

**RICHARD VINCENT SUTTON:
A RECORD OF HIS LIFE
TOGETHER WITH EXTRACTS
FROM HIS PRIVATE PAPERS**

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Richard Vincent Sutton: a record of his life together with extracts from his private papers by
Constance Astley

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From a photograph by Lafayette, London.

Richard V. Sutton!

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☞ To Dick's friends this record of his short life is dedicated. It is necessarily incomplete and also, perhaps, one-sided, as the principal material available consisted of letters to me, or other near relations, and refer, therefore, to trivial everyday matters of transitory and probably personal interest only. Yet I venture to hope that friends of a later date will not find even his early letters entirely devoid of interest. He was so absolutely ONE all his life that they will, I think, find the characteristics of the Dick whom they knew and loved in manhood in the Dick of childhood's and boyhood's days.

☞ To those friends from whose kind letters I have ventured to make extracts, in the last pages of this book, I tender my apologies. From one point of view so many quotations may seem unnecessary, since they are so unanimous in tone that one letter might well have stood for all. But it has been pointed out to me that it is this very unanimity which constitutes their value as a record of the deep impression Dick's character and personality made on all who knew him.

☞ I cannot end this "apologia" for my share in the book—namely, responsibility for what is included or excluded therefrom—without expressing my deep gratitude to the friend without whom it would never have existed at all!

☞ To Mildred Isemonger then, who undertook what seemed to me a hopeless task in the weaving of this record, and who has carried it out with never-failing patience and sympathy—for all the work it has entailed, for the time, infinite trouble, and loving care given by her to present a living picture of my beloved son, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

CONSTANCE ASTLEY.

FAMILY HISTORY AND CHILDHOOD.



SIR RICHARD VINCENT SUTTON, sixth Baronet, of Norwood Park, county Nottingham, & Benham Valence, Berkshire, born on 26th April, 1891, was the only child of Sir Richard Sutton, the fifth Baronet, by his marriage with Constance, daughter of Sir Vincent Corbet, third Baronet, of Moreton Corbet and Acton Reynold, Shropshire. On both sides he came of the old race of feudal landowners who, under

the Sovereign, have ruled and served their country well for many generations. The tradition they created and passed on through the centuries, of personal honour, of disinterested service, of just and generous use of power, wealth, authority—at once the epitome and the outcome of their Christian faith, has been the life-force that made England great, and found its apotheosis in the war. Never was there a time when all that *noblesse oblige* implies involved more sacrifice; never were its obligations more cheerfully accepted and loyally fulfilled than in these tragic years, by the finest element in the country's youth. And among that gallant company Sir Richard Sutton took his natural place, maintaining with the best the standards of personal courage and chivalry for which men look to their leaders, the unselfish devotion that inspires by example, the kindness and courtesy that turns every relation into friendship, until the last, when his life was laid down in the military hospital at Wimereux on 29th November, 1918.

☪ The Sutton Family was established in the Northern Midlands from the time of the Norman Conquest, the main line being the Suttons of Averham who united the names of Sutton and Lexington. Among the distinguished members of this house were Oliver de Sutton, Bishop of Lincoln in the latter part of the thirteenth century, who completed the cathedral and enriched the see; Sir Richard Sutton of Henry VII's reign, who gave half the endowment of Brasenose College, Oxford, and his kinsman Thomas, who

founded Charterhouse monastery and school; Sir Robert Sutton, later Lord Lexington, who fought for King Charles in the Civil War, and his son and nephew, who were famous diplomatists in the reigns of William and Mary and Queen Anne. The Lexington branch died out in the second generation, but the male line of Suttons of Averham continued, and the baronetcy was created in 1772. The famous sportsman of the early part of the nineteenth century, Sir Richard Sutton, was the second Baronet. It was said of him that he hunted eight days a week at his own expense, for he maintained the Quorn Hunt which met every day but Sunday, and a smaller pack of hounds which hunted two days a week. The tradition of sport was carried on by his son, Sir Richard Sutton, fourth Baronet, who bred the Derby winner of 1866, "Lord Lyon," winner also of the St. Leger and the Two Thousand Guineas Stakes.

¶ Sir Richard Sutton, fifth Baronet, while inheriting to the full the family love of sport, was cast in a finer mould than those typical sportsmen, his immediate predecessors, and those who knew him best recognised later in his son many of his own characteristics: his thoughtful kindness and great generosity, his frank charm among intimates that contrasted with his indifference to general society. He was one of the finest yachtsmen of his day, and competed with his 80-ton cutter, "Genesta," for the America Cup in 1885. An incident of this race, in which Sir Richard could have claimed the prize, by reason of a foul on the part of the American competitor, but declined his right and sailed the match again, brought him warm popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, and the "Genesta's" later triumphs in international sailing matches, as well as in the Jubilee yacht race of 1887, were long remembered.

¶ In the spring of 1888 Sir Richard Sutton married Constance Corbet. The Corbets of Moreton Corbet trace unbroken male descent from the Norman knight, Hugo le Corbet, who came to England with the Conqueror, and further back to Viking ancestors, from whose cognisance, the Raven, they took their name and coat of arms. Their history is too long to tell, but throughout the centuries, through much adventure and romance, they seem to have justified the description given of their ancestors by an old French chronicler: "*La vaillance, la gentillesse et la courtoisie est tellement ne avec ces gentilshommes normands, que c'est comme un prodige d'en voir un mal gracieux ou peu civile.*"