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978-0-521-62656-9 - Richard Symonds's Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army

Edited by C. E. Long

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This diary is the only eye-witness account of the English Civil War by a participant on the King's side who was not an officer. The diarist, Richard Symonds, was a royal Lifeguardsman for the crucial two years of 1644–5, which included the battle of Naseby and the Royalist defeat. Symonds was also a scholar and antiquarian and his diary includes much topographical detail of the time. The value of his diaries to our understanding of the Civil War is considerable. It provides a distinctive picture of the face of battle in the Civil War, of the feelings of a sensitive and passionate follower of the King, and of the variety of military experience the war afforded.

This reissue enhances Symonds's diary by placing it in a rich historical context for the first time, and adding a great deal of new material supplied by recent historical scholarship. This book will be invaluable to scholars and students of the English Civil War, as well as to local historians, war-gamers and Civil War re-enactors.

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Richard Symonds's family, originally from Shropshire, was by the early seventeenth century settled at Black Notley, a rural parish near Braintree, Essex. The senior branch of the family owned a small estate at Great Yeldham, and he claimed cousinage with Edward Symons, the rector of Rayne, all neighbouring parishes. Both branches produced a high proportion of men who attended the inns of court, and – more unusually – entered the law as a profession. As well as being minor landlords Richard's wider family supplied, over the generations, cursitors in Chancery. At any one time in the reign of Charles I the cursitors' office (twenty-two strong) contained three or more members. Daughters of the family married other cursitors, and the office descended from father to son. This department of Chancery was as closely associated in the period with the Symonds family as was the Treasury (and a florid complexion) with the Fanshaws. Richard, the eldest son of the Black Notley branch, entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1632, and became a cursitor in due course. There is no record of his having attended an inn of court.

In the great division of the nation in summer 1642 the county of Essex was more inclined to Parliament than most. Many of its MPs and leading clergymen were sympathetic

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to the cause, and protected by the patronage of one of the great peers of the popular party, the Earl of Warwick. The minority of local gentry which could be identified with Royalism or recusancy was unpopular, and victimised: the houses of the Countess Rivers and the Lucas family were attacked. The extended Symonds family was divided. As gentry in a predominantly Parliamentary area, and with strong legal and officeholding connections in the capital, it might be expected that they would side with the majority. To do otherwise would be to invite unwelcome reprisals. The senior branch of the family declared for Parliament, and Richard's first cousin, of the same name, fought in the New Model Army and died at Naseby (see 'Pedigree of Symonds', below, before p. 1).

But Richard Symonds, who had inherited the estate on the death of his father in 1636, took a different line. It is no doubt significant that he was a devout member of the church, and the rector of Black Notley was a man who welcomed the Laudian innovations of the 1630s. In doing so he quarrelled with the churchwardens and this may be why Symonds himself, the local squire, seems to have taken over the keeping of the parish register just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Several entries are in his hand; one of them records his mother's burial in 1641. Head of the family in that revolutionary year, at age twenty-four, responsible for younger siblings, and out of sympathy with current trends, he faced many dangers in a local environment increasingly hostile.

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It is clear from his writings that he found reassuring, in a time of troubles, his own religious faith and strongly held political beliefs. His commonplace book, now in private possession, reveals a solitary, introverted man, who – with the onset of the revolution and the loss of his patrimony and office – became increasingly embittered. An impression of his seal, in red wax, exists among his surviving papers. If the head depicted is a true likeness of the owner, Symonds, aged about thirty, bore some resemblance to the conventional image of the Cavalier, with long, flowing locks and Van Dyckian cast of face. But he was not a laughing Cavalier; his long pointed nose and bulging eyes make him look decidedly testy. Had he survived the Restoration and met John Aubrey, another keen and eccentric antiquarian, he might have merited the latter's well-known observation: 'great goggli eies'.

Symonds's study of the past, even his musical and artistic tastes, may also have aided his withdrawal from society. Did they also provide private consolation in an alien world? He never married. He admired the antiquity and orthodoxy of the church, perhaps especially as recently reformed to express the 'beauty of holiness', and the nation's equally ancient and honourable temporal institutions, the crown, nobility and landowning gentry (England's 'nobiles major and nobiles minor'). Hereditary rank and ancient lineage, like the church by law established, embodied those timeless verities which the conservatively inclined found reassuring in the turbulent 1640s.

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For whatever reason Symonds became a fiercely partisan defender of the Church of England and the monarchy of Charles I. In his particular locality he would suffer for his cause, and he must have lost his office in Chancery. He later claimed that he was imprisoned by the Essex Parliamentarian Miles Corbett in March 1643, but that he escaped from prison in October of the same year ('Pedigree', below, before p. 1). As a delinquent his estates were sequestered. If he wished to help the royal cause he had little alternative but to uproot himself, take what he could (he probably travelled with a couple of servants) and join the King at Oxford, where Charles I had set up his headquarters after the battle of Edgehill (October 1642). Several prominent Royalist officers were from Essex. His younger brother Edward died at Oxford in October 1644.

On the way he may have passed through London. With his connections in the governmental and legal world he was no doubt familiar with the politics of the capital. As a Royalist sympathiser he shared the view that London had been the major instigator of rebellion and was now its principal supporter. He took a close interest in the leading figures involved in City and Parliamentary politics, and although (if the dates he supplies in the 'Pedigree' are correct) he could not have seen the return of the regiments of the London militia from the Newbury campaign, at the end of September 1643, he had speedy and privileged access to an eye-witness account of that occasion. He not

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only copied the full notes taken by another Royalist, a courtier acting as a spy, but was able to correct and supplement it from his own knowledge, and decorate the cover with a drawing which symbolised the malice of the City of London. A satyr or devil, with cloven hoof and forked tail, and bearing the City's arms, holds two cornucopias full of snakes. This valuable list names the units mustered on that occasion, estimates their numbers and sketches their banners. It was, like other notes made by Symonds in his Civil War journals, a piece of private intelligence gathering (p. xxxiv: BL, Harl. MS 986).

By December 1643, when the war was already more than a year old, he was at Oxford, and it must have been about this time that he joined the Royalist army, as a trooper in the mounted Lifeguards. He was not, as is sometimes claimed, an officer in this elite corps. The Lifeguards had been raised in summer 1642, at the beginning of the war, and comprised two troops: the first, entirely manned by gentlemen, was commanded by Lord Bernard Stuart, the King's cousin and younger brother of the Duke of Richmond; the second, consisting of their servants, by the courtier and playwright Sir William Killigrew. To be one of the eighty men who rode in the first troop was easily the equivalent of being an officer in a line regiment. One of their number, Sir Philip Warwick, claimed that altogether the troop was worth £100,000 p.a. If so, Symonds was one of its least wealthy members; his yearly income was less than £100. It was gilded, aristocratic and glamorous: its

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special function of guarding the royal person gave it independence from the army command – a point of contention later – and usually preserved it from the ordinary hurly-burly of battle. This had not been the case at Edgehill and First Newbury, but nevertheless, as it seemed to the casual observer to be more for decoration than for fighting, it had gained the nickname ‘the Troop of Shew’ or ‘the Shew Troop’. As such, it was an early example of what was to be a source of merriment in the British army later: ‘What is the role of cavalry in modern battle? To lend distinction to what would otherwise be a vulgar brawl.’

While the troop was in winter quarters, and as we might expect from a man of his character, Symonds would use his leisure to observe and record the antiquities of the ancient city and university, which served as the royal headquarters, and which were new to him. He began to visit sites of historical interest and to jot his observations and sketch pictures in the first of the series of notebooks he was to employ. As a scholarly, Chancery-trained civil servant, who revered the past, he was well equipped to record accurately what he saw or heard. He was methodical and orderly, and wrote a neat if small hand, only occasionally indecipherable. His drawing is serviceable but lacking in flair; in an often fast-moving campaign he had little time to do more than put down a simplified version of what he saw as he stood before it. Passionately interested in ancient buildings and the monuments they contained, and in heraldry, the record of ancient lineage, he

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must also have been moved by his emotional partisanship: his political and religious commitment to the institutions, now subject in the Civil War to sacrilegious abuse and destruction, he lovingly recorded.

He included in his jottings at this time one or two of the colleges – including the books in Balliol library, which remained in place though the college community itself had dispersed – and the remains of Osney Abbey, just the kind of medieval ruin which would have a special appeal to the author. He was also an eye-witness of the pompous funerals of two leading Royalist officers, one killed by a fellow officer in the garrison, but whether as one of the horse guards on parade on that solemn occasion, or as an interested bystander, is unknown.

The portrait of the writer and artist which has emerged so far has been drawn in the main from his own notes scattered through several of the small octavo leather-bound volumes he used, containing all sorts of material and composed at different dates. He considered the series of four books which he began to use in April, on the eve of his departure with his troop from Oxford, however, as a discrete collection. Like the others the four contained differing kinds of information, but all relating to the movement of the Royalist forces in which he served, from April 1644 to February 1646. They comprise the text now reprinted. He entitled the first volume 'A Diary of the Marches and Moovings of his Maties Royall Army, Himselfe [the King] being personally present', and, at the

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close of the campaign, when its hundred ink-numbered pages were mostly used up, he noted with satisfaction on the same first page that the story ended 'with the Ruine of two great Armyes', those of Essex and Waller. The fact that he indexed the volume also indicates that although it has all the appearance of a diary, with entries made, at the time or shortly after, on a day-to-day basis, but with some gaps, the author felt free to add to his work or amend it later.

On 10 April 1644 the garrison of Oxford, including the horse guards, marched out to meet the rest of the army already in the field, which had been worsted at Cheriton by Sir William Waller two weeks before. This was Symonds's first experience of active service, and it was almost bloodless. The army rendezvoused on the Wiltshire Downs and in the notebook in which he had copied the musters of the London militia Symonds listed the colours, chief officers, and strengths of the regiments assembled, adding to these notes later to record changes in personnel (p. xxxiv). The troop guarded the Queen on her way to Bristol and the West, and then returned to Oxford with the King. In complicated manoeuvring around the city in the following weeks the royal army, the more mobile cavalry separated from the slower infantry and artillery, proceeded to avoid as best it could the attempt of two powerful Roundhead forces to surround and destroy it. The Royalists were forced to abandon their main infantry base at Reading and 'slight' the defences; at the same time they deliberately gave up

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Abingdon, a decision they would later regret. But in his celebrated 'night march' (2 June 1644), the King, accompanied only by his cavalry, eluded his pursuers, rejoined his Foot, and moved without loss to Worcester.

On all this, in which the troop protecting the King was much involved, Symonds preserved, for a man on his first campaign, an air of scholarly detachment; his account is spare and laconic, and he found time to visit some of the local churches and great houses his troop passed by, and note their contents. At Reading he recorded the regiments in the garrison, and their numbers, in the 'musters' volume. His first lengthy description, in the text printed below (pp. 10–13), is of the city and cathedral of Worcester, and the Royalist forces raised locally. Here as elsewhere he usefully lists the garrisons held by both sides, with their commanders. He marked Parliamentary garrisons 'R'. For Symonds, as for his royal master, the opponents of the King were always identified as 'Rebells'.

The first battle he witnessed was the encounter at Cropredy Bridge, on the 29 June 1644, between the King and Waller's forces. Historians of that battle consider his account, not much more than a page in length (pp. 22–4), 'short and confused'. Probably the great distance between the different actions fought that day, cavalry being mainly involved, and the apparent inactivity of the King's troop, would have made it difficult for any member of it to see the whole battle. It was drawn up 'near the enemy', but was not called upon to take part.

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The pace quickens with the march of the army westward, following this success, in pursuit of the Earl of Essex's main army. The Parliamentarians had embarked on what looked at first like a triumphal progress, to raise the siege of Lyme Regis and exchange supplies with their last remaining stronghold and port in the south-west, Plymouth. Persuaded by leading Cornish sympathisers – who must have hoped that a successful expedition would lead to the recovery of their estates – that his army would be well received, Essex found his forces, the further west he penetrated, in contrast badly treated and envied by not only the pursuing Oxford forces but those which had been occupied before the besieged towns: by the middle of August he was surrounded by four armies, those of the King, Prince Maurice, Lord Hopton and Sir Richard Grenville. Hemmed in at Lostwithiel, in Cornwall, while his cavalry escaped back to Plymouth, and he left by boat, the main body of his infantry, some 10,000 men, was forced to surrender.

This great victory for the Royalists was well described by Symonds, whose account is one of the most immediate and valuable to have survived. The events of 31 August to 2 September are recounted in some detail (pp. 62–8), the longest connected narrative of any in the four volumes. He set the scene: the atrocious weather, the lack of shelter in the field and the shortage of provisions, the strange country, of thick-set hedges and narrow lanes, which made cavalry fighting difficult. He described the desperate plight of the

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Roundhead Foot, trapped between the sea on three sides and the Royalist armies on the other. His account of the fighting tallies with others, and possesses many individual touches. Although the troop was once more paraded, with the several units of mounted Lifeguards belonging to the other commanders-in-chief, behind its colours, and endured salvos of musket fire which emptied a few saddles, it was again not brought to the charge. This did not prevent Symonds seeing a good deal of the scattered actions which gained valuable ground for the encircling Cavaliers, and providing an intelligent appreciation of the situation. As an observant topographer he noted the dispersal of the soldiery in search of provisions and the consequent difficulty of concentrating their forces which incapacitated both sides in those conditions. He learned right away of the flight of the enemy cavalry, and unlike the contemporary official Royalist history (and Clarendon, who followed its error) he saw that no forces of the King could have prevented it escaping.

The nature of the conflict is brought home by his description of the captured gunner, so drunk that he had not fired his piece more than once, and of the '8 or 9 of the enemies men dead under the hedges'. His picture of the sodden and dejected state of the infantry after their surrender is memorable (pp. 66–7). 'It rayned extremely as the varlets marched away', and the captives were as down-cast as the weather. 'The rout of soldjers', he observed, were 'strucken with such a dismal feare' that, passing

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through the ranks of their captors, they 'presst all of a heape like sheep, though not so innocent'. Their colours were furred (a mark of disgrace), and they were without arms (except officers their swords) to protect themselves against some undisciplined and vengeful Cavalier soldiery and an even more hostile population.

As well as compiling the diary narrative Symonds continued in his, presumably self-appointed, role of intelligence gatherer, noting, when he had the opportunity, the size, disposition and leading personnel of the forces in the field, and other key bits of information. It is to him that we owe the best listing of the King's tertias of Foot taken on the Western campaign, and the names of the officers of one of the regiments of Horse. He was later at Oxford to ask the colonel of one of the Foot regiments for a complete list of the companies and their captains, and the history of the unit (pp. 102, 159–61). He supplies a great deal of information about another Lifeguard troop, that of Prince Maurice, perhaps to compare it with his own: but, if that is the case, it is an even more curious omission that, in the four volumes he filled, he said so little about the composition and leadership of the King's troop (pp. 181, 223, 245, 258).

He seems to have had access to what would now be termed classified information. In Cornwall he copied two papers taken from captured Roundheads – a list of the regiments of the Parliamentarian cavalry quartered at Tiverton (Devon) in July, and the route of march of

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Essex's army to the West (pp. 73, 97–8). Later he had more important documents to transcribe. No doubt copies were circulating, some already in print, in the army's quarters, especially those guarding the royal headquarters. These were the sensational disclosures which accompanied, and justified, the sudden sacking of the King's cavalry commander, Lord Wilmot, and his replacement by Lord Goring, in early August. Forty-four of Wilmot's subordinate officers signed the petition to the King, which asked for an explanation, and prompted the publication of the charges and counter-charges which Symonds saw (pp. 106–10). Although he diplomatically omits their names when he came to copy these papers, and forbears to comment on their contents, his notes are a valuable source for this episode. Even in sight of the enemy, over whom they were about to score a resounding victory, the divisions in the Royalist camp could not be contained.

The main event of the campaign which followed was the second battle of Newbury, where the 'Shew Troop' belied its name by again getting into action. It defended its position near Speen (not, as the editor has supplied in the text, p. 145, Shaw House), chased from the field the enemy cavalry which charged into it, and slaughtered the musketeers lining the hedgerows: 'wee cutt their throats', Symonds noted grimly. In spite of this success, however, in a confused, bloody and lengthy struggle for position the Royalist generals decided the King was unsafe in the field at the end of the day, and his guards rode with him

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through the night and the next day the fifty miles to Bath. One has to read between the lines of Symonds's account to appreciate the stress and danger undergone by those involved.

Neither side could claim the victory. There were recriminations in the Parliamentary camp over the performance of their generals; and Symonds records the changes in command which the King made after the battle. Rupert, not involved at Newbury, was made effective commander-in-chief; but almost immediately he threw up his commission because the Guards, though recently enlarged and reofficered, were to remain, as they had been since the beginning of the war, independent. As a guardsman Symonds no doubt awaited the outcome of the dispute with some interest, but he recorded it in his usual low-key style. 'It was all quiett that day' (Friday 15 November), he wrote, but eventually Rupert 'yeilded to the King's resolucion' (p. 152).

Symonds's third notebook continued the story with the start of the Naseby campaign on 7 May 1645. The Parliamentarians had remodelled their forces during the winter, and Cromwell and Fairfax make their first appearance in his pages. It is due to him that we know the strength of the several components of the royal army which manoeuvred in the Midlands, something of its munitions train, and which of the local garrison forces were drawn out to augment the marching army before the first test of battle in the summer. He provides some basic

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information about the garrisons, for and against the King, maintained in the Midland counties at this time.

Till now, as a chronicler, Symonds has been self-effacing, rarely slipping into the first person singular. But as the Royalist army prepared to assault Leicester in the last days of May he reveals more of himself and his private activity. There were few duties for Horse in a siege and he appears to have gone off with friends on scouting expeditions, on one of which they visited the mansion of the great rebel, Sir Arthur Haselrigge. These sorties were probably unauthorised, for he kept the note of them cryptic and in French (pp. 179, 185). Symonds was present, however, at the storming of Leicester, for he saw for himself the dead piled up against the inner defences of the town after it was taken.

His account of the decisive encounter at Naseby is sparse in the extreme. No doubt conditions following the battle, and his own state of mind, were scarcely conducive to an extensive or considered description. He had beforehand accurately noted the order of battle of the King's veteran infantry, and found time to draw some of their regimental colours (pp. 180–2, 194). Most of the Old Foot of the army was lost at the battle. By August 1645 he was able to list the reduced number of Horse, only 2,200 effective, following the King (p. 225). The Lifeguards had been augmented, however, and now consisted of four troops, amounting to 300 men, a sizeable and important elite force in the attenuated ranks of the royal army.

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If Symonds allowed himself the occasional unofficial foray in the relatively favourable circumstances of the army's progress before Naseby, his inclination to go his own way was strengthened rather than diminished by the military catastrophe of June 1645. His bald account of the flight of the defeated army (interspersed by his antiquarian diversions) through Wales and the Welsh borders, then eastward as far as Huntingdon and north to Chester (and another crushing defeat before the walls of that city in September) conceal a widespread demoralisation among those remaining with the King, which he must have shared to the full. A note of bitterness is occasionally apparent: the knighting of a local worthy, though non-combatant, the perfidy of the Glamorgan 'Peaceable Army' ('these rogues', p. 239), the poverty and rudeness of Wales, the misleading and over-optimistic news fed the King's men – all attracted his contempt. Though, typically, he does not mention it, his regiment's colonel, Lord Bernard Stuart, was killed at Rowton Heath, where twenty of the first Lifeguard troop (a quarter of the whole) were captured (p. 243). The 'long and tedious marches' over the barren mountains of North and central Wales were dispiriting (p. 245); at every turn they were harassed by the enemy, who were able to beat up quarters and capture stragglers. Inevitably there was much desertion to the other side.

While he does not spell out the catalogue of disasters – he fails to record the surrender of Bristol by Rupert in

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September 1645, or detail the Rowton defeat – for a Royalist irreconcilable like Symonds the situation would be increasingly hard to bear. But there was a ray of hope. He contrasted the poor state of the remnant of the field army, and the defeatism of those in the high command, like Rupert, who saw the war as already lost, with the high morale and fighting qualities of some of the local forces still operating in Wales and the Marches. These were often the professional soldiers, blooded in the Irish wars, who had been waging a fierce rearguard action against the increasingly dominant local Parliamentarians. Symonds had already seen and admired the ‘gallant’ troops brought by Charles Gerrard from South Wales to the King (p. 242). He praised the little army commanded by Sir William Vaughan, at the core of which was the regiment he had brought from Ireland in late 1643, and which ranged widely through Shropshire and North Wales. If the war was to be carried on, these were the men to do it, and, exhausted as he was by continual and futile marches, Symonds left the Lifeguards and carried his sword, and no doubt his servants, into these troops when they went to ‘refresh’ themselves in Bridgnorth garrison in October 1645 (p. 245). Disbanded officers and men (‘reformadoes’), rather than formed units, now made up a large part of these forces.

The rest of the diary is a fascinating (though increasingly fragmentary) record of their last stand against all odds, fighting a ferocious guerilla war in increasingly

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desperate circumstances. The King had raised his first army in Shropshire; Symonds's own family came originally from there. The previous year most of the garrisons had been Royalist. Now, in the summer of 1645, eight out of eleven (including Shrewsbury) had fallen to Parliament (pp. 248–9, 256). The powerful local Roundhead general, Thomas Mytton, was able to pen the remaining King's forces into a smaller and smaller area. Vaughan had placed his Headquarters at Shrawardine Castle ('Shraydon', p. 256), six miles west of Shrewsbury, and appointed as governor his clergyman brother. But it fell in July, and the castle was rased to the ground. Today only heaps of grass-covered stones mark the spot where Vaughan acquired his evil reputation as 'the Devil of Shrawardine'.

When at Chester Charles had promised the governor, Lord Byron, that he could expect relief from the still effective loyal forces in North Wales. This did not materialise, and in November Vaughan's small army, mainly cavalry, was dispersed by Mytton in a skirmish just outside Denbigh. Symonds, as usual, passes over this last disaster almost in silence, but takes the trouble to copy (p. 280) the friendly letter from the governor of Denbigh to Vaughan, welcoming his infantry to the protection of the castle, and soothingly noting that Mytton's army had greatly outnumbered his. The guerilla forces of the area were so infamous that they were often refused entry by the remaining Royalist garrisons (Vaughan's party was shut out of Ludlow later), and so were always in danger of falling prey

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to the better disciplined enemy. Symonds may have judged the action of the governor of Denbigh so unusual and laudable as to be worthy of record.

The news everywhere was bad. Symonds must have got hold of a copy of the printed account of the famous quarrel at Newark between the King and Rupert and his fellow officers, which followed the sacking of the Prince on his surrender of Bristol. He entered it into his journal (pp. 268–70), but tore it out when one of the participants, Sir Richard Willys, much later told him it was ‘all a feynd [feigned] form’d lye’ (p. 270; BL, Harl. MS 944, f. 66). Willys no doubt preferred to be remembered for the scheme, which he had presented to the King at Newark somewhat earlier, to collect from the remaining garrisons a force large enough to face the New Model Army. Symonds dutifully recorded Willys’s version of these events. He also, usefully from the historian’s point of view, copied out Rupert’s declaration of October with the twenty-two signatories, and the King’s letter to the governor of Worcester (pp. 270–2). These additions to his MS show that he was revising it as late as 1659, the date of his conversation with Willys. Symonds was suspected as a Royalist plotter in the 1650s, as was Willys. Presumably he did not know that his informant was also a Cromwellian spy.

Otherwise there was little to record but the bad behaviour of the King’s men before their final liquidation. They foraged, plundered, quarrelled and fought amongst themselves; two officers killed each other, and there was an

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attempted suicide, at Bridgnorth (p. 250). They carried fire and sword through the little towns and villages of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire (pp. 261, 276). Not surprisingly Symonds begins to note the resistance of the local people to these depredations, although he does not call them Clubmen (p. 263). The new general for the King in these parts, Lord Astley, came to Worcester before Christmas (p. 277), and spent much of his time thereafter attempting to compose the quarrels of the local commanders.

It was time for Symonds to make his last move. He left Bridgnorth in the new year, 1646, and joined one of the garrisons, Tutbury castle in Staffordshire, of the energetic East Midlands general, Lord Loughborough. Symonds was already familiar with this 'flying army', for he had noted a year previously its dispositions and officers' names in his 'musters' journal (BL, Harl. MS 986). It was a natural step for him to retreat from Tutbury to Loughborough's Headquarters at Ashby de la Zouch. It was there that he ended his war, being granted a pass from the local Parliamentarian governor to return home with two servants, horses and arms, in March 1646. He compounded on Ashby articles later that year, with a fine of one sixth of the value of his estate, £295.

Symonds's military career was now over. He had been a conscientious recorder of antiquities and the end of the war (and the victory of a hostile regime) gave him both opportunity and incentive to extend his knowledge by foreign

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travel. Having settled his remaining income on his sister, borrowed money from her and the local rector, Edward Symons, he set out for the Continent. Of his travels in France and Italy, from 1649 to 1651, the year-and-a-half-long stay in Rome was the most formative experience. He learned the language, saw the sights and, discovering a taste for modern art, met and conversed with several painters, including Nicolas Poussin. Until his money ran out, he bought as many books, prints and drawings as he could. Among art historians Symonds has an honoured place. His notebooks of this period are as valuable a record of contemporary art and artists, their workshop practices, and the contents of private collections in Rome, as his earlier diaries are for the Civil War. Back in London thereafter he listened to gossip about the artists of the time and recorded some of it. Symonds is the source for many of the stories of the period in Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*, such as the legend of Cromwell's nocturnal visit to the coffin of King Charles (p. xxxiv).

An old mystery, the date of his death, which baffled the editor of the diary (pp. xxxvi–xxxvii), and the author of the article on Symonds in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, has been solved by a modern art historian. Dr Mary Beal, in *A Study of Richard Symonds: His Italian Notebooks and their Relevance to Seventeenth-Century Painting Techniques* (New York, 1984), has shown that Symonds died intestate in June 1660, at the age of forty-three, and was probably buried in London. The will of his

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one remaining brother, who died in the following year, hints that the family were having difficulty regaining their estates, and possibly their offices, at the Restoration. Richard Symonds's papers were dispersed, probably not long after. If, however, like John Evelyn, he was able to witness the 'miraculous' event of May 1660, the triumphant entry of Charles II into London, he must have died a happy man.

The value of his diaries to our understanding of the Civil War is considerable. No other narrative by a soldier who was not an officer, on the King's side, exists. Of course, as a cultivated gentleman, he was not an ordinary trooper, but his record is of someone who was obeying orders rather than giving them. While a careful reading, some of it between the lines, is needed to appreciate its merits most fully, it provides a distinctive picture of the face of battle in the Civil War, of the feelings of a sensitive and passionate follower of the King, and of the variety of military experience the war afforded, so different from pre-war existence. The Civil War changed lives. How other than in those troubled times would a pious and artistic Essex squire end his personal Odyssey fighting alongside the ruthless 'Devil of Shrawardine'? When later, in 1649, as a traveller and connoisseur, he waited for an escort to enable him to cross the brigand-infested mountain passes to Rome in safety, did it ever occur to him that he had himself acted this role in the inhospitable hill country of North Wales only four years before?

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INTRODUCTION.

THE author of the following Diary, Richard Symonds, was descended, as will be seen on reference to the accompanying pedigree, from a respectable gentleman's family, sometime seated at a mansion called the Poole, in the parish of Great Yeldham, in the county of Essex. He was himself, however, a native of the parish of Black Notley, in the same county, where his father had acquired a small property in right of his wife.

At the outbreak of the great Civil War, between Charles and the Parliament, our author joined the royal standard; while his cousin, of the elder branch, and of the same name, took the opposite side, and fell in the cause of his country at the crowning fight of Naseby. The royalist was, as he tells us, in the troop of horse commanded by Lord Bernard Stuart, a younger son of the Duke of Lenox, and during the various operations in which they were engaged he seems never, in his leisure moments, to have lost sight of his ruling passion, the love of topography, with its handmaids genealogy and heraldry; and, on all occasions, to have had his note-book in his pocket to jot down, from time to time, whatever, in churches or in country mansions, might elucidate his favourite pursuit. We are indebted to him, then a very

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young man, for many a family record which time, neglect, and Vandalism have since swept away; and, if his narrative is not always lively, and attractive to the general reader, it is valuable as affording corroborative testimony to the truth of other publications of that period.

The manuscript labours which he has left to us are, in the first place, the three small volumes in the Harleian collection which form the contents of the present article, together with the volume preserved among the Additional MSS., completing the set, and which latter was purchased at Mr. John Bohn the bookseller's sale in 1847, by Sir Frederic Madden, for the Trustees of the Museum. It had been supposed that one or more volumes still remained in private hands; but this point is cleared up, first, by the dates of the several volumes, and, secondly, and conclusively, by the fact that Symonds, on leaving England, consigned his books and various boxes to the custody of his sister, and among the contents of one of the latter we find that he makes mention of "4 bookes of marches bound in leather."

The other manuscript volumes of Symonds are:—

Harl. MS. 964 :

Notes of Monuments, &c. Oxford, Dec. 1643 to April 1644.

These, though not distinctly included in the Diary, are, nevertheless, virtually a portion of it, inasmuch as the dates show that they were made during the leisure hours of his winter quarters.