

**THE MILITARY HISTORY  
OF THE DUKE OF  
WELLINGTON IN INDIA**

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The Military History of the Duke of Wellington in India by Anonymous

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# MILITARY HISTORY

OF THE

## DUKE OF WELLINGTON IN INDIA.

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THE lustre which the military fame of the Duke of Wellington derived from his campaigns in the Peninsula of Europe and from his crowning victory at Waterloo has cast into comparative shade the splendid commencement of his career. This sketch of his services in India is designed to bring that portion of the history of this great captain of the age prominently into notice, whence it will be apparent that his rare qualities, which experience matured and disciplined, were developed in a remarkable degree at an early age.

### 1.—*Birth, Parentage, and Entrance into the Army.—Campaign in Flanders.*

Arthur Wesley,—for this was his grandfather's name, and thus the Duke wrote his own name until after he arrived in India,—was the third son of the first Earl of Mornington, and was born in Ireland on the 1st of May, 1769. His father dying in 1781, he was left, at the age of twelve, to the care of his mother, eldest daughter of the first Viscount Dungannon, a lady of fine understanding and great mental accomplishments, the contributor of several papers to the *Archæologia*. Both parents carefully superintended the education of their children; and Arthur, after a brief residence at Eton, being designed for the army, was sent to the military seminary of Angers, in France, where he remained about five years.

On the 7th of March, 1787, when not quite eighteen, he received a commission as ensign in the 73rd regiment of foot, and in December of that year was promoted to a lieutenancy,—first in the 76th.



whence he moved into the 41st, and then into the 12th Light Dragoons. On the 30th of June, 1791, he obtained a company in the 58th foot, but exchanged the same year into the 18th Light Dragoons. On the 30th of April, 1793, he became major of the 33rd regiment, the lieutenant-colonelcy of which he purchased in September of that year, when he was only twenty-four years of age.

This was rapid advancement, for which the young officer must have been indebted, in some degree, to family influence.

In 1794, Lieutenant-Colonel Wesley embarked with his regiment at Cork for Ostend, to join the British army in the Netherlands, under the command of the Duke of York. The progress of the French troops caused the evacuation of Ostend, and the retreat of the British commander into Holland, followed by the French, with whom several affairs took place, in some of which the 33rd regiment was engaged. The retreat continuing, Lieutenant-Colonel Wesley was selected to command the rear-guard, consisting of three battalions, and in this very trying service, his skill and intelligence gave promise of future distinction.

Although this, his first campaign, was short, and there was no battle, it was upon a large scale, and he saw the troops of different nations, whose bearing and spirit he could note and compare with those of English soldiers.

2.—*Embarkation for, and Arrival in, India.—Expedition to Manila.*

On the return of the army to England, in the spring of 1795, the 33rd regiment was ordered for the West Indies, and actually embarked; but tempestuous weather having compelled the fleet to put back, the destination of the regiment was changed for the East Indies. This accident, coupled with another,—the nearly contemporaneous appointment of his elder brother, Lord Mornington, to the post of Governor-General of India,—opened to the young officer a wider field of action, in which talents like his could not long lie concealed.

His corps embarked in April, 1796, but its lieutenant-colonel was

disabled from accompanying it by severe illness. As soon as he was in a condition to enter upon the voyage, he hastened to join it, and having overtaken it at the Cape of Good Hope, proceeded with it to Calcutta, where he landed in February, 1797. During the voyage, we learn from a fellow-passenger that "he passed much time in his cabin, diligently reading, to prepare himself for command and conduct in that country."

The Governor-General of India, at this date, was Sir John Shore (soon afterwards Lord Teignmouth), who was, however, about to relinquish the government. The lieutenant-colonel of the 33rd regiment brought a letter of introduction to Sir John from Marquis Cornwallis, who was the colonel of that corps, and it is amusing now to notice the guarded, though complimentary, terms in which the marquis couched his recommendation. The letter is dated "Whitehall, June 10th, 1796," and is as follows:—

"Dear Sir,—I beg leave to introduce to you Colonel Wesley, who is lieutenant-colonel of my regiment. He is a sensible man, and a good officer, and will, I have no doubt, conduct himself in a manner to merit your approbation."

Sir John Shore seems to have very promptly and acutely discerned the true character of the young soldier. The present Lord Teignmouth tells us that, at their first interview, at a levee, Sir John turned quickly round to his aides-de-camp, as Colonel Wesley retired, remarking,—“If that officer should ever have an opportunity of distinguishing himself, he will do it, and greatly.” He was a frequent guest at the table of Sir John Shore, who, in after-life, often adverted to the union of strong sense and boyish playfulness which, he said, was at that time a peculiar characteristic of his young friend.

The Governor-General had resolved to despatch an expedition against Manilla and the Spanish islands, to consist of 1,400 infantry, with a frigate and five armed Indiamen, which he placed under the direction of Colonel Wesley, who immediately drew up a "memorandum," which, bearing as it does the striking features of his later

official compositions, amply justified the prognostic of Sir John Shore. The memorandum proposed a previous attack upon the Dutch settlements in the island of Java, the writer intimating that he had a plan prepared for protecting an establishment there; it detailed the information he had collected respecting the state of the Dutch force and the defences on the island, and suggested a judicious mode of operations for the capture of Manilla. The whole paper indicates a familiarity with the matter which, in so young an officer, who had been only a few weeks in India, is a remarkable proof of the activity of mind and assiduity in acquiring professional knowledge which, in after-years, gave the duke an abundant command of resources whenever and wherever they were needed.

An incident occurred soon after his embarkation in the *Heroine* frigate, as commander of this expedition, which, though slight in itself, is worth recording, as it illustrates that rare combination of opposite qualities so conspicuous in the duke,—firmness with temper, spirit with discretion. He received an order from General St. Leger that, in case of coming to action, the troops were to be under the command of the captains of the Indiamen. Colonel Wesley addressed to Sir John Shore immediately the following dignified and temperate remonstrance, in which may be discerned the same plainness and simplicity of style, and the same firmness of tone, which characterize his more recent official papers:—

“ Sir,—I have just received an order from Major-General St. Leger, stating, that, ‘ in case of coming to action, the troops will be under the command of the captains of the ships.’ In the different conversations you did me the honour to hold with me upon this subject, I uniformly stated it to be my determination that every assistance should be given to work and fight the ships. I told you that the directions of the captains of the Indiamen, upon those occasions, would of course be obeyed; and I communicated to you an extract of my instructions to the officers commanding the troops on board the different ships upon this subject, which you thought fully sufficient. Confiding, then, that there would be no order from