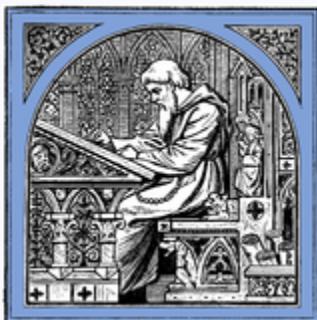


Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 55 — Symonds, Richard (1617-1692?)

Daniel Lleufer Thomas



1898

Exported from Wikisource on September 16, 2024

SYMONDS, RICHARD (1617–1692?), royalist and antiquary, was the eldest son of Edward (or Edmund) Symonds of the Plumtrees (now known as The Buck), Black Notley, Essex, where he was born in 1617. His mother, who brought the Notley property into the family, was Anne, daughter of Joshua Draper of Braintree. His grandfather, Richard Symonds (*d.* 1627), belonged to a respectable family at Newport, Shropshire, but had himself settled at the Poole, Yeldham, Essex. Like his father and grandfather, as well as several of his uncles and cousins, Symonds became a cursitor of the chancery court. He was committed a prisoner by Miles Corbet as a delinquent on 25 March 1642-3, but escaping thence on 21 Oct. he joined the royalist army, becoming a member of the troop of horse which formed the king's lifeguard, under the command of Lord Bernard Stuart, afterwards Earl of Lichfield [q. v.] He was thus with the king in most of his movements during the ensuing two years, being present at the engagements of Cropredy Bridge, Newbury, Naseby, and at the relief of Chester, where the Earl of Lichfield was killed. He was subsequently with Sir William Vaughan (*d.* 1649) [q. v.] at Denbigh and elsewhere. After the king's surrender, in the autumn of 1646, he applied on 17 Dec. to be allowed to compound for his delinquency (*Cal. of Proc. of Comm. for Compounding*, p. 1610). On 1 Jan. 1648 he left London and travelled, first to Paris, and then to Rome and Venice, where he resided till about the end of 1652, when he returned again to England. In 1655 he was implicated in the abortive

plot for restoring the monarchy, and was one of a batch of over seventy persons who were on that account arrested in the eastern counties, but were subsequently released on bond in October (*Cal. State Papers*, Dom. 1655, pp. 367-9).

From an early age Symonds evinced strong archaeological tastes, and in all his wanderings he seems never to have lost an opportunity for jotting down in his notebook such topographical or genealogical memoranda as he came across. He thus kept a diary of the marchings of the royal army from 10 April 1644 to 11 Feb. 1646, and the four notebooks which he so filled are still preserved at the British Museum (being Addit. MS. 17062 and Harleian MSS. 911, 939, and 944). These were frequently quoted by county historians, and in 1859 were edited for the Camden Society by Charles Edward Long, under the title 'Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army during the Great Civil War,' London, 4to. His account of the great struggle, though meagre, is entitled to the credit of strict accuracy, and his description of the second battle of Newbury is both minute and interesting. Another notebook of Symonds (Harl. MS. 991), containing anecdotes and memoranda relating to his contemporaries, extending to 1660, was partly printed in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1796 (vol. lxiv. pt. i. p. 466) and for 1816 (vol. lxxxvi. pt. ii. p. 498), and in 'Notes and Queries' (2nd ser. vii. 141). This contains several stories relating to Oliver Cromwell, including that of his lifting up the lid of Charles's coffin and gazing on his body. Three volumes of genealogical collections for the county of Essex,

compiled by Symonds, are now preserved at the Heralds' College, to which they were presented in 1710 by Gregory King [q. v.], into whose possession they came in 1685. In the second volume (fol. 613), under Great Yeldham, Symonds gives the pedigree of his own family, and in close proximity to his own name is 'an impression, in red wax, of an admirably engraved head in profile,' probably that of Symonds himself, by Thomas Simon [q. v.], the medallist. These collections were largely utilised by Morant in his 'History of Essex.'

Symonds also left behind him some musters of the king's army (Harl. MS. 986), two pocket-books containing notes of monuments in Oxfordshire and Berkshire and in Worcester Cathedral (Harl. MSS. 964-5), and five other books filled with memoranda of his tour on the continent, and notes on public buildings and pictures at Rome and elsewhere (Harl. MSS. Nos. 924, 943, 1278, Addit. MS. 17919, and Egerton MS. 1635). Another notebook (Egerton MS. 1636) contains 'secrets in painting learnt at Rome,' together with notes of 'certain old paintings I have seen in London since my return from Italy.' Much of the information given in Walpole's 'Anecdotes of Painting' about the painters of the time of Charles I is drawn from these notes (*op. cit.* ed. Wornum, i. 287, 293, 324). Another commonplace book of Symonds, extending to 558 pages folio, was lately in the possession of Mr. E. P. Shirley of Ellington Hall, Warwickshire (manuscript No. 135). The latest entry in it is an account of an earthquake which was

felt at Wit ham in Suffolk on 8 Sept. 1692 (*Hist. MSS. Comm.* 5th Rep. pp. 362, 367). Previous to the discovery of this manuscript it was assumed that Symonds had died prior to 1685, as his genealogical collections passed into other hands in that year. It is probable, however, that he died towards the end of 1692 or soon after.

Symonds had an uncle of the same names as himself, a barrister of Lincoln's Inn, with whom he has been confounded (*Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser. vii. 224, 243), while a cousin of his, also Richard Symonds (1616- 1645), was engaged 'in divers battailes with y^e Earle of Essex against y^e king,' and fell at Naseby under Sir Thomas Fairfax in 1645.

[Morant's History of Essex, ii. 302-3; Long's Introduction to the Diary published by the Camden Society, as above; Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting, ed. 1888, i. 324.]

[D. L. T.](#)

Dictionary of National Biography, Errata (1904), p.262

N.B.— *f.e.* stands for *from end* and *l.l.* for *last line*

Page Col. Line

277 i 15 **Symonds, Richard** (1607-1692): *for*
f.e. Ellington *read* Ettington

About this digital edition

This e-book comes from the online library [Wikisource](#). This multilingual digital library, built by volunteers, is committed to developing a free accessible collection of publications of every kind: novels, poems, magazines, letters...

We distribute our books for free, starting from works not copyrighted or published under a free license. You are free to use our e-books for any purpose (including commercial exploitation), under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 Unported](#) license or, at your choice, those of the [GNU FDL](#).

Wikisource is constantly looking for new members. During the transcription and proofreading of this book, it's possible that we made some errors. You can report them at [this page](#).

The following users contributed to this book:

- Charles Matthews
- JamAKiska
- Mpa