Journal of the siege of Rouen,
1591

Coningsby Thomas
JOURNAL
OF
THE SIEGE OF ROUEN,
1591.

BY SIR THOMAS CONINGSBY,
of Hampton Court, Co. Hereford.

EDITED BY
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F.S.A. Lond. and Newc.

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INTRODUCTION.

The present fragment, though belonging to the history of another country, claims the attention of the Camden Society, not merely from having been written by an Englishman, but also because it relates principally to the services of an army of English auxiliaries. The narrative does not include the whole period of their campaign, but it supplies an account of the greater part of it. It appears to have been written in the form of letters, which were despatched to some friend at a distance,* and afterwards transcribed in a consecutive form.

Commencing on the 13th of Aug. 1591, when the earl of Essex, the English general, was still near Dieppe, the port at which he landed, it proceeds day by day to the 6th of September. It is then suspended until the 3rd of the following month; when it is resumed, and thenceforward continued to the 24th of December, at which period it was again closed, in order to be transmitted to the friend for whose information it had been written. Whether the events which occurred in the month of September, and those which followed the 24th of December, were ever described by the same writer, it would now be vain to conjecture; but it must be regretted that we have not his account of the first demonstration made by the Englishmen before Rouen; in which the earl of

* See passages in pp. 33 ("no more till the nexte.") 60, 61, and the concluding paragraph in p. 65.
Essex had not only the misfortune to lose his only brother, but also to incur the censure of his detractors at home, and the displeasure of his royal mistress.

The true author of this Journal has not been ascertained without much difficulty. It has been attributed in one quarter * to the celebrated sir Henry Wotton. Such appropriation could not be reconciled with the authentic biography of that eminent man. Although he was closely attached to the earl of Essex at a subsequent period, there can be little doubt that throughout the year 1591 he was travelling in remote parts of the continent. This is shown by his letters to lord Zouch.† He arrived at Vienna on the 11th Nov. 1590, and remained there until the 21st April 1591. Early in February 1592 he left Padua, after some residence there, and on the 25th April following he returned to Florence; and, although we have no positive evidence of his place of sojourn during the period of the present diary, it was clearly in the south of Germany or in Italy; and, had he been in Normandy, his correspondence at this period would surely have contained some allusion to the circumstance.

The MS. has inscribed upon it, by the hand of Humphry Wanley:

"Written by Mr. Wotton."

and as there were three elder brothers of sir Henry Wotton, the sons of his father's first marriage, their history has also been considered. Sir John, the second, was certainly engaged in the campaign of 1591, and was one of the knights made by the earl of Essex, on the 8th October; but he is twice mentioned in the Journal (pp. 40, 49), and in the former place distinctly as a different person from the writer.

* Sale Catalogue of Mr. Bright's Manuscripts, Lot 276: which was evidently another copy of the same Journal, as shown by the passage there given, which is the same as that in p. 44, though slightly differing in language. It is supposed to have passed into the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart.
† Printed in the Reliquiar Wottonianae.
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The identity of the Author has at length been ascertained through his mentioning his cousin sir Philip Boteler,* coupled with the circumstance of his officiating as the muster-master of the army.† These facts combined have contributed to fix the authorship upon sir Thomas Coningsby, who is placed third in precedence among the twenty-four knights made by the lord generall on the 8th of October.‡ Sir Thomas Coningsby and sir Philip Boteler§ were second cousins, inasmuch as they were both great-grandsons of sir Humphrey Coningsby, justice of the king’s bench; and that sir Thomas Coningsby was muster-master is shown by a letter of lord Burghley.||

SIR THOMAS CONINGSBY was the son and heir of Humphrey Coningsby esquire, of Hampton Court, co. Hereford, and a gentleman pensioner to queen Elizabeth, by Anne daughter of sir Thomas Inglefield, one of the judges of the common pleas. He was elected to parliament for the city of Hereford in 1593 and 1601, and intermediately was sheriff of the county in 1598. On the 12th Nov. 1617 he was appointed one of the council to William lord Compton, lord president of the marches of Wales.

Fuller, in his Worthies, meeting with the name of Sir Thomas Coningsby among the sheriffs of Herefordshire, remarks, “I have heard from some of this county a pretious report of his memory, how he lived in a right worshipful equipage, and founded a place in Hereford for poor people, but to what proportion of revenue they could not inform me.” The institution to which Fuller thus vaguely alludes is that of which Sir Thomas began the foundation

* See pp. 48, 49. He also mentions another cousin, sir Richard Acton, whose degree of relationship has not been discovered.
† See pp. 29, 60, 61. ‡ See p. 71.
§ Sir Philip Boteler's mother was Anne, daughter of John Coningsby esquire of North Mums in Hertfordshire, younger brother of Thomas Coningsby esquire of Hampton Court, co. Hereford, the father of Humphrey, father of sir Thomas. See the pedigree of Boteler in Clutterbuck’s Hertfordshire, vol. ii. p. 477, and that of Coningsby in vol. i. p. 444.
|| See p. 73.
in the year 1614, for superannuated soldiers and servants. The pious and affectionate feeling which gave birth to it in the mind of the veteran, was expressed in an elevated strain in the preamble of the deed* enrolled in Chancery upon the occasion, which shews that he had experienced some of the rude buffets of the world. "The said Sir Thomas Coningsby, to the honour of God, the father of every good and perfect gift, in thankfulness to him for his defence and protection, as well in foreign travels as by sea and land, as also for his preservation against malice and evil practices at home, in submission to his chastisements upon the person of the said Sir Thomas, which have disabled his body in this world, and enobled his mind and thoughts to the expectation of a world to come, and with a Christian hope and humble supplication to him for his blessing on his posterity, now depending on the last of six sons, which he had by his worthy and virtuous wife Philippa, the daughter of Sir William Fitzwilliams; and being seized in fee of houses, lands, and parcels of the commandry, which were the inheritance of those knights of St. John of Jerusalem, formerly employed in the sustentation of Christian valour and courage, the said Sir Thomas ordained and constituted that all that quadrangle or square building of stone (&c. here it is described as to site) should be and remain a hospital for ever, under the name of 'Coningsby's Company of Old Servitors,' in the suburbs of the city of Hereford."

Sir Thomas Coningsby died May 30, 1625, having married Philippa, second daughter of sir William Fitzwilliam, of Milton near Peterborough, lord deputy of Ireland; by whom he had issue a numerous family. Fitzwilliam, his only surviving son and successor, was grandfather of Thomas first earl of Coningsby. Of his daughters, Katharine was married to Francis Smallman, of Kinar-

* An abstract of this deed, and of the rules of the institution, may be seen in Duncumb, Collections for Herefordshire, vol. i. p. 405 et seq. ; or in Price's Historical Account of the City of Hereford, Appendix, p. 213 et seq.
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delsey castle, co. Hereford, esquire; Elizabeth, to sir Humphry Baskerville, of Erdesley castle, co. Hereford; and Anne to sir Richard Tracy of Hatfield, co. Hereford, knpt.

THE SIEGE OF ROUEN is well known in the history of France as one of the incidents of the wars of the League. The city was seized and garrisoned by that party in the year 1590. After considerable delay in his preparations, Henri IV. invested it on the 11th November 1591. The siege was raised on the approach of the duke of Parma on the 20th April following.

Queen Elizabeth was prevailed upon, early in the year 1591, to send forces in aid of the protestant king of France, as she then had reason to esteem him. "In the moneth of Aprill," says Stowe, "three thousand footmen were sent from hence into Brytaine in France under the conduction of sir John Norris knight, to joyne with the prince Dombes, son of the duke Montpensier, and general of the French king's forces in that province; which companies have sithence beene from time to time supplied." This army continued to serve in Britany, under the command of sir John Norris,* but did not unite with that afterwards committed to the charge of the earl of Essex.

The negociations for despatching this second army were completed in the month of June;† and the following month was spent in mustering men, and in the other busy measures of preparation.

* "A Journall of the honourable service by the renowned knight S. John Norrice, general of the English and French forces, performed against the French and Spanish Leaguers in Fraunce 1591," is appended to Churchyard's Civill Wars in the Netherlands, 4to. 1602, pp. 119—133. It extends from April 11, 1591, to March 1, 1592.

† "June 25. A graunt to send 4,000 foot in to France, which be in Normandy, under the E. Essex.

---- 29. The French ambassador bound for the payment.

"July 19. The queen at my house to see the erle of Essex hors in Covent Garden,—3,000 men appoynted to be imarked for Depe to serve under the erle of Essex.


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"The xxth of this moneth," writes sir Thomas Wylkes to sir Robert Sydney, "my lord of Essex intendeth to imbarque with his troopes of 4,000 men for Normandy; in which expedicion sir Thomas Sherley and myself were appointed counsaillors to the earle, which with much adoe we have avoyded (as I hope); and I have not known so gallant a troope goe out of England with so many young and untrained commanders."*

Sir Thomas Leighton and sir Henry Killigrew were those who afterwards went as councillors to the lord generall.

There are large materials for the history of this war among the papers of sir Henry Unton, who was at the same time sent by queen Elizabeth to reside with the French king, and to watch the events of the campaign. Of those papers one voluminous portion is preserved in the Cottonian collection: † and some documents from that source are printed in the 16th volume of Rymer’s Foedera.‡ To have attempted any further selection from them on the present occasion would have been quite to overburthen this slight brochure; but there is one which the editor would have been tempted to give, viz. "Notes of the incidents relating to the earl of Essex’s expedition, with their dates," at fol. 76,—had not the greater part of the dates been unfortunately burnt away from the margin by the Cottonian fire. A few passages, however, of sir Henry Unton’s despatches have been placed in the notes, because they directly illustrate the statements of the Journal.

† MS. Cotton. Caligula C. viii. In the memoir of sir Henry Unton, contained in the introduction to The Unton Inventories, which I edited for the Berkshire Ashmolean Society in 1841, I have given some notice of this volume, as also of another relating to the same embassy preserved in the Bodleian Library, No. 3498. A third volume of sir Henry Unton’s papers has since made a transient appearance before the public at the sale of Mr. Bright’s collection of MSS. in 1844, lot 263, and is now in the possession of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart. (See the Gentleman’s Magazine, Aug. 1844, vol. xxii. p. 151.)
‡ Some of sir Christopher Hatton’s letters in the same volume have been recently edited in his "Life and Times" by Sir Harris Nicolas.