

**VOYAGES OF DRAKE &
GILBERT: SELECT NARRATIVES
FROM THE "PRINCIPAL
NAVIGATIONS" OF HAKLUYT**

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Voyages of Drake & Gilbert: select narratives from the "Principal navigations" of Hakluyt by
Edward John Payne

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EDWARD JOHN PAYNE

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Voyages of Drake & Gilbert

SELECT NARRATIVES FROM THE
'PRINCIPAL NAVIGATIONS' OF HAKLUYT

EDITED BY

EDWARD JOHN PAYNE

WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES, MAPS, ETC., BY

C. RAYMOND BEAZLEY

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NOTE

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THE Introduction to this book is taken from the larger selection (*Voyages of the Elizabethan Seamen*: edited by E. J. Payne; with additional notes, &c., by C. Raymond Beazley: 1907), which contains the voyages of Hawkins, Frobisher, Drake, Gilbert, Amadas and Barlow, and Cavendish.

See Will, 5, 100

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INTRODUCTION

MR. FROUDE has happily characterized the 'Principal Navigations' of Hakluyt as 'the prose epic of the modern English nation.' This liberal estimate of Hakluyt's labours contrasts amusingly with an opinion once put forth by an eminent Professor of Modern History in the sister University. Professor Smyth accounted the 'Principal Navigations' nothing but 'an unwieldy and unsightly mass,' only likely to be burrowed into by a few speculative persons, bent upon tracing out 'the steps which lead to permanent alterations and improvements in the concerns of mankind.' Only the mere lover of old books will deny that Hakluyt's blackletter folios are both unwieldy and unsightly. But no one who knows them will consent to dismiss them as containing nothing but raw material for the use of the philosopher. They contain episodes which are integral parts of our national history—episodes to which the English reader cannot but recur again and again, with an emotion akin to that which a Greek may be supposed to have felt while listening to the exploits of the Homeric heroes. And no one who has experienced this

feeling will be disposed to quarrel with Mr. Froude for denominating Hakluyt our national prose epic.

Among the heroes of this epic one group undeniably stands forth with commanding prominence. Hakluyt's work is mainly the monument of the great English navigators and maritime adventurers of his own time, who overthrew the Spanish colossus that bestrode the ocean, established that naval supremacy on which after-ages reared the fabric of the British Empire, and prepared the way for the founders of the great Anglo-American nation. If the interest which men command with posterity depends on the importance of the services which they render to their country, on the breadth, the variety and the originality of their designs, as well as on the measure of success which attends them—on their patriotism and force of character, and on the wealth of dramatic incident embodied in their careers, few more interesting groups can be found in English history, or in any other. Conspicuous in its forefront stand the three famous navigators whose voyages are commemorated in the present volume. Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake are always remembered among us as the three lieutenants of the admiral who repulsed the Spanish Armada. It is sometimes forgotten that they were the very men who by their assaults on the Spanish possessions in America had done most to provoke the Spanish invasion of England. The brilliancy of their exploits in the New World induced men like Gilbert, Raleigh, and Cavendish, scholars and gentlemen-adventurers, and soldiers rather than sailors, to take up the movement which the three seamen had started. The principal figure in the group, in the eyes

of contemporaries, was undoubtedly Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh's fame rested rather on the magnificence of his projects than on the extent of his achievements. The dream of his life was to oust Spain from America, and thereby to make England the greatest power in the Christian world. History judges by results. Had Raleigh permanently colonized 'Virginia,' subjugated the caciques of Florida, made himself master of the riches of La Grand Copal, ransacked the Apalachian mountains of their fabled wealth in gold, crystal, rubies, and diamonds, and thence marched southwards to Mexico—had he then discovered the imaginary kingdom of El Dorado in Guiana and annexed it to the dominions of his sovereign, invaded New Granada from the Orinoco, marched to Quito and Cuzco, and permanently secured for England what Drake called the 'Treasure of the World,' he would have done something more than keep the place assigned to him among his contemporaries by contemporary opinion. He would have ranked as the greatest Englishman of his own or any other time. But his projects, one and all, ended in failure, and his fame stands eclipsed by that of the less imaginative adventurers whose successes inspired him.

Yet though Gilbert, Raleigh, and Cavendish are only secondary figures among the great Elizabethan maritime adventurers, history will always rank them with Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake as a single group, because they all toiled in the same field and with the same object. To break the maritime power of the most formidable prince in Europe, and to throw open to the English people that New World which he arrogantly claimed as his own, was the end to which they devoted