

THE
BRITISH COLONIAL MAGAZINE.

Conducted by W. H. SMITH, Author of the "Canadian Gazetteer," &c. &c.

NUMBER V.

PRICE 3d.; or 12s. 6d. per Annum.

ARTHUR WELLESLEY,
DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

The following sketch of the life of the "Iron Duke," is abridged from an article published in the "London Times" since the decease of the Duke; and we have no doubt it will be acceptable to the great majority of our readers.

It is a circumstance of rather unusual occurrence that the day and place of a famous birth should be unknown even to contemporary inquirers; yet such is the case on the present occasion. It is certain that the Duke of Wellington was born in Ireland, and of an Irish family, and that the year in which he saw the light was that which ushered also Napoleon Bonaparte into the world. For most purposes but those of astrology these verifications of fact would be sufficient; but it is not unlikely that the event which has now thrown Britain into mourning, may reanimate a controversy not without its attractions to inquisitive minds. The 1st of May, 1769, is specified, with few variations, as the birth-day of Arthur Wellesley by those of his biographers who venture on such circumstantiality, and Dangan Castle, county of Meath, has been selected with similar unanimity as the place of the event. The former of these statements has received a kind of confirmation by the adoption of the Duke's name and sponsorship for a Royal infant born on the day in question; yet, in the registry of St. Peter's Church, Dublin, it is fully recorded that "Arthur, son of the Right Hon. Earl and Countess of Mornington," was there christened by "Isaac Maun, archdeacon, on the 30th of April, 1769." This entry, while it conclusively negatives one of the two foregoing presumptions, materially invalidates the other also; for, though not impossible, it is certainly not likely that the infant, if born at Dangan, would have been baptized in Dublin. Our own information leads us to believe that the illustrious subject of this biography first saw the light in the town residence of his parents, Mornington house, a mansion of some pretensions in the centre of the eastern side of Upper Merrion street, Dublin, and which, as it abutted eighty years ago as a corner house upon a large area, since enclosed with buildings, was occasionally

described as situate in Merrion square. We are not inclined, however, to pursue a question of which the most notable point is the indifference with which it was treated by the person most immediately concerned. The Duke kept his birthday on the 18th of June.

Two families, both English by original extraction, and but Irish by settlement and adoption, were centred in the lineage from which our great Captain sprung. We shall be giving sufficient prominence to points possessing little beyond incidental interest if we state that in the year 1728 Richard Colley, of Castle Carbery, in the county of Kildare, succeeded to the name and estates of Garret Wesley, of Dangan Castle, in the county of Meath. The Colleys had migrated in the 16th century from Rutlandshire; the Wesleys at an earlier date from Sussex. The two families had been already connected by a recent alliance, so that Richard Colley was first cousin of Garret Wesley, whose estates in default of lineal issue he was called to inherit. The former of these two names was indiscriminately specified as Cooley, Colley, or Cowley; the third of which forms obtained the preference at a recent revival of the family designation; the latter was usually written Westley or Wesley till 1797, when the first Marquis adopted the orthography of Wellesley, now familiar to the world. It was, however, as "Arthur Wesley" that the subject of these memoirs was first known as a soldier, and the young officer will be found so designated in contemporary descriptions of his early services. The double notoriety attaching itself to the name of Wesley will be suggestive, we doubt not, of some edifying thoughts, and to the ready pen which chronicled both reputations in the respective history of Methodism and the Peninsula War, we owe an anecdote curious enough to be transcribed into our more concise biography. When Charles, the brother of John Wesley, was at Westminster School, his father received a communication from an Irish gentleman, offering to adopt the boy as heir; but the overture, strange as it may seem, was declined. It was for this Charles Wesley that Richard Colley was substituted by the owner of Dangan, and thus, but for a capricious and improbable transfer of fortune, "we might," says Southey in his speculative reflections, "have had no Methodists; the British empire in India might still have been menaced from Seringapatam,