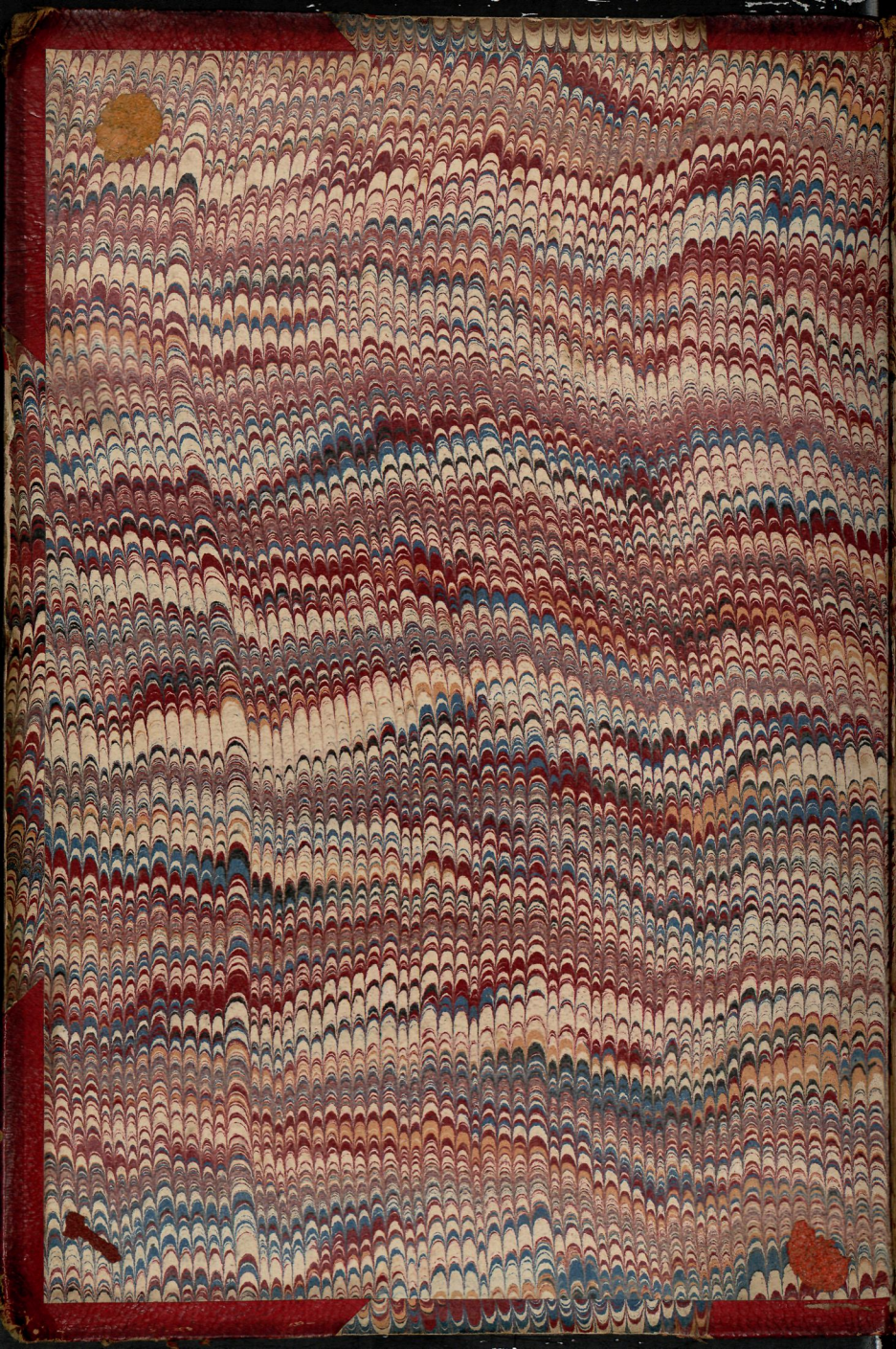


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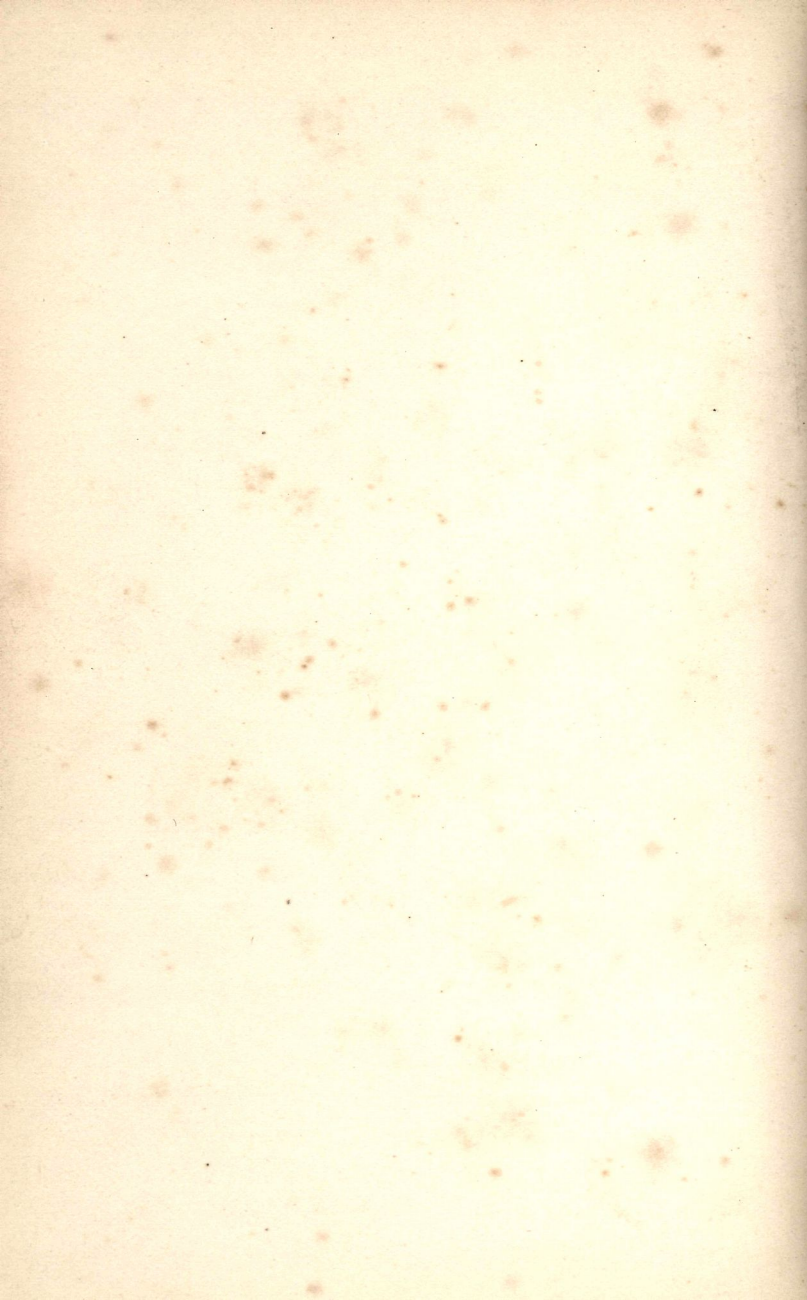


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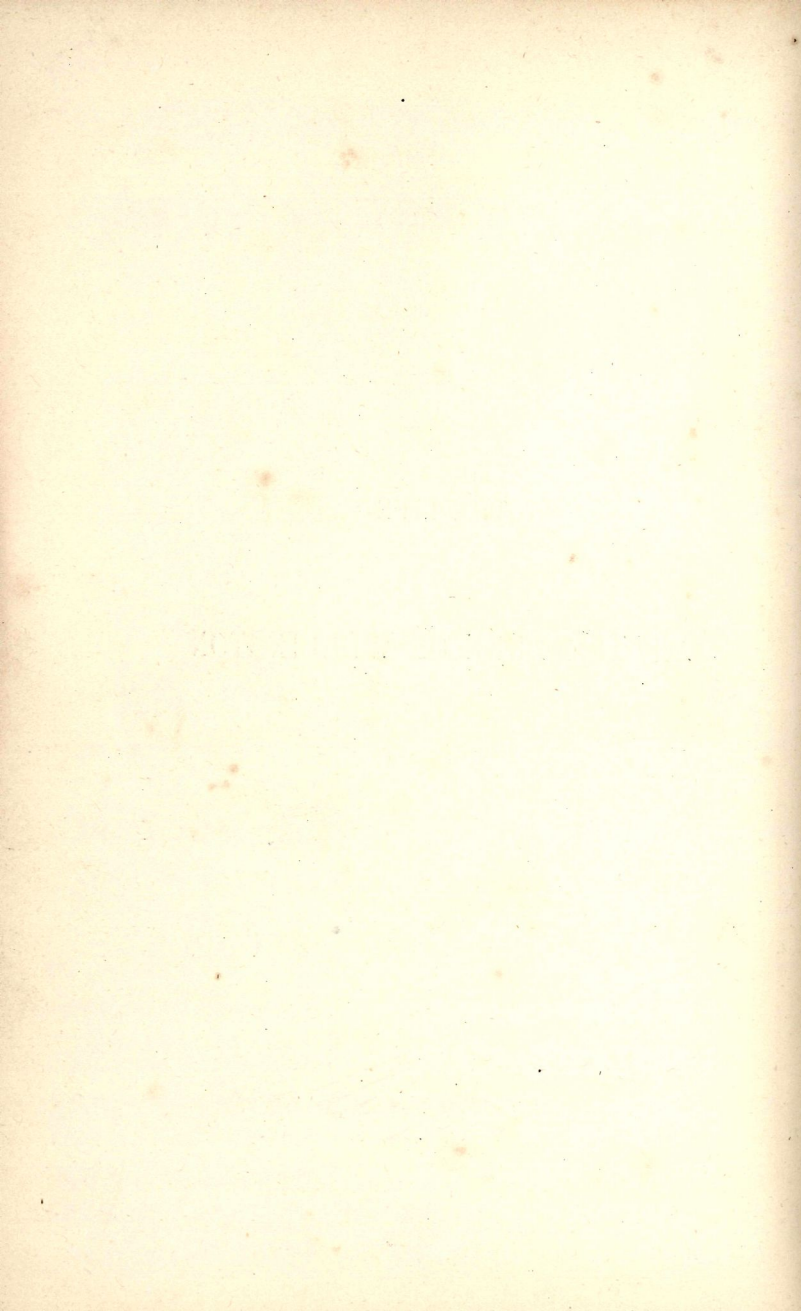
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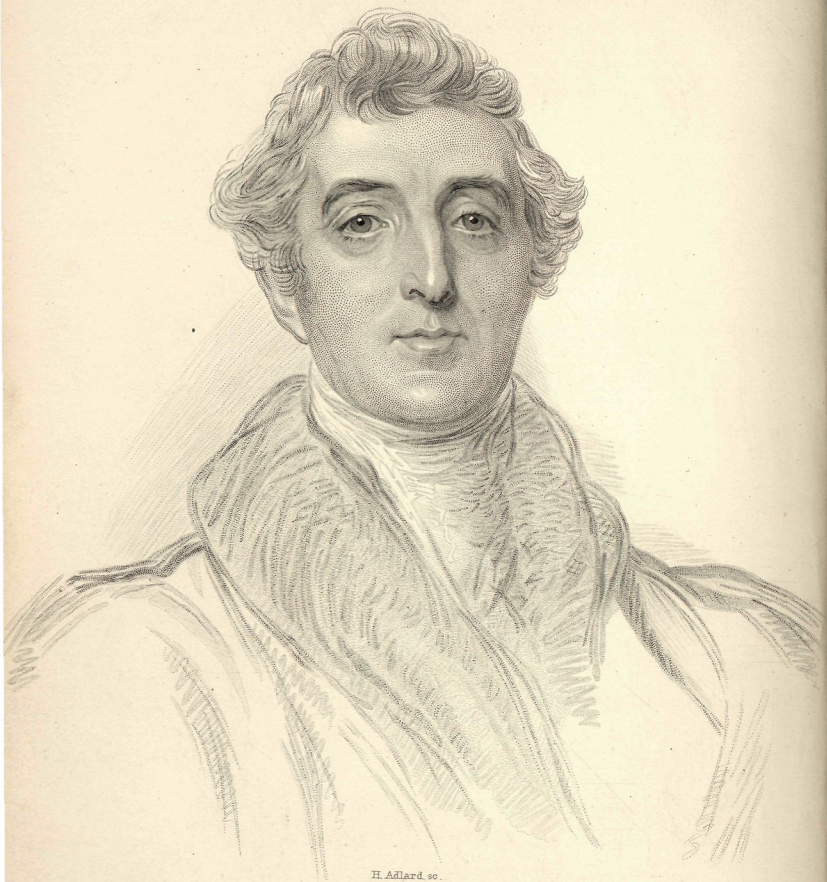
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THE LIFE
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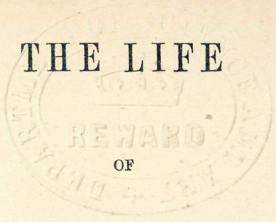




H. Adlard sc.

Wellington

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THE LIFE

OF

ARTHUR DUKE OF WELLINGTON

BY

G. R. GLEIG, M.A., F.R.G.S.

ETC., ETC.,

CHAPLAIN-GENERAL TO THE FORCES, AND PREBENDARY OF ST PAUL'S

THE PEOPLE'S EDITION

Revised Edition,

WITH A NEW PREFACE

He was a man, take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, AND DYER

1869



JOHN CHILDS AND SON, PRINTERS.

DEDICATION.

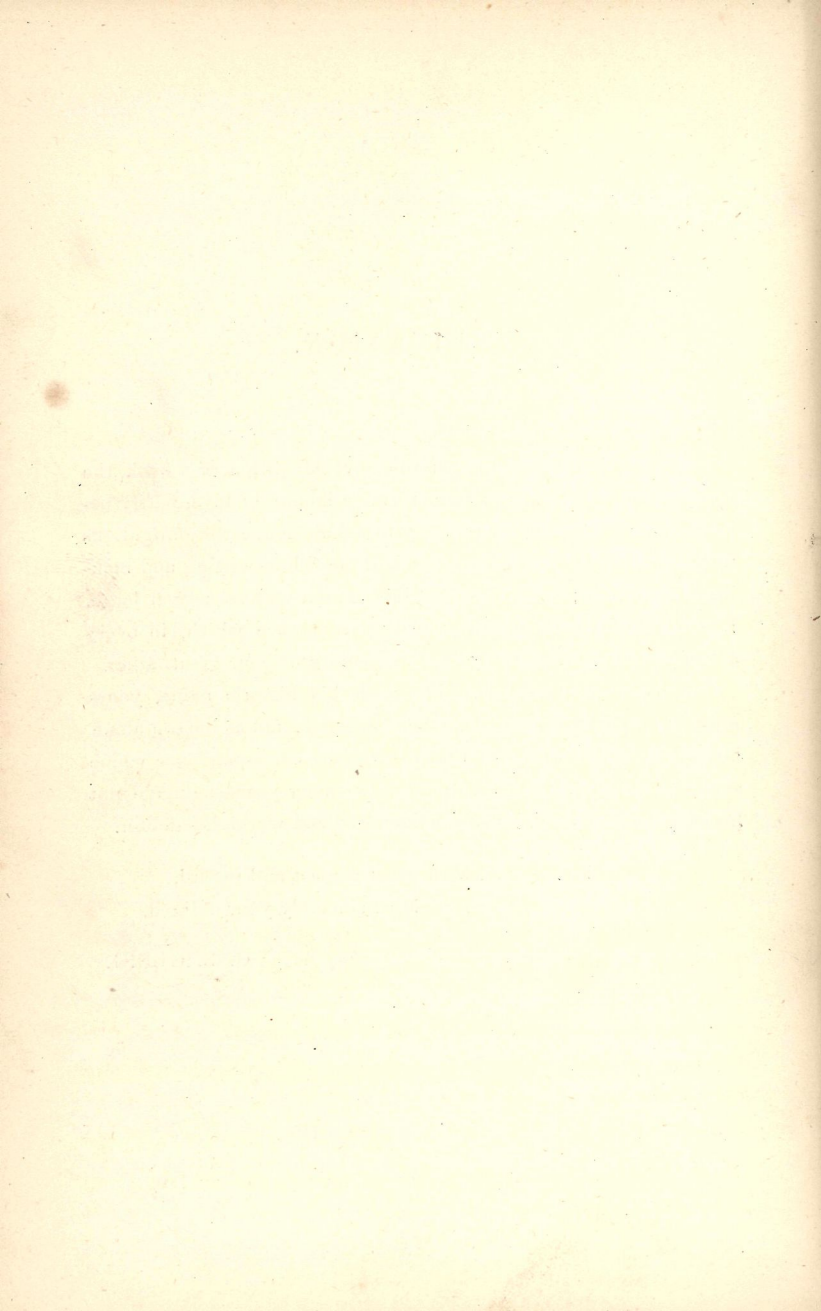
MY DEAR DUKE OF WELLINGTON,

I dedicate to you this revised edition of a book, the compilation of which has been to me a labour of love, partly because I am thus enabled publicly to acknowledge the obligations under which your great kindness laid me while writing and making it what it is; partly because, in common with Society at large, I cannot sufficiently admire the deep reverence which, in every act of your life, you display for the memory of your great father.

You have your reward. For with his historic name, yours must, through all time coming, be connected; not as his son alone but as the gifted editor of that marvellous correspondence which shows to what an extent, and for how many years, he made not his own country only, but the whole civilized world, his debtor.

Believe me, with great respect and regard,
Most sincerely your obliged,

G. R. GLEIG.



ADVERTISEMENT.

IN this revised edition of the Life of the Duke of Wellington, I have kept two objects steadily in view : first, to paint the Duke himself exactly as he was ; and next, to meet the possible wishes of readers, and they are not few, to whom the minute details of military and political operations are not very attractive.

To describe the career of the foremost General of his age, without telling how he carried on war and achieved great successes, is indeed impossible. And as little possible would it be to speak of a statesman and a politician, leaving unnoticed the stream of public affairs, the course of which he contributed to guide, or by which he was carried along. But writing as I now do for others than professional soldiers and statesmen, my endeavour has been so to handle these points of history, as that as little as possible they shall stand between my readers and the true subject of my narrative, the Duke himself. It seems to me, having now accomplished my task, that neither the continuity of the narrative, nor its value as a record of great public events, is damaged by the process. And I am willing to believe that on others the same impression will be produced. But however this may be, one thing is certain, that by following no

other course could I hope to achieve the ends which I had set before me: namely, while lightening my story, to produce a portrait of my hero, such as shall do full justice to his great qualities, without seeking to hide or to explain away the weaknesses which he shared in common with his fellow-men.

It will be seen that in following up these designs, I have made freer use than I formerly ventured to do of sources of private information that were open to me. Of the Duke's remarks upon men and things, many, which were originally given in substance only, are here set down as he delivered them. Some of the peculiarities in his strongly-marked character are now for the first time brought forward; and stories are told, which on former occasions might have fitted in but indifferently with graver matters then under discussion. I am confident that neither the most sensitive of the Duke's personal friends, nor the bitterest of his political enemies (if any such still survive), will see the smallest reason to be dissatisfied or offended at this change of plan. On the other hand, it appears to me that multitudes whom the record of his glory, in wars and political contests long passed away, might repel, will be attracted by the new arrangement to their own great gain. Wherefore "the People's Edition" of the Life of THE DUKE passes out of my hands without any misgivings or hesitation on my part; first, because I persuade myself that "the people" will certainly read it; and, next, because I feel that there is not a man among them "so high, so low, so rich, so poor, but that he will be benefited by the exercise, if it only stimulate him to follow in all things, as the great Duke did before him, the guiding star of duty through life."

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION.

THE demand for a new edition of my Life of the Duke of Wellington enables me to notice and refute certain curious and, let me add, most unlooked-for mistakes into which the writer of an essay in a recent number of the *Quarterly Review* permitted himself to be hurried.

They relate to three points, which may be thus briefly stated :—

1. Was the Duke, or was he not, furnished with a pontoon train in his Indian wars? a train movable, be it observed! because either well horsed, or *well bullocked*.

2. Has it, or has it not been the practice of the British army heretofore, to deliver and receive attacks in line, and not in column, when fighting battles in the open field?

3. Are we to believe the Duke himself, that, though "often in want of money, he was never in debt;" or must we, like the writer in the *Quarterly Review*, accept it "as settled" "that young Wesley (or Wellesley), who had very little besides his pay, got into debt in Dublin; that he borrowed money from the bootmaker he lodged with; and that he left Mr Dillon, a draper, to settle his affairs, giving up, most creditably, a great part of his income for the purpose?"

To find a solution to the first of these problems, we must look not only to the tone of the Duke's despatches, but

to the principle which guided him in carrying on military operations in India. With respect to the question of principle it is certain that, prior to the Duke's appearance on the stage, the English were accustomed to delay entering upon Indian wars till the monsoons were over. Our people adopted this course because they believed that they should be better able to keep their troops supplied in the dry season than in the wet, and that the troops themselves would suffer less from exposure to heat than if they took the field amid the pelting rains of a tropical climate. The consequence was, that while our armies, composed chiefly of infantry, were toiling after the native armies, the latter, consisting mainly of cavalry, doubled back round the English flanks, and crossing the frontier rivers, at that season fordable everywhere, laid waste the British territory with fire and sword. A remarkable instance of this sort occurred in the war with Hyder Ali, the father of Tippoo Saib. While our people were seeking him on his own frontier, he suddenly made his appearance at the gates of Fort St George, where he dictated peace on his own terms, after making a desert of the district through which he passed.

The Duke saw the error of this system, and applied to it a remedy. Before moving a man, he caused all the frontier rivers, the Toombuddra, the Werda, the Malpoorba, the Gutpurba, and the Kistna, to be bridged, and the bridges to be guarded, and, where necessary, fortified. And then, when the floods came, he crossed with ease into the enemy's country, followed till he got them into a position from which they could not escape, and there fought and defeated them. For the most part, though not always, the enemy were unable, during a campaign so conducted, to double back upon him, as other native armies had doubled back upon his predecessors: and hence it came to pass that his expression, which the *Quarterly Review* quotes in a sense entirely different from that which he intended it to convey, becomes in-

telligible:—"The rivers that rise from the Western Ghauts will soon fill; crossing them to the native armies will be dangerous, if not impracticable, but safe and easy to the British forces."

Starting from this principle, I turn to my reviewer's quotations from the Duke's correspondence, and find that they are literally correct. They contain instructions ranging between 1799 and 1803, for the laying down of bridges at various points, to be constructed, sometimes with boats, sometimes with barges; but they are all bridges of communication. I find, also, repeated applications for pontoons, but I cannot discover a single sentence which says, directly or indirectly, "the pontoons for which I have so often applied, arrived, and did me good service on such-and-such a river."

Again, if the reviewer had been a little better acquainted than he seems to be with India and its resources, he would have known that neither the Duke nor anybody else ever thought, 60 or 70 years ago, of carrying about, in the train of an army, the scantling of basket-boats. The frame-work of basket-boats, consisting of bamboos, can be provided almost everywhere throughout the Peninsula. The boats themselves are constructed by drawing over the frame, sometimes leather, more frequently the green skins of animals killed for the purpose; and the ordinary mode of using them is this:—Into each boat fascines, or bundles of twigs, are thrown. Upon these twigs infantry stand, and with light guns are ferried across rivers which horses and elephants are compelled to swim. The Duke, to be sure, did from time to time construct basket-boats on a large scale, and possibly used them as if they had been pontoons; but this was only when he could find no better means of constructing those permanent bridges, which kept open his own communications with his rear.

That such is the real history of that imaginary *well-bullock*ed pontoon train with which the writer in the *Quarterly*

Review has supplied the Duke, is, I think, proved by the following quotation from a letter addressed, in 1808, by Sir Arthur Wellesley to Mr Dundas. (See "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi., page 594.) It appears that India was then threatened, or supposed to be threatened, with invasion by a combined army of French and Russians, and Sir Arthur Wellesley being consulted as to the measures best adapted to restrain or repel the invasion, says,

"The art of crossing rivers is now so well understood, and has been so frequently practised, and so invariably, I believe, with success in the late wars of Europe, that we cannot hope to defend the Indus as a barrier. It is true that the enemy will not be in possession of the resources and means which they could apply to such an operation on a river in Italy or in Germany, but they will experience no want of such resources as that country will afford; and I have made as good a bridge with the basket-boats (which are described in Cæsar, and are in use all over India, the materials for which are to be found everywhere), as I could have made of the best pontoons."

Two points are observable in this extract,—1st, the Duke states that basket-boats abound all over India, and that the materials for making them are to be found everywhere. Is it to be supposed that he, well-instructed on these heads, would encumber himself on the line of march by dragging basket-boats after him? Next, the comparison which he draws is not between his own bridges and the materials for bridge-making which the enemy were likely to get, but between bridges which he had himself constructed *with basket-boats*, and such bridges as he might have constructed on the best pontoons, *if pontoons had been at his disposal*.

So much for reasoning from inference. Now for a matter of indisputable fact. The Duke's repeated applications and instructions appear to have been so far attended to, that, in 1803, a copper pontoon train was actually prepared and set in motion. What became of it, and how far it proved serviceable to General Wellesley, the following letter from a distinguished Indian veteran will show.

“The Grange, Goudhurst, W. Kent,
“October 24th, 1866.

“DEAR SIR,

“On reading your letter of the 16th, addressed to the Editor of the *Times*, and with reference to the pontoon question, I am happy in having the power of assisting you. I was for more than two months, as a young subaltern, employed with a strong detachment in literally carrying 60 copper pontoons up the Bhere Ghaut during the monsoon of 1803. These were intended for General Wellesley’s army; but the cattle employed in their carriage from Panwell (?) to the foot of the Ghaut, either died or were totally unfit for severe labour; and the result was, that *one* pontoon, with its planks and carriage, was carried on men’s shoulders between three and four miles up the mountain-pass, under torrents of incessant rain; the road being only rough water-courses, formed by the deluge of rain.

“Of four officers, I alone had the good fortune to stand the daily trial, thanks to a good constitution; but the pontoons were useless to the army in the field, as the battles of Assaye and Argaum were fought long before they had reached Poonah, and they were deposited in the arsenal of Ahmednuggar for years after the war. You are at liberty to make any use you please of this letter.

“Believe me, dear Sir, yours faithfully,
“P. LADWICK, General.”

Before I pass from this to the subject of line and column, I may be permitted to say that the Duke never stated to me, nor did I understand him as stating, that “when fords failed in an active campaign, he had no other resource than inflated skins.” His expression was, “We crossed the rivers pretty much as Alexander the Great did, and as everybody must do who makes war in a country circumstanced as India then was.” And he particularized the inflated skins, partly, perhaps, in order to impress me—who was not ignorant of what Alexander the Great had done—with a sense of the shifts to which he had himself sometimes been put; partly, perhaps, because the operation of crossing rivers on inflated skins had fixed itself in his memory more tenaciously than a similar operation performed by means of basket-boats, whether floated or bridged over.

2. We come now to the second question at issue between my reviewer and myself.