

**MILITARY HISTORY;
LECTURES
DELIVERED AT TRINITY
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649245994

Military history; lectures delivered at Trinity college, Cambridge by J. W. Fortescue

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J. W. FORTESCUE

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The Cambridge Manuals of Science and
Literature

MILITARY HISTORY

Cambridge:
PRINTED BY JOHN CLAY, M.A.
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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PREFACE

THERE is little in these lectures, or at any rate in three out of four of them, which I have not written at greater length in other volumes. I therefore publish them unwillingly, and in deference only to the wishes of some of my audience, whose good opinion I greatly value, and whose kindly sympathy I shall never forget. If this little volume should set but one student thinking seriously as to the meaning of military history, its object will be fully accomplished.

The spelling of Indian names has been, as usual, a stumbling-block. No doubt I shall be asked why I have used the form *Narbada* for the more familiar *Nerbuddha*, and yet written *Hyder Ali* instead of *Haidar Ali*. I can only say that when the form *Kalkáta* (or whatever may be the Hunterian spelling) is substituted for *Calcutta*, I shall be prepared to plead guilty to inconsistency.

J. W. F.

March 1914.

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LECTURE I

MILITARY HISTORY : ITS SCOPE AND DEFINITION

WHEN in the spring of the year 1913 my old College did me the honour to appoint me its first lecturer in Military History, I was obliged for the first time to ask myself seriously, What is military history? I confess that I have found it very difficult to furnish a satisfactory answer. Some would reply with a light heart that military history is the history of wars and warring. But what, in its turn, is war? It has been defined as an instrument of policy for the imposition of the will of one community upon another by force of arms. The definition is not a bad one. But *force of arms* is a very vague term, and must not be taken necessarily to imply an *armed force* in the ordinary acceptation of the words. You will remember that after the French fleet had been swept by us from the seas in 1805, Napoleon, unable to attack England by any other means, decreed the exclusion of British manufactures from the Continent, and endeavoured to ruin her by shutting her out of her markets. This he was able to do

because his previous conquests had placed the control of many of the principal ports on the Continent in his hands. But though he strove thus to inflict his will upon England by might of arms, the armed men necessary for enforcing it were nothing more formidable than a small body of Custom-house officers. No doubt these functionaries, or some of them, carried weapons and in case of need were prepared to use them ; but they cannot be considered as a military body. None the less as an act of war the Continental System was a bitter and deadly stroke, which nearly proved successful.

Is the history of the Continental System, therefore, military history ? So far as concerns the invasion of Spain, Portugal and Russia to coerce those countries into the acceptance of it, undoubtedly it is. But as regards England, the power at which it was really aimed, what are we to say of it ? How did we endeavour to combat it ? How does any country invariably combat the commercial restrictions of any other ? First by imposing retaliatory restrictions of her own, or engaging in a war of blockades or tariffs, which may be called regular commercial warfare ; secondly, by the practice of smuggling, which may be called irregular commercial warfare. Is the history of a war of tariffs, then, military history ? If we answer in the affirmative there is no escape from the logical conclusion that the never-

ceasing contest between smugglers and revenue-officers in all countries is military history. Moreover, since revenue-officers are only departmental police, it follows that the external struggle between the breakers and the upholders of the law at large—between criminals and the police—is also military history. But this is to say that the history of social communities generally is military history ; and I cannot think this to have been in the mind of the generous founder of the lectureship which I have the honour to hold.

But can we then lay down the general proposition that the breach—the forcible breach—of commercial regulations is not military history ? I do not think we can, if we bear in mind how Spain, in virtue of a Papal bull, excluded all other nations from commerce with the new world, and how successive Englishmen for many generations insisted upon flouting her. Nor can we say that in many cases the conflict between supporters and breakers of the law is not military history. It is merely a question of degree. A fight between three drunken men and the police is a scuffle. A fight between three hundred men and the police is a riot. A fight between three hundred thousand and the police is civil war ; and we cannot exclude civil war from military history, for it would mean the sacrifice, among the English-speaking race alone, of the campaigns of Cromwell,