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Charles XII And The Collapse Of The Swedish Empire



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Synopsis

Charles XII and the Collapse of the Swedish Empire is a history of the famous Swedish monarch and the Great Northern War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The great northern war is a topic that has sadly been underrepresented amongst english speaking authors. Its consequences though, were enormous. The rise of Russia would negatively affect the Ottomans and Poland would disappear completely. Had Charles XII been able to defeat the reformist Peter the great, russian progress might have been pushed an entire century. Thereby ensuring a vastly different eastern europe.The book does a nice job of laying out the facts and for an older book is surprisingly readable. The positive aspects of Charles XII kingship are made clear(his work ethic, sense of justice, military leadership), but so are his negative aspects like his stubborness, countless geo-political mistakes and poor grasp of diplomacy. If you are looking for the definitive account of his life this isnt it, and sadly i dont think one even exists in the english language. But the book does a terrific job of presenting his achievements, and showing the course of the war that swallowed up his entire adult life.Overall if you are looking to learn more about the subject this is probably the best book you will find, good books about Sweden in the age of stormskstiden are hard to find. Charles XII is by far one of the most interesting figures who ever lived and its a shame more people dont know about him.

A quick light read. More hagiography than history.

one of the most fabulous books I have ever read.

Pretty good read.

quite uninteresting, no larger seting for the book

Well writen.

This is a reprint of an 1895 biography of King Charles (or Karl) XII of Sweden written by Robert Nesbit Bain. Karl XII reigned in Sweden from 1697 until 1709. At the start of Karl XII's reign, Sweden was a large empire that had vast holdings in the Baltic States and Germany. However, at the end of Karl XII's reign Sweden was clearly in decline. This decline of Sweden was blamed on the adventuristic military ambitions of Karl XII which led to the continuous wars with Russia, Poland and Saxony that dominated the reign of Karl XII. The school of historians which are now called the "old school" tend to blame King Karl XII directly for the decline of Sweden. This school is largely a nineteenth century view of Karl XII. Since 1900 a "new school" of historians has revisited the reign of Karl XII with a gentler view of the king. This new school suggests that events outside the reach of King Karl XII are to blame for the decline of Sweden.Written just prior to 1900, Bain's biography of King Charles (or Karl) XII of Sweden is an example of the new school of history in regards to Karl XII. Bain holds that the Swedish Empire was built on the shifting sands of military expansionism during the Thirty Years War (1619-1648) on the part of King Gustavus Adolphus (who reigned in Sweden from 1611 until 1632). During the Thirty Years War Europe, Germany and the Baltic States were devastated. Gustavus Adolphus entered the Thirty Years War and carved out a large empire for Sweden over the weakened and prostrate states of northern Germany. Bain maintains that in normal times, Europe and Germany would have put up more defense to Gustavus Adolphus and Sweden would never have built the Empire that it did. Accordingly, the Swedish Empire was really a hollow sham that was built on extremely poor footing and was sure to fall as soon as the states of Germany and the Baltic recovered from the destruction of the Thirty Years War. This Bain maintains would have happened no matter who was King during the period of time following the Thirty Years War. Thus, Bain maintains that King Karl XII was merely fighting hard against an inevitable downfall of the Swedish Empire.

The life of Charles the XII is an interesting one to follow. The book in depth describes very well his

personality and his character, which is abundantly cool and charismatic in his military ventures. Although the Swedish Empire is not one that comes to people's memory in general, the time period of 1700 -1720 is where all Europes major powers looked upon it will great interest. The book gives a lot of credit to the ordinary Swedish soldier, one that constantly was at war on his feet, little food and badly provisoned, yet won great victories under the King that inspired them every moment of their lives. The King himself was one to love danger not luxury, and put himself in harms way like his soldiers did. However, this book also does a great job in showing how poor of a diplomat and politician Charles was. His distain for his common foes and belief of his armies invincibility, and of course a massive accumulation of pride, meant that Charles made numerous blunders that accelerated the collapse of the Swedish Empire and meant Swedens people continued to suffer for the endless campaigns. It is a very gripping story of both Swedens rise to greatness as well as its military and a political blunders that lead to its demise. In detail it describes well Charles relationship with family,statesmen and generals. It is a period of history not greatly known. I say this is a perfect book to change that.

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