

ADMIRAL BLAKE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649099702

Admiral Blake by David Hannay

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PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
LONDON

HE.B
B6364
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English Worthies

EDITED BY ANDREW LANG

ADMIRAL BLAKE

BY

DAVID HANNAY

NEW YORK

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1886

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

THE authorities for the life of Blake are scanty and of dubious value. He is, of course, frequently mentioned in the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic), 1649-57, but the references to him are in a great majority of cases purely official and of little interest. Other mention of him is to be found in Rushworth, Thurloe, and the compilers and memoir-writers of the time. In Thurloe are some of his despatches, and of the orders sent him when on foreign service in his later years.

An account of the first battle of the Dutch war was published by authority under the title of 'The Answer of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England to three Papers delivered in to the Council of State by the Lords Ambassadors Extraordinary of the States-General of the United Provinces.' It gives the English version of the preliminaries of the encounter, and may be compared with the Dutch story as told in the life of Cornelius Van Tromp, Martin's son and successor.

There are also official or semi-official 'Narratives' of the capture of the Plate Ships, and of the attack on Santa Cruz, published by authority.

No life of the Admiral was written till nearly half a century after his death. In 1704 one appeared in a collection of 'Lives English and Foreign.' It was an attempt to supply a want with indifferent means. When the

reaction against Walpole's policy had brought on the war of Jenkin's Ear, and there was a revival of interest in the old naval glories of the country, two lives, by very different hands, were written to meet the popular demand. Dr. Johnson turned the life of the collection into good English. His short biography has, of course, an independent literary value, but it does not pretend to be an original authority.

About the same time there appeared 'A History and Life' professing to be the work of a gentleman bred in the family. It was manifestly written in Grub Street while Vernon's capture of Portobello was a fresh and glorious feat, but if the author did not use up some local tradition he was a clever fellow with a dash of Defoe in him.

Mr. Hepworth Dixon's 'Life,' published in 1852, is a work of undoubted research, and had at least the advantage of being written before his style had reached its full maturity.

A long and careful article on Blake will be found in 'The Dictionary of National Biography,' vol. v.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. TO THE CIVIL WAR	1
II. THREE SIEGES	11
III. THE NAVY OF THE COMMONWEALTH	35
IV. THE PURSUIT OF RUPERT	48
V. IN THE CHANNEL, AND AT WHITEHALL	64
VI. WAR WITH HOLLAND	75
VII. THE DUEL WITH TROMP	98
VIII. IN THE MEDITERRANEAN	114
IX. CHASING THE PLATE SHIPS	133
X. THE CAPTURE OF THE PLATE SHIPS	151
XI. SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE	166
XII. CONCLUSION	179
INDEX	191