

**CAMDEN THIRD SERIES.
VOL. XIV. THE
RELATION OF SYDNAM
POYNTZ, 1624-1636**

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Camden Third Series. Vol. XIV. The Relation of Sydnam Poyntz, 1624-1636 by A. T. S. Goodrick

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A. T. S. GOODRICK

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THE RELATION OF
SYDNAM POYNTZ

1624-1636

EDITED FOR THE
ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY

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ERRATUM

- P. 74. *Delete* last paragraph of Footnote.
Lilly's letter was addressed not to
Gustavus Adolphus, but to his
father.

ADDENDUM

- P. 111. Colonel 'Musten' is almost certainly
'Mostyn' who fought with distinction
under Gustavus in Poland.

INTRODUCTION.

The fragment of autobiography here published is of two-fold interest. On the one hand it throws a new and not altogether favourable light on the character of one of the Parliamentary leaders in our own civil conflict, and it also embodies one of the very few narratives of the earlier and more stirring period of the Thirty Years' War written by men who actually took part in the events they describe. The student of the history of the War is amazed to find how little of such first-hand authority is available for his use. The Memoirs, the Diaries, the private correspondence which render the history of the English Civil War so lucid are almost entirely lacking. Anyone who will for example critically examine the seventy pages of Bibliography at the end of the volume entitled *The Thirty Years' War* in the *Cambridge Modern History* will find that contemporary narrations of actors in the great conflict reduce themselves to two or three. There are plenty of titles it is true like *Ausführliche Relation* of this or that battle and *Extract eines Schreibens* from such and such a (possibly fictitious) combatant, but these are plainly the work of mere pamphleteers—mere catchpenny publications at the best. And when we seek for personal memoirs we find few indeed. There is one genuine German soldier's diary, first published by Westenrieder a century ago and somewhat unaccountably neglected: and there is the so

called *Sokial Suddois*, which, as the work of a mere littérateur, and a deeply prejudiced one, may almost be accounted a forgery, but which for two hundred years was quoted, and where not quoted used, as a professional memoir. These almost make up the sum of German records of the personal type indicated. It is possible that the Piccolomini family papers at Siena may prove interesting from this point of view, but little seems to be known of them at present. For contemporary history we are left to the mercy of makers of books, often misinformed and seldom if ever impartial. It is either the Vienna Jesuit, adulatory of all things Imperial, and chronicling every lying bulletin which reaches the capital as authentic history, or the subservient historiographer of a Protestant court, on whom we have to rely. Of the former class of history the *Annales Boicæ Gentis*, the work of two Jesuits and a librarian, is a good specimen: it gives for example the number of Tilly's killed and wounded at the famous fight at the passage of the Lech as thirty only. Of the latter Chemnitz's four parts, published at long intervals indeed —1648 to 1859— give us a favourable example. Pufendorf adapted all of this which he could lay hold of, and published it in his own *Commentarii de Rebus Suecicis* in 1686.

In the last half century, however, the archives of European courts have been ransacked for contemporary material, and they have yielded such in enormous quantities but of very doubtful value. As a rule they supply merely records of wearisome intrigue, without interest for the student of the social or military features of the great war, but which are supposed to illustrate the 'public history' of the time. In reality they illustrate nothing but the senseless 'Macchiavellismus' of the period — the same which deferred for years the peace of Westphalia (of which the conclusions were foregone and the details all but certain) with the Empire

bleeding to death all the time. Throughout the war, while generals were fighting and soldiers plundering and peasants starving, pedants were scribbling away in their chancelleries, tinkering at their little alliances, patching up marriages here, corrupting venal commanders there, and at times venturing so far as to concoct assassination. But a folio volume of their futile despatches adds less to our knowledge than a couple of essays from Freytag's *Bilder aus der Deutschen Vergangenheit*; and the student who desires to get a vivid idea of the war had better read even Schiller than wade through the records of tortuous intrigue on which even Ranke and Droysen employed their great talents. The view of a certain school of historians is thus summed up by the American translator of Gindely's *Thirty Years' War*: 'Diplomacy is the point of most interest and importance in the history of a war': battles are but incidents' and so on. The negotiations which precede a war and those which end it are it is true of interest: for example the debates in the American Senate which heralded Secession, and the diplomatic struggles which ended in the Treaty of Portsmouth. But the writer who should present a history of the American Civil War or the Russo-Japanese contest on the basis of the neglect of military operations and their social results would assuredly command neither an extensive nor an intelligent audience. Yet this was the view held not so long ago. It is sufficiently irritating to find Ranke in his great *Geschichte Wallensteins* practically ignoring the duke's ferocious 'Blutgericht' after Lützen (which probably did more to ruin him than all his half-hearted palterings with treason—if treason it was), and Gindely dismissing the battle of Nördlingen in eighteen lines, while

¹ For an example of the value of diplomacy during war see note on p. 89 of the 'Relation.'