a less independent role in Dublin and at Westminster. In Ireland Goulburn sometimes tended to serve as adversary to Wellesley rather than his principal colleague. Of course the Irish chief secretary had already ceased to be secretary to the Lord Lieutenant and was well on the way to becoming the principal minister for Irish affairs; in 1830 a chief secretary would gain entrance to the cabinet while the viceroy

225 McDowell, Public, p. 69.
remained outside. Goulburn was neither Wellesley's subordinate nor his equal, but something in between. As such he certainly served as principal protector for the castle administration and his relationship to Wellesley in that capacity was never more than merely civil.

Fortunately for Goulburn's sanity and Wellesley's stability, the Irish chief secretary normally resided in Dublin only during that part of the year in which parliament was not in session. Only during this period can the chief secretary be considered part of the "permanent" castle bureaucracy. In this capacity Goulburn played the role of reluctant amanuensis to an unsympathetic, temperamental, and often unpredictable master. Most prominent among Goulburn's complaints, not surprisingly, were Wellesley's defective habits as communicator and administrator. There are very critical comments about Wellesley's failure to respect deadlines, his suffocating pretentions as a writer, and his want of a schedule for doing business.

For his part Wellesley never accepted Goulburn as anything more than his title - chief secretary to the Lord Lieutenant - implied. He resented the fact that Goulburn and Peel

226 Goulburn to Peel, 20 April 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 61; Ibid., 26 November 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, f. 236.
corresponded on intimate terms and that indeed Peel wanted Wellesley himself to correspond only through Goulburn. Peel was careful to have it on record that he had urged Goulburn to keep the viceroy fully informed of events in Britain and of their own correspondence. But it is clear that much of what passed between them was not intended for the viceroy's eyes.

Between Wellesley and William Lamb, chief secretary for the final eight months of Wellesley's tenure, relations were more intimate. Their political views were more congenial, and as a result Lamb did not play the role of protector of the old bureaucracy against Wellesley. Goulburn had urged the permanent undersecretary and other officials to keep their distance from Wellesley in an effort to outlast him. Peel encouraged Goulburn in this strategy, and the effect was to place Wellesley in something akin to quarantine. Lamb on the contrary curbed the policy-making functions of the castle officials.

227 Peel to Wellesley, 16 February 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 227.
228 Peel to Goulburn, 10 September 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 130.
229 Goulburn to Peel, 21 April 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 322-23; Cash, Peel, p. 372.
Goulburn had regarded Wellesley as "the guide and instrument" of men like Plunket, who would use him to fill the castle with Catholic partisans if Goulburn and Peel were not inclined to prevent it. Lamb on the other hand believed that Wellesley, if handled patiently and gently, could be induced to examine the merits of any policy and that his record was highly complimentary to his reputation.

Under Canning and then under the Whigs the chief secretary ceased to be connected in any direct way to the Irish administration as such. A hint as to future arrangements appears in Canning’s memorandum of April 1827 concerning the question of whether Wellesley should be replaced immediately or allowed to remain in Dublin a while longer. Canning told Wellesley that the King insisted that the viceroy be "protestant" and therefore Wellesley must plan to quit Ireland at an early date. But his reasoning as it appears in the memorandum is quite different. The chief secretary, Canning observed, must be chosen on the

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231 Goulburn to Peel, 21 April 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 322-23; Goulburn to Wellesley, 2 January 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 3.

232 Lamb to Lansdowne, 3 August 1827, printed in Aspinall, "Formation," pp. 276-77; Shawe to Knighton, 15 August 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 287.

233 Canning to Wellesley, 22 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 272-80.
basis of his political views, which should coincide with those of the cabinet, with whom he was continually and closely connected. He was the efficient head of Irish affairs rather than the viceroy. To give the Irish branch of the ministry's composition great popular appeal, the viceroy might be chosen to reflect a point of view different from that of the chief secretary. In all this it is clear that Canning expected the viceroy to remove himself from all policy-making functions, or at a minimum to serve in this capacity only as an adjunct to the chief secretary. The viceroy would be part of, rather than above, the Irish bureaucracy.

In many respects Canning's viewpoint was vindicated after 1830, although the pretensions of any particular viceregal incumbent might be such as to make his submission to the chief secretary very awkward. Wellesley's experience was that a chief secretary who alone commanded the sympathy of the cabinet was almost inevitably stronger than the viceroy. If the secretary also enjoyed the sympathy of the castle administration, his position was very strong indeed.

At the head of the Irish administration in the absence of the Irish chief secretary and often in cooperation with him

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was the permanent undersecretary for civil affairs. The office had been filled since 1812 by William Gregory. Gregory was dedicated to Tory principles, and liberals considered his pro-Orange sympathies notorious. He was widely thought to be the most powerful man in Ireland before Wellesley reached Dublin. Goulburn's predecessor Grant reportedly described Gregory as "the master of the whole machine of government" in the absence of the chief secretary. Thomas Wyse, the Catholic leader and a prominent Irish barrister, was quoted as saying that "the petitioner at the castle did not ask what the Lord Lieutenant thought, but what the Lord Lieutenant's secretary thought, or rather what his secretary's secretary thought. It was not Lord Wellesley, nor even Mr. Goulburn, but it was Mr. Gregory who held in his hand the destinies of Ireland." This seems exaggerated and undoubtedly was intended to be so. But Gregory's reputation as a power broker impressed itself with equal force upon some who had never met the man or dealt with Irish affairs. After he had been appointed to succeed Wellesley and while waiting for his predecessor to retire, Anglesey sent to Lamb the following uncomplimentary summary of his impressions of Gregory:

Arch jobber. A man who has the press at his command - a determined intriguer. False as hell. A violent

\[235\] O'Brien, Dublin, p. 56.
anti-Catholic - a furious Tory - and quite ready to betray the secrets of anyone whose confidence he obtains. It is a misery to feel that you have a spy in your camp and I intend to make a point of having him removed.236

It is remarkable that Gregory managed to survive the pro-Catholic chief secretary Grant (1818-1821). It is more remarkable that Wellesley did not dismiss him. Most remarkable of all, Gregory survived Anglesley's first administration. The answer to questions about Gregory's durability of course lay in his indispensability. When Wellesley arrived in Dublin Gregory feared that he would be removed forthwith. His friend Saurin was fired immediately. But Wellesley ignored Gregory, and met him only once - at a dinner party - during the first five weeks. Gregory petitioned Peel and Goulburn to defend him. They advised Gregory not to resign, and Peel urged Goulburn to stiffen Gregory's resolve to carry on.237

There appears to be no record of any effort by Goulburn to raise with Wellesley the subject of Gregory's tenure. Perhaps, as Gregory thought, Wellesley's experience in India had in fact convinced him of the wisdom of not


237 Peel to Goulburn, BM, Peel MSS 40334, f. 5, and 40329, f. 61, cited in Gash, Peel, p. 372.
meddling with the delicate and complex working of the machinery of Irish administration. Relations between Wellesley and Gregory gradually improved. Gregory recorded that the new viceroy had arrived in Dublin "boasting of his past victories over Indian cabals and anticipating his future ones over the Irish." But their dinners together gradually became more frequent, and in his leisure moments Wellesley emerged in a very attractive image as tutor in the classics to Gregory's grandson, the future governor of Ceylon. For his part Gregory behaved with the appropriate discretion. He held to the principle laid down by Wellesley that "when he stated his objection he had gone to the very verge of his duty" and that nothing remained but to execute his orders.

When Canning took office as Prime minister in April 1827 Gregory rather fearfully asked Wellesley whether he should resign. To his surprise Wellesley cautioned him against acting precipitously. And even Lamb in responding to Anglesey's fulminations against Gregory thought that

238 Gregory, Letter-Box, p. 164.
239 Ibid., p. 183.
240 Ibid., p. 185.
241 Gregory to Peel, 2 February 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40334, cited in McDowell, Public, p. 69.
the under-secretary's deficiencies and prejudices had been overdrawn. Wellesley himself complained of the enemies who surrounded him frequently and loudly, but he kept Gregory, a good indication indeed that a familiarity with Irish government was a redeeming feature indeed.

Wellesley did not believe that the principal officers of his Irish "cabinet" were indispensable, but those whom he opposed were, with one exception, either too powerful to be removed or too ineffective to warrant the effort. Wellesley was not in fact the master of his own administration. The principal officers were selected by the Prime minister after consultations with the cabinet. Wellesley was certainly aware of this before he went to Dublin, because he stipulated that Saurin was to be replaced as Attorney general by his friend Plunket. Wellesley's success here conveyed the impression that he was indeed master, an impression which faded as he failed to have his own way later on.

News that Saurin would be replaced reached Dublin shortly before Wellesley himself arrived. Saurin was therefore well prepared when Wellesley confronted him in a celebrated interview. According to Wellesley's account,

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242 Liverpool to C. W. Williams Wynn, c. 15 November 1821, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 93.
he first offered Saurin the position of Lord chief justice. Saurin refused this post, and believed that his position was impregnable. Wellesley then offered him a peerage, which he also refused. "In truth," Wellesley wrote, "I had nothing left to offer except the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland. To that, however, there were two objections: first, he had already held the office for fifteen years; second, I . . . I was viceroy."

Talbot and Gregory thought the offer of a peerage a fair one; Saurin had no right to think himself a permanent fixture of Irish officialdom. But Saurin took deep offence at his proposed "promotion," refused all offers, retired in a huff, and remained in complete isolation.

Plunket and Wellesley were close personal friends and shared similar positions on most outstanding issues. They looked to each other as allies against the castle bureaucracy superintended by Gregory. Wellesley considered Plunket's friendship one of his "great consola-


244. Gregory, Letter-Box, pp. 198-200.

245. Goulburn to Peel, 24 March 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 51.

246. Plunket to Sir John Newport, 5 January 1822, NLI, Newport MSS 796, f. 81.
tions in this troublesome and thankless station." Indeed, he wrote on one occasion when Plunket had gone off to England that it was impossible to go on unless Plunket returned; if he could not, Wellesley would soon be forced to resign.\textsuperscript{247} Plunket for his part testified to their "complete identity of opinion" and, as a result "of their common efforts and constant intercourse on matters of business, there grew a private intimacy." This was not entirely correct. Plunket certainly disputed Wellesley's contention that those arrested in connection with the bottle riot should be charged with treason, and when Wellesley continued to insist on the grave charge, Plunket was burdened with the hopeless task of extracting convictions from hostile juries.\textsuperscript{248} In other instances as well Plunket took a much more moderate line than the viceroy.

In May 1827, near the end of Wellesley's tenure as viceroy, Plunket was appointed Lord chief justice and received a peerage. The promotion, similar in nature to that offered Saurin, reflected the conviction of the Protestant faction in Canning's cabinet that Wellesley and

\textsuperscript{247}Wellesley to Plunket, 21 March 1823, printed in Plunket, \textit{Plunket}, II, 134-36.

\textsuperscript{248}Plunket to Wellesley, 23 December 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, ff. 98-105.
he together were too powerful as advocates for the Catholic
interest in Ireland. Plunket was replaced as Attorney
general by Henry Joy, "one of the ablest practical lawyers
that ever these countries have produced, and one of the
bitterest bigots that Irish Toryism ever nurtured." Joy
had already seen service as Solicitor general under Wellesley
and was therefore not an unfamiliar face. He had prepared
the case against the Catholic association in 1823 and had
appeased Wellesley by his cautious approach and his conviction,
which Wellesley shared, that present legislation was
not sufficient to cope with O'Connell's strategy. Otherwise he seems to have directed most of his opinions to
Goulburn, to the exclusion of Plunket. He enjoyed long
holidays in Britain when the demands of his office,
never too burdensome, were even lighter than usual;
Wellesley never urged him to stay. After becoming
Attorney general his abilities were tested by agitation
preceding Catholic emancipation.

249 Canning to Wellesley, 24 May 1827, BM, Wellesley
MSS 37297, ff. 283-84.
250 Joy to Wellesley, 12 May 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40324,
f. 152.
251 Goulburn to Peel, 1 November 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329,
ff. 91-96.
253 Daniel Owen Madden, Ireland and its Rulers Since 1829
Wellesley's private correspondence touches only lightly on other prominent Irish officials. The Lord chancellor, Thomas Manners-Sutton, first Baron Manners, angered Wellesley in 1822 by opposing publicly Wellesley's interdiction of the Orange lodges' custom of dressing King William's statue. Goulburn intervened to promote an amicable settlement and the truce, albeit precarious, held. Manners later took umbrage at the selection of Daugherty to replace Joy as Solicitor general, but this dispute was focused on Canning and not Wellesley. Kendall Bushe, master of the pithy phrase and a powerful orator, was appointed chief justice of the King's bench in 1822; he was a close friend of Wellesley and took his side on the religious controversy.

In addition to the great offices of state there was Wellesley's personal staff. The work of the principal officers of Ireland was to some degree removed from Wellesley's purview; it was more closely related to the

254 Goulburn to Peel, 17 January 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 22.
255 Ibid., 24 March 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 50.
256 Canning to Wellesley, 1 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 335-36.
Home office and to the appropriate counterpart bureaus in London. Wellesley's personal staff, however, enjoyed no such autonomy and indeed was directly dependent upon the viceroy. Many of the offices were ornamental relics of medieval times when the viceroy was virtually King in his own right. Although some scaling down of offices had taken place before Wellesley set foot in Ireland, there remained a good number of positions which demanded no work but which constituted a drain on the Irish exchequer. Among these were the state steward, private secretary, comptroller, gentlemen ushers, chamberlain, master of the horse, private chaplains, two gentlemen of the bedchamber, and two pages. Of these the most important was the office of private secretary, which was granted by Wellesley to Johnstone. Because the private secretary regulated Wellesley's schedule of appointments and enjoyed immediate access to the viceroy, he constituted a potentially powerful force in Irish politics. Awarding this office to Johnstone was one of Wellesley's most serious mistakes in Ireland.

As has been seen, Johnstone lived with Wellesley after 1816, in part to compensate for the estrangement which set in between Wellesley and his children by Hyacinthe. By

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258 The Patriot, 6 April 1822, p. 3.
November 1822 Johnstone had succeeded in impressing Goulburn with his complete unsuitability for office. "Johnstone has no knowledge of business," Goulburn wrote to Peel, "and will not apply himself to it, but spends his time interfering and misunderstanding the work of others. He has confused a great many items which were thoughtfully settled." Goulburn hoped that Johnstone could be induced to return to England by making some employment available to him; even Wellesley favoured this. None was found, unfortunately and if Goulburn is to be believed, in December Johnstone vindicated entirely his invidious reputation by convincing Wellesley that the bottle riot was an assassination attempt. Under Johnstone's direction, "all those who wished to lay in a claim to favour by a show of superior zeal not only promulgated the same opinion but added that it was a general conspiracy of Orangemen. Thus by the time Goulburn was able to see him on Monday (the riot occurred on the Friday previous) Wellesley had been put in a "state of great excitation" and could not be dissuaded from the view that there had been

259 Goulburn to Peel, 2 November 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 173-74.

260 Ibid., 21 December 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 302-304.
a systematic plan to murder him. 261

Johnstone must have been a resourceful enough fellow, for he managed to hold on to office until 1826, when Wellesley's new wife found him so obnoxious that she pleaded successfully with Liverpool and even with Wellington to place him in some English employment. During the climactic phase Goulburn enjoyed preparing numerous accounts of Johnstone's battles with the castle bureaucracy and the new marchioness. Peel received these. Goulburn himself was often rebuffed in his attempts to consult with Wellesley on official business, and was suitably frightened of Johnstone as well. Unfortunately for Wellesley, Johnstone's principal achievement was to keep the castle in a state of almost continuous uproar, which encouraged lower-ranking officials to line their own pockets handsomely during the confusion. Well might Wellesley complain that he was "frustrated, baffled and betrayed by his own agents." 262 An advance party for Anglesey warned him of Wellesley's staff; "the system of plunder was ruinous" and Wellesley's servants would corrupt those brought in by Anglesey. 263

261 Ibid., 21 December 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 302-4.

262 Wellesley to Plunket, 19 March 1824, printed in Plunket, Plunket, II, 146.

263 Forbes to Anglesey, quoted in Anglesey, One Leg, p. 185.
Anglesey's advisor probably took far too uncharitable a view of Wellesley's personal household. The evidence suggests, nonetheless, that Wellesley's tendency to exaggerate personal slights and indeed to translate perfectly innocent gestures into aspersions on his conduct was fortified by Johnstone. Certainly Wellesley had difficulties enough with the castle bureaucracy, with Goulburn, and with Peel. To aggravate his problems by taking on a collection of syncophants in his personal household was most unfortunate. There were enough Irishmen in the period eager to demonstrate their loyalty and receive the benefits which connection to the viceroy might bring them. The impact of Wellesley's official family was to aggravate the very venality which he abhorred and tried to reduce in Ireland.264

IX: Molding Public Opinion: Patronage, the Press and the Viceregal Image

The act of union of 1801 resolved many pressing problems which stemmed from efforts to marry two legislatures to a single crown. In the realm of patronage affairs, once "union engagements" had been satisfied, the process of awarding offices became somewhat less complicated. A case could be made, however, that the act of union led to increased reliance

264 Ibid.
on a favourable Irish press and the trappings of viceregal rule. Government could no longer influence Irish public opinion effectively through parliament. Editors who combined a persuasive style, an apparent credibility, and a suitable political philosophy, or who could be encouraged to support the government if given a subsidy, became important features of the Irish scene. Likewise Irishmen were eager to retain the mark of special status within the United Kingdom implied by the viceregal court in Dublin. With parliament now abolished, it may be that retention of the Lord Lieutenancy became more important than ever.

When Earl de Grey was chosen Irish viceroy in 1841 Wellesley offered his advice based on what he considered his own conduct to have been as viceroy ten and twenty years earlier: "an honest straightforward determination to act upon principle instead of feeling, to do justice to all sects and parties without distinction, to be swayed neither by fear nor favour..." Distribution of patronage was an important index of how well Wellesley met his own espoused standards. By 1820 the age of unabashed Irish patronage jobbery had passed. Between 1812 and 1816 Peel had laboured hard to raise the tone of appointments

\[265\] Wellesley to Earl de Grey, 12 September 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS 37313, f. 64.
to Irish offices. During this time the Primate, William Stuart, and the archbishop of Cashel, Charles Brodrick, had launched a reform movement inside the established church. The act of union itself led to the extinction of many sinecures and quasi-sinecures. And finally, parliamentary commissions and inquiries prompted the elimination of many extraneous offices and attached duties to some of the remainder. Therefore by 1820 Irish patronage practices had been purged of their worst excesses. Indeed, as Liverpool wryly observed to Wellesley on one occasion, Irish patronage had become scarce enough in quantity so that those who still enjoyed it should find it very easy to support the government.

Wellesley's contribution to the reform movement was most notable in two areas: the movement to admit Catholics to office; and the drive to increase the proportion of Irishmen in Irish offices. In both areas patronage reforms to date had made little progress, and Wellesley's initiatives here in retrospect may be considered substantial, even revolutionary. Especially in the latter case it also

266 Liverpool to Wellesley, 9 December 1824, BM, Liverpool MSS, 38299, f. 217; also printed in Arthur Aspinall and E. Anthony Smith, eds., English Historical Documents, 1783-1832 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1959), p. 300.

267 Ibid., 31 December 1825, BM, Liverpool MSS 38301, f. 62, and printed in Aspinall and Smith, English, p. 208.
involved a struggle with London for jurisdiction over appointments. Wellesley's efforts here were marred by an attempt to secure a bishopric for his brother Gerald, but the principle of the Lord Lieutenant's prerogatives was also at stake.

A general tendency in awarding preferment to higher offices in church and state was to reduce the autonomy of the Irish executive by placing a veto power in the hands of the Prime minister and even the Home secretary. The veto itself was ancient, for of course the Crown's consent to appointments was necessary. Ireland had long served as a forum for English patronage; Dean Swift in the parable of Hounslow Heath underscored how pervasive this practice was thought to be a full century before Wellesley came to Ireland as viceroy. A firm handle on major Irish appointments, exercised from London, was considered necessary to maintain the Anglo-Irish connection. After 1800 the need to reinforce the bond in this manner was somewhat less critical, and the award of many offices in the church and the state to Irish families in order to purchase their support for the act of union sharply increased the role of Irish born subjects in patronage matters. A reduction of English participation in Irish patronage activities, however, did not diminish London's
determination to maintain control. At Westminster Whigs and Tories alike insisted that parliament maintain its leverage over the administration of Irish offices.

Wellesley wished to exercise as much autonomy as possible. There was, nonetheless, only a limited area in which he enjoyed unfettered control. The Prime minister and the King expected to have at least a veto over Wellesley's nominations. This was understandable. But Irish M. P.s also wanted to be heard when vacancies appeared among the lesser offices. Wellesley tried to establish more precise guidelines before he departed London. In the case of Irish representative peers, Liverpool and Wellesley agreed that "residence, respectability and local consequence" were essential conditions. Church patronage practices, they also observed, must be directed to improving the calibre of the bench, and Dublin castle must not remain the preserve of certain powerful Irish families.

These resolutions were impressive but in practice much was wanting. Wellesley discovered for instance that he could not expect freedom of action in making appointments within the principal Irish departments. When his friend Plunket tried to nominate candidates for certain

268 Liverpool to Wellesley, 6 November 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 12.
legal offices, Wellesley agreed with Goulburn that this was not proper. Nonetheless, Wellesley does not seem to have been able to increase his own authority at the expense of either the principal law officers themselves or London. When Canning became Prime minister he wrote to Wellesley to confirm that he and not the Lord Lieutenant would fill these posts, "subject, of course, to any representations which the Ld. Lt. may have to make upon what is thus conveyed to him." Canning maintained this posture when Lord chancellor Manners tried to intervene against the nomination of Dougherty for Solicitor general. Manners claimed that the nomination violated precedent; Canning declared that London "makes its choices without references to such punctilios." Wellesley was at the end of his term and declined to confront Canning on the issue, and there the matter rested.

Wellesley was more careful of his rights when it was a question of blocking nominations which he believed to be harmful or unjustified. He favoured the nomination of

269 Goulburn to Peel, 8 November 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 205.

270 Canning to Wellesley, 24 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 283-84.

271 Ibid., 5 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 341-43.
Irishmen to Englishmen and urged that Catholics be appointed to such offices as they were entitled to hold. Wellesley's mandate as viceroy included a pledge to confine Irish honours to those who had contributed substantially to Ireland and who were people of "personal consequence." In 1822 the King urged that Sir Benjamin Blomfield, an Irishman of no particular consequence, be given a peerage. Wellesley resisted and Liverpool supported Wellesley in an interview with the King. It was settled that if the King persisted in his request he should write to Wellesley that this instance was an exception to the general rule. The King continued to urge Blomfield's case but failed to write to Wellesley about it. Wellesley in turn refused to recommend Blomfield. It was left to Liverpool to assuage the King's unhappiness.

Wellesley made some effort to broaden his patronage prerogatives but for the most part they came to nothing. Perhaps the most celebrated bid was really the least important. One month after arriving in Dublin Wellesley declared that he possessed the right to bestow knighthoods on his own

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272 Liverpool to the King, 22 January 1822, printed in Aspinall, George IV, II, 498.

273 Wellington to the King, 16 March 1822, printed in Aspinall, George IV, II, 512.
authority. Indeed it appeared that he was correct; Richmond before him had created knights when he travelled around Ireland. But in 1822 the London lawyers delivered an opinion that this power had expired with the act of union. Wellesley was incensed and he was not mollified until Goulburn extracted the opposite verdict from the same legal experts.

Wellesley made a more substantial mark in the area of Irish episcopal patronage. The viceroy's patent reserved to the crown the right to appoint archbishops, bishops, and deans; the Lord Lieutenant could appoint incumbents to whatever remaining benefices (not many were lucrative) which remained in the gift of the crown. Liverpool agreed with Wellesley, as he had stipulated with Wellesley's predecessors, that Wellesley should nominate candidates for the higher church offices, including the bench, subject to the cabinet's veto. His first year as viceroy saw a considerable clearing of the ranks of Irish prelates,

274 Richmond to Ryder, 2 November 1809, NLI, Richmond MSS 72, f. 1507.

275 Peel to Wellesley, 19 January 1822, BM, Peel MSS 37298, ff. 54-55; Thomas Wilson Croker to Goulburn, 31 January 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37298, f. 130.

276 Goulburn to Wellesley, 3 July 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37301, ff. 184-85.

277 Wellington to Liverpool, 4 September 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 390.
including the death of two archbishops. This provided Wellesley an unparalleled opportunity to test new patronage standards. The first case resulted from the death of William Stuart at Armagh. Wellesley proposed as his successor John de la Poer Beresford. There were many objections to this nomination. He had been archbishop of Dublin only two years. His family was one of the most powerful in Ireland and its members frequented high church offices. More serious in the eyes of many was his Irish birth; to the King this was a grave objection indeed, for Irishmen did not occupy the primacy.

The viceroy’s correspondence gives no clear indication why he favoured Beresford, but his Irish birth may have been one important recommendation in Wellesley’s eyes. Liverpool was visibly distressed at the selection and alleged that Beresford’s elevation would inevitably be ascribed to family pressure. Unfortunately, he observed, Irish gentlemen of late had been pressing their claims to church preferment with renewed vigor because they sensed weakness within the cabinet divided as it was by the Catholic issue.  

278 Parker, Peel, I, 324-25.  
Peel joined Liverpool in urging Wellesley to nominate someone else. This Wellesley refused to do. The King thereupon reluctantly assented to Beresford's elevation. The appointment struck a blow in favour of Irish control of the Church of Ireland; later, paradoxically, Beresford would lead the fight to impress upon successive governments his conviction that the English and Irish churches should not be distinguished one from another.

Beresford's elevation created a vacancy at Dublin. William Magee, one of Ireland's foremost scholars and until 1822 something of a liberal in the church, was Wellesley's choice for Dublin. The King again acquiesced. For Cashel, vacant since the beginning of the year, Wellesley nominated Nathaniel Alexander, another Irish bishop. The King would not tolerate this. Echoing sentiments expressed by Liverpool exactly a decade earlier, the King argued that Trinity College alone should not be permitted to supply all of the Church's episcopal requirements. Wellesley was overruled and Alexander had to be content with the promise of any available preferment other than an archbishopric.

These vacancies were filled only just in time for a second round of negotiations. Clogher was the most interesting

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280 Peel to Goulburn, 17 May 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 78.

281 Liverpool to Wellesley, 7 June 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, ff. 187-90.
of them and reveals the contours of Wellesley's patronage most clearly. Next to Derry Clogher was the richest see in Ireland. Earl Talbot had planned to grant it to the Ely family's candidate when the seat was vacated in 1820. The Marquess of Ely superintended a powerful interest, and could be challenged only at the risk of sacrificing certain conservative support in parliament. But the King defied the Ely family and interposed one of the most disastrous of his long list of unfortunate patronage nominees. The see of Clogher went to Percy Jocelyn, a member of the Roden family and like the Marquess of Ely's interest an important Irish family.

The elevation of Jocelyn, who was manifestly unfit for the post, confirmed charges that the age of patronage abuse was not yet over. But worse was to come. Jocelyn was soon apprehended on a grave morals complaint and jailed. He escaped and fled to France. He was deposed and the Prime minister pleaded with Wellesley to nominate anyone who would by the strength of his reputation rescue this benighted see. Wellesley decided the earlier in-


283 Liverpool to Wellesley, 7 August 1822, BM, Wellesley MSS 37299, ff. 324-25.
tention to give the nomination to the Ely interest. Tottenham proved competent enough.

One balance Wellesley's nominees to the bench reflected a higher standard than had often been the case in the past. He did not, however, radically transform the character of the bench, and perhaps he could have done more in this direction had he been so inclined. Liverpool was satisfied that Wellesley's nominations on the whole were praiseworthy, including as they did some of those whom the Prime minister regarded as the most eminent men in Ireland.

Other elevations and translations followed. The rate of translation was high but many aspirants remained disappointed. A number of Irish clergymen eager for promotion celebrated their own suitability in letters to the viceroy; this portion of Wellesley's correspondence is at once intriguing and somewhat depressing. No candidate was quite so enterprising as the dean of Raphoe. He offered to sell for £500 a manuscript which Goulburn conceded

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285 Goulburn to Peel, 18 October 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, ff. 150-52.

286 Liverpool to Arbuthnot, 20 May 1822, printed in Arbuthnot, Correspondence, p. 30.
described "accurately a disposal of Church patronage in Ireland for the past forty years, a history that reflects infinite discredit on the Church and much on the government." This was boldfaced blackmail, but the government reluctantly acquiesced, and Goulburn instructed Wellesley to purchase the document.

In all these transactions, as Liverpool noted to Arbuthnot when the latter applied for a post for his brother, the dean of Cloyne, the government had pledged itself to abide by Wellesley's recommendations and "to make no application to Lord Wellesley for church preferment on personal grounds, except under the most special circumstances." Nor would London oppose Wellesley's recommendations "unless anything was known here to the prejudice of the parties, or the recommendation appeared to have been made under any misapprehension or mistake." Liverpool was wise to have insisted upon a restricted dispensation for his Irish viceroy. On occasion he was forced to use it.

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287 For the flavour of clergymen's applications Peel's correspondence constitutes the most important source, although the Wellesley papers contain many choice items. Regarding the manuscript see Goulburn to Wellesley, 11 May 1824, BM, Wellesley MSS 37302, ff. 261-62.


289 Liverpool to Arbuthnot, 20 May 1822, Arbuthnot, Correspondence, p. 30.
Wellesley's correspondence as viceroy betrays a certain inability to abide the company and the pretensions of ecclesiastics. Wellesley seems to have relished opportunities to debate the bishops. One occasion he "roasted" a group of them on the issue of tithes and the Anglo-Irish ecclesiastical connection.Magee on one occasion observed to Wellesley that since the churches of England and Ireland were perfectly united the ministry had no right to distinguish between them on the question of tithe reform. "Pardon me," Wellesley is alleged to have replied, "the two churches differ materially; for instance, the English bishops wear wigs, and you don't... I'll wig you if you don't take care." And indeed the Church of Ireland was to be subject to farreaching Whig reforms only a decade later.

Even during his tenure as viceroy Wellesley challenged the Church of Ireland's claims to exclusive confidence and support of the ministry of the day. On one occasion Goulburn complained that Wellesley had denied preferment to a famous Irish preacher because of his anti-Catholic testimony before a committee of parliament. Goulburn wondered whether

290 Wellesley to Shawe, 8 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 333.

popularity with Catholics was a legitimate criterion for advancement in the established church. On another occasion a rumor circulated among the bishops that Wellesley planned to put an end to all translations from one see to another. Several bishops wrote to Wellesley to inquire about this. John Jebb of Limerick, one of the most articulate and worried, bewailed the prospect of spending the remainder of his life in a place so horrible as Limerick. Wellesley had made no such resolution, although he was slow to relieve Jebb of his nightmare.

Wellesley's plans to promote reform in the Church of Ireland took second place when the interests of his own family were involved, and this prompted one of the most interesting exchanges of opinions contained in the Wellesley papers. Liverpool was relatively careful not to indulge his own friends and relations and this put him in a strong position to lecture those who suffered from this weakness. In this case it was a bid by Wellington and Wellesley in a rare moment of agreement to secure a bishopric for brother

292 Goulburn to Wellesley, 5 April 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37305, ff. 75-79.
293 Goulburn to Peel, 10 October 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, ff. 133-38.
294 Ibid., 16 October 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 146.
Gerald. Wellesley and Wellington supported the plan in separate letters to Liverpool, and Liverpool returned a politely defiant reply to the Duke. When the family was concerned, Liverpool discovered, appeals to principle were not necessarily sufficient. Wellington turned to a discussion of viceregal prerogatives. Wellington advised Liverpool that the Lord Lieutenant enjoyed the right of nomination as "an exercise of his discretion and of the power vested in him by His Majesty." Liverpool therefore need not interfere in the nomination of Gerald at least until the nomination had been made and the reactions of others had been measured.295

In his reply to this exposition Liverpool stoutly maintained "that the government in England" possessed "a decided negative upon all of his [Wellesley's] recommendations and it would have been wrong not to oppose one so injurious as this."296 Wellington thereupon repeated his earlier position: Liverpool need not interfere, at least at this stage.297 Further rounds of correspondence

295 Wellington to Liverpool, 30 August 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 388.

296 Liverpool to Wellington, 31 August 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 388.

297 Wellington to Liverpool, 1 September 1826, printed in Yonge, Liverpool, III, 389.
gradually eroded Wellington's enthusiasm. He decided that perhaps Wellesley had deceived him as to nomination rights and procedures. Gerald did not get his bishopric, a signal defeat indeed for the Wellesley family interest but perhaps some solace to the Church's reformers.

Although the Liverpool papers suggest that Wellington and not Wellesley laboured most assiduously for Gerald, the papers of the Marquess show quite conclusively that Wellesley provided the initial stimulus and guided Wellington in his contest over legal niceties. Family considerations were so important as to blind Wellesley to the parlous condition of the Church in this instance. Reformers would have been deeply upset had they been privy to the Wellesley-Wellington-Liverpool correspondence on this occasion. They, along with the entire Church of Ireland interest, were already alarmed at the growth of Catholic power, and Wellesley's identification with Catholic relief. To their consternation they discovered that there was a great deal Wellesley could do for the Catholic population of Ireland outside the arena of ecclesiastical patronage.

Wellesley's attempts to use his patronage powers to

298 Goulburn to Wellesley, 5 March 1823, BM, Wellesley MSS 37300, f. 316.
introduce Catholics into the magistracy makes for happier reading. Wellesley believed that he was "not only permitted but enjoined to admit Catholics to the enjoyment of a certain portion of the patronage of government, by occasionally appointing duly qualified persons of that religion to such legal and other offices as by the existing laws they were permitted to hold but to which none had yet been appointed, although for many years past they had been eligible by law to hold them." 299 He moved slowly to vindicate his convictions here. He appointed some Catholics to the position of chief constable as was permitted under the constables act. Of the ten assistant barristers vacancies which appeared during Wellesley's tenure, he appointed Catholics to three of them. 300 He praised himself for the restraint he showed; his actions did something to mitigate the frustrations of qualified Catholics, but cannot have pleased the Protestant interest. 301

Restraint was a virtue little in evidence in the Irish press during Wellesley's term. Wellesley's presence did much to stimulate a free press in Ireland. The ancient


300 Ibid.

301 Ibid.
"castle press," which consisted of newspapers subsidised by the government, was disoriented by the arrival of a pro-Catholic viceroy attached to a largely pro-Protestant ministry. Wellesley found therefore that one paper, the Patriot, became the "castle Catholic" organ; the Dublin Correspondent was "castle Protestant." The absurdity of supporting two newspapers which devoted their best energies to defeating each other did not escape Peel; they earned their name "government papers," he observed wryly, "from doing mischief to the government." Later on Peel complained that the Patriot criticised the government more harshly than did the Correspondent and therefore should forfeit its subsidy. Wellesley reminded Peel that the Correspondent was equally malicious and refused to consider surrendering the subsidy granted to one without abandoning the other. Goulburn thereupon conceded that the fault was equally assignable to Catholic and Protestant newspapers, but agreed with Goulburn that the Correspondent's abuse was less mischievous because "support of Catholic politics in this country is necessarily connected with

302 Peel to Goulburn, 14 November 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 217.

303 Goulburn to Peel, 29 January 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 254.
hostility to government."304 Goulburn volunteered that he would have been willing to abandon the whole idea of a subsidised press had it not been likely that in the future, under "more normal conditions," such a press might prove useful.305 At any rate, Wellesley's identification with Catholic sympathies so disoriented the traditional role of the subsidised press as an advertisement for the traditional Protestant rule that shortly after he departed Dublin the system of grants to favoured newspapers was finally extinguished.306

The decay of a system of government subsidised papers did not bring an end to Wellesley's troubles with the popular prints. In the wake of the King's visit in the autumn of 1821 Catholic papers began to publish without fear of government harassment. But they were circumscribed by a lack of advertisement revenue, and it fell to the Protestant press, rising to challenge the Catholic point of view, to lead the way in reasserting the independence of the press in general. Wellesley played an important if

305 Goulburn to Peel, 29 June 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 54.
uncomfortable role in all this, because the first stage in vindicating their independence saw the Protestant press launch a sprightly attack on the viceroy. Wellesley complained that one of these newspapers, the Dublin Evening Mail, was "set up for the express purpose of writing down Lord Wellesley's government." Wellesley alleged that the editor, Timothy Hadyn, was supported "by the [established] church and every department under government." Chief constables appointed by Wellesley "upon applying for their commissions" were "required to subscribe to the Evening Mail in order that they might be edified by daily libels upon their benefactor." Hadyn's enthusiasm soon outran the limits of libel law, even as it prospered on the basis of its "scurroulously anti-Wellesley and anti-Catholic editorials." Wellesley observed that "not a single issue" was published "without a personal attack upon his private or public conduct." Libel suits against Hadyn multiplied and costs outstripped the paper's profits;

308 Ibid.
309 Inglis, Freedom, pp. 166-71.
eventually he was removed as editor.

Wellesley's triumph over Hadyn proved short-lived. In February 1824 he launched the Dublin Morning Star. If anything it proved more irresponsible and more anti-Wellesley than the Evening Mail. Wellesley claimed that it was financed by Saurin and supported by Lord Manners. The first number featured a "historical" review of a late eighteenth century landlord, a thinly disguised Wellesley. Readers' interest was heightened by such headlines as "He treated the clergy of the established religion with contempt" and "He violated public decency by his low amours." Plunket failed in an attempt to pin a libel conviction on him; the jury refused to cooperate. Protestants' hatred of Wellesley, as Professor Inglis has noted, struck a blow for freedom of the press in that no jury could be found to uphold libel charges. This was not, one can imagine, the way Wellesley had intended to promote a more liberal atmosphere in Ireland.

A perusal of the press during Wellesley's period of

311 Wellesley to Lady Blessington, n. d., printed in R. R. Madden, The Literary Life and Correspondence of Lady Blessington (3 vols.; Woking, 1855), III, 4-5.
312 Inglis, Freedom, pp. 171-72.
313 Ibid., p. 173.
office reveals dramatically the vitality of the anti-Wellesley spirit under conditions of virtual immunity from libel laws. The *Dublin Evening Post*, which identified itself closely with Wellesley and was soon ruined as a result, praised everything about the Lord Lieutenant: his "unfettered" spirit and the Shamrock impressions on the livery buttons.314 As its own fortunes declined the Post urged Wellesley to curb the Orange lodges, and to do so, one suspects, before the Post was driven out of existence.315 Wellesley did not oblige, and the Post decayed. As the battle between Wellesley's friends and foes ended in a rout of the sympathetic press, Irish readers could at least take comfort in Haydn's editorial antics. It broadcast reports of Wellesley's "imminent recall."316 It praised the domestic virtues of the Duke of Richmond (he had had his problems), the "affability and urbanity" of the Duchess, and the purity of almost every public figure's intentions before Wellesley. It treated Dublin to some biting and witty small talk after Wellesley married the Catholic Marianne Patterson:


315 *Ibid.*, 26 September 1822, p. 3; 10 October 1822, p. 3; 13 February 1823, p. 3.

316 *Dublin Evening Mail*, 9 November 1825, p. 3.
Private Chaplain's Office, Phoenix Park:
Feb. 17, 1826. There will be a Rosary at the Lodge on the evening of Monday the 20th inst. The ladies and gentlemen who attend are requested to bring their own beads.  

For the Correspondent and the Patriot, criticism of the government was often tongue-in-cheek. The Patriot exaggerated the effects of Wellesley's "moderation" in Ireland; it would be a "merciful" thing, it added, to put martial law into permanent effect in Ireland.  

The Correspondent had great fun with Wellesley's rumored marriage in 1825, labelling those who spread such news as "little vermin" determined to destroy the character of a great man.  

It is little to be wondered that Wellesley, who felt no compunction in India about quashing newspapers which criticised his person or policies, exclaimed to Plunket that he was "indeed most unhappy - degraded, villified, an object of scorn and detestation, without protection or even care."  

317 Fitzpatrick, O'Connell, I, 88.  
318 Patriot, 21 February 1822, p. 3.  
319 Dublin Correspondent, 4 October 1825, p. 2.  
320 Wellesley to Plunket, 19 March 1824, Plunket, Plunket, II, 146.
There was the consolation of viceregal ceremonial chores. In 1821 Dublin still considered itself a capital city. Its parliament had vanished, however, and the effort to keep up appearances was an increasingly difficult one. Much depended on the efforts of the resident viceroy. Wellesley had long displayed a weakness for theatrics. In India this no doubt contributed to the success of his policies. In England he was laughed at for his tendency to appear in public painted and overdressed. When his income was surrendered to his debts, he reduced his household, sold his house, and subsisted instead on good wines and conversation. Ireland once more provided him an income, but his bout with frugality and the desire to use part of his earnings to accelerate repayment of debts meant that he was in no position to rival Bedford or Northumberland. Fortunately his immediate predecessors Whitworth and Talbot had set a more frugal tone, and Wellesley was able to rely on a couple of magnificent displays to establish his credentials as the center of Irish society.

Certain rituals governed the outward manifestations of the authority vested in the King's representative. These have been described in some detail elsewhere. Wellesley's entry into Dublin on 2 December 1821 was "anything but reassuring" with entrances barricaded and stones piled on
rooftops to be dropped on agitators or assailants. 321

Fortunately, the transition from Talbot to Wellesley passed without incident. Talbot was furious that the haste with which he was recalled deprived him of the benefits of a proper departure ceremony. 322 Nonetheless, many of the traditional civilities were observed. The old and new viceroys were met in the city by a delegation of civic officials, the seventh hussards, the nobility in their carriages, and the citizenry at roadside. Wellesley charmed the crowds by declaring that an Irishman had come to govern them and by displaying his horses with their shamrock decorations. 323 His household, decked out in sky blue coats lined with white silk, embroidered with silver lace and sporting gilt buttons, was offered for inspection after he was sworn in according to the simple but ancient ceremonial custom. 324 The sinecurists and the colourful footguards armed with battle axes joined "the Ulster king of arms with his heralds and pursuivants" to satisfy the


323 Dublin Evening Post, 29 December 1821, p. 3.

demands of the audience for a suitable spectacle. 325

Wellesley held his first levee 7 January of the new year. The viceroy was "most magnificently attired in purple velvet richly embroidered." 326 The new administration, as one newspaper put it, thus began with "the assumption of splendid vigor." 327 The next evening the Lord major gave his dinner, and a week later the sheriff acted as host. The inaugural duties closed on 28 February when a "select party of distinguished personages" dined with Wellesley. The late date of Wellesley's first major dinner party heightened suspicions that Wellesley did not plan to entertain on an oriental scale. Wellesley's friends rushed to explain the day as the result of his complete dedication to business. 328 Dublin's disappointment was not to be assuaged by such explanations. Wellesley quickened the pace somewhat but sacrificed some plausible excuses for expensive public displays, including the King's birthday, an omission which scandalised the Orange lodges. He did


328 *Patriot*, 28 February 1822, p. 3.
attend to his duties as a member of the established church.

In all he met Goulburn's exacting criteria in these things: this, plus "a little discretion on Wellesley's part" was serving to "make society here tolerable." 330

After 1823 Wellesley relied as much as possible on social events sponsored by others to meet his own requirement to be seen in the right places. He was willing to oblige when pomp and ceremony was the order of the day. On one occasion he conceded a bit too much; Lady Manners produced a chair and canopy for Wellesley to sit under at her charity ball and London thought this a bit too regal. 331

After 1825 Wellesley had the able assistance of his new wife. She, according to Colonel Shawe, "enlivened the social scene during the last two years by contriving to make herself popular with all classes to a degree that never was surpassed by anything that can be remembered of any of her predecessors." 332

In 1827 Wellesley reacted to news from Canning that he

329 Ibid., 9 April 1822, p. 3.
330 Goulburn to Peel, 24 March 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 51.
331 Shawe to Knighton, 6 June 1828, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 151.
332 Ibid., 19 April 1826, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 146.
must resign at the end of the year by placing a moratorium on social functions, much to the distress of the upper classes in Dublin. For this exercise in domestic economy he was upbraided by the King's advisor Knighton. Wellesley thereupon promised to resume his entertainments after Lady Wellesley returned from a visit to England and thus to "put the people of Dublin in good humor." His private means would pay his remaining encumbrances, leaving almost all of his salary to be expended here."

Wellesley certainly did not win the hearts of the Orange interest by his entertainments or conduct. The solid ascendancy class held their dinners and toasted the "exports of Ireland," with Wellesley the hoped-for primary export. After hearing of this on one occasion Wellesley was sufficiently angered to dismiss three members of his household staff who had been indiscrete or unlucky enough to be in attendance. Nor did Wellesley score high marks with the provincial gentry and aristocracy. He neglected to visit the provinces and in doing so forfeited some support which predecessors such as Hardwicke, Richmond and Talbot had gained.

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333 Ibid., 13 June 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 252.

334 Dublin Evening Post, 13 February 1823, p. 3; 20 February 1823, p. 3.
Wellesley's relationship with special interest groups was also unsatisfactory. Although in every instance viceroys were expected to receive their petitions and prepare gracious if vague responses, Wellesley's addresses were often elaborate and dramatic to the point of foolishness. They provided material for his enemies more often than they gave solace to his friends.

On the whole, Wellesley's record as leader of Irish society was probably a mediocre one: his age; the desire for quiet; the need for economy after a turbulent domestic life and his bankruptcies; and the hostility shared by much of the society which guided Dublin's public life all played their part. Never at ease in large gatherings, Wellesley tended to remain too isolated in Dublin. Especially when combined with Wellesley's family problems, this behaviour nourished "a community of gossip" and added to his feeling of isolation. 335

This loneliness was certainly relieved when Wellesley surprised the world in October 1825 by marrying for a second time. Goulburn was alarmed at the impact on the Catholic question of a viceroy marrying a Catholic. But Liverpool

335 Gregory to Peel, 3 February 1828, BM, Peel MSS 40334, ff. 199-200.
recovered in due time and took a more graceful approach. It was, he admitted, "a very strange and awkward event," but this aside, Liverpool suspected that marriage would be good for Wellesley, and indeed for the efficiency of the Irish government and the sanity of the ministers who were obliged to deal with him. "She would entirely govern him," he predicted, "but I think she has sense enough to govern him better than he governs himself." 336

Liverpool was correct. Not only did she distract him from his multitude of slights and illnesses, but she set out to resolve two difficulties: to rid the viceroy of Johnstone; and to effect a reconciliation between Wellesley and Wellington. 337 The first she succeeded in doing by issuing a couple well-timed ultimata, thus endearing her to the once hostile Goulburn. The second was more difficult. 338 But within a year she managed to

336 Aspinall, George IV, III, 126.

337 There was speculation in early 1826 that Lady Wellesley was pregnant. The Earl of Mountcharles dined with Wellesley in March and reported to Knighton that he had never seen "a man so much in love in my life, the whole of the dinner he kept making downright love to his wife, she was so sick towards the end of the dinner that she was obliged to get up from the table. . . . Does not this look as if there was a young Lord Mornington forthcoming?" Earl of Mountcharles to Knighton, 13 March 1826, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 142.

338 Butler, Eldest, p. 505.
improve relations between the two brothers sufficiently so that they could cooperate in an attack on Liverpool on behalf of Gerald.

The most important manifestation of the change in Wellesley's frame of mind in the wake of the marriage was a sudden cessation of demands on his part to be recalled to England. 339 Indeed, Wellesley had come to see his work in a new light. By May 1825 he had already moved from a state of constant anger to a despondent but not crushing fatalism: "I look to the lot assigned me in this public calamity with gratitude to God," he told Plunket, "and with a humble but steadfast confidence in my final reward, here and hereafter, for the just and faithful discharge of my high duty." 340

But by 1826 he was boasting once more of his ability to redeem Ireland, if he could be granted enough time. Viceregal tenures, nonetheless, were never measured solely by Ireland's requirements. Wellesley would spend almost all of 1827 prolonging his term and then rushing to London in hopes of becoming Prime minister. As he departed Dublin his record in Ireland was already under scrutiny.

X: Wellesley in Ireland: An Estimate

Apart from a memorandum prepared in 1828 by Wellesley's

339 Aspinall, George IV, III, 142.

340 Wellesley to Plunket, 22 May 1825, Plunket, Plunket, II, 207.
friend Shawe (much as he had prepared on in 1814 to vindicate Wellesley's years as Foreign secretary), there are almost no detailed analyses of Wellesley's viceroyalty. In part this is accounted for by the bifurcated character of the administration, which certainly placed a premium on compromise and intentionally blunted any concerted effort towards either conservatism or innovation. The highest encomium one could pay in the context of Wellesley's original instructions of 1821 was to point out that he did in fact administer and not change the law, and did so with some degree of evenhandedness. As Shawe rightly points out, Protestants were unlikely to praise a policy which by allowing Catholics enjoyment of more of the rights the law already had given them, increased Catholic power. On the other hand Catholics refused to acknowledge improvement in their condition "lest it should be said that they ought to be contented." Shawe noted that O'Connell had "denounced Lord Wellesley as the worst enemy of Ireland, because his measures were calculated to cajole and tranquilise the Catholic population by a partial redress of their grievances and thus to render them indifferent to the great object of unqualified emancipation." 341

Wellesley thus suffered at the hands of both Irish factions. No viceroy could expect to turn his position into an opportunity for becoming a popular hero unless he could make sweeping changes, and this London would not permit. Thus Wellesley's role in Ireland was largely a combination of most of the more difficult features of the Indian viceroyalty with few of its advantages. In Ireland he was the principal guardian of law and order, as he was in India. In India, however, his authority had been virtually unlimited, and the masses, who knew no concepts of liberty and wanted only efficient, enlightened rule, applauded a system which provided security and strove to guarantee evenhanded treatment under the law. Ireland was not content to be governed as a garrison outpost of the empire. Even Wellesley's contributions, therefore, to reform of the magistracy, the policy, and the constabulary were regarded with suspicion by a majority of the population.

An estimate of Wellesley's accomplishments is perhaps made easier by looking at the system which he was sent to Ireland to superintend. After 1825 parliament entertained several suggestions for eliminating viceregal rule altogether. Agitation for this came from the Whigs and indeed from M.P.s many of whom were generally sympathetic to Wellesley's efforts in Ireland. The testimony, then, only indirectly constituted
a verdict on Wellesley's performance. But it revealed how great was the challenge for any incumbent; no Seringapatam lay on the horizon for the ruler of Ireland.

In 1823 the House of Commons was treated to a debate on the motion that the Irish Lord Lieutenancy was excessively expensive. Joseph Hume, who pursued this tack, hazarded the opinion that Dublin's economy and self-esteem could easily survive the extinction of Dublin castle administration. Ireland's departments in large degree had already been subsumed into those of Britain; the viceroy remained as an anachronism, and possessed no original powers to distinguish him from London. His duties were "trifling"; he focused Ireland's discontents and problems on himself and symbolised all that was inequitable in the Anglo-Irish relationship.

In his rebuttal Goulburn emphasised the need for an authority immediately responsive to Ireland's needs, prepared at all times to suppress "tumult and discord." This, of course, was sadly true. Goulburn also held that the lower classes looked upon the connection with England as the result of defeat; to them the Lord Lieutenant was

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[^342]: Hansard, IX (1823), 1226-30.
their "last vestige of dignity." Peel intervened to add that a resident viceroy was needed to superintend the distribution of patronage in the church and the law. Newport proved an unexpected ally of government by condemning plans for abolition; the Irish "would look upon it as the last scene of their degradation." Canning wound up the government's case by fearing that Hume's proposal "would destroy the last link which bound the two countries together."

This interesting exchange adequately summarised the strong and weak points of the Irish viceroyalty and served as well to measure Wellesley's responsibilities and goals. Both opponents and defenders of the institution agreed that it was primarily an instrument for social control, applying force and granting favours through police and patronage powers. These were not responsibilities which admitted of much chance for devising long range solutions to Ireland's problems. The other virtue of the system - symbolising Ireland's special status within the United Kingdom and constituting something of a hostage to its dignity - was

343 Ibid.
344 Ibid., pp. 1232-35.
345 Ibid., pp. 1236-37.
346 Ibid., pp. 1237-38.
only slightly affected by the incumbent, although Wellesley's Irish birth and pro-Catholic views did something to ingratiate him with the Catholic majority.

The debate of 1826 reinforced the conclusion that the Irish viceroyalty was something of a necessary evil. Hume's motion for a commission of inquiry was negatived without a division. The debate, nonetheless, seems to have stimulated considerable thinking on the subject. Canning, who defended the system in 1823, was bothered by second thoughts, and his visit to Wellesley in Dublin in 1825 may have in part been related to this. In 1826 David Spring Rice introduced a motion for a reexamination of the Lord Lieutenancy. He wrote to Wellesley outlining his intentions and venturing the opinion that at some future time a cabinet officer should be substituted. He hastened to assure Wellesley that no criticism of him was implied; Wellesley had done more for the benefit of Ireland since the act of union than all his predecessors combined.347

Spring Rice's motion surfaced just as Canning was about to become Prime minister. Goulburn busied himself by preparing a response which repeated his earlier presentation.348 Lamb duly shouldered the same burden when he


348 Goulburn to Wellesley, 19 March 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37305, f. 54.
replaced Goulburn. But Spring Rice consulted Canning, who turned from being angry to Spring Rice's determination to pursue the subject to an inclination to sponsor the project himself. Nothing came of Canning's alleged conversion before his death in August. But Lamb, either under Canning's influence or as the result of his tenure as Irish chief secretary, came to hope that Wellesley and his office might go out together; as Wellesley was "so near his end, you may let him expire in peace; and if his office could expire with him, so much the better. . . ." It did not, of course, and indeed Wellesley disciplined himself to return to London prepared to steer the country through the crisis of the moment, if only the country would let him. To his horror the King summoned Wellington instead.

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349 Lamb to Wellesley, 7 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37305, f. 122.
350 Arbuthnot to Peel, 6 July 1827, BM, Peel MSS 40340, ff. 156-59.
351 Peel to Goulburn, 25 January 1827, Parker, Peel, I, 492.
352 Melbourne to unnamed correspondent, 11 November 1827, printed in Torrens, Melbourne, I, 259.
CHAPTER XVI: INTERREGNUM

As long as Liverpool remained Prime Minister Melvillay’s role as head of the Irish administration seemed secure. Catholic relief was an open question, and after Melvillay’s unsuccessful bid to force the issue in 1825 as leader of the government he prepared to upset the delicate balance between “Catholics and Protestants.” Liverpool was not only irreplaceable; he was the object of genuine, but genuine obstruction in all quarters. The Ministry staggered forward as if Liverpool would be at the helm forever.

Beneath the calm of surface from the changes were taking place. There had been trouble during the 1829 crisis but no less demonstrated in only that the Catholic issue could not be ignored forever. The incoercible pressure was
Wellesley contrived to make the final year of his first stint as viceroy an unpleasant one for himself and his colleagues. In contrast to the public utterances of most men of the period, who protested frequently that they despised office, Wellesley stoutly resisted attempts to remove him from Dublin castle. Moreover, he based his obstreperousness on expediency rather than on high principle. In doing so he thoroughly exasperated his friend of many years, George Canning, and he consigned himself to an isolation which could not be ended without distress to his self-esteem.

As long as Liverpool remained Prime minister Wellesley's role as head of the Irish administration seemed secure. Catholic relief was an open question, and after Canning's unsuccessful bid to force the issue in 1825 no member of the government was prepared to upset the delicate balance between "Catholics and "Protestants." Liverpool was not only irreplaceable; he was the object of grudging but genuine admiration in all quarters. The ministry staggered forward as if Liverpool would be at the helm forever.

Beneath the placid surface dramatic changes were taking place. Canning had been bruised during the 1825 crisis but he had demonstrated to many that the Catholic issue could not be ignored forever. His recuperative powers were
impressive. By May 1826 Canning had been fully restored to the King's good graces; Canning's sympathy for the late unlamented Queen was forgiven if not forgotten and Canning was offered a peerage. This he refused but he nominated his closest friend, Charles Ellis, instead.¹ The King's accommodating frame of mind proved very useful to Canning when Liverpool was struck down in early 1827. After much complicated maneuvering Canning emerged as Prime minister.

The formation of Canning's ministry has been the subject of intense analysis.² It is remarkable but undeniably true that Canning seems to have made no attempt to find a place for Wellesley within that ministry. He had many positions to fill, and because the Tories rebuffed his efforts to continue with a coalition government Canning was forced to rely on public figures whose attitudes were close to those of Wellesley.³ Most of the month of April slipped away before Canning turned his attention to Dublin,

and even then it came in response to reports of Wellesley's unhappiness, which was intense enough for him to complain of Canning's conduct even to Goulburn. Later Lamb wrote to Lansdowne that Wellesley had been "exceedingly hurt and irritated with Canning for never communicating with him upon his becoming the head of the government nor upon any subsequent step whatever." These stories eventually reached Canning. On 24 April he wrote to Wellesley an apologetic letter complaining of a lack of sleep and of little time for correspondence with "absent friends." This launched an exchange of letters more vigorous than anything Canning could have wished or predicted.

By the middle of April Canning had indeed addressed himself to Wellesley's position. Canning was personally content to leave Wellesley in Dublin; at least he saw no virtue in immediate changes. As Canning later explained to Wellesley, the King had been foiled in his attempts to secure a government in which the "Protestant" faction would predominate, and therefore he was determined to give them the

4 Henry Goulburn to Wellesley, 21 April 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37305, f. 95.


lead in Ireland. If Goulburn had consented to remain as chief secretary, Canning told Wellesley, perhaps the King would have been mollified. This Canning had tried to do, but pressure from Wellington and Peel insured that Goulburn would join the other Tories on the opposition benches. The "impossibility of finding a successor of the same kidney" was one factor which forced Canning's hand. Canning also believed that Liverpool had promised the King back in 1825 that a "Protestant" viceroy would be sent to Dublin whenever parliament was dissolved. 7

Equally ominous for Wellesley's prospects, the Whigs under Lansdowne insisted that both primary Irish offices be held by men sympathetic to Catholics. As often happened when faced with an invitation to enter office, the Whigs quarrelled among themselves as to the wisdom of tasting power and Lansdowne presented conditions so demanding that Canning saw at once how impossible it would be to satisfy even a portion of them unless Wellesley was removed from the Dublin post. 8

So Wellesley must go. Canning was unwilling to bring him

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7 Canning to Wellesley, 22 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 272.

into the cabinet; the passage of twenty years had not dulled his recollections of Wellesley's difficult behaviour as Foreign secretary. But he was prepared to enlist Wellesley's services in some other capacity. In mid-April therefore Canning interviewed the chairman and deputy chairman of the court of directors of the East India company: would they consent to have Wellesley return to Calcutta?

Wellesley was not Canning's first choice for that position—lesser lights such as Melville, Williams Wynn and Tierney had been approached and all of them had refused. The court of directors were in an accommodating mood. They were prepared to accept even Wellesley, no doubt mindful that at age sixty-seven Wellesley was unlikely to repeat his earlier style. Apparently Canning even prevailed upon them to frame their invitation so as to suggest obliquely their regrets at the company's behaviour during the previous quarter century. Canning himself moved to sweeten the offer by suggesting a rise in the English peerage for Wellesley.

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10 Wellesley-Canning correspondence, April-June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, ff. 265, 279, 346.
11 Canning to Wellesley, 24 April 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 265.
12 Ibid., 22 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 272.
Before the company was forced or persuaded to grant Canning's wishes in a formal manner Wellesley weighed in with a firm negative. At his age his reluctance to sail for Calcutta was understandable enough, and there was the unfortunate precedent of Cornwallis dying as he reached his destination. But Wellesley's refusal took on an injured tone. He refuted Canning's arguments that Liverpool and the King had planned to remove him from Dublin before the end of his "natural term." This, Wellesley had somehow concluded (he adverted to Richmond's tenure) that he should be allowed to remain six years, and this would not come until winter. Wellesley littled expected "any eagerness should exist to abridge" his term. There was, moreover, no evidence (according to him) that he was "Catholic" or "Protestant." "Who can point out one act or expression of mine in this government by which any inclination of my judgement on that matter can be referred?" He rejected the idea of a step in the peerage if it did not displace his Irish title. He concluded by asking Canning why he had not consulted Lady Wellesley about his aspirations before

14 Wellesley to Canning, 2 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 337.
proceeding with the India project.

Canning was distressed by this pricklish response. It was unfortunate that Wellesley should refuse to return to India; it was far worse that he seemed adamant about remaining in Dublin. Canning let Col. Shawe know that he meant no harm in suggesting India; indeed he had assumed that Wellesley might not want to go. Shawe reported back that he had reassured Wellesley of Canning's good intentions and was "so far successful as to prevent any disturbance of temper" on Wellesley's part. He hoped, nonetheless, that Canning could see his way to leave Wellesley in Dublin until the end of the year.¹⁵

This Canning could not do. The King was pressing for a change. Canning confided to Wellesley that the King's kindness continued "unabated,... though I am not quite sure that there are not some trifling matters (the amount and nature of which I hardly know) in which you may inadvertently have fallen into some negligence towards His Majesty."¹⁶ These words of faint praise were intended to suggest that Canning was not a free agent, and indeed this was true.


¹⁶ Canning to Wellesley, 7 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 345.
He was fettered to the extent that it was impossible as well to consult with Lady Wellesley, explained Canning. She was in the habit of seeing Wellington frequently (her campaign to reconcile the two brothers was in full flood) and Wellington's "bitter hostility" towards the ministry meant that the world would misconstrue Canning's intentions.  

These reasons were somewhat lame, but Canning must be given credit for fashioning an imaginative reply. He also had a counter-proposal in mind: would Wellesley accept the embassy at Vienna after an extension of a few months in Dublin? If so, his brother Henry, the incumbent envoy there, would be sent to Calcutta. This would serve to give Wellesley the advantages of his brother's house and establishment fixed at a rate "probably of not ruinous extravagance."  

Canning tendered this offer on 22 May and repeated it on 7 June. He urged an early reply because of the court of directors' insistence that Lord Amherst be recalled. 

Almost immediately after posting the second letter Canning

17 Ibid., 7 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 345.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 22 May 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 272.
received Wellesley's negative. He gave Canning no reason; Charles Arbuthnot confided to Peel that Wellesley had been "grievously offended" at the prospect of succeeding his younger brother. Wellesley's wounded pride more than offset his expressed desire not to injure Henry's prospects. So intense was his unhappiness that he determined to lay out for the King's edification his reasons for remaining in Dublin. He wrote to Canning on 11 and 13 June and on the 13th Shawe forwarded to Knighton a memorandum inspired by the viceroy. On 28 June Wellesley wrote directly to the King. Wellesley appealed to his "interests and honour, your Majesty's service, and ... the welfare of Ireland.

Meanwhile Wellesley gave assurances to Canning that in any case he would not remain in Dublin beyond the end of the year. He simply wanted to avoid the appearance of a recall. Upon returning to England he would be "quite ready" to serve under Canning, presumably even abroad if Canning

21 Wellesley to Canning, 11 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 351.
22 Wellesley to the King, 28 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 362.
so desired. Shawe's memorandum was a bit more candid. In addition to completing "some plans of public benefit" and rewarding several persons "of high honour" he would be able to use the extra time to retire his remaining debts before returning to London. 

In retrospect it does appear that questions of finance loomed very large in Wellesley's mind. By 1827 his debts were no longer enormous, but painful memories of his celebrated bankruptcy remained quite vivid. He had the chance to extinguish those debts which remained and to arrive in London solvent, an uplifting feeling indeed. It was a prospect so attractive that it overrode all other considerations, including even the prospect of returning to India. Wellesley had little to gain otherwise by staying in Dublin, as would soon become apparent. He could not have foreseen that Canning was entering the final weeks of his life.

On 21 June Canning placed Wellesley's request for an extension in Dublin before the King. He recommended that Wellesley's request be approved, and wrote to Wellesley that the King would probably agree. The King continued nonetheless

24 Ibid., 11 June 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 351.
25 Shawe to Knighton, 13 June 1827, printed in Aspinall, ed., George IV, III, 252.
to insist that Canning find an unabashedly Protestant chief secretary to balance Wellesley, and this Canning confessed to be quite unable to do. Canning then rather pessimistically suggested Lamb as Goulburn's replacement, and to his great surprise the King agreed, but only on the stipulation that Lamb's tenure last until a "pure Protestant" could be found. Lansdowne and the Whigs accepted the arrangement, but only because Canning declined to inform Lansdowne of the King's stipulation. Canning's calculated lack of candor was to cause grave problems for Wellesley at the end of the year.

On 12 July Canning was able to report that all was in order, but warned Wellesley that the beginning of January should be "the completion and not the outset of the whole transaction." To insure Wellesley's compliance he let it be known that Anglesey was to succeed him. London was soon privy to the whole transaction, as perhaps Canning intended, and to Wellesley's great distress. Arbuthnot reported gleefully that the extension was granted because of Wellesley's financial embarrassments and for no other reason.  

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28 Canning to Wellesley, 12 July 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 364.

himself penned an effusive paean of thanksgiving to the King, and sat back to serve out his term.  

Soon enough Wellesley was astounded to hear of Canning's illness and then of his death. His reaction smacked more of chagrin than sorrow; fate had conspired to see him isolated in Dublin—by his own command—when the nation was plunged into its most serious crisis since the war.

II: Wellington vs. Wellesley

Between Canning's death in August 1827 and the fall of Wellington's ministry in November 1830 Wellesley's career was once more in shambles. He purchased an extension of six months in Ireland at the price of alienating Canning and his friends. He belittled the qualifications of Lord Anglesley. In Ireland his usefulness had declined precipitously. O'Connell in particular waxed angry at the failure of the new ministry to proceed with Catholic emancipation. Lamb tried to arbitrate the dispute between the viceroy and the Catholics' leader by pleading with O'Connell to judge Wellesley not by the government's performance but by what he told O'Connell he would like to do. O'Connell warmed to Lamb but his opinion of Wellesley fell even further: "You know," he told Spring Rice at the end of the year, "that

30 Wellesley to the King, 15 July 1827, Aspinall, George IV, III, 268.
although Wellesley spoke the Catholics fair, all his countenance was given to the enemies of Irish tranquility."31

Wellesley felt frustrated and he took out his anger on innocent parties.32 He sat in almost daily expectation of receiving an invitation to rescue the nation from the dangers of an incompetent coalition. He suffered from an eye ailment and his financial position remained precarious. His qualities went unnoticed in London, and Lady Wellesley's labours had not effected a reconciliation with the Duke. There were no miracles to work in Ireland, and he was too far from London to set things right there.

In London Canning's sudden decline and death renewed speculation about the future direction of Wellesley's political career. When Liverpool resigned in March 1827 some observers predicted that Wellesley might be recalled from Dublin to form a government. James Losh, who kept a detailed diary at the time, recorded that Wellesley might be a compromise candidate under whom Peel and Canning could both serve. It would be only a temporary measure, and a coalition based upon younger

31 Daniel O'Connell to David Spring Rice, quoted in Ziegler, Melbourne, p. 93.

32 A. G. Stapleton to Wellesley, 5 and 7 August 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, ff. 261, 263; Wellesley to Knighton, 9 August 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 278.
leadership would soon follow. 33 The Duke of Buckingham, whose interest in politics seldom contributed much to his acumen, forecast in February that Wellesley would become titular head of a ministry with Wellington as the principal source of strength. 34 Of course these speculations came to nothing, but Wellesley must have allowed his expectations to rise. Shawe reported to Knighton that Wellesley was

in the enjoyment of perfect health and in a more vigorous state of mind and body and more happy than I have known him for years. His circumstances are greatly improved and although he has lately declined situations of great emolument, he is content and satisfied with his determination. He has satisfied his own feelings and is in good humor and charity with all mankind. Late events have interested him very much and he feels inclined to take an active part in whatever is passing on his return to England. 35

This was certainly an advertisement of Wellesley's availability. Canning died on 8 August and Wellesley immediately composed a "memorandum" in which he announced his readiness to assume the burdens of leadership. 36

"If the office of the first lord of the Treasury should

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35 Shawe to Knighton, 15 August 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 287.
be proposed to Lord Wellesley," the memorandum began, "he would accept it and would proceed to England with all possible expedition." Short of that, Wellesley was prepared to take the Foreign office or the presidency of the council and to serve under Lansdowne, Wellington, Goderich, Peel or anyone else forming a ministry based on the "principles of Lord Liverpool's government." If no invitation came his way he planned to take an active part in public life, in or out of office. This memorandum reached Knighton, who may have embarrassed Wellesley unintentionally by circulating it in high circles.

The King persuaded Goderich to succeed to Canning's inheritance at least until things could be sorted out. Goderich was woefully inadequate, but he had the advantage of honestly not wanting to be Prime minister. Goderich's weakness made Whigs tremble for the safety of liberal opinions but there was no consensus on a successor. The King did suggest that Wellesley be made Foreign secretary, "inasmuch as it would be satisfactory to Europe, and to the corps diplomatique, very important considerations at

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this particular moment." The incumbent Foreign secretary, Viscount Dudley and Ward, was on record favouring resigning his post in favour of Lansdowne. Goderich knew that the King was most reluctant to strengthen the Whig faction in the cabinet by bringing in Lansdowne, and Dudley preferred to remain in office rather than give it to someone else. This suited Goderich, who abhorred changes, and the ministry staggered forward.

By late autumn Wellesley had grown impatient to leave Ireland. Anglesey’s appointment was common knowledge. Wellesley had declared him to be "peculiarly unfit for the government of Ireland." News arriving from London in early December dispelled any doubts on Wellesley's part about trying to extend his tenure in Ireland even longer. On 11 December Goderich proposed to the King that Wellesley be appointed President of the council in place of the Duke of Portland, who wished to retire. Goderich apparently had broached this topic in November, but Lansdowne had threatened to abandon Goderich if Wellesley took office before another of the Whig leadership, Lord Holland, was satisfied. Lansdowne had claimed on that occasion that he had withdrawn his own

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39. The King to Frederick Robinson, Viscount Goderich, 10 August 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 279-80.
40. Ibid.
41. Peel to Henry, Earl Bathurst, 21 August 1827, printed
resignation (and thus averted a Whig exodus when Goderich was trying to form a government) upon being promised that Holland would have the first vacancy. 42 The King had wanted no more Whigs. Huskisson now supported Lansdowne in his determination to see Holland given office. On 16 December Goderich tried to resolve the problem by suggesting that Wellesley and Holland be brought in together. The King listened and sought counsel elsewhere. 43

Huskisson now emerged as arbiter of Wellesley's fate. The King was quite uncertain how to accommodate Wellesley without at the same time strengthening the Whig element in the cabinet. Goderich was quite unable to influence the King. Huskisson, on whom Goderich relied for counsel and support in this crisis, confessed to be perfectly willing to see Wellesley placed in the cabinet, if Holland also entered. 44 But he opposed Wellesley as Prime minister: "he will not do, depend on it" he told


42 Goderich to the King, 11 December 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 344.

43 The King to Knighton, 16 December 1827, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 351.

44 William Huskisson to Goderich, 18 December 1827, BM, Huskisson MSS 38752, f. 297.
his friend Leveson Gower.\footnote{Huskisson to Granville Leveson Gower, First Earl Granville, 18 December 1827, BM, Huskisson MSS 38752, f. 303.} This news, in a distorted form, reached Dublin.\footnote{M. G. Prendergast to Wellesley, 20 December 1827, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 373.} Wellesley reacted immediately by rushing to London just before Christmass.

The intelligence conveyed to Wellesley cast Huskisson as a villain. Huskisson, it was alleged, had intrigued to force Goderich out of office before parliament met, in order to keep Wellesley from becoming Prime minister. He had failed, and now he was determined to keep Goderich in power for the same reason. Knighton was pushing Wellesley's candidacy, according to this report, and Huskisson reportedly informed him that he would resign as leader of the house of Commons if Wellesley became Prime minister.\footnote{Ibid.}

It is difficult to separate fact from fiction. Huskisson certainly held Wellesley in low esteem; there are traces of this in Huskisson's correspondence stretching back twenty years. Wellesley on the other hand believed that he had materially advanced Huskisson's career on several occasions. Now Wellesley was convinced that a conspiracy had formed against him. Huskisson was implicated, and later when he
took office under Wellington Wellesley's suspicions seemed to be confirmed. Wellesley also concluded later on that Knighton was involved in the conspiracy. 48

Wellesley would have been wiser to suspect Lamb. Lamb was in London with Wellesley when Goderich's ministry began to unravel. He reached London well ahead of Wellesley, in time to agree with Huskisson that the Canningites could in good conscience remain in office, even in the company of Wellington and Peel, if at least half the cabinet could be listed as favouring Catholic emancipation. Wellington was fully prepared to promise this, and he pledged himself to select the next viceroy and chief secretary "from among persons not known as decidedly hostile to the Catholic claim." Anglesey met these criteria. 49

Lamb was inclined to follow Huskisson's lead. Many Whigs reacted most unsympathetically when Huskisson betrayed a willingness to share office with the Tories, "to unite with Mr. Canning's murderers," as the Duke of Devonshire put it rather crudely. Even Wellington was surprised to see Huskisson desert his old allies so readily and serve "as

48 Wellesley to Knighton, 21 July 1828, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 412.
49 Ziegler, Melbourne, p. 97.
a bridge for the rats to run over."\textsuperscript{50} Lamb was one of those "rats," and his motives reflected no support for Wellesley. Lamb may have insisted that Anglesey be appointed as one condition for his remaining as chief secretary. If so, his insistence more likely reflected a desire to see Wellesley out than Anglesey in; all Pagets, he later told Queen Victoria, were "very proud, very passionate, and see no need to correct their pride and their tempers."\textsuperscript{51} Meanwhile, Lamb's support for Huskisson encouraged Wellington to see his way to forming a ministry, and in doing so Wellesley's hopes were dashed.

While Lamb and Huskisson negotiated with Wellington, Wellesley came to a decision of his own in Dublin. The strategy was to arrive suddenly in London and to force his candidacy on weak-kneed men. It came too late. Even as Wellesley was en-route Goderich submitted his resignation, tears and all. The King wavered. Goulburn confessed that he would not be surprised to see "in all the embarrassments" some attempt to form a government under Wellesley's leadership.\textsuperscript{52} Wellesley arrived in London to find the King closeted


\textsuperscript{51}Zielger, Melbourne, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{52}Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory, ed., Mr. Gregory's
with Wellington. Wellesley at first convinced himself that Wellington would recommend him as leader of a new ministry. He could not have known how far removed this idea was from Wellington's mind. He had already confided to the Arbuthnots that the very rumor of Wellesley in high office would demonstrate the necessity of a Tory government. Now he proceeded to form a government of his own.

Details of all this were revealed on 7 January. The resignation of Goderich was finally and officially accepted a week after Christmas. Wellesley still sat in daily expectation of office. His son Henry told Lady Wellesley that "all the world will with one voice condemn" Wellington if he failed to put Wellesley into office. Wellington was fully prepared to brave that condemnation. On 7 January Wellington confided to Bathurst that his friends did not want Wellesley in office. Wellesley, meanwhile, applied for an interview with the King. There was no response. At length Wellington laid his brother's hopes to rest with a note which,


55 Wellington to Bathurst, 7 January 1828, Bathurst MSS, p. 652.
with all its eloquent language, lacked even the courtesy of an explanation: "it would have given me the greatest satisfaction if circumstances had permitted me to ask for your assistance in the difficulties in which I found myself; and to have been the means of giving the King and his counsels the benefit of your powerful services and able advice."

There was no elaboration. Peel called on Wellesley and invited him to dinner. There was no audience with the King, no further communication.

III: Retirement

Wellesley and Lady Wellesley retired momentarily to Brighton. Wellesley, according to his son Richard, was "low in spirits about himself and with no new hope." His reception in London had proven deeply mortifying, and without the salutary influence of his wife Wellesley would perhaps have failed to cope with all these disappointments. His correspondence dwindled away to almost nothing. There

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57 Wellington to Bathurst, 2 January 1828, printed in Bathurst MSS, p. 651.

were some acrimonious exchanges with Wellington. A lively salvo delivered by Wellesley is printed in the Windsor papers of George IV:

A person wholly out of power, insulted and exiled, can scarcely expect even ordinary notice from those who owe their very existence to his former kindness and indulgence. But though wounded, I am not yet destroyed; it would be painful to you to announce, that I never enjoyed so good health; and still more to assure my enemies (whom I know) that I never was more equal to that bold and determined effort, which is now become equally necessary for my honour, and for that of the King, as well as for the safety of the country. I am most anxious to vindicate myself, and to bring my secret, base, cowardly enemies to open battle, and with the blessing of truth, reason and justice, I entertain no doubt of complete victory, on my very first public movement, which cannot longer be delayed.

To many Wellesley was simply an "old woman." His enemies, probably Huskisson, Knighton, and the King, were ready to dismiss his blasts. They were premature in so doing. Within two years Huskisson and George IV would be dead, and Knighton would retire into obscurity. Meanwhile, Wellesley was preparing to play out one final act in his public career. It began when he returned to the house of Lords in January 1828.


60 Wellesley to Knighton, 21 July 1828, printed in Aspinall, George IV, III, 412.
CHAPTER XVII: IRELAND AGAIN
Wellesley resumed his seat in the house of Lords at the beginning of summer. After several months of depression and some celebrated bouts of self-pity, Wellesley's decision to resume a public career was remarkable, and it foreshadowed yet another period of active involvement in the political life of the nation. At an age when most of Wellesley's contemporaries had already been laid to rest under the floor of their favourite church or chapel, Wellesley continued to confound friends and foes alike. Until 1835 he was extraordinarily active; indeed, in terms of imaginative contributions to British politics this period compares favourable with any in his long career in domestic politics. His influence rose steadily and by 1835 he was no longer widely thought of as simply an unhappy and aging misfit. In many respects there were happy years, and it is odd that most observers, including recent writers, have treated this period as the twilight of his life. Twilight began after 1835, not in 1828.

I: Catholic Emancipation

With Wellesley's opponents safely in office and the Whigs discomfitted by their failure to force a genuine reform ministry on the King Wellesley was content to take his place on the opposition benches. The crisis of the moment of course
was Catholic emancipation. By 1828 Daniel O'Connell had demonstrated to everyone his command of Irish public opinion and his determination to force the Catholic issue to a vote at Westminster. He had reduced the electoral process in Ireland to something approaching a farce. Nonetheless, the sturdy gentlemen who comprised backbench support for Whigs and Tories alike (especially the latter) were loath to admit Catholics to civil equality. It was a question whether parliament, against its own instincts, could be made more liberal than the constituency it represented.

Wellesley had never abandoned his commitment to Catholic relief. He had, along with most of his colleagues, become discouraged after 1812, and after 1820 he firmly refused to go on record supporting Catholics' claims. Indeed, he claimed that he had never, even in 1812, advocated emancipation as such, but only as part of support for a full and free discussion of the matter in parliament. For these reasons his decision to participate as advocate for relief in a debate on the issue in early summer 1828 marked his shift from the Tory part of the Canningite persuasion to union with the Whigs. New party alignments pressed many prominent figures to redefine their allegiances. If Wellesley planned to remain active in parliament, it was appropriate even at his advanced age that he also do so.
Once again debate focused on a motion that it "be expedient to consider the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, with a view to seeking a final and conciliatory judgement" which could insure tranquility in Ireland and the stability of the Protestant establishment there. Wellesley spoke towards the close of a long debate in the house of Lords. His presentation was brief and it addressed itself to practical aspects of the question. He referred to his experience as Lord Lieutenant, which proved to his satisfaction "that those laws did not tend to the security of the church and state, as was fondly imagined." As viceroy, despite "the most efficient assistance from the members of His Majesty's government," his exertions "had been too often counteracted by the dreadful influence" of the Catholic crisis.¹ So pernicious was the impact of the penal system and associated civil disabilities on Catholics that the ancient securities granted to church and state therein were "dangerous to both." He doubted whether the house of Lords would see the wisdom of joining the other chamber in approving the motion, but he was encouraged by the frank confession on the part of so many peers that the present situation could not persist much longer.

¹Great Britain, *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time* (Second Series; London: T. C. Hansard, 1828), XIX (10 June 1828), 1284.
Wellesley's temperate speech was warmly received. The effect of it was enhanced when Wellington rose after his brother and admitted that perhaps their opinions on the subject were not so very different.\(^2\) The full significance of Wellington's observations were not appreciated at the moment; Wellington's slow conversion to conceding the need for Catholic emancipation was still a well-kept secret. But Wellesley had now declared himself fully satisfied that Catholic grievances were genuine, and that their power to disrupt the life of the nation could no longer be denied. Lord Holland on behalf of the Whigs rightly interpreted Wellesley's speech as a clear indication of his willingness to join the Whigs in pressing for Catholic relief. Would Wellesley shoulder the burden of pressing reform in other areas as well?

Perhaps. But Wellesley moved slowly in giving his allegiance to the Whigs visible expression. Wellington soon removed the Catholic issue from the forum of parliament by appropriating it as a measure of his own government; in the wake of the June 1828 debate, which the government carried by a narrow margin in the Lords, he was forced to move more expeditiously than he had originally intended. For

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\(^2\) Edward Law, Second Baron Ellenborough, diary entry, 8 June 1828, printed in Edward Law, Second Baron Ellenborough, Political Diary, 1828-1830 (2 vols.; London, 1881), I, 141.
his part Wellesley abstained from debate for most of the next two years. He circulated among the Whigs, however, and seems to have dampened some longstanding prejudices against him. He sat on the opposition benches and finally in June 1830 took the offensive. George IV died on 26 June. Two days later, with an eye to approaching elections, Wellesley spoke to Grey. It was important, Wellesley advised Grey, that proponents of reform combine their resources in order to show Britain and Europe that a viable government based on progressive measures was feasible. Grey was the obvious leader of this new group and Wellesley volunteered to support him.³

From this point forward Wellesley offered his advice and services on a number of occasions. Wellington's ministry staggered forward until November and the Whigs solicited Wellesley's advice with increasing frequency as the Tory party's long supremacy drew to a close. Wellesley played the role of intermediary between Huskisson as leader of the Canningites and Grey's Whigs. Huskisson was prepared to enter systematic opposition to Wellington in cooperation with Grey. He was killed shortly after making this commitment.

³Wellesley to Grey, 28 June 1830, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 119.
but the Canningite adhesion was made secure. 4

Thoughts turned to office. The first office mentioned in connection with Wellesley was the board of control. Lord Ellenborough had invited Wellesley to become a member of the East India committee the previous February. Wellesley had declined, citing ill-health. 5 As Wellington's ministry weakened rumors increased that Wellesley would replace Ellenborough at the board of control. These stories prompted Ellenborough himself to observe that Wellesley "would not undo anything. He would do nothing himself. Everything would be done by the secretary." 6 If so, perhaps the board of control was not suitable, and the Whigs shared many of Ellenborough's prejudices about Wellesley's executive talents. He was not to be offered that position.

Rumors of Wellesley's candidacy for other major offices came to nothing. Croker wrote on 18 November that Wellesley would get something, but the Whigs would not likely "give any office of business to the most brilliant


5 Ellenborough, diary entry, 6 February 1830, printed in Ellenborough, Diary, II, 184.

Brougham wrote to Wellesley saying that there was a "general feeling" that it would be advantageous to have Wellesley in the cabinet, but "you have chosen otherwise." Brougham was certainly in a position to know, and perhaps Grey extended an offer the nature of which is not known to us. Nothing in Wellesley's correspondence sheds light on the subject. At any rate Wellesley was offered and he accepted the honourific position of Lord Steward of the household. It was in some respects an appropriate position: access to the King and Queen; a vantage point to view the fortunes of the Whig ministry; a place far removed from bureaucratic responsibilities. He accepted it without much alacrity, we may imagine. Again, for many it seemed to mark a dignified close to Wellesley's career.

Wellesley's influence surfaced in several different areas during the next year. He seems to have been consulted regularly on Irish affairs, with topics ranging from suggestions for reform of the representative peerage to how to deal

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8 Henry Brougham to Wellesley, 1830, BM, Wellesley MSS 37310, f. 365.

9 Wellesley, Wellesley Papers, II, 222.
with O'Connell. He announced his "complete approbation" of Grey's plan for parliamentary reform when Grey offered it for inspection early in 1831. He advised Grey to adopt a system of reconciliation in Ireland, including support for the Catholic clergy as a supplement to Catholic emancipation. Catholic bishops should be invited to work closely with the government in the field of education. These suggestions, which others probably seconded, formed the early basis of Whig policies in Britain and Ireland.

Wellesley played an important role in reconciling the new monarch, William IV, to the era of reform. Adelaide of Saxe-Meininger, wife of the King, was a good friend and patroness of Lady Wellesley. As Butler observed, both women shared the problem of their husbands' irregular families, and both handled it "in perfect charity." Unlike Lady Wellesley, however, the new Queen was deeply conservative, prejudiced and obstinate. She was, in Wellesley's words, "educated in the very worst principles of passive obedience

10 Wellesley to Grey, 3 December 1810, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 22.

11 Grey to Wellesley, 4 March 1831, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 6.

12 Wellesley to Grey, 1 February 1831, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 27.

and divine right."\(^1\) By retaining opponents of the ministry of the day in her household she compromised the sincerity of her husband's commitment to his ministers, and Wellesley was called on to help smooth the way, especially as the parliamentary reform bill progressed through parliament.\(^2\)

There were conspiracies of a sort in other quarters. Wellesley thoroughly distrusted the various brothers of the King, especially Cumberland. Cumberland was an unsavoury character, accused in his time of all sorts of unmentionable crimes, never proven. He was, nonetheless, an "assiduous and by no means unskillful politician" and his influence during the last years of the reign of George IV was considerable.\(^3\) His opponents alleged that he might attempt a coup d'état. This never came to pass but the rumors served their purpose. Early in 1831 Wellesley reported to Grey that Cumberland had dedicated himself to the circulation of "scandalous libel" against the new government. Grey agreed, and exploited Wellesley's antipathy towards Wellington


\(^2\)Littleton, diary entry, 20 November 1831, printed in Aspinall, *Three*, p. 156; Grey to Wellesley, 15 September 1832, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 56.

\(^3\)Ziegler, *William IV*, p. 159.
by observing that Cumberland and the hero of Waterloo had been seen of late "in sweet and harmonious conversation in the house of Lords." Fortunately, and perhaps in part because of the Wellesleys' influence, the Queen took the initiative in dislodging Cumberland. He remained a dangerous alternative to constitutional rule, but an isolated one.

Playing the role of purveyor of rumor was not sufficient employment for Wellesley. His wit and worldly wisdom made him a much sought-after ornament for the Whig houses. "Lord Wellesley sparkles with fire both in mind and matter," Littleton told his diary at the end of 1831. Was there a position more important than what he had which could make use of Wellesley's talents? He resigned his post as Lord Steward in May 1831 and waited in the wings. He apparently failed to play an active role in parliament during this time, one which was crucial for the Whigs because most effort concentrated on the issue of parliamentary reform. He had strongly opposed such projects thirty years before, and despite his support for Grey's plan, perhaps he still entertained some reservations. His reticence upset some Whigs.

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17 Grey to Wellesley, 15 April 1831, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 11.

18 Littleton, diary entry, 13 December 1831, printed in Aspinall, Three, p. 164.
Durham betrayed their unhappiness in a note to Wellesley dated 11 June 1831: "Why do you, who view everything so justly, . . . never take a part now in the debate?" Wellesley pleaded ill-health, and at the end of the year his appearance did suggest to many that he was growing infirm.

Wellesley's bouts of poor health perhaps corresponded to fluctuations in the fate of the ministry's parliamentary program. William IV gave the respectable Earl Grey a carte blanche to form his administration in November 1830. Shortly thereafter several Whigs set to work on a proposal for parliamentary reform. At the end of January 1831 the proposal was ready for the King's inspection. He agreed to support it in all details. The Whigs were overjoyed. The King's many reservations surfaced shortly thereafter, but the bill was introduced as planned into the house of Commons on 1 March. It survived by a single vote the second reading of the bill on 22 March and in April failed in the Lords. A dissolution was granted. The Whigs strengthened their position and between June and September the second reform bill was piloted through the house of Commons. It was thereupon defeated decisively in the house of Lords for a second time. The King voiced his opposition to appointing peers sympathetic to the government.

In early 1832 the battle was joined again, and it could not be won for the Whigs unless the King permitted the Whigs to stuff, or threaten to stuff, the upper chamber with its supporters.

In the spring of 1832 Wellesley's health seemed to improve with the weather. His politics waxed radical when it appeared that the house of Lords might defeat the parliamentary reform bill for a third time. As early as February Littleton observed that among the leading supporters of the ministry only Durham, Althorp, Richmond and Wellesley were prepared to expand the Whig interests in the house of Lords by distributing peerages in large numbers. For Wellesley this was not just the whim of the moment, for in May he wrote to Grey that "the only bulwark against all plots is strength in the house of Lords; without that, and without infusing into that house a large portion of that spirit, which now animates the house of Commons and the nation, and forms public opinion, your government can never stand on its true original basis." It was far from certain that the King would ever subscribe to these arguments; would Lord Grey

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21 Wellesley to Grey, 15 May 1832, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 68.
himself urge them with conviction?

The bill became law in the summer of 1832; the King agreed to permit the creation of additional peers and the threat sufficed. Grey urged Wellesley to be more active on behalf of the bill. Again ill-health intruded. Finally an opportunity for real service seemed to present itself at the end of the year. The forum was Iberia. Wellesley had always sustained an interest in the fortunes of Spain and Portugal. While in office he had hoped by some means or other to effect the "liberalisation" of Spain, and of course Portugal was an ancient British ally. In the spring of 1832 Pedro I, the Brazilian emperor, launched an attack on Lisbon to rescue his daughter Maria, Queen of Portugal, from his brother Miguel, who had usurped the throne. Pedro seemed to favour constitutionalism and thereby won British support. Miguel was favoured by conservative regimes in Spain and by the older European monarchies. Despite British naval assistance, Don Pedro fared poorly and by November it appeared that his cause might be lost. The French under their new "bourgeois" monarch Louis Philippe showed signs

22 Grey to Wellesley, 26 July 1832, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 54.

23 Wellesley to Grey, 30 November 1832, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, f. 73.
of intervening with a large force on the side of Don Pedro, an initiative which would have undercut British influence in Brazil. Palmerston as Foreign secretary urged Grey to despatch a special emissary to Lisbon. The proposal called to mind Wellesley's mission to Spain in 1809. Should Wellesley be sent again?

The answer was both yes and no. On 1 December Palmerston asked Wellesley whether he would be prepared to depart immediately for Spain. Wellesley replied that he required two weeks to prepare himself. Palmerston informed Wellesley on 2 December that two weeks was probably too long a delay but that Grey could make the final determination. To Grey Palmerston wrote that Wellesley "would in many respects be a capital person to send: his name would tell, his manners would carry with them an air of authority, his notions are comprehensive, his views enlarged, and his mission would be a shot in the hull of the Duke." But his "fortnight would be like the Scotch mile and a wee bit," and "events might slip through our fingers" before he finally arrived. Stratford Canning, whose name had been under consideration along with

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25 Palmerston to Grey, 4 December 1832, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 45, file 3, ff. 338-39.
Wellesley's, went instead. The possibility was left open that after Stratford Canning's mission a "weightier hand" might be needed. Wellesley was asked to remain available in this event. As it happened, both Don Pedro and the evil Miguel were sent away.

II: Dublin Again

As it happened, Wellesley was soon to return to active service, and on a scale much more impressive than a mission to Iberia. The Whigs were disturbed to discover that Catholic emancipation had failed to guarantee peace in Ireland. At the end of 1830, indeed, a new wave of unrest travelled across the land. At the base of it was a veritable revolt against tithes, and it deeply embarrassed the Whigs. It also led in January 1831 to the arrest of O'Connell. He was subsequently acquitted and in doing so the Whigs launched the strategy of kicks and kindness which would carry them through the decade.

With parliamentary reform safely on the books the ministry could afford and indeed could not avoid taking a

26 Grey to Wellesley, 4 December 1832, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 63.

27 Palmerston to Wellesley, 6 December 1832, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 383.
closer look at the Irish scene. The King's speech at the opening of parliament in February 1833 signalled the beginning of a comprehensive attack on Ireland's problems. According to Littleton, Wellesley drew up a list of policy proposals and submitted them to Grey. Basing his observations on his familiarity with Ireland, Wellesley insisted on abolition of the grand jury system in Ireland, the vestry cess and tithes, and the imposition of thorough reform within the Church of Ireland. Wellesley observed, again according to Littleton, that O'Connell's strategy was to keep the repeal question out of parliament. He would enflame the masses and at length present an ultimatum to the legislature. Wellesley urged Grey to counter this strategy by a bold stroke of his own. Parliament should be persuaded to make the necessary reforms but at the same time to extract a pledge of imperial unity from all its members.

Grey returned a warm letter of approval, and pledged to embody exactly Wellesley's proposals in the King's speech. In fact the speech did incorporate many of these proposals, although the recommendations concerning tithes reform fell

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29 Littleton, diary entry, 3 February 1833, printed in Aspinall, Three, p. 293.
far short of abolition. On the issue of Church reform, proposals had been advanced by interested Whigs as soon as the ministry was formed.

More important than the alleged inspiration provided by Wellesley to Grey's Irish program was the sudden decision to change the guard at Dublin castle. This came the following September. In June Grey had written to Wellesley regretting once more that Wellesley's ill-health made it impossible for him to participate in the debate on Wellington's motion in favour of British neutrality in the continuing dynastic controversy in Portugal.\(^{30}\) He had also asked Wellesley to lend a hand in the house of Lord's discussion of rising violence in Ireland, but there is no evidence that Wellesley had participated.\(^{31}\) It came as an enormous surprise, therefore, when on 5 September the ministry announced that at age seventy-three Wellesley would return to Ireland as viceroy. Greville recorded his reactions:

Yesterday the announcement of Lord Wellesley's appointment to be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was received with as great astonishment as I ever saw. Once very brilliant, probably never very efficient, he is now worn out and effete. It is astonishing that they should send such a man, and one does not see why, because it is difficult to

\(^{30}\) Grey to Wellesley, 4 June 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 79.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 30 June 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 1.
find a good man, they should select one of the very worst they could hit upon. It is a ridiculous appointment, which is most objectionable to all. His verbal wit prove[s] nothing as to his fitness for business and government, and as he was quite unfit for these long ago, it is scarcely to be supposed that retirement and increased age and infirmities should have made him less so now. They have judiciously waited till parliament is up before the appointment is made known. . . .

Greville was perhaps harsh, but his sentiments reflected accurately those of many other observers. Many who were reluctant to pass judgement in such caustic terms were genuinely astonished to see Wellesley chosen. Apparently Grey at first gave some thought to sending Wellington: "the iron hand of the Duke," he volunteered, "would be the most effectual government for Ireland." Later he thought otherwise. His second choice was Viscount Melbourne, the same Charles Lamb who had served under Wellesley in Ireland. Lamb had ridiculed Wellesley's pomp (although complimentary of Wellesley's work on other points) and after this he could not easily appropriate it to his own use, and declined the offer. Grey apparently discovered no one else worth of the office who was willing to take it. One version is that Lady Wellesley intervened

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33 Ziegler, Melbourne, p. 153.

and urged the King to suggest Wellesley's name; Littleton, who was in a position to know, believed this to be the case. In his biographical sketch of Wellesley, he concluded that Wellesley "liked to be considered capable of divising an original policy and possessing a superior courage requisite for putting it into effect." He had already counseled Grey to neutralise O'Connell by coming forward with a comprehensive reform program, including even high office for O'Connell himself. Grey may have believed that the force of Wellesley's logic would overawe centers of resistance within the Whig party; indeed, the Whigs included few enough adherents who could claim a command of the intricacies of Irish affairs.

Deeper than this, however, was the desire to dismiss the Marquess of Anglesey, whose independence had led to an almost complete breakdown of communications with Edward Stanley, the incumbent chief secretary. Stanley was a conservative at heart and Anglesey's radical innovations were more than he could digest. But Stanley was also brilliant; he was by far the best debater on the Whig benches.

\[35\] Littleton, diary entry, Hatherton MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 541.

\[36\] Torrens, Melbourne, I, 429.
of the house of Commons. Grey had no trouble concluding that if Stanley and Anglesey could not abide one another Anglesey must go. The viceroy had been dismissed from his first stint as Ireland's ruler because of insubordination to Wellington; now the Whigs engineered his recall for much the same reason.  

So Wellesley suddenly found himself in high office once more, almost six years after leaving Dublin. He friends saw some hope for Ireland. Plunket wrote a congratulatory letter and noted that now Wellesley would be free of "those embarrassments which never ceased to impede your former efforts" under the Tories. Perhaps Wellesley shared these feelings. A couple of months later Brougham reported to Greville that Wellesley had been completely transformed. Greville entered in his diary a passage to the effect that Wellesley "had astonished everybody by his activity and assiduity in business. He appeared, before he went, in the last stage of decrepitude, and they had no idea the energy was in him; but they say he is quite a new man, and it is not merely a splash, but real and bona-fide

37 Grey to Melbourne, 9 January 1833, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 41, file 3, f. 99; Melbourne to Grey, 11 January 1833, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 41, file 3, f. 100.

38 Plunket to Wellesley, 8 September 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37306, f. 69.
What accounted for this alleged transformation? Greville and Brougham should have been able to discern a precedent in Wellesley's first tour at Dublin castle, when he applied himself to the business at hand during the first year with an intensity which astonished all witnesses. This time, despite his great age, conditions were more pleasant. In the first place, Wellesley's appointment as viceroy was bracketed with that of Littleton as chief secretary. Littleton's politics made him congenial in a way that Goulburn's could never be, and much of the energy Wellesley once devoted to blasting Goulburn and Peel for the views and their alleged conspiracies against him could now be directed to more fruitful concerns. In addition, Littleton was Wellesley's son-in-law, and in that capacity he rid Wellesley of the two Johnstones. Littleton recorded in his diary that he had told Grey that he would not be able to take his wife Mary Hyacinthe to Dublin if the Johnstones were part of Wellesley's castle retinue. Littleton persuaded Shawe to inform Wellesley of this; Wellesley proved surprisingly malleable, for he had

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39 Greville, Journal, II, 200; Greville made a habit of denouncing loudly and atoning handsomely, all in his diary. He decried Melbourne's selection as Home secretary in 1831 because of his reputation for idleness. Soon he was amazed at "the sudden display of activity and vigor, rapid and diligent transaction of business, for which nobody was prepared: Ziegler, Melbourne, pp. 139-40.
a falling out with the elder and the younger was to be dispatched to a consulate. 40

The ministry took every precaution to see that Wellesley would succeed. Melbourne betrayed a dictatorial tendency (premonitions perhaps of a terrible row between Wellesley and Melbourne two years later) in warning Wellesley not to neglect the backlog of official correspondence awaiting his perusal (it was not enormous, he added) and to exercise the "utmost delicacy in his behaviour in Dublin"; Ireland was infinitely worse than when he left it. 41 Wellesley demonstrated a sense of business in his communications to Wellesley. He directed Anglesey to notify the castle staff that he would rely on a smaller entourage this time than before; the news must have disoriented those who recalled Wellesley's weakness for grandiose display. 42 Anglesey for his part kept the transition ceremonial to a minimum. His obligation was certainly tempered by Wellesley's conduct in 1827, when he arrived in Dublin to find that Wellesley had entrusted the government to the Lords Justices. 43 Wellesley reached Dublin

40 Littleton, diary entry, 28 August 1833, printed in Aspinall, Three, pp. 358-59.

41 Melbourne to Wellesley, 8 September 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 71.

42 Wellesley to Merrick Shawe, 2 October 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 107.

43 Henry William Paget, Marquess of Anglesey, to Wellesley,
at the end of September and immediately settled into business. 44

The tenure was a short one, only a year. Wellesley was instructed to address himself in the first instance to the tithe question. At the beginning of the year tithe arrears had reached the calamitous level of £1.2 million and the impossibility of collecting arrears was manifest to everyone except a few ultras. This time the ministry was far more receptive to Wellesley's observations than it had been in 1822. Grey asked Wellesley to prepare a plan which would lead to "a real and final extinction of tithe." 45 Wellesley had already shared his views with Littleton, who was entrusted with the unpleasant task of preparing the necessary bill. 46 This bill, and others which followed it over the next five years, challenged some fundamental concepts concerning private property. Until parliament could digest the changes recommended by this legislation Wellesley and his successors were forced to endure the effects of an almost complete collapse of law and order.

11 September 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS, 37306, f. 75.
44 Melbourne to Wellesley, 3 October 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 113.
45 Wellesley to Grey, 16 November 1833, University to Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58.
46 Melbourne to Littleton, 4 May 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, ff. 201-202.
Tithe reform was also quickly identified with the larger question of reform of the established church, and Wellesley's role here manifested itself in two separate areas. Wellesley strongly favoured a sharp diminution of the temporalities of the established church. In January he urged the cabinet to issue a plan for a commission on church reform. Grey agreed to it, but the commission later floundered. Instead, the cabinet accepted a comprehensive bill, originally prepared by Edward Stanley and carried forward by Lord Althorp, leader of the Whig party in the house of Commons. Wellesley's role in this does not seem to have been a salient one.

Ideological considerations were important; they became the impetus for a cabinet drama which questioned the sanctity of private property no less than the future of the Church of Ireland. Althorp favoured the more radical principle of secularising ecclesiastical property not needed for the maintenance of an adequate Irish establishment. He invited Wellesley to subscribe to this point of view. It would strengthen the government of Ireland, Althorp maintained, if it could be enacted, but it could also break up the ministry. Wellesley pursued a discreet course of action. He

47 Grey to Wellesley, 3 June 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 145.
denied Althorp the comfort of a supporting letter, and in this way helped to postpone parliamentary discussion of the concept of secularisation until 1835. Grey managed to hold the cabinet together until May 1834, when suddenly it split on an issue quite different from that of Althorp's concern, and one which proved to be much more germane to Wellesley's role in the Whig ministry.

In Dublin, nonetheless, Wellesley was forced to endure the ragings of Irish ecclesiastics who saw in Church reform the inevitably collapse of Protestantism in Ireland. Wellesley indeed not only favoured reform; he urged Melbourne and Grey to extend reform to a public provision for Catholic priests. Melbourne was horrified lest such sentiments find their way into the hands of the bishops. Things were bad enough; the ultras were labouring hard to convince the King to dismiss the Whigs at once. Again Wellesley kept his own counsel.

Much of Wellesley's correspondence during the winter and spring of 1834 dealt with the Church of Ireland and its problems. Grey forwarded strict guidelines for the advance-


49 Melbourne to Wellesley, 22 November 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 201; see Mary Condon, "The Irish Church and the Reform Ministries," Journal of British Studies, III (1964), 120-42.
ment of bishops as the various dioceses were amalgamated
(precedence was to be given to bishops in sees to be suppressed
and to those few ecclesiastics who appeared sympathetic to the
Whig ministry). Wellesley in turn forwarded memorials
drawn up in various dioceses against church reform and its
ramifications. Much more than was the case during the
1820s, Wellesley was instructed to concern himself with
the Roman Catholic episcopacy. Such attention reflected the
strength of the Catholic resurgence, and it was far more
difficult to insure that the Pope appointed the proper man
than it was to defy old Irish families. Wellesley also
attended the dedication of Catholic "chapels" many of which
in fact were large and imposing ecclesiastical edifices.
This did not endear him to the established church but it
reflected the changing realities of political life. It was sometimes carried too far. Grey was horrified at
a report that Lady Wellesley had gone to mass in state; he

50 Grey to Wellesley, 11 December 1833, 9 January 1834, BM,
Wellesley MSS 37306, ff. 239, 314.

51 Correspondence from Church of Ireland clergymen, 12
March 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, ff. 218-23.

52 Littleton to Wellesley, 14 May 1834, BM, Wellesley
MSS 37307, f. 43.

53 Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, to Wellesley,
assured Wellesley that he could not believe it to be true. 54

Grey was to hear of worse things and Wellesley was implicated in some of them. In May 1834 several members of the cabinet resigned when Grey refused to support the idea of alienation of Irish church property to secular uses. Littleton forwarded to Wellesley a long and elaborate account of all this and warned him not to express an opinion on the issue until a new government had been constructed. 55 Wellesley had behaved with admirable discretion when Althorp (who was one of the group which now resigned in protest) had enlisted Wellesley's support the previous January. Wellesley remained silent now.

The ministry was now very weak and Grey had no appetite at all for further reform. In July the government proposed a stringent coercion act to meet the constantly expanding tithe agitation. Law and order in rural areas had been deteriorating steadily since 1830 and the deterioration sharpened after 1832. 56 The ministry was reluctant to get too far out in front of public opinion, and within the cabinet

54 Grey to Wellesley, 11 December 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37306, f. 239.


the division between those in favour of harsh measures and those who saw hope in immediate reforms widened steadily. Anglesey joined the conciliators and Edward Stanley as Home secretary urged new coercive legislation. Removing Anglesey did little to promote cohesion within the cabinet because powerful ministers such as Brougham and Durham continued their agitation.

It was bitterly ironic, then, that one of the first important bills to come before the newly reformed parliament was this coercion proposal, "one of the most drastic measures against civil disturbance ever framed by a British government." It was offered because Grey opted for it and the King wanted it, but the history behind the bill was equally instructive about Whig disunity. O'Connell was to exploit this. When the bill was presented, he rose in the house of Commons to complain that the government had promised him to abstain from harsh measures. O'Connell, it transpired, did indeed have a commitment given by Littleton on Henry Brougham's advice (Brougham was Lord Chancellor). Brougham in turn had consulted his friend Wellesley and had extracted from him a statement that conciliation was the proper path to follow. Wellesley later claimed that he assumed the approach

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57 Ziegler, Melbourne, p. 153.
to O'Connell to have been made with the concurrence of the full cabinet. It is far from clear what motives governed the actions of this most divided ministry. But Grey resigned, happy at last to be relieved of responsibility for a government so distracted by disputes between radical and conservative factions. In any event, Grey considered the work of reform complete.

Later it would transpire that Melbourne had drawn from all this the conclusion that Wellesley's conduct was unconscionable. This was not apparent at the time. Indeed, upon succeeding Grey as Prime minister this unambitious and somewhat eccentric aristocrat wrote to Wellesley declaring that he knew no man alive more equal to the work of coping with Ireland's problems, or more capable of effecting a solution.58

What happened to prejudice Melbourne against Wellesley? It began almost as soon as Wellesley became viceroy, when he became a pawn in a struggle between the conservative element in the cabinet and Littleton concerning how O'Connell should be handled. Conservatives such as Stanley wanted to maintain the Protestant interest as intact as possible. Radicals such as Durham and Russell, as has been seen, favoured

secularisation of church property. A church reform bill based on relatively conservative principles had already passed. No tithe bill, however, had been enacted. Littleton believed, naively as it turned out, that he could manage O'Connell's parliamentary interest so as to produce support sufficient to balance a decay of enthusiasm for tithe reform on the conservative benches. But O'Connell said that he would not support the tithe bill unless the government abandoned a clause forbidding meetings which the government considered seditious.

The coercion act was due to expire in August 1834. During the spring and early summer Wellesley went on record in favour of renewing this act, but his support was clouded by "confusing and contradictory expressions of opinion on the more severe clauses." On 18 April Wellesley took a firmer line in opposition to concessions, and an official despatch to Melbourne dated 20 May repeated this opinion. Grey heartily approved it, although Wellesley was not told this.

Wellesley had already discovered that O'Connell was a

much more powerful force in Irish affairs than had been the case in 1827. Wellesley feared that the union between Britain and Ireland might be sundered under O'Connell's impact and therefore he recommended that the coercion acts make such agitation for repeal of the union illegal. But Melbourne was slow to apprise Wellesley of Grey's position. Wellesley was certain that Grey was hostile to O'Connell, but without further information he could not determine how far Grey was prepared to go in supporting drastic measures.

Littleton also misread Grey's mind, and by miscalculating he brought disaster to the government. Before Grey had made his own position clear Littleton confided to O'Connell that the ministry was of two minds on the issue of coercion. According to O'Connell, Littleton went further and assured the Irish leader that the clauses to which O'Connell objected would not be renewed. Littleton probably informed Wellesley what he had done, although there seems to be no record of it. If he did not, Wellesley correctly sensed that in the absence of a compromise within the cabinet neither the ministry nor the bill would survive. He wrote to Littleton on 23 May to

61 Melbourne to Wellesley, 4 May 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37304, ff. 13-14.
62 Ibid.
urge him to consult Brougham, "whom I most sincerely esteem, love and admire," and who was willing to go to any length to sustain the divided ministry. This advice, given in good faith, proved to be very bad advice indeed. 63

Brougham was indeed keen to save the ministry, and already he had gone beyond the bounds of propriety to do it. A year earlier he had agitated openly to remove the radicals from the cabinet. He had failed and had excited much ill will. When the conservatives resigned in May over the question of ecclesiastical revenues Brougham took his case directly to the king to demonstrate that had the radicals proven less demanding the ministry would never have lost the Stanleyite faction. He described cabinet transactions in great detail and declared that he would "never abandon the public service and leave all in remediless confusion as long as I can find six men to stand by me." 64 Grey was not pleased by this arrogant behaviour even if he sympathised with Brougham's objectives. Nor was he consoled by Brougham's condemnatory letter to Russell and his radical allies declaring that their acquiescence to O'Connell's threats meant that "henceforward

63 Wellesley to Grey, 18 April 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37307, f. 101.

64 Brougham to Wellesley, May 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 143.
the name of Whig and driveller are synonymous." 65

This, then, was the man whom Wellesley urged Littleton to consult. Littleton duly conferred with Brougham. Both Brougham and the chief secretary thereupon sent letters to Wellesley urging that concessions be made to O'Connell. Wellesley claimed subsequently that Brougham's letter had not persuaded him to change his mind, but that Littleton's "long argumentative letter" had been decisive. Wellesley concluded that without concessions to O'Connell the tithe bill would be lost, and that continued tithe agitation would make Ireland impossible to govern. Littleton argued that the clauses in question were not central to the powers needed by Wellesley to keep Ireland in good order. 66 Wellesley also inferred (he stated later) from Littleton's letter that Grey had been privy to these conversations and that he approved the change in strategy. When Littleton's letter reached him on 21 June, therefore, he immediately wrote an "official" letter to Grey supporting Littleton's point of view, and declaring that the provisions of the insurrection act under scrutiny had been "found useless during the whole course of the agitation to

65 Aspinall, Brougham, p. 194.

66 Brougham argued the point eloquently in a note to Althorp, printed in Aspinall, Brougham, p. 196.
Wellesley's change of opinion was not unconvincing in many respects. "The truth is," he lectured Littleton in a private letter at the same time, "that Ireland will never be quieted by these annual expedients of suspending the laws and constitution of the realm. We must endeavour as soon as possible to return to the ordinary laws, and to be satisfied with a vigorous and pure administration of them. Until we are fixed on that rock we never shall know genuine peace nor security."  

Unknown to Wellesley, Grey had already made up his mind that the clauses must be retained. Wellesley stated in a memorandum prepared subsequently that he had never been informed that the clauses were to be renewed, or that they had been brought before the cabinet in "any regular form," or indeed that instructions had been given to the Attorney general to prepare a bill to that end. Wellesley blamed Melbourne in part, and his son-in-law in part. At any rate, Grey had already made up his mind to resign if the clauses were abandoned, while others such as Althorp were equally determined to resign were they retained. Melbourne as Home secretary was astonished and angry at Wellesley's sudden

67Wellesley to Grey, 21 June 1834, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, unnumbered.
68Wellesley to Littleton, 7 August 1834, Stafford County Record Office, Hatherton MSS.
change of heart, but concluded that the clauses could not be carried against the advice of the Lord Lieutenant. Althorp as leader of the house of Commons urged Littleton to tell O'Connell the state of affairs in order to discourage him from focusing attention on the issue prematurely. Littleton conferred with O'Connell, probably on 23 June. He was nervous and he confided too much. Relying on Althorp's assurance that the government could not stand if the controversial clauses were included in the coercion bill, he made bold to say that Wellesley had assured him that such enactments against public meetings were no longer necessary.

O'Connell was delighted and agreed to keep the information confidential. It was remarkable that Littleton spoke to O'Connell without seeking permission from either the Prime minister or the Home secretary, but it transpired that at least two other members of the ministry had also conveyed their views to the Irish leader. When the cabinet met on 29 June Grey refused to give way to the entreaties of the majority and they agreed reluctantly to accept the clauses. When informed of this Wellesley again cheerfully changed his view and wrote another official despatch on 2 July strongly urging retention of the clauses. Anything was agreeable to Wellesley, apparently, if the tithe bill could be saved.

Littleton's predicament was complete when on 1 July Grey proposed in the house of Lords the renewal of all clauses of
the coercion bill. O'Connell was shocked, or claimed to be so, and divulged the content of his conversation with Littleton. Rather than involve Althorp and Brougham, the primary instigators of Littleton's strategy, the chief secretary resigned. Grey refused to accept this resignation and himself resigned on 9 July. Grey gave as his reasons his support of the controversial clauses but his first impulse was to credit rumors that Brougham sought to usurp his place.

Wellesley was eager to vindicate his own conduct and honour, and he was not completely scrupulous in his attempt to do so. Wellesley enjoined his secretary to record that Wellesley's changes of opinion had not prompted Grey to resign, but Littleton's "unaccountable disclosures" to O'Connell.69 To Grey he wrote accusing Littleton of having "occasioned this mischief." He "knew the horror of all communications with O'Connell; and he had no authority whatever, from me, to make such a communication, as he made, which is also contrary to fact."

Wellesley's conduct could no be justified so easily.70


70Wellesley to Grey, 10 July 1835, University of Durham, Grey MSS, Box 58, unnumbered.
He had in fact urged Littleton to consult Brougham, and the fulsome terms in which he described his friend’s fitness to tender advice certainly makes Wellesley responsible in part for what Brougham determined Littleton should do. Beyond this Wellesley had submitted no fewer than three communications on the subject involving two complete changes of opinion. He had done so without properly consulting either the Prime minister or the Home secretary. It was not Grey, however, who demanded an explanation. He was happy enough to retire and upon the occasion of justifying his resignation described Wellesley as "that illustrious person of whom he could not speak too highly." 71

The Tories and O’Connell alike were all too eager to exploit the truncated ministry’s embarrassment. Melbourne somehow managed to reconstruct the ministry and carry on. Grey was out, of course, but many others were willing to remain if Melbourne could see his way to amending the coercion bill by removing the clauses which most infuriated O’Connell. Althorp’s services as leader of the house of Commons were vital, and he agreed to serve only if Littleton was permitted to continue as chief secretary. Melbourne digested this too,

and did so with grace sufficient to hide his determination
to rid himself of Littleton and his father-in-law at the
earliest opportunity. With Littleton still in office there
was no way to replace Wellesley, and at any rate Lady Wellesley
continued to serve as one of the ministry's most effective
channels for disciplining the conservative instincts of
the King.

The government's foes on the right and the left expected
to exploit the Littleton-O'Connell incident but Melbourne's
colleagues closed ranks to prevent it. Wellesley refused a
demand made by Peel and O'Connell that the Littleton corre-
respondence be published forthwith. Brougham of course supported
Wellesley on this; private correspondence such as Wellesley's
communications to Littleton were sacred. He went further
and held, in opposition to Melbourne and Grey, that few indeed
would subscribe to the "novel doctrine that no minister can
write a private letter to the Lord Lieutenant without con-
sulting his colleagues." These were vulnerable arguments,
but Brougham had some success in defending Wellesley and
Littleton against the parliamentary opposition on one hand and

72 Gash, Sir Robert, pp. 69-70.

73 Brougham to Wellesley, 19 July 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS
37311, f. 201.
even Melbourne on the other. 74 At length Melbourne prepared a letter exonerating Wellesley. 75 Rumors that Wellesley would be replaced immediately by Durham were suppressed, to Wellesley's relief. 76

Between July and December the Melbourne ministry seemed content to lay on its oars. Melbourne himself submitted to Grey every suggestion for Whig initiatives during the next session of parliament and tried to bear up under the strain of Brougham's arrogance and Grey's hovering presence. In private he betrayed his ardent wish that Wellesley might see fit to resign, but in public he behaved so handsomely that Wellesley was reassured about Melbourne's friendliness. The Tory party seemed too weak to oust the ministry, and the radicals looked forward to a gradual reinforcement of their representation within the ministry as time went on. Well might Wellesley, who desperately wanted to remain in harness, dream of a long tenure in his troubled native land.

But the King had stomached as much of the Whigs as he could manage, and in November he dismissed Melbourne in a barely disguised coup d'état. Wellington was awarded all

74 Ibid., July 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 153.


76 Gosset to Littleton, 17 July 1834, printed in Edward
offices until Peel could be summoned from Italy. The new ministry could not pretend to command a majority, and Wellesley fully expected to return to Dublin in the near future. Again he placed his office in commission, but he did not even bother to resign. His old nemesis Goulburn was given the unenviable task of extracting a resignation from Wellesley so that the Tories could appoint a successor. Littleton predicted that Wellington as caretaker would try to deny Wellesley access to the King upon his return from London, but this did not happen. Wellesley himself thought that perhaps Peel would see fit to return him to Dublin forthwith; perhaps this explains his failure to resign. Peel did not return him. Wellesley would not see Dublin again.

III: Wellesley vs. Melbourne

Peel's ministry was constructed on the suffranc of the

John Littleton, First Baron Hatherton, Memoir and Correspondence Relating to Political Occurrences in June and July 1834 (London: Longmans Green, 1872), p. 106.


78 Henry Goulburn to Wellesley, 17 December 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37307, f. 316.

79 Littleton to Wellesley, 2 December 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 190.

King, and a winter election could not save it. Wellesley and his friends were prepared for an early return to power. Grey kept in touch and counted on Wellesley to help keep the Whig party from succumbing to radical control. Wellesley himself kept a close watch on the progress of events in Dublin. From accounts "most authentic and impartial" he concluded that the Orange faction had reestablished control over Dublin castle and was busy filling offices "with the most notorious and flaming bigots." Far more important than monitoring Irish patronage was his efforts to help ease Peel out of office. Brougham stated that Wellesley framed the famous resolution of April 1835 recommending Church of Ireland revenues in excess of ecclesiastical requirements by secularised. There is no proof for Brougham's statement, but Wellesley did work hard to remove the Tories.

From the point of view of any personal advantage to Wellesley all this went for naught. When Melbourne once more became Prime minister Wellesley's problems were at once

81 Grey to Wellesley, 28 May 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 141; Brougham to Wellesley, May 1834, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 143.

82 Wellesley to Sir Francis Burdett, 6 February 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 234.

made evident. Brougham was denied the woolsack. Melbourne wrote to Wellesley on 19 April that it gave him pain not to be able to send him back to Ireland, but "plainly and frankly, after what passed last summer, it always appeared to me that if the government should break up it would be impossible... again to constitute the government of Ireland as it was then constituted." Wellesley's initial reaction bordered on shock, a jolt so severe that all he could do was to thank Melbourne for relieving him of the "painful suspense." He accepted the white wazd of the office of Lord Chamberlain and resolved to dedicate "the remainder of a long life" to the King's service. He was soon brought out of this state of shock by his wife, whose anger at Melbourne's conduct knew no limits. The parter owed Wellesley "everything," she reminded her husband, and yet but for the King Wellesley would have received no office at all. She wrote to Melbourne to complain, and to Wellesley she announced that she had "renounced for ever all my Whiggery" and hoped and believed that Wellesley would yet triumph over all his

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85 Melbourne to Wellesley, 19 April 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 254.
86 Wellesley to Melbourne, 19 April 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 256.
enemies. 87

Wellesley's reflections intensified his anger and
grief. 88 On 11 May he resigned his office and informed
Melbourne that the appointment of Mulgrave as viceroy in
his place (as he saw it) undermined his "public character
and honour." 89 Littleton described Wellesley's displeasure
in a passage in his diary:

The storm that burst forth from him against Lord Melbourne
was terrific. It lasted at the full stretch of his voice
for exactly an hour by the clock on his mantelpiece,
during which time I found it in vain to attempt to
speak or withdraw. Am I a man to be treated with dis-
respect? I who have spent a long life in the service
of the country, who for my services have received high
rank - I, who have added millions to the empire? Am
I to be treated with contumely or indifference by this
puppy, this damned scoundrel? Sir, the offence can only
be expiated by blood. I'll send instantly for my respected
and gallant friend, Lord Howden. He shall arrange a
meeting between us tomorrow morning! . . . As his strength
expended itself, his reason returned and he contented
himself with saying he would suppress his feelings, but,
depend on it, he would have his revenge. 90

There was no duel, but parliament and the Tories were
eager to hear Wellesley out. Wellesley had a case if he wished
to exploit it. The Duke of Cumberland at one point thought

87 Lady Wellesley to Wellesley, 24 April 1835, BM, Wellesley
MSS 37311, f. 258.
89 Wellesley to Melbourne, 11 May 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS
37311, f. 260.
90 Aspinall, Brougham, pp. 213-14.
he extracted from Wellesley as his reason for resigning Melbourne's decision to entrust the Irish government to O'Connell with Mulgrave merely his puppet. This interpretation was featured in an article in The Times on 15 May. Wellesley wrote immediately to Melbourne denying that he had said this. Melbourne professed to be satisfied, but Cumberland's friends were not. On 22 May the Earl of Roden attempted to convert the alleged conversation into a censure on Mulgrave's newly established Irish government. Wellesley in debate denied that Mulgrave had featured in any way in his own decision to leave public life and announced that short of a full investigation of the subject he would not offer further details. Unfortunately, Cumberland and the Marquess of Londonderry (a party to the alleged conversation of 14 May) interpreted this reticence as an inference that they had fabricated the remarks. Londonderry therefore urged Wellesley to address the issue in the Lords.

Wellesley refused. He noted that Londonderry's name had not appeared in the account in the newspapers, and

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92 Hansard (20 May 1835).

maintained that Cumberland should not have allowed his version of these remarks to go to press without consulting Wellesley. Cumberland raised his pen next, reminding Wellesley that the conversation had been a public one and that at any rate he had not authorised its publication. He was certain, nonetheless, of the accuracy of his rendition of the conversation. At length Wellesley conceded "the accuracy of its general tenor" but in fact considered it a private affair. Melbourne informed Wellesley that he was completely satisfied with Wellesley's conduct. Even Mulgrave wrote a short note hoping that at some future time some post agreeable to Wellesley would come his way. 

Did this correspondence hide something which should be recorded for posterity? It is difficult to say. Cumberland did succeed in extracting from Wellesley the rather important point that arrangements made under Melbourne's authority gave O'Connell added weight in Ireland. Almost certainly it referred to what became known as the Litchfield House compact, which admitted O'Connell to consultations on government appointments in Ireland in return for O'Connell's

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95 Mulgrave to Wellesley, 30 May 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 439.
cooperation in parliament. It is quite unclear whether this understanding extended to a veto over the nomination of a viceroy as alleged by Ellenborough. Ellenborough's information was often accurate, however, and this could well explain Wellesley's vehemence against the Irish leader. This vehemence would certainly have been intensified if Wellesley was convinced that the real reason for Melbourne's refusal to reappoint him was not the July 1834 episode but O'Connell's veto. There are many hints in Wellesley's correspondence that he thought this to be so.

From our perspective it appears that Wellesley's suspicions were almost certainly ill-founded. Nonetheless, the fact that Wellesley's anger towards Melbourne never subsided constitutes an important part of the Marquess' later years. Brougham wrote to Lansdowne that Wellesley's anger at the "late hoax" had "nearly killed" him. Brougham also seems to have believed that Wellesley and he had been sacrificed to O'Connell. Brougham defended Wellesley and praised him in several prominent publications, but Littleton

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99 Brougham to William Petty, Third Marquess of Lansdowne,
and he urged Wellesley to hold back from a public assault on Melbourne. 100 Early in 1806 Wellesley sent to Atherton a copy of his letters to Grey and said that he looked to the day when publication would vindicate his conduct in the coercion acts affair. At almost the same time Melbourne rather bravely asked Wellesley whether he might depend upon Wellesley's cordial support during the upcoming session. One can only admire Melbourne's sangfroid. Wellesley in reply held that he had made "great sacrifices" for the cause but that his "services have not been duly requited." He requested an interview with the Prime minister, and Melbourne volunteered to come to Wellesley's residence at Hurlingham. 102 What went on, from Wellesley's view, was incorporated into a series of letters he sent to Lady Wellesley. Clearly O'Connell was on his mind, and he demanded an accounting of the government's response "to the designs of O'Connell and others." Melbourne reacted by trying to take the offensive. He spoke of Wellesley's "imprudent" letter to Grey. Wellesley

printed in Aspinall, Brougham, p. 221.

100 Brougham to Wellesley, 13 July 1836, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 363.


immediately accused Melbourne of having neglected completely to keep him informed. According to Wellesley Melbourne admitted his culpability on this point. Wellesley then inquired of the justice of Melbourne proceeding to a "general sweep which I (poor imprudent wretch!) was to be swept off with the rest of your rubbish by your mighty hand." And why did Melbourne not make the "general sweep" at once? Instead, Wellesley continued in office with Melbourne's full approbation and attended his councils until he formed a new government. Why the secrecy when Melbourne knew he was "destroying the dearest and most long-cherished hopes"? Melbourne was left only to ask why Wellesley had accepted the lower office only to reject it shortly thereafter. Wellesley answered this by saying that the interim had supplied news that Mulgrave had long been promised Wellesley's old office.

With that, Wellesley informed Melbourne that no longer could he act publicly with him. To Lady Wellesley he somewhat charitably, considering his frame of mind, attributed Melbourne's conduct "to habitual indolence, carelessness, imbecility and utter inaptitude for serious business than from any positive depravity."103 The adjective reminds one of

103 Wellesley to Lady Wellesley, 30 January 1836, BM, Wellesley MSS 37316, f. 60.
some of the descriptions applied to Wellesley himself.

This letter to his wife summarising his conversation with Melbourne in some respects marks the end of Wellesley's political career. He believed he had been wronged, and his grievance has weight. Wellesley for all his defects was always punctilious about points of honour; Melbourne did not share this virtue to the same degree. The interview with Melbourne certainly relieved Wellesley of any further need to support the Whigs. On 10 February he proclaimed his independence of the ministry, which was "now the shield of protection to the champions of revolution, and their whole mismanagement in Ireland is entirely contrary to my public principles. . . . My personal wrongs, " Wellesley assured Brougham, "are not of a private nature. They involve public offences of a deep dye."106

The break came more slowly than this declaration of independence might suggest. In February 1837 he praised Peel's "very able speeches" on the need to maintain "the Protestant establishment of the united realm as the great bulwark, not merely of our religion, but of our liberties and laws." He professed to be horrified to see Melbourne

104Wellesley to Brougham, 10 February 1837, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 436.
"countenancing the utter demotion of the Protestant establishment in Ireland." 105

These were certainly the beliefs of a conservative. Nonetheless in June he told Melbourne to keep his proxy, despite "former injustice or injury (however severe I may suffer under their pressure)." 106 Melbourne claimed to be "deeply touched" by Wellesley's "rectitude and generosity." 107 Melbourne probably realised that barring a reconciliation with Wellington Wellesley could not transfer his proxy to the Tories. That came in 1838, and in 1839 Wellesley planned to issue a statement on Melbourne which would "produce astonishment in those who have any feeling for the honour of a great party, or any sense of truth, justice, or honest dealing." 108 Nothing was forthcoming; probably Littleton intervened. Wellesley added a codicil to his will instead. In it he directed Alfred Montgomery to "publish my papers as shall tend to illustrate my two administrations in Ireland, and to protect my honour against the slanders of Melbourne and his pillar of state

105 Wellesley to Peel, 10 February 1837, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 438.
106 Wellesley to Melbourne, 21 June 1837, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 7.
107 Ibid.
108 Wellesley to Lord Holland, 13 November 1839, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 181.
O'Connell.\textsuperscript{109} He delivered his proxy to Peel on 25 March 1841. Time had obscured many unpleasant memories and Peel celebrated the union: "my separation from you in politics arose rather out of personal obligations of honour which party connection imposes, than any material differences as to the principles on which the government of this country should be connected," Peel explained. Wellesley could accept this kind interpretation of those tumultuous years. 

\textsuperscript{109} Aspinall, Brougham, p. 214.
CHAPTER XVIII: TWILIGHT
We can only conjecture what might have been the course of events had Wellesley returned to Dublin in 1835 as viceroy. Wellesley enjoyed remarkably good health until 1840, although the cold and damp of the castle and the lodge might have undermined it. His mental faculties betrayed no signs of decay; many observers detected a sharp revival of activity and confidence in the 1830s. In Ireland the Melbourne years proved to be a decade of considerable achievement: tithe extinction; church reform and rationalisation of the administrative apparatus of Dublin castle; a tendency towards an accommodation of new forces released by Catholic emancipation and the predominance of O'Connell. What might have been Wellesley's role in this, assuming "an efficient Irish chief secretary," is hard to determine.

Wellesley's enormous disappointment regarding Dublin was not, however, without its compensation. His anger at Melbourne was one reason why he laboured with such zeal and success to publish his Indian despatches, and they in turn provided a medium through which Wellesley was reconciled to the East India company. They also won for Wellesley wide acclaim among the public; Wellesley had survived long enough to see his countrymen begin to enjoy reading lengthy autobiographies and collections of correspondence. Wellesley certainly would not have had an opportunity to prepare his
papers for publication had he returned to Dublin.

I: Final Skirmishes

Wellesley maintained a lively interest in politics during these years. He never attended the house of Lords after his stormy interview with Melbourne in January 1836, but prior to this there were several important projects with which Wellesley identified himself. One was his son-in-law's bid for speakership of the house of Commons. Littleton was one of a handful of Canningites who found it difficult to forge new allegiances after the death of their leader in 1827. He joined Huskisson's group, which Wellesley must have found painful for at least a short period. Huskisson was killed in 1830. Littleton did not take office when Grey's ministry was formed, although he was invited to do so.¹ Littleton wanted a peerage and hoped to obtain it by bidding successfully for the speakership. After serving as chief secretary he thought it was time to make the bid. He was not a man of enormous ambition and had little taste for politics.²


²Aspinall, "Last," pp. 663-64.
As has been seen, Littleton served as Irish chief secretary during a particularly difficult period. He was conscientious, hardworking, honourable, and somewhat meddlesome. He kept Wellesley in relatively good humor. But he agitated many of the "old Whigs" because of his commitment to ecclesiastical reform in Ireland. Involvement in the demise of the Grey ministry also detracted from his reputation.

Nonetheless, Littleton decided to proceed with his bid for the speakership when parliament convened in February 1835. Despite the fact that the Whigs were out of office their candidate was thought to have a good chance. The Tories were in a minority. The incumbent speaker, Manners Sutton, was not altogether popular among the whigs, for although he had held the office since 1817 and behaved fairly in most cases, he was identified as an accomplice of the King in the coup d'etat of the previous November.

As it happened, Littleton's principal challengers lay within the Whig party itself. One was J. Abercromby, a member of the Duke of Devenshire's interest. Abercromby was unacceptable in Melbourne's eyes, which at first bode well for Littleton.

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3 Littleton to Richard Colley Wellesley, Marquess Wellesley, 14 January 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, ff. 221-22.

Sensing victory, Wellesley bestirred himself in Littleton's support. He exchanged letters with some influential back-benchers and of course consulted the veteran power brokers at Holland House. To Wellesley's and Littleton's consternation, however, the Irish liberal M. P. Thomas Spring Rice also entered the race in the middle of January. Spring Rice enjoyed wide support among the group who might otherwise have supported Littleton, and by 22 January Lord Duncannon and others had persuaded Littleton to abandon his efforts.5

Littleton was angry and hurt and told Wellesley that in no event could he support Spring Rice.6 Wellesley was equally determined to see Manners Sutton removed, especially when it became clear that the radicals, who held a decisive position in the poll, might do this. The letters of the Marquess are full of fire, and he tried to convince such prominent radicals as Burdett that a vote for Manners Sutton was a vote for the Orangemen.7 Burdett was not won over, but Abercromby defeated Manners Sutton and Spring Rice both.8

5 Duncannon to Wellesley, 22 January 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, ff. 221-22.
7 Wellesley to Sir Francis Burdett, 6 February 1835, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 234.
8 Burdett to Wellesley, 10 February 1835, BM, Wellesley...
Wellesley could take comfort in the fact that Melbourne's wishes had been denied, even if Littleton also suffered. Littleton subsequently held important offices in Whigs ministries and eventually gained his peerage.

After 1835 Wellesley assumed the position of elder statesman, as was perhaps his right. His friend Brougham seems to have been a principal source of news about Whig party politics, and Littleton journeyed regularly to Hurlingham to hear what Wellesley had to say about his friends and foes. He enjoyed the confidence of the Whig-appointed Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, who discussed with Wellesley by letter some provocative plans for the salvation of the established churches of England and Ireland. He gained access to papers dealing with sensitive foreign policy questions because Palmerston much admired the elder statesman. Wellesley appreciated the compliment and delighted in Palmerston's robust interpretation of Britain's international responsibilities, especially when they were directed to disciplining the French.

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MSS 37311, f. 238.

9 Henry Brougham to Wellesley, 10 July 1838, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 128.


Wellesley's circle of friends was depleted by the passage of years, and yet one does not gain the impression that the final decade of Wellesley's long life was a lonely one. He had by his side Alfred Montgomery, who took dictation and read letters to Wellesley when the eyesight of the Marquess deteriorated to the point where he could read only for short intervals. A remarkable number of Wellesley's acquaintances in later life were younger men. Foremost among them was Brougham. Brougham had been damaged "almost irretrievably" by his conduct during the summer of 1834. Wellesley in a sense was one victim of his follies, and when Brougham returned to England from France in early 1835 he found himself almost totally ostracised. Wellesley was one of a very few who stood by Brougham, warning him at the same time to pursue a more moderate course of action in the future.¹²

Brougham was never reconciled to the Whig party, despite Wellesley's advice, and his fame rests instead on his brilliance at the bar. He was also something of an

eccentric, which seemed to bother everyone but Wellesley. Littleton confided to his diary on 3 May 1838 that in a conversation with Wellesley he had alluded to Brougham's "singularity" in building a house on the French Riviera. Lord Wellesley immediately defended him against any such charge and burst out into "an eulogium of his character and powers." "Nobody in the house of Lords dare look him in the face," Wellesley thundered. Littleton agreed, but he told his diary that "the fear of him is like all men have of a violent madman." None of this bothered Wellesley in the least. Brougham became in Wellesley's declining years what Canning had been in an earlier generation: a source of friendship and intellectual stimulus.13

Like Canning Brougham was inclined at times to take personal advantage of Wellesley's talents. One anecdote here dismayed many contemporaries and was used to confirm Brougham's defect of character. Lady Burghersh, who counted Wellington among her close friends, told the Duke on one occasion that when she had described Lord Normanby's decision to open Irish mails Wellesley had responded by accusing the viceroy of making "mercy blind and justice weeping." She was surprised to discover subsequently that Brougham used the

13 Littleton, diary entry, 3 May 1838, printed in Aspinall, Brougham, p. 297.
witty phrase in parliament without acknowledgement to Wellesley.  

This was perhaps a small price to pay for Brougham's companionship. Brougham also atoned by reviewing Wellesley's India volumes for the Edinburgh Review in terms which delighted the author.

Wellesley maintained a friendly correspondence with several other figures. Lord Holland, like Wellesley an excellent writer and the author of Memoirs and Further Memoirs, had supported Wellesley at crucial moments after Wellesley's return from India. Wellesley played an unusually prominent role in his Further Memoirs, which included as an appendix Wellesley's views on the Catholic question based on a conversation between Holland and Wellesley in January 1828. Holland was a perceptive judge of Wellesley's foibles and strengths, and on balance he thought Wellesley "the person, above all politicians he had known, who most impressed him with the idea of a great statesman." Holland died in


15 Brougham to Wellesley, October 1837, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 61.


October 1840. Wellesley expressed a desire to attend the funeral, but Holland had requested complete privacy and the distance involved was considerable. Wellesley instead joined other admirers of Holland in a written tribute.  

Wellesley's wit and sparkle kept him from being isolated even when death and infirmity reduced his circle of acquaintances. In 1833 Grenville captured Wellesley's style: "he comes to the house of Lords and talks of making a speech every now and then, of which he is never delivered, and he comes to court, where he sits in a corner and talks, (as those who know him say) with as much fire and liveliness as ever, and with the same neat, shrewd causticity that formerly distinguished him. . . ."  

After Wellesley retired from court many of these people came to him. Lord Stratforde de Redcliffe, who had been thoroughly disgusted by Wellesley's failure to communicate with him at Constantinople between 1809 and 1812, went to see Wellesley during these years. They walked in the garden and the conversation "at one time figured the commanding statesman, at another the accomplished orator, to say nothing of wit, scholarship and the recollection of Empire (London: Chatton and Windus, 1880), p. 351.

18 Caroline Fox to Wellesley, 27 October 1840, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, ff. 391-393.

of bygone events." Wellesley enjoyed these pilgrimages and regretted that he could not often reciprocate. He also used the occasion of the publication of his Indian despatches to restore contact with old acquaintances, such as Peel. They responded in kind. When Bushe retired as chief justice in 1841 he thanked Wellesley for having secured him the appointment in the first place and forwarded some books on the classics. Wellesley replied in verse.

In contrast to all of these demonstrations of friendship and affection there was the painful relationship to his brother Arthur. Until 1835 relations remained frigid. Lady Wellesley's exertions were completely nullified by political developments which saw Wellesley and Wellington locked in an adversary relationship from 1828 onwards. The Whigs saw in Wellesley's role an opportunity to diminish Wellington's influence and felt free to castigate Wellington when they wrote to Wellesley. On 1 January 1835 Brougham wished "you and yours" many happy new years greetings. This


22 Peel to Wellesley, 11 February 1837, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 440.

23 Edith A. O. Somerville, An Incorruptible Irishman . . .
did not include a "certain duc," Brougham wrote from France, who would find the coming session "worse than any one French or Maratha general he ever licked found his beating." Wellington's friends in return blamed Wellesley for the animus. Certainly both parties were to blame. When in 1836 Littleton queried Wellesley why Wellington had turned against him Wellesley blamed Charles Arbuthnot, although he confessed that he could not divine Arbuthnot's motives.

After Wellesley's retirement from active politics hints of a reconciliation began to appear, and the timing itself suggests that the end of an adversary position in public life probably encouraged a reconciliation in private relationships. Wellesley told Littleton in early 1836 of his determination to suppress any "imputations of ill conduct" made against Wellington in India as he edited his Indian despatches.

In May 1838 Wellesley apparently took the initiative and invited


24 Brougham to Wellesley, 1 January 1835, BM, 37311, f. 211.


26 Hatherton MSS, cited in Butler, Eldest, p. 557.

27 Ibid.
Wellington to visit him at Fulham. One sees the hand of Lady Wellesley in this, and the two brothers met "most cordially." As Wellesley's political allegiance gravitated towards Peel the reconciliation took on a stronger hue. Wellesley's happy rapprochement with the East India company prompted Wellington to forward a fulsome testimonial. Wellesley's reply to the court of directors, Wellington declared, was "inimitable. Nobody could write such a letter but yourself in these times." Wellesley was pleased, pleased enough to prepare a verse for a new statue of Wellington which left nothing superlative unsaid:

Europe and Asia, save by thee, proclaim
Invincible in war thy deathless name.
Now round thy brow the civic oak we twine
That every earthly glory may be thine.

Perhaps Wellesley's prose was sincere. Wellington added a generous footnote: no honour he had received had ever equalled "that of being Lord Wellesley's brother."

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30 Wellington to Wellesley, 20 March 1841, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 466.


32 Elizabeth Longford, Wellington: Pillar of State (New
Wellesley's mind drifted back to Pitt in these final years. Of Pitt's close friends only Wellesley and the Earl of Clarendon were still alive in 1836. The demise of Grenville and Addington had reduced the inner circle to these two. There was heightened interest in assessing Pitt's life, interest which increased after William Wilberforce's life of his father painted Pitt in pious and unconvincing colours. In April 1838 Croker wrote to Wellesley "to renew our literary correspondence" and hoped to gather as many reminiscences of Pitt as possible. Wellesley in return hinted to Croker that someone should undertake a "more complete development of the political character" of both Pitt and Grenville. At Croker's request Wellesley supplied a letter on Pitt which Croker inserted in his essay on Wraxall's Posthumous Memoirs, prepared for the Quarterly Review. Many were apparently displeased by Croker's treatment of Pitt, but Wellesley's letter stood out as a masterpiece.


Earl of Clarendon to Wellesley, 22 December 1836, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 401.


In reading it one is struck by the ease with which one might apply some of the encomiums to Wellesley himself. Wellesley dwelt long on Pitt's mastery of English and classical literature and admitted that he did so because he knew no source "from which more salutary assistance can be derived to choose from the spirits those clouds and vapors which infest vacant minds, and, by self-weariness, render retirement melancholy and intolerable." Pitt's life, although tragically shortened by overwork in the service of the state, mirrored what Wellesley himself, now that he saw the vanity of seeking honours and applause in full perspective, wished had been his own.

Even as Wellesley honoured Pitt with some of his finest and most economical prose, the nation rallied to make Wellesley's closing days among his happiest. After the East India company repaired Wellesley's finances in 1838 Wellesley settled into Kingston house at Knightsbridge. The area still boasted copses of trees and in good weather Wellesley strolled in the garden. He sat for several portraits commissioned by Windsor castle, the East India company, and Eton. Others


would have found these chores burdensome. Wellesley was still willing to advance his claims to immortality.

IV: Rest

Wellesley was always careful about his health. He considered himself a delicate child and refrained from vigorous physical activity and sports even as a student at Eton. There was more than a hint of hyperchondria in all this, and illness had a way of intruding at critical times. Wellesley suffered periodic bouts of influenza before going to India, but he enjoyed excellent health during his triumphant years from 1799 to 1802. He attributed this to the "great regularity" of his life and "to the constant sense of good intentions, accompanied by very large powers of putting them into execution." His health declined during the final two years of his stay in India, and it was no doubt aggravated by his battles with the court of directors. As Foreign secretary he suffered periodic sharp

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39 Mornington to William Grenville, Baron Grenville, 18 November 1798, printed in Great Britain, Historical
complaints and seemed prove to severe illness during the critical months of 1812. Wellesley's remedies were the unusual ones: sea bathing, sulphuric medicines, and seclusion.

In 1812 for the first time Wellesley complained of a serious eye malady. It does not seem to have been diagnosed. Apparently he suffered no permanent impairment of vision until his final years, but he referred frequently to swelling and inflammation. Illness in 1816 was interpreted as a sign of Wellesley's early demise and his recovery from 1817 to 1824 was seen by some as a little short of miraculous. These were once more years of improvement on other fronts, which reinforces the impression that there may have been a psychosomatic element in all this. Goulburn, who observed how frequently Wellesley's illnesses coincided with his own


41 Mary Hyacinthe Wellesley to Wellesley, 4 November 1812, BM, Wellesley MSS 37315, f. 151; Grey to Wellesley, 18 May 1814, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 240.

42 Grey to Wellesley, 10 June 1817, BM, Wellesley MSS 37297, f. 255; Henry Goulburn to Peel, 4 May 1822, BM, Peel MSS 40328, f. 60.
visits to Dublin, informed Peel that he was surprised that a man personally brave and of a good understanding should so readily entertain the idea of his life being in danger."  

Wellesley grew more afraid of cold weather as he became older. Goulburn unkindly chronicled all of the viceroy's imagined fears and real sniffles. By 1826 he was judged to be both deaf (which was certainly no more than a temporary condition if an ailment at all) and very infirm. His constitution suffered from the strain of rushing to London in the hope of gaining high office in the winter of 1827-1828. He retired to Brighton and repaired there frequently during the next five years. His illnesses were henceforward partly seasonal, partly scheduled to coincide with calls made upon him to assist Grey in the house of Lords. Office proved great therapy, and thereafter Wellesley's work on his despatches seems to have been attended by the

43. Goulburn to Peel, 16 January 1823, BM, Peel MSS 40329, f. 17.

44. Ibid., 5 July 1824, 5 August 1824, BM, Peel MSS 40330, ff. 74, 94.

45. Earl of Mountcharles to Knighton, 13 March 1826, printed in Arthur Aspinall, ed., The Letters of George IV (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1827), III, 142; Goulburn to Peel, 10 July 1826, BM, Peel MSS 40332, f. 52.

46. Henry Wellesley (son) to Lady Wellesley, 5 January 1828, BM, Wellesley MSS 37316, f. 3.

47. Grey to Wellesley, 15 April 1831, BM, Wellesley MSS
longest period of good health he had ever known. Colleagues were astonished and a little envious that a septuagenarian should manage so well. 48

Until a year before his death Wellesley continued to demonstrate remarkable vitality. 49 The key was his undiminished mental powers. Wellesley confided to Sidmouth in February 1840 that his memory and other faculties seemed better than ever; certainly his powers of expression remained undiminished. "My mind a kingdom is," he told Wellington; it "supplies me with new life and new spirit every hour of my existence." 50

At last, in the winter which persisted late into 1842, Wellesley succumbed to the weaknesses which attend great age. Brougham recommended more wine and Wellesley's doctors prescribed more prussic acid. At length Wellesley accepted the inevitable with grace. "At my advanced age . . . I must be either prepared at all times for the last summons, or I must be afflicted with that infirmity of mind, which is

37311, f. 11; Ibid., 26 July 1832, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 54; Ibid., 4 June 1833, BM, Wellesley MSS 37311, f. 79.

48 Brougham to Wellesley, 10 July 1838, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 128.

49 Ibid., 18 October 1840, BM, Wellesley MSS 37312, f. 351.

the unusual companion of age: thank God I feel no such infirmity."\textsuperscript{51}

Wellesley died Monday morning, 26 September 1842. Windsor mourned briefly; Eton made a better show of it, with six hundred and more young Etonians filing into the chapel pews for the funeral.\textsuperscript{52} The funeral itself is described movingly by Irish Butler. Littleton, by now Lord Hatherton, entered in his faithful diary that "a great light has been suddenly extinguished." Wellesley wrote his own epitaph; he was always careful about those things. It celebrated the joys of Eton, his earliest and most enduring place of refuge and intellectual refreshment, where

\begin{quote}
To seek the purer lights of ancient days
To love the simple paths of manly truths
\end{quote}

seemed to be both right and exhilarating.

The funereral procession included Alfred Montgomery and Wellesley's family. Lady Wellesley was genuinely aggrieved, and the children who had not predeceased him felt that Wellesley had made his peace with his family in his final years. He would have preferred above all to have died a Duke, but that not being possible he did well. At least Hatherton was moved


\textsuperscript{52}Malleson, \textit{Wellesley}, p. 228; Pearce, \textit{Memoirs}, III, 430-31.
to tears, even if his wife had chosen to cherish her mother's tresses instead. Wellesley made a mark upon his family and his world; even his length lifespan did not suffice to permit those who saw him buried to put it into perspective. Now perhaps we can.
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I. General References Sources

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V. Other Printed Works

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I. GENERAL REFERENCE SOURCES


II. Manuscript Material

A. The Wellesley MSS in the British Museum

The Wellesley papers housed in the British Museum include most of the Marquess's official correspondence and much of his private correspondence. Ten volumes of his letters written while in India (Add. MSS 37274-37284) were acquired in 1842. Shortly thereafter forty-eight volumes of political and private correspondence covering the years 1797 to 1842 were added. Various private papers were deposited subsequently. The Carter MSS used extensively by Iris Butler remains the only large collection of Wellesley papers exclusive of India correspondence still outside the British Museum.

Special attention is drawn to certain items in the Wellesley MSS in the following list:

Add. MSS 13470-13806: Personal Papers
Add. MSS 37274-37275: Correspondence with Henry Dundas, 1797-1805
Add. MSS 37276: Letter Book as Governor-General of Bengal, 1798-1799
Add. MSS 37278: Correspondence with the East India Company, Special Topics, 1797-1841
Add. MSS 37279-37280: Correspondence relating to Madras and the Carnatic, 1797-1805
Add. MSS 37292: Correspondence with Col. David Scott, 1798-1802
Add. MSS 37285: Correspondence relating to Persia, 1800-1815
Add. MSS 37286-37288: Correspondence of . . . Wellesley . . . relating to Spain and Portugal, chiefly as ambassador extraordinary in 1809 to the central junta at Seville.
Add. MSS 37289: Letter Book Containing "Copies of the Despatches of Marquess Wellesley to Mr. Secretary Canning" from 11 August 1809 to 8 October 1809
Add. MSS 37290: Correspondence with Distinguished Foreigners, 1809-1814

Add. MSS 37291-37294: Correspondence and Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Chiefly as ... Foreign Secretary

Add. MSS 37291 (1793-March 1810)
Add. MSS 37292 (April 1810-March 1811)
Add. MSS 37293 (April 1811-1814)
Add. MSS 37294 (1815-1840)

Add. MSS 37295-37297: Select Political Correspondence

Add. MSS 37295 (November 1799-9 August 1811)
Add. MSS 37296 (14 October 1811-23 May 1812)
Add. MSS 37297 (24 May 1812-1835)

Add. MSS 37298-37307: Official Correspondence as Lord Lieutenant, 1821-1835, et. al.

Add. MSS 37298 (January-March 1822)
Add. MSS 37299 (April-October 1822)
Add. MSS 37300 (November 1822-March 1823)
Add. MSS 37301 (April-December 1823)
Add. MSS 37302 (January-September 1824)
Add. MSS 37303 (October 1824-December 1825)
Add. MSS 37304 (1826)
Add. MSS 37305 (1827, 1828)
Add. MSS 37306 (June 1832-April 1834)
Add. MSS 37307 (May 1824-February 1835)

Add. MSS 37314: Register of Letters to Lord Bathurst, 1797-1813
Add. MSS 37414-37416: Personal Papers

Add. MSS 38103: Letters and Papers, Mainly Official, Relating to Irish Affairs

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 1-10: Letters to Grattan, 1782-1785

Add. MSS 38103, f. 45: Royal Commission Appointing Wellesley Lord Lieutenant, 8 December 1821

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 129-154: A long memorandum on Wellesley's administration as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in draft, with many pencil and ink corrections inserted by Wellesley

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 163-66: "Form of Ceremonial . . . at the Reception and Swearing in of . . . the Marquess Wellesley, K. G., as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland," 1833

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 217-225: Vindication by Wellesley of his impartiality towards Catholics during his Administration of Ireland, in reply to a statement of Lord John Russell, 1 March 1837

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 195-209: Draft in Wellesley's hand of the portion of the King's speech related to Ireland, January 1834

Add. MSS 38103, ff. 210-16: Memorandum on Wellesley's second administration in Ireland, in Wellesley's hand

Add. MSS 49979-49982: Miscellaneous personal papers

B. India MSS

The most useful and comprehensive guide to Wellesley's papers related to India is printed in C. H. Philips, India Under Wellesley. Most sources therein listed have been consulted. The following
sources also contain material related to Wellesley:


Boultibrook MSS: The papers of Col. Malcolm contain copies of letters from Malcolm to Wellesley, 1799-1801, and are housed in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth under MSS 4903-6.

Clive MSS: Correspondence with Wellesley in the Clive MSS, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth is included in MSS 282, 281, 1836, 1053, 2533.


Dartmouth MSS: The papers of George, Viscount Lewisham and third Earl of Dartmouth, President of the Board of Control, 1801-1802, are housed in the William Salt Library, Stafford under D1778Ii, D1778Iii, and D1778V, 428-97, 549.

De Houghton MSS: General Daniel Houghton's papers in Preston, Lanchashire Record Office, contain letters to Wellesley.

India Office MSS: HSM 488: an entire volume devoted to the College at Fort William and Haileybury College.

British Museum MSS: India Records related to Wellesley are included in the following Add. MSS: 12583, 13396, 13448, 13449-51, 13595-99, 13693, 13695-96, 13746-47.

McCartney MSS: Correspondence from Wellesley is contained in the McCartney MSS, Oxford, Bodleian MSS English Letters.

Melville MSS: Lots 701 and 723, of the 1927 purchase by the National Library of Scotland contains Henry Dundas' correspondence with Wellesley (as Earl of Mornington) and others.
Melville MSS in the Possession of Violet, Viscountess Melville: Correspondence between Dundas and Wellesley is housed at "The Grange," Eskbank, Midlothian.

North MSS: Letters from Frederick North, Governor of Ceylon, to Wellesley, 1798-1801, are housed in the Kent County Record Office, Maidstone.

Cornwallis MSS: The PRO Cornwallis MSS (30/11, 7-58, 111-215) contain references to Wellesley.

Sidmouth MSS: The Sidmouth Papers (152M, Box A, prior to recataloguing) housed at the Devon Record Office, Exeter, contain letters from Wellesley to Addington, 1802.

War Office MSS: Correspondence between General Abercromby and Wellesley, 1795-1802, in War Office MSS 358.

Wellington MSS: Correspondence between Wellesley and Arthur Wellesley and between Arthur Wellesley and Merrick Shawe, 1800-1804, included in Add. MSS 13772-78. Arthur Wellesley's correspondence with Wellesley and his aides as one of the Commissioners for Affairs of Mysore, 1799, is included in Add. MSS 13669-74.
Other Manuscript Collections in the British Museum

Grenville MSS

Add. MSS 41852, 41853, 41856, 42058: Includes some important correspondence of William Wyndham Grenville, first Baron Grenville

Huskisson MSS

Add. MSS 38736-38739 and 38751-38754: The papers of William Huskisson

Liverpool MSS

Add. MSS 38246, 38247, 38279, 38300, 38409: The papers of Robert Banks Jenkinson, second Earl Liverpool

Moira-Hastings MSS

Add. MSS: Some papers of Francis Rawdon-Hastings, second Earl Moira and first Marquis of Hastings (1754-1826)

Peel MSS

Add. MSS 40207, 40324, 40328-40332: The papers of Sir Robert Peel, second baronet

Perceval MSS

Add. MSS 49178, 49179: A small collection of papers belonging to Spencer Perceval (1762-1812). Others are noted elsewhere.

Rose MSS

Add. MSS 42773, 42774, 42779: Papers of George Rose (1744-1818)

Wellington MSS

Add. MSS 38522: A small number of items belonging to Arthur Wellesley, first Duke of Wellington.
D. Manuscripts in the Public Record Office, London

The Public Record Office houses several collections relevant to Wellesley, of which however only the Foreign Office MSS comprise a sizeable group. Those most useful are listed below; all are included in Foreign Office General Correspondence: Before 1906:

Spain: F. O. 72.

F. O. MSS 72/75: Letters to Marquess Wellesley (June-November 1809)

F. O. MSS 72/76-78: Letters from Marquess Wellesley (August-November 1809)

F. O. MSS 72/79-92: Correspondence from Bartholomew Frere et. al.

F. O. MSS 72/93-98: Correspondence to and from Henry Wellesley, 1810.

F. O. MSS 72/106: Correspondence related to Simon Bolivar et. al. (June-September 1810)

F. O. MSS 72/108-115: Correspondence to and from Henry Wellesley (1811)

F. O. MSS 72/127-132: Correspondence to and from Henry Wellesley (1812)

F. O. MSS 185: Embassy and Consular Archives: Spain

F. O. MSS 519: Private Collections: the Papers of Henry Wellesley, Baron Cowley

E. Collections Located outside the British Museum

Beresford MSS

The papers and typescript copies of correspondence of John de la Poer Beresford, Archbishop of Armagh, housed in the library of the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland, Dublin
Canning MSS

The papers of George Canning, owned by Earl Harewood and deposited in the Sheepscar Library at Leeds. The collection is sometimes referred to as the Leeds and the Harewood MSS in studies related to Canning.

Charlemont MSS

Bound volumes of the correspondence of James Caulfield, fourth Viscount Charlemont and first Earl Charlemont (1728-1799), housed in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

Goulburn MSS

The papers of Henry Goulburn, housed in the library of the Surrey Record Office under Acc. 319, II/22.

Grey MSS

The papers of Charles, second Earl Grey (1764-1845), housed in the Prior's Kitchen, University of Durham. Boxes 41, 45 and 58 were consulted for this study.

Hatherton MSS

The diary (in eighty folios) and papers of Edward Littleton, Baron Hatherton, housed in the library of the Stafford County Record Office.

Kirkpatrick Papers

A collection of correspondence, mostly related to military affairs in India during Wellesley's viceroyalty. They are in the possession of Sir Edward Strachey, Bart., of Sutton Court, Somersetshire.

Melville MSS

Papers of Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville, housed in the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh.
Monteagle MSS

Correspondence and Papers of Thomas Spring Rice, first Baron Monteagle, housed in the National Library of Ireland

Newport MSS

Correspondence of Sir John Newport, Bart., housed in the National Library of Ireland

North MSS

Copies of correspondence between Frederick North as governor of Ceylon and Wellesley from 1798 to 1800, housed in the central library of Madras, with handscript copies in the University of Sri Lanka library, Colombo campus

Sidmouth MSS

Correspondence of Spencer Perceval (1762-1812) housed in the Devon County Record Office

Stowe MSS

Correspondence and family papers of George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, second Earl Temple and first Marquis of Buckingham, and members of his family, housed in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California

III. Contemporary Printed Sources

A. Newspapers and Periodicals

Annual Register (1790-1827)

Anti-Jacobin (1794-1797)

Asiatic Register (1797-1806)


Correspondent (Dublin, 1806-1828)
Dublin Evening Mail (1823-1827)
Dublin Evening Post (1822-1823)
Dublin Morning Register (1823-1824)
Faulkner's Dublin Journal (1807, 1817, 1821)
Freeman's Journal (1821)
Gentleman's Magazine (1806, part II, pp. 1164 ff; 1808, part I, pp. 373-74)
Hibernian Journal (1821)
Morning Chronicle (1823)
Patriot (1822-1828)
Quarterly Review (1840)

B. Official Papers and Publications


Intercepted Correspondence between Certain Persons in This Country and Their Friends in India. London: Spilsbury, 1804.


Sessional Papers (Commons), 1813. Papers Respecting the War with America, 1814-1815.


Martin, Montgomery, ed. Despatches and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During his Mission to Spain, 1809. London: 1838.

Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquess Wellesley During His Administration in India. 5 vols.; London: John Murray, 1836.


Mornington, Richard Colley Wellesley, second Earl. Substance of Lord Mornington's Speech in the House of Commons on Tuesday, January 21, 1794, on a Motion for an Address to His Majesty at the Commencement of the Sessions of Parliament. Dublin: P. Byrne, W. McKenzie and J. Milliken, 1794.


C. Unofficial Publications


D. Memoirs and Correspondence


Hatherton, Edward John Littleton, First Baron. Memoir and Correspondence Relating to Political Occurrences in June and July 1834. London: Longmans, Green, 1872.


Llanover, Lady, ed. Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville Delany. 3 vols.; London: R. Bentley, 1861.


Malmesbury, James Harris, First Earl of. Diaries and Correspondence. 4 vols.; London: R. Bentley, 1844.


Pellew, George, ed. Life and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth. 2 vols.; London: John Murray, 1847.


IV. Theses and Dissertations


Embree, Ainslee. Lecture Delivered at the Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, Washington, D. C., 10 August 1972.

Fryman, Mildred L. "Charles Stuart and the Common Cause: the Anglo-Portugues Alliance, 1810-"


V. Modern Secondary Printed Sources


... "Canning's Return to Office in September, 1822." *English Historical Review,* LXXVIII (1963), 531-45.


"George IV and Sir William Knighton." English Historical Review, LV (1940).

"The Irish Proclamation Fund, 1800-1846." English Historical Review, LVI (1941).


Beaven, Alfred B. "Canning and the Addington Administration in 1801." English Historical Review, XXVIII (January 1913).


Brohier, R. L. "Chronological Catalogue of Letters


"Some Repercussions of the Act of Union on the Church of Ireland, 1801-1820." Church History, XL (September, 1871), 281-96.


"Some Early Foreign Office Registrars at the Public Record Office." English Historical Review, XXXVII (1922), 567-68.


Crawley, C. W. "French and English Influences in the Cortes of Cadiz, 1810-1814." *Cambridge Historical Journal,* VI (1938), 176-206.


Foster, W. "The India Board, 1784-1858." Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Third Series, XI (1917)


"Members of the Irish Parliament, 1784-7." Royal Irish Academy Proceedings, LXXI (1971), 139-244.


Lane-Poole, Stanley. Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning. 2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1888.


McDowell, R. B. "Ireland in the Eighteenth Century British Empire." Historical Studies, IX (Edited by John Barry; Belfast: Blackstaff Press).


O'Mahoney, Charles. The Viceroys of Ireland. London, 1912.


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Ranking, G. S. A. "History of the College of Fort William." Bengal Past and Present, VII (January 1911), 1-29.


Rydjord, M. "British Mediation between Spain and Her Colonies, 1811-1813." Hispanic American Historical Review, I, 31.


_____ "The Leadership of the Whig Party in the House of Commons from 1807 to 1815." English Historical Review, L (1935), 620-38.


_____ India under Wellesley. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1929.


Schneidman, J. L. "The Proposed Invasion of India by Russia and France in 1801." *Journal of Indian History*, XXXV (1957).


Sinha, D. P. "The Late Marquess of Wellesley." *Friend of India*, VIII (1 December 1842), 753-54.

Sinha, N. K. "Beginnings of Western Education." *Hundred Years of the University of Calcutta*, 1936.


\_\_\_ Miscellanies. 2 vols.; London, 1861 and 1864.


Temperley, H. "Canning, Wellington and George IV." English Historical Review, XXXVIII (April 1923).


Trevelyan, Charles, J. Princep et al. The Application of the Roman Alphabet to All the Oriental Languages. Serampore, India, 1834.


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VI. Other Sources

Below are listed primary and secondary sources containing material related to Wellesley not directly referred to in the footnotes of this study. In some instances the material is available in printed sources. Other items, although interesting, were not relevant to this work. Several items were not open to inspection or came to light too late to be included.

A. Primary Material

PRO, Dublin, Genealogical Office MSS:

MS 93, ff. 23-47: Pedigree of Marquess Wellesley and family

MS 107, ff. 4-5: Background of Marianne Caton Patterson, Lady Wellesley

MS 173, ff. 176, 219, 222-31: Pedigree of Marquess Wellesley and others

MS 174, f. 143: Pedigree of Marquess Wellesley

PRO, Dublin

MS M 2659: Genealogical Extracts Relating to the Wellesley family
British Museum

Wellesley MSS 37305, ff. 315-19: "Precis of the Despatches from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to the Secretary of State for the Home Department from 3rd of January 1822 to 25 January 1827, furnished by Mr. Peel's Desire on His Retirement in 1827 to Which is Added in Red Ink the Despatches in Ld. W.'s Possession not Noticed in Mr. Peel's List."

Add. MSS 13914: Original Addresses from Irish Towns Regarding Wellesley's Appointment as Viceroy, January-April 1822

Wellesley MSS 37416: Correspondence from the Countess Mornington, Pitt, Newport, Maryborough; essay on Pitt's character (ff. 373-85); 1906 memorandum on location of sources for a biography of Wellesley (ff. 385-86).


PRO, London


Apsley House-Wellington MSS

Papers of Arthur Wellesley related to election correspondence in the borough of Trim and other political matters, 1790-1795.

Hatherton MSS

Nine volumes of correspondence between Wellesley and Edward Littleton between 1832-1833, housed in the Stafford County Record Office as MSS D.260/7/01

Clements MSS

Several letters from Wellesley are included in the
Pitt correspondence housed in Clements Library of the University of Michigan. The Canning MSS (214 items) and the Goulburn MSS in the same library also contain several items related to Wellesley.

Monteagle MSS

In addition to Monteagle MSS entries noted above, there are six letters from Wellesley to David Spring Rice c. 1827 and three letters c. 1833, contained in National Library of Ireland MSS 3368 and 3375.

Buckingham MSS

The National Library of Ireland possesses the patronage correspondence of the Marquess of Buckingham, 1782-1790. Several items relate to the Wellesley family.

Portland MSS

The Papers and Correspondence of William Cavendish Bentinck, Third Duke of Portland (1738-1809) are housed in the Nottingham University Library, Nottingham. All items related to Wellesley are available elsewhere.

Capt. Murray Buchanan MSS

The Papers of Dr. Francis Buchanan, Surgeon to Wellesley in India, are available through the Secretary, National Register of Archives (Scotland). They contain two letters from Wellesley.

De La Poer Beresford MSS

Correspondence between Wellesley and John Beresford, Archbishop of Armagh, is contained in the De La Poer Beresford MSS housed in the Public Record Office, Northern Ireland, T1242.

David Holland MSS

Some 800 letters, mostly on political matters and related to Spencer Perceval, are in the possession of Mr. David Holland (cf. National
Register of Archives report 8587).

Pitt-Tomline MSS

Copies of some 4,000 letters received by Pitt between 1786 and 1805, drawn from the papers of Bishop Tomline, Pitt's biographer and literary executor, are housed in the University Library at Cambridge, Add. MSS 6958, 6959. They contain a number of letters from Wellesley; cf. The Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge (6 vols.; Cambridge, 1856-67).

B. Dissertations


C. Printed Materials

Anon. Catalogue of the Small Service of Plate, Cellar of Wines and Some Handsome Library and Bed Chamber Furniture, the Property of the Marquess Wellesley, K. G. Deceased, which . . . Will Be Sold by Auction, etc. London: W. Nicol, 1843.


Ceylon Literary Register. First Series.


