



A History of the British Army - Vol. III (1763-1793)

Hon. Sir John William Fortescue

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Sir John Fortescue holds a pre-eminent place amongst British military historians, his enduring fame and legacy resting mainly on his life's work "The History of the British Army", issued in 20 volumes, which took him some 30 years to complete. In scope and breadth it is such that no modern scholar has attempted to cover such a large and diverse subject in its entirety; but Sir John did so and with aplomb, leading to a readable and comprehensive study.

According to Professor Emeritus of Military History at King's College, Brian Bond, the work was "the product of indefatigable research in original documents, a determination to present a clear, accurate, and readable narrative of military operations, and a close personal knowledge of the battlefields, which enabled him to elucidate his account with excellent maps. Most important, however, was his motivation: namely, a lifelong affection for the old, long-service, pre-Cardwell army, the spirit of the regiments of which it largely consisted, and the value of its traditions to the nation. An important part of his task was to distil and inculcate these soldierly virtues which, in his conservative view, contrasted sharply with the unedifying character of politicians who habitually meddled in military matters." ODNB.

This third volume covers the period from 1763-1793, as the European Powers licked their wounds after the brutal wars of Austrian Succession, they fought each other via proxy in North America and India. The British Army would have great success in India under military leaders of the calibre of Abercromby, Cornwallis and Warren Hastings. These successes could not balance the loss of the American Revolutionary War, gaining for the Americans their Independence and the British troops, hamstrung by political foolishness, a humbling defeat.

TIMES.—"Whatever Mr. Fortescue may do in the future, he has already, in his first three volumes, produced one of the most important military works in the English language. It is sincerely to be hoped that they will be read as widely as they deserve to be."

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