

**PEPYS' MEMOIRES OF THE
ROYAL NAVY, 1679-1688.
MEMOIRES RELATING TO THE
STATE OF THE ROYAL NAVY OF
ENGLAND**

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SAMUEL PEPYS

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ROYAL NAVY, 1679-1688.
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Samuel Pepys'
Memoires

Of the Royal Navy

1679-1688

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At the Clarendon Press

MCMVI

Tudor & Stuart Library
Pepys' Memoires of the
Royal Navy 1679-1688

appeared indispensable to his contemporaries, and impressed his successors with the record of a fine career of public service, is a different person from the Pepys of the *Diary*. The work of the Navy Records Society has recently begun to bring into court the evidence contained in the Pepysian Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge.¹ The official correspondence of Pepys himself during the time that he was Secretary to the Admiralty, and other official documents copied or carried off by him into his own library, disclose a public servant of a much higher type than anything which the period of the Restoration has hitherto been credited with producing. Pepys appears here as a man of sound judgement, of orderly business habits and methods, of great administrative capacity and energy, and of extraordinary shrewdness and tact in dealing with men. He reorganized the administration of the navy at the points where it was weakest, brought in business principles where they had not been hitherto effectively applied, and made some progress, in spite of difficulties which

¹ Ed. J. R. Tanner, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Naval Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library*, vols. i, ii. (Navy Records Society Publications, vols. xxvi, xxvii.)

would

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would have been the despair of a less strenuous administrator, towards the solution of the delicate problem of naval discipline. The *Diary* suggests Restoration vices; the record of the official career of its author exhales the authentic savour of Puritan virtues. In his unselfish devotion to duty, in his pride in the great organization which he controlled, in the patience and tenacity with which he laboured to bring his subordinates gradually up to a higher standard of conduct, Pepys is at one with the Puritan colonels who organized and carried through the First Dutch War. In spite of all the tendencies of the Restoration, he was caught up on to the same high plane of duty. The naval administrators of the Commonwealth had everything in their favour—unlimited funds, the tone of the time, a business tradition carried over from the Cromwellian army. Samuel Pepys had none of these things, and yet he displayed the same spirit, and achieved no mean result.

If the intimate self-revelation of the *Diary* does a good deal less than justice to Pepys the public servant, peculiar interest must necessarily attach to his only other acknowledged work, *Memoirs relating to the State of the Royal Navy of England*, for in this he appears as a naval administrator
pure

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pure and simple, defending an official position in official language, with the help of statistics and official documents.

In form the *Memoirs* are a fragment of history—‘the contents of one chapter of a greater number, wherewith the world may some time or other be more largely entertained upon the general subject of the *Navalia* of England.’¹ We know that Pepys dallied with the notion of becoming an historian from an entry in the *Diary*, where he receives with enthusiasm the idea of writing a history of the First Dutch War, ‘it being a thing I much desire, and sorts mightily with my genius’.² Evelyn also, in writing of his friend’s death on May 26, 1703, refers both to the *Memoirs* and to the larger design of which they were intended to be the forerunner. ‘This day died Mr. Sam. Pepys, a very worthy, industrious, and curious person, none in England exceeding him in knowledge of the navy. . . . Besides what he published of an account of the navy as he found and left it, he had for divers years under his hand the History of the Navy, or *Navalia* as he call’d it; but how far advanced and what will follow of his is

¹ p. 128 *infra*.

² *Diary*, iv. 158 (June 13, 1664).

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