

THE
 LITERARY LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE
 OF THE
 COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

RICHARD COLLEY WESLEY, first Marquess Wellesley (eldest son of Yarrell, second Baron Wesley, and subsequently to the birth of said Richard, Earl of Mornington), was born in Dublin, the 20th of June, 1760, and died in London, in 1842, in his eighty-third year.* To his mother's excellent

* In "Pue's Occurrences," a weekly paper, published in Dublin, No. 50, from June 17th to June 21st, 1760, I find the following notice among the births—(June 20th, 1760)—"In Grafton Street, the Lady of the Right Honourable the Lord Mornington was safely delivered of a son and heir, to the great joy of that family." This is the first time, as far as I know, that the above notice has been referred to in relation to the place of birth of the Marquess. A great deal of confusion of dates, names, and of ideas that have led Colonel Gurwood, Mr. Peter Cunningham, and other writers, into error, have arisen, as I imagine, from there being a traditional account of a son of Lord Mornington born in Grafton Street, in the house lately occupied by the Royal Irish Academy, and, from some cause or other, that son being erroneously supposed to be Arthur Wesley, the third son of Lord Mornington. The notice I discovered in "Pue's Occurrences" disposes of that

understanding and great mental accomplishments is chiefly to be attributed the careful cultivation of the Marquess Wellesley's elegant tastes for literature and classical learning. His first display of oratorical talent was in an eloquent academical address, pronounced at Eton, in 1778, and, two years later, he gained the University prize for the best composition in Latin verse. At a subsequent period of his career, the Provost of Eton College, Dr. Goodall, before a committee of the House of Commons on academic education, spoke of the Marquess Wellesley as "infinitely superior to Porson in Greek composition." The Marquess, he said, as a genuine Greek scholar, exhibits the exquisite style and manner of Xenophon. He sat in the Irish House of Peers from the date of his succession to the title of his father, the Earl of Mornington, in 1781, for a few years. In 1784, he was sworn in a Member of the Privy Council; in 1786, he was appointed one of the Lords of the Treasury. He sat in the English House of Commons, for several boroughs, from the year 1784, and distinguished himself particularly at the time of the Regency question by his advocacy of the English view of it, and at the period of the French Revolution, by his denunciations of its excesses. He married, in 1794, his first wife, the daughter of M. Pierre Roland, by whom he had previously several illegitimate children. A separation took place soon after the marriage, and the Marchioness died in 1816, leaving no legitimate issue. In 1795, he was appointed a member of the Board of Control: and subsequently Chief Governor of India.

In 1797 he was created Baron Wellesley, in the peerage of error; but there remains another to get rid of. The house of Lord Mornington, in Grafton Street, was not the one which became the property of the Royal Irish Academy. The Academy's premises were built on the site of that house, in fact, the house in which the Marquess of Wellesley was born, has long ceased to exist. A writer of great research and accuracy, in his second article on "the Streets of Dublin," treats largely of this locality.

THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

3

Great Britain, and in 1799, Marquess Wellesley, in the peerage of Ireland, on account of his great services in the office of Governor-General of India. In 1805, after a career of unparalleled successes, signal civil and military triumphs, and services of the highest importance, thwarted and distrusted, and interfered with in his great and comprehensive schemes and governmental measures by the Court of Directors, he resigned his office and returned to England, when he had attained the forty-fifth year of his age.

In the latter part of 1809, he was appointed Ambassador to Spain. He landed at Cadiz the day the battle of Talavera was fought, but remained only a short time in Spain, and on his return home was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. His known opinions in favour of Catholic Emancipation did not leave him long in office, and for fifteen years he continued in opposition to government.

In December 1821 the Marquess of Wellesley was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. From 1807 up to that period, Ireland was governed for the interests, and in the interests solely, of Orangeism, nominally by the Duke of Richmond, but virtually by the Attorney-General, Saurin, and an English Chancellor, Lord Manners, who was wholly under the control of the former.

The Marquess of Wellesley in 1822 struck a blow at the Orange ascendancy regime, from which it never recovered. From 1807, up to that period, Ireland had been governed by William Saurin, of Huguenot descent, a black-letter lawyer of eminence, of much astuteness in his profession, but of a narrow mind, illiberal and unenlightened, a partizan of Orangeism without disguise or any affectation of impartiality in his high office—an open adherent of that system, deriving all his power from its fanaticism, and exercising all his influence for its objects, under the cloak of zeal for the interests of religion. All the administrative power of the state was

B 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04833-0 - The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington: Volume 3

Richard Robert Madden

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

placed by him and the Chancellor, the governors of the chief governor, in the hands of Orangemen. The Duke of Richmond, who had been appointed Viceroy in 1807, and held his office till 1813, had delegated his authority to the Chancellor, Lord Manners, and by Lord Manners, the chief power and control of the government, civil and military, and religious, had been transferred to Saurin.

Such was the power in Ireland which the Marquess of Wellesley found more difficulty in dealing with, than that of Tippoo Saib in India. And yet at the period of his arrival in that country as Governor-General, the sovereignty of India had to be disputed with three native powers, and Sultans of vast resources. But the struggle of one power alone, of Orangeism in Ireland, with Saurin for its legal sultan, cost the illustrious statesman more trouble than all the strife of his government in India, and his wars with the princes of the Mahrattas and Nizam. He broke the stubborn neck of Orange influence and insolence, however, though at an infinite cost of trouble, vexation, and disquiet. And this attainment perhaps, after all, is the greatest achievement of the illustrious Marquess.

Lady Blessington had reason to know that such was the opinion of the Marquess: among her papers she has left a very remarkable piece of evidence of the fact, of unquestionable authenticity, in the following statement of the Marquess to her in March, 1840.

“Bushe is one of the first men produced by our country. When I went to Ireland in 1821, I found him depressed by an old Orangeman, named Saurin, then Attorney-General by title, but who had been really Lord Lieutenant for fifteen years. I removed Saurin, and appointed Bushe Lord Chief Justice.

“Saurin set up a newspaper to defame me, ‘The Evening Mail,’ which (notwithstanding the support of Lord

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04833-0 - The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington: Volume 3

Richard Robert Madden

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

5

“Manners and the Orangemen) has not yet ruined or slain me.”

Of one of the principal opponents of the Marquess, in his Irish Government, a few words may not be misplaced here.

Thomas Manners Sutton, first Lord Manners, a younger son of Lord George Manners Sutton, third son of the third Duke of Rutland, who was born in 1756, and died in 1842, in his 87th year, was Lord Chancellor of Ireland, from the death of Mr. Fox till the retirement of Lord Liverpool. For twenty years, he enjoyed greater patronage and emoluments than ever fell to the lot of any legal functionary in Ireland. His patron, Spencer Perceval, who was Attorney-General in 1802, when Colonel Despard was prosecuted successfully for high treason, discovered in the peculiar talents of the then Solicitor-General, Lord Manners, the qualities which fitted him, in his opinion, for the high office of Lord Chancellor in Ireland.

The whole Orange party and ascendancy throughout the country received the new Lord Chancellor with acclamation. The great Indian General, Sir Arthur Wellesley, the late Duke of Wellington, who at the same time was appointed Chief Secretary, was not less favourably received by the same party : poor deluded innocents ! no prophetic vision of theirs peering into futurity, and the part that Chief Secretary was to play in 1829.

Manners was an ornamental Chancellor—of a grim countenance, somewhat ghastly, painfully suggestive of the aspect that a resuscitated mummy might be expected to assume in the act of reviving. He was remarkable for courtesy on the bench. He bowed oftener to the bar, bent his gaunt form lower, spoke in milder accents, stood more perpendicularly at the close of a long sitting, and smiled with greater labour, than any keeper of the seals in Ireland, had ever done before. He imparted great solemnity, and gave a gentlemanly character to the exercise of his vast patronage, for all the purposes of party and

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-04833-0 - The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of
Blessington: Volume 3
Richard Robert Madden
Excerpt
[More information](#)

intrigue, and the jobbery interests, which were protected and promoted by his subordinate in legal office. But his decisions in Chancery were found entitled to little respect in Westminster Hall; and of his administration of justice it can be said with truth—it gave very general satisfaction to the Orangemen of Ireland. William Saurin, who was made Attorney-General in 1809, and who retained his office for sixteen years of the term that Lord Manners was Chancellor, the uncompromising adversary of Catholic claims, and most virulent of all the opponents of them, was at once taken to the private councils of the Chancellor, Lord Manners, on his arrival, and became his “guide, philosopher, and friend.” Daily the business of the government of Ireland was done by the two legal functionaries of kindred spirits—“Arcades ambo,” as they regularly walked down every morning from Stephen’s Green to the Four Courts, and returned to their homes, after a visit to the Castle, every evening, with arms linked, and solemn steps and bended brows, settling affairs of state, and arranging the things that were to be done by the facile, convivial, and pleasure-loving Chief Governor and Viceroy, the Duke of Richmond, who thus allowed himself “to be led by the nose as tenderly as asses are.”

The well-known partiality of this dignified Judge for the Attorney-General, had the effect to be expected from it, on the Solicitors of the Court of Chancery, Mr. Saurin having “the ear of the Court,” and a supposed influence over the Lord Chancellor out of Court. Mr. Saurin, who was known to be a man of some intellectual power, and the Lord Chancellor Manners one of very little strength of mind, and who was capable of being influenced by one of a very different calibre of understanding, briefs poured in, on the favoured Attorney-General, and men of the highest standing in their profession were cast into the shade, in the court of the exceedingly courteous Lord Chancellor Manners.

THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

7

In January, 1822, the Marquess Wellesley being Viceroy, the Attorney-Generalship of William Saurin came to an end. But his power, as the confidential adviser of the Lord Chancellor, and the acknowledged head and legal guide of the Orange ascendancy faction, continued to be exercised and pitted against the government of the Marquess Wellesley for a period of six years, namely, from 1822 to 1828, when the Liverpool ministry broke up, and Lord Manners was succeeded by Sir Anthony Hart.

The conqueror of Tippoo Saib and the Nizam, having resolutely encountered the hostile power of Irish Orangeism, that had been previously deemed indomitable in Ireland, and having succeeded largely in his warfare with that system, though not to the full extent of his desires, after an administration of justice and wisdom of six years' duration, was recalled in 1828, when his brother, the Duke of Wellington, took the office of First Lord of the Treasury.

The Marquess married a second time, in 1825, the eldest daughter of Richard Caton, Esq., of Maryland, in America, and widow of Robert Patterson, Esq., a Roman Catholic lady, by which marriage there was no issue.

During the whole of the Duke of Wellington's administration, the Marquess remained in retirement.

In 1833, Lord Grey being Prime Minister, the Marquess, in his 74th year, once more took on him the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and retained office for the period of one year. He returned to England when Peel came into office, in December, 1834.

In 1835, he accepted the office of Lord Chamberlain, for the sake, it is said, of its emoluments; and with that humiliating step, his public life may be said to have closed.

An elegant volume of his Latin Poems, entitled "*Primitiæ et Reliquiæ*," many of them written after he became an octogenarian, were privately printed a short time before his death;

and perhaps, but for the care of one whom he loved like a father, and watched over with all the affectionate interest of a true and faithful friend—Mr. Alfred Montgomery—these remarkable poems never would have seen the light of day.

“Some of these had been recently written, and they exhibit in an astonishing degree his unimpaired vigour of intellect, and his unaltered elegance of taste. One poem in this volume justly attracted universal admiration.”*

This eminent man passed much of his time, in the latter portion of his life, in the vicinity of Eton.

The Marquess lived and died in straitened circumstances, leaving a great name, which will yet be honoured as that of one of the most illustrious men of his time, and perhaps the ablest British statesman of his age.

By the will of the Marquess Wellesley, Alfred Montgomery, Esq., his private secretary, was left £1000, “in regard of his affectionate, dutiful, and zealous services.” And the residue of his property was left to the Marchioness Wellesley, whose death took place in the latter part of 1853.

By a codicil to the will, the Marquess bequeathed to his secretary, Mr. Montgomery, all his manuscripts, enjoining the public use of a portion of them in the following terms:—

“And I desire him to publish such of my papers as shall tend to illustrate my two administrations in Ireland, and to protect my honour against the slander of Melbourne and his pillar of state—O’Connell.”

To Lord Brougham he bequeathed his Homer, in four volumes, and earnestly desired him to assist in publishing his MSS., saying, “I leave my memory in his charge, confiding in his honour and justice.”†

The property was sworn under £6000.

* *Memoirs of Eminent Etonians ; with Notices of the Early History of Eton College.* By Edward S. Creasy, M.A. Bentley.

† *Gentleman’s Magazine*, December, 1844, p. 654.

LETTERS OF THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY. 9

LETTERS FROM THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY TO LADY
 BLESSINGTON.

“Kingston House, June 9, 1839.

“MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

“Your little volume of wisdom, genius, and just sentiment, has delighted me; I have read it with great admiration, and (although in my seventy-ninth year) with instruction, and I hope with self-correction.

“It is very amiable to think of me so often in the midst of all your higher occupations; but your thoughts are chiefly directed towards the happiness of others, and I am proud of the share which your kindness allots to me.

“If your definition of a *Bore* be correct, you never can have encountered one of those Pests of Society. For ‘*when were you thinking only of yourself?*’

“Ever your most grateful

“And devoted servant,

“WELLESLEY.”

“Kingston House, November 9, 1839.

“MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

“Your beautiful and magnificent present contains such a crowd of wonders, that it will require almost a season before I can finish my wonderments at the whole collection.

“The poetry (which I have read, none of your Ladyship’s) is very beautiful and interesting; the plates, printing, binding, all chefs-d’œuvre of their kind.

“I have not been able yet to appreciate the prose. A thousand thanks for your kindness in thinking of me. As to the play, I do not admire it, and I do not wish to criticise it.

“I have not been well lately, otherwise I should much sooner have acknowledged your Ladyship’s goodness and munificence.

“I am truly grateful for your protection of my dear young friend, Alfred Montgomery, who is truly grateful for it, and I sincerely believe truly worthy of it.

“I am too happy always to render any service to your Ladyship; and I regret the approaching expiration of the privilege

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-04833-0 - The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of
Blessington: Volume 3
Richard Robert Madden
Excerpt
[More information](#)

10 LETTERS OF THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY.

of franking, principally as it will deprive me of the pleasure of obeying your commands.

“ Ever, my dear Lady Blessington,
“ Your faithful, obliged,
“ And devoted servant,
“ WELLESLEY.”

“ Kingston House, January 1, 1840.

“ MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

“ I have suffered such continual pain, that I have been unable to offer my heartfelt acknowledgments for all your kindness and favour. Writing on this day, it would be impossible to omit the most ardent wishes for many happy returns of this season to you ; if half the happiness you dispense to others is returned to yourself, you will be among the happiest of the human race. This is no great demand upon the gratitude of the world, to compromise your just claims, by the payment of one half.

“ Your commendation of my humble tribute to the adored ‘ Shrine of my Education,’ has raised me in my own estimation. The sentiments flow from the very source of my heart’s blood, and therefore must be congenial with the feelings of one whose works abound with similar emotions. I am sure you understand the Latin ; you could not write as you do, if you had not approached those pure springs of all beauty, sublimity, virtue, and truth.

“ I feel most gratefully the honour you confer on me, when you desire to publish my verses in your beautiful annual collection ; but I am averse to any publication ; and I therefore hope that you will not attribute my declining this distinction to any want of a sense of its high value.

“ Your protégé, Alfred, is still in Staffordshire, hunting and shooting with Lords Anglesey, Hatherston, &c. I expect him this week.

“ Believe me ever,
“ My dear Lady Blessington,
“ With true attachment and gratitude,
“ Your devoted servant,
“ WELLESLEY.”