

SIR JULIAN CORBETT

DIED 21 SEPT., 1922

NAVAL History has sustained a serious loss through the death of Sir Julian Corbett, whose work during the last quarter of a century has added immeasurably to our knowledge of war at sea. He raised the study of the History of War—a study so vital to officers, and, indeed, to statesmen—to a wholly new level. In all his works he kept the unity of war steadily in view. He saw war as one great whole, of which the naval operations were a part, often a pivotal part, and certainly never something unrelated, something standing alone. The wide views he took are particularly illustrated in his *England in the Mediterranean*, *England in the Seven Years' War*, and *The Campaign of Trafalgar*; and when it fell to him, as it properly fell, to write the history of the naval operations in the recent war, his trained mind worked on the same broad lines; and in his most interesting and instructive volumes he never allows us to lose sight of the interdependence of land and sea. For this reason they have a very particular value, a value wholly their own; for we see in them all those contending elements, those practical difficulties which invariably present themselves and prevent war from being conducted according to copy-book maxims.

His love of history, and also of everything beautiful—for by instinct he was an artist—of necessity led him into the study of naval archæology; but though he had a remarkable knowledge of this delightful science, it was his avocation rather than his vocation: it never dominated his work. To him such knowledge was a means to an end, not an end in itself. He maintained that a proper study of history is essential for, and leads to, knowledge of the higher art of war; but he greatly deplored the assumption sometimes made, that “historical” and “material” schools must of necessity be in opposition to each other.

He was one of the earliest members of that valuable body, the Navy Records Society; a most generous contributor with his pen, and a constant attendant at the meetings of the Council.

The works he edited for the Society are among its most important publications. His *Fighting Instructions* and *Signals and Instructions* are classics without which the tactics of the past cannot be understood; and they serve as essential foundations for the study of tactics of to-day and to-morrow. *The Spencer Papers*, of which he edited two volumes, afford an insight into the conduct of war equalled only by the parallel volumes of *Barham Papers* of Sir John Laughton.

He leaves, unfortunately, much proposed work undone. He had within a week of his death completed the third volume of the "Naval Operations" of the late war; but this will bring the history no further than the second half of 1916; and it was his intention, he told me, to complete the work in one more volume. He meant also to edit a third volume of the *Spencer Papers*, and he had plans for writing about that neglected period between Trafalgar and 1815 which formed the subject of his Creighton Lecture in 1921. These fruits of his wide study and great experience are lost to us; but fortunately in the many years of his literary life he had completed much, and the achievements of those years place him in the very foremost rank of naval historians. He has made clear to the people of this country in a rare way the cause, effects and influence of naval power, and both the Navy and the nation owe him a debt of gratitude for the great work he did.

This is not the place to speak of him as a man; but those who had the privilege of his friendship realise more and more as the days go by the immeasurable loss they have sustained, now that they can no longer call on the ever-ready sympathy, the sound instincts, the wise judgment and long experience that were his.

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CHIEF WORKS.—1889, *Monk*, and 1890, *Drake*, in "English Men of Action" Series. 1898, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*. 1900, *The Successors of Drake*.

Edited for the Navy Records Society: 1898, *Papers Relating to the Spanish War, 1585-7*; 1905, *Fighting Instructions, 1530-1816*; 1908, *Views of the Battles of the Third Dutch War (Sole Bay, 1672, and the Texel, 1693)*; *Signals and Instructions, 1776-94*; 1913, 1914, *The Spencer Papers* (2 vols.).

1902, "Education in the Navy" (*Monthly Review*). 1904, *England in the Mediterranean, 1603-1713*. 1907, *England in the Seven Years' War*: "The Capture of Private Property at Sea" (*Nineteenth Century and After*, June; reprinted in *Some Neglected Aspects of War*, edited by A. T. Mahan). 1910, *The Campaign of Trafalgar*. 1911, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. 1914, "Staff Histories" (in *Naval and Military Essays*). 1921, Creighton Lecture, "Napoleon and the British Navy after Trafalgar" (*Quarterly Review*, April 1922). 1920, 1921, *Naval Operations* (Official History of the War), vols. i, ii. Vol. iii. will probably appear in 1923.