



# **A History of the British Army - Vol. X - (1814-1815)**

*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 tenth volume covers the period from 1814-1815, as the British Army along with its Portuguese and Spanish Allies finally pushed into France in 1814 they still met with fierce and determined resistance from the French troops under the veteran Marshal Soult. After a number of skilful, and some less skilful actions along the river lines the victories of the British troops added further evidence to the hopeless situation for Napoleon who abdicated in 1814. The British government immediately sent a large part of the victorious Peninsular army on a foolish and unsuccessful attack of New Orleans, all the more futile as peace had already been signed between the United States and Great Britain. Napoleon did not rest long in his new home on the Isle of Elba, returning to France in 1815 reuniting his enemies against him and fighting the era defining battle of Waterloo, one of the finest hours of the British Army.

TIMES.—"We have in these volumes the worthy continuation of a history which is worthy of its subject. Mr. Fortescue will not ask for higher praise."

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