

A History of the British Army - Vol. VIII - (1811-1812) PDF



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A History of the British Army - Vol. VIII - (1811-1812) by Hon. Sir John William Fortescue ISBN B00E4WFCJE

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 eight volume covers the period from 1811-12, having drawn the invading French forces into a trap before the fortified lines of Torres Vedras the British Army under Wellington set about expelling his foe from the land of his Portuguese allies. Despite much skill and bravery on the part of their French foes, the Duke of Wellington and his British troops pushed them back in some disarray and with heavy loss. The French however regrouped quickly and almost inflicted a serious reverse on the British forces at the battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro, but the determined resistance of the British army ensured that the French would never return to Portugal as anything other than as prisoners of war. Sir John does not miss the actions and manoeuvres in the other provinces of Spain, French successes in the east were balanced by losses in the south at the battle of Barossa and the failed siege of Tarifa. Across the Atlantic British naval high-handedness allied with American opportunism began to simmer over into the War of 1812 as the British would be caught fighting on two fronts and their Canadian citizens would face annexation into the United States. Written as always with superb detail and authority, Fortescue blends the political machinations with the movements of the British Armies across the globe and the glory gained by the troops in Spain and Portugal.

ARMY AND NAVY GAZETTE.—"The whole volume is admirable; it is equally the work of a great student and of an impartial historian."

A History of the British Army - Vol. VIII - (1811-1812) Review

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