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Edited by Harold Winter Hodges and Edward Arthur Hughes

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This illustrated book, first published in 1936, is an edited compilation of source material drawn from some 145 diverse naval documents covering a period of more than three centuries from 1497 to 1805. The editors' intention was to smooth the approach to a highly technical subject, and to use original documents to give concrete illustrations of the limiting conditions of sea warfare, thus removing some common misconceptions such as that the big Spanish ships of the Armada were defeated by cockleshells manned by volunteers. Subjects include the seaworthiness of ships in Elizabethan times; Drake's views on strategy; sea punishments; Kempenfelt's 1782 design for a signal book; victuals; the battle of Kentish Knock (1562); the 1803 defences against invasion; Nelson's watch off Toulon; the coppersing of ships; and many other topics giving insights into the history and development of the British navy.

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Select Naval Documents

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PREFACE

THE use of 'source-books' in historical studies has been justified by experience: the imagination can hardly fail to be quickened by the living voices of the past. In addition to this purpose—the provision of colour and the heightening of the personal aspect, we have another—the smoothing of the approach to a highly technical subject. Naval History is so different from land History, and sailing ships are so different from steamships, that the subject abounds in pitfalls. The belief is still common that the 'big ships' of the Armada were defeated by 'cockle-shells' manned by volunteers; plans of battles still appear in which ships are shown sailing straight into the wind; the strategy of blockade is frequently discussed in the abstract, apart from its practical problems. The cure for such misconceptions lies in concrete illustrations of the limiting conditions of sea warfare. Many of the points emphasized may at first seem trivial: unless they are made vivid, they are not realized to be vital. If we appear to lay too much stress upon administrative defects, we would remind our readers that they only heighten the fame of the admirals who triumphed in spite of them.

It is obvious that a book of this size can in no sense be exhaustive, but can deal only with certain aspects: there are large gaps which must be filled by the text-book, which this selection is intended to supplement, not to replace. Thus, while conflicting evidence is produced, for example, on the tactics employed at the Chesapeake in September, 1781, no direct mention is made of Lord Howe's tactics on June 1, 1794. Again, a considerable space has been allotted to the work of Kempenfelt, to whose genius scant justice is usually done. Many problems

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of strategy, tactics and administration are illustrated by the reproduction of a single document, when a dozen would not have been superfluous.

Lack of space, too, has made us avoid such disputed questions as the precise meaning of 'deck' in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and has led us to make our notes as brief as possible, at the risk of their appearing dogmatic: they are designedly merely introductory or explanatory, to allow more room for Drake, Hawke, Kempenfelt and Nelson.

The papers here printed may be divided into two classes. The first class consists of documents, such as the Fighting Instructions and the Trafalgar Memorandum, which are of great importance in themselves, and which have been frequently printed at length, but not in a single volume: most of these are here reprinted by kind permission of the Navy Records Society, to whose volumes this book is intended to be an elementary introduction, and without which its compilation could not have been attempted. Where there is no *locus classicus*, we have tried to choose the more lively and less accessible illustrations. Many of the passages in this class appear in print for the first time.

In two respects we have not strictly adhered to the rules of scholarship. Since limitations of space have forced us to weigh the claims of almost every sentence, we have made so many omissions (without changing the general sense) that we have thought it best not to indicate them by means of the usual sign. Secondly, though it goes against the grain to alter words like 'bittacle,' 'fadom,' and 'Cales,' we have, except in one or two extracts, modernised the spelling and punctuation for the convenience of readers who are unfamiliar with the older forms.

We are deeply indebted to Mr W. G. Perrin, Admiralty Librarian, for his ready and invaluable help both in suggestion and in the reading of the MS. Our warm thanks are also due

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Acknowledgment is further due to Mr O. F. Morshead, Pepysian Librarian of Magdalene College, Cambridge, to the officials in charge of the Search Room, Public Record Office, and to those of the Manuscripts Room, British Museum, for their invariable courtesy.

Our best thanks are due to Professor G. A. R. Callender for advice on the arrangement of our material, to Messrs P. F. R. Bashford and Arthur Chambers for French translations, and to Mr D. F. Ferguson for help in the preparation of the MS. for the press.

H. W. H.

E. A. H.

ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE
DARTMOUTH.

July 1922

FROM the second edition we have omitted the old Nos. 101 and 102, which were mainly of political interest, and No. 121, which has been proved spurious. In their place we print a document relating to the early history of 'Divisions' (which we have numbered 101 and 102 in order to avoid altering the numbering of the others) and an additional one on the reform of the Signal Book.

H. W. H.

E. A. H.

July 1935

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ABBREVIATIONS

P.R.O. = Public Record Office.

S.P. Dom. = State Papers, Domestic (in P.R.O.).

Cal. S.P. Sp. = Calendar of State Papers, Spanish.

Cal. S.P. Ven. = Calendar of State Papers, Venetian.

N.R.S. = Publications of the Navy Records Society.