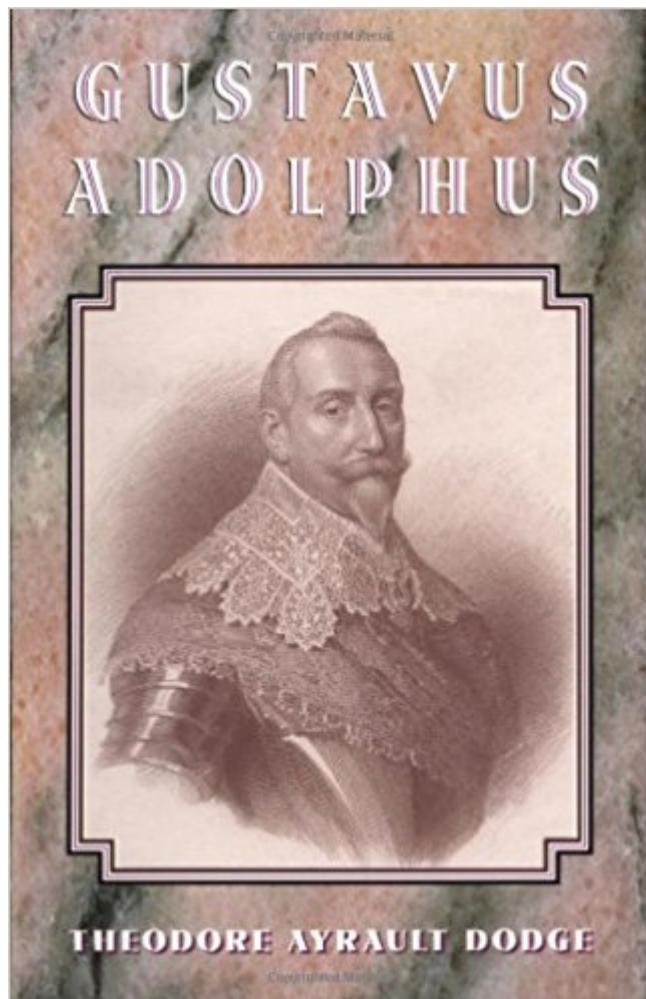


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Gustavus Adolphus



Synopsis

Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632), King of Sweden, has been rightfully hailed as the father of modern warfare and as the most outstanding commander of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Forming the first national conscript army in modern Europe, he emphasized officer education, strict discipline, rigorous training, and the combination of firepower and mobility, until he had forged a formidable fighting force that stands unrivaled between Caesar's legions and Napoleon's Grande Armée. In 1630 Gustavus rescued the beleaguered Protestant cause in Germany from the Catholic League of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II militarily, led by the era's two other great captains, Tilly and Wallenstein. Gustavus triumphed against them (twice defeating Tilly) in battles that are tactical masterpieces, but he was killed while leading a cavalry charge at Lutzen. Illustrated with nearly 250 drawings and maps, Dodge's brilliant work (1895) not only examines the life, battles, and military innovations of Gustavus Adolphus but continues beyond the end of the Thirty Years' War to 1712, discussing his influence upon the great captains who followed—Turenne, Condé, Eugene, and Marlborough. The result is a clear, comprehensive study of a neglected but crucial period in the annals of warfare.

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Customer Reviews

A fascinating history of an extraordinary figure in history, who deserves to stand with Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon in many respects - but is little known in the English-speaking world. Fighting in one of the bloodiest wars in all of history - the 30 Years War - on the side of the Protestants, when armies habitually slaughtered, raped and pillaged everyone in the path (all in the name of

God) culminating in the horror of Magdeburg, Gustavus stand out as the exception, a genuinely good man who disciplined his troops to respect the people they fought against, as well as a cool-headed commander and a brilliant tactician. This account is a tad dry, and needs to be read with a detailed map of Europe at the elbow or else the brilliance of his strategic moves is lost, but it is important because it describes in detail the exploits of the man widely acknowledged as the father of modern military thought.

Having read Europe's Tragedy: A History of the Thirty Years War, Dodge gives a more detailed insight into one of the late entries into the conflict, Sweden's Gustavus Adolphus. As king and leader of his army, he takes the side of Germanic Protestants, and feeling led by the hand of the divine, lays waste to the Catholics who are based largely in Bavaria. Spoiler Alert: Adolphus is killed in battle and Sweden's allies abandon his army almost as fast as the army, lacking their energetic leader, loses its momentum. Spread too thin, and with untrustworthy or apathetic supporters in Germany, Sweden's continental power fades in the last years of the Thirty Years War. I thought the book to be an excellent account of soldiering and warfare, that is until Adolphus is killed and I wasn't even sure I was reading the same book as the text wandered into an unrelated account of Cromwell's combat exploits against the Loyalists during the civil war in England. Then as oddly as that digression starts, the sections of Cromwell ends, and the account of the drained, mostly leaderless, and unsupported Swedish army begins again as it loses ground so bitterly fought for and paid with many lives, including that of their brilliant and brave king's.

Dodge covers many of the campaigns and battles led by Gustavus Adolphus and such other 17th-18th century luminaries as Turenne, Conde, Eugene and Marlborough. This book is a great overview of the era, and a good summary of the military aspects of the 30 Years War in which G.A. took part. The analysis of how G.A. improved upon the military practices of his forbears (and thus became ranked as one of the "6 great captains") is sometimes difficult to distinguish from the narrative flow, which is why I rate this as a 4, rather than 5. All in all, still an indispensable read for the student of military history who wants to understand the state of military art before Frederick the Great.

The book was a good general overview of the Thirty Years War and Gustavus Adolphus' contemporaries. Dodge then covers the campaigns of several other generals ending with Marlborough and Prince Eugen. The book tries to cover too much ground, and while lengthy, does

not go into the details of the battles like other military history books. Dodge covers cavalry, infantry and artillery tactics and the development of those tactics during the seventeenth century, based on the influence of Gustavus. I felt that Dodge was too much of a cheerleader for Gustavus and not as objective as I would have liked. About two-thirds of the book covers the time after Gustavus' death. The book is a good read for people who want a general overview of warfare in the last half of the seventeenth century.

I can't recommend this book enough, for three key reasons:1. Dodge's work is a wonderfully detailed description of warfare up to the early 18thC, focussing mainly on the book's eponymous general, and continuing on from his previous books covering great generals.2. The transfer into Kindle is first rate, continuing the excellent work done by Tales End Press (look for their efforts on Dodge's previous books - Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Art of War in the Middle Ages).3. Great price - brilliant value. If you're interested in military history then you should buy this, right now!

If you're unfamiliar with T.E. Dodge, he's one of the reasons that JFC Fuller got into writing about history. He's a American Civil War veteran with real experience to help him have a more thorough understanding of warfare. This book and his comparative essays are all phenomenal. The amount of detail surrounding the Lion of the North is spectacular, though if you are unfamiliar with the history of the Thirty Years' War, you should pick up a copy of one the independent histories on the subject to help with the context. The context of this war is particularly complex politically, so background helps a lot. If you're already familiar with the TYW, this book will flesh out the life of its most successful military leader.

This a detailed account of the Swedish war machine and its most famous commander on operations. The book covers operations in Poland and Northern Germany prior and during the Thirty Years War. The book supports the widely held belief that Gustav was a military reformer of some genius. Who combined compassion with military necessity to gain advantage tactically, operationally and ultimately strategically. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the man, period or the kind of warfare practiced at the time. The book is well written and detailed in its descriptions.

Wonderful battle-by-battle coverage of the time, and the genius of Gustavus' military mind, but not the book for one looking for a medium-sized history of the 30 years war.

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