



Service with the Signal Corps: The Civil War Memoir of Captain Louis R. Fortescue (Voices Of The Civil War)

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In 1854 an assistant surgeon named Albert J. Myer entered the Union Army and created a system of transmitting information that would revolutionize military communications. His flag-and-torch system led to the formation of the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Major Myer selected only educated men for this new arm of the military, and among these was twenty-three-year-old Louis R. Fortescue. Fortescue's memoir, written in the postwar years but based on his wartime diaries, offers a rare view of this lesser-known support arm of the Union army.

The Signal Corps originally met with resistance, particularly from high-ranking Regular Army officers, but the men who served in the corps—including Fortescue—took great pride in their duties and eventually succeeded in changing the minds of their unit's detractors by achieving the most basic, but often bedeviling, strategic objective on any battlefield: effective communication. Fortescue's memoir not only presents a unique look at the corps, but it also provides important insights into the war as a whole. Fortescue experienced the conflict from several perspectives—infantry subaltern, signal officer, aide-de-camp (briefly), and prisoner of war—and took an active role in a number of significant campaigns and battles. Fortescue's ardent opinions on the war, President Lincoln, army commanders, and the South are expressed without reservation, making this account a must-read for anyone interested in how Civil War veterans understood their cause and interpreted their experiences.

Expertly edited by J. Gregory Acken to place events in chronological order and make the text as complete and accessible to the reader as possible, this remarkable record of Fortescue's Civil War service fills a much-needed void in the historiography of the conflict. As the first full-length, published memoir to deal with Civil War Signal Corps service, this book provides a glimpse into the most tumultuous era in the nation's history from an underexplored new perspective.

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