perfunctory remarks. This is nevertheless an indispensable collection of essays for anyone interested in the early modern book trade, and it is to be hoped that Cambridge will soon make it available in a more affordable paperback version. At $140.00, the vast erudition between its covers is bound to remain the preserve of the literary aristocracy.


Thomas St Nicholas was a Kentish man, born in 1602 at Ash, near Sandwich, where his family was long established. He proceeded from Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to the Inner Temple but was not called to the bar for some years. In the interim he was married and widowed, his four children also dying. His second wife, who survived him, came from the West Riding; St Nicholas joined her brothers in an ironworking partnership, and his business interests brought him often to Yorkshire. He was there in 1642 and a subscriber to the Declaration and Protestation against the Yorkshire commission of array. He was taken prisoner at Rotherham by “great Newcastle’s popish legion” and confined for some time in Pontefract Castle (16). Once released, he continued to work for the parliamentary cause, and Fairfax made him receiver-general for the West Riding. Having returned to Kent in 1649 with his wife and two surviving children, he held increasingly important legal posts and was a member of the Barebones Parliament and the Council of State. However, he objected to Cromwell’s interference with the Commons, from which he was one of those excluded in 1656. He was active again in the last Parliaments of the Protectorate and justified himself at the Restoration when his wartime accounts were scrutinized and approved. He retired, deeply disillusioned by the ungodliness of the new age, and died in 1668. Throughout his adult life he wrote poetry—"when / Some vacant hours invite, I take my pen / Instead of cards or dice or tavern
He collected seventy poems of various lengths, including a few by relatives, in a manuscript volume now in Birmingham University Library and admirably edited by H. Neville Davies.

It is true that St Nicholas may not achieve, and perhaps never sought, the brilliant lines with which his talented contemporaries surprise and delight their readers; however, his meticulous descriptions and conventional imagery can bring clearly to mind the human drama of those troubled years. Take the poem “For My Son,” describing his humiliation, and that of other Pontefract prisoners

At whose approach t’the castle the bystanders

Did inhumanely triumph and rejoice,

Jeer, and with shoutings elevate the voice . . .

To see poor men stripped to their shirts and driven

Ten miles or twelve barefoot, some six or seven

Tied by the thumbs together, some, that stood

With shirts like boards stiffened with cold gore blood,

Surbate and lamed i’t the feet with walking bare,

Begging for water for God’s sake . . . . (25)

In the Yorkshire towns, swept for soldiers by “besoms of array,” a stranger seeing “No males appear would sure be at a stand, / And think th’Amážons had possessed the land” (26). St Nicholas’s rather deliberate sense of humour appears more innocently in another Pontefract poem, “Upon the Sight of a Mouse, Taken by a Samson’s Post, under Sir Walter Ralegh’s *History*”—a handy trap replicated by the editor with Birmingham University’s 7½-lb. copy—”So great a weight as needs contained must be / In such an universal history.” But for a Puritan no happening is without implications: like the mouse, the “silly sons of Eve” nibble at forbidden fruit, and St Nicholas prays his soul “might trample underfeet / The moon [as
in Rev. 12:1] with all her tempting baits” (32). In “The Recreation of an Accountant at the Grand Audit of England” he is soon “pressed / Upon the thoughts of numb’ring calculations / A little to dilate my meditations / On that of Moses, where he sweetly prays / ‘O Lord, teach us to number up our days’” (48-49, quoting Ps. 90:12). In the sequel, “Upon the Declaring and Passing of My Accounts, May 21, 1663,” he inevitably reflects, “But I have yet greater accounts to pass. / A greater audit than yet ever was / Is yet to come” (65). Mercifully he can count on Christ’s “Act of Oblivion” for protection.

God was active in saving the St Nicholases when a flooded river engulfed their coach. The poet’s “Hymn of Praise,” written in eight and six, elicited “An Echo” in heroic couplets by his brother John, the ejected rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, and St Nicholas responded with a “A Return to the Echo” in octosyllabics. This friendly interchange of poems is an attractive aspect of the collection. Other poems are satirical: “God Speed the Plough” on lawyers practising “the noble art of angling / In clients’ purses’ and parsons plying ‘the steeple-monger’s trade” (66-87), or “Upon Loquacity” on various misusers of speech. The longest, and angriest, poem is “The Voice of the Rod” (from Mic. 6:9), berating the society that has brought upon itself the Great Plague of 1665. With its Hudibrastic metre and recycling of Butler’s notorious rhymes (such as “stickle/conventicle” in lines 267-68), this reads like a response-text turning anti-Puritan rhetoric back against the debauched proponents of Uniformity. The rod speaks again, more smoothly in heroic couplets but just as bitterly, in “1666: Upon the Burning of the City of London.” But St Nicholas’s manner is more typically personal, or familial, as in “My Ultimum Vale,” his last farewell to his relatives and non-conformist brethren. A couplet on his grandchildren—“My pretty surculi, who rise / To fill my garden’s vacancies”—neatly captures the mixed emotions in his memory (171). “Myself reprinted,” he continues, “May th’edition / Corrected prove is my petition!”

He would surely have been gratified by H. Neville Davies’s edition of his poems. The commentary, which fills more pages
than the text, is immensely thorough in its historical research and always a pleasure to read. The printed text is modernized; however, the University of Birmingham Press has included a CD-ROM with nice clear images of all the manuscript's pages. This is an excellent expedient: it makes an already most interesting book a place where scholars of the seventeenth century will feel entirely at home.


The period roughly stretching from 1600 to the early 1700s is generally referred to as Sweden's Age of Greatness when that nation briefly acquired a Baltic empire and played a major role in the 30 Years' War and European politics for several decades thereafter. These developments led both to a significant growth in the size of its military forces and to the creation of the “military state.” Given Sweden's particularly limited resources, it was also forced to recruit relatively large numbers of foreign troops both as ordinary soldiers and officers. Professor Ailes in this work examines the 119 British officers recruited in this fashion, their integration into Swedish society, and the significance of this phenomenon in the creation of a Swedish military state.

In her first chapter Ailes discusses the various phases to Swedish recruitment of foreign officers, particularly those from Britain. She notes that this practice occurred most often during the decade from 1628-1638 when Sweden established supremacy over the Baltic states at the expense of arch-rival Poland, successfully participated in the Thirty Years' War, and became a major European power. Demand receded thereafter as Sweden's role and power declined especially after 1660. Ailes also makes the point that recruitment of officers abroad not only fulfilled the obvious military need for officers as the army grew in size but also was done to