

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE
AND THE SPANISH
ARMADA**

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Huntingdonshire and the Spanish Armada by W. Mackreth Noble

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W. MACKRETH NOBLE

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE
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HUNTINGDONSHIRE AND THE
SPANISH ARMADA.

EDITED FROM ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS.

Halliam BY
W. MACKRETH NOBLE, B.A.,
Rector of Wistow, Hunts.

'Attend all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
I sing of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days,
When that great fleet invincible, against her bore, in vain,
The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts in Spain.'

LORD MACAULAY.

LONDON:
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1896.

DEDICATED TO

THE RIGHT HON. LORD DE RAMSEY

P R E F A C E.

THE following account of the preparations made in this county to resist the Spanish Armada in the year 1588 is taken principally from a manuscript once in the possession of Lord de Ramsey, but now in the British Museum.

The manuscript contains the muster roll of the company commanded by Oliver Cromwell (the date being June 3, 1588), copies of several despatches from the Government of the day, as well as of letters from Sir Henry Cromwell, who took a prominent part in organizing the forces of the county.

Perhaps nothing could show the position in the county occupied by the Cromwell family, or the national spirit of loyalty to Queen and country and determination to resist the invader, more plainly than these documents.

Never before or since, we may suppose, has loyalty reached such a pitch of enthusiastic devotion as when the Queen (Elizabeth), in speaking to her troops at Tilbury, said that, though a woman, she had the heart of a King, and of a KING OF ENGLAND too, and that rather than survive the ruin and slavery of her people, she would herself lead her soldiers into battle and die with them.

But previous to this speech of the Queen, evidence was forthcoming as to her subjects' disposition. In a letter written by Lord St. John from Hinchinbrook, dated May 2, 1588, he says :

'I am further to commend unto your Lordships particularlie the great willingness and careful endeavours of this gentleman,

Sir H. Cromwell, in this service, as well for his furtherance in the general advancement hereof, in the shire, as for his own private charges in furnishing of a very large number of horsemen in most serviceable manner to his great cost and expense. The which if it may please your Lordships to render unto him thankful acceptance of and by your hon. means to procure her majesty to take knowledge thereof, which gracious liking it will procure him to persevere, and draw others to follow his good example. Thus Like I am to entreat you of Sir Edward Wingfield, who beside a large proportion of horsemen, by him furnished, hath also let in the county a band of 150 footmen well appointed and trained at his own charge to be employed in her Majesty's service.

'The meaner sort of gentlemen have also behaved well, as may appear to your Lordships by their voluntary offers.'

To oppose the Spaniards in case they should effect a landing in England put into the field three armies, variously estimated at from 90,000 to over 130,000 men. One of these armies guarded the southern coast, another was held in reserve to be sent wherever required, and the third was stationed at Tilbury to defend London.

With the last of these three armies were the Huntingdonshire troops.

In order to prevent the Spaniards landing, 191 vessels were equipped by the English—much smaller, however, than those of the Spanish navy. The Channel fleet was under the command of Lord Howard of Effingham, who was the husband of the only child of the Lord St. John so frequently mentioned in this book. Under him were the best and bravest captains of the day among them Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher.

Lord Howard's fleet engaged the Armada in the Channel, and after a running fight the Spanish fleet anchored off Calais, hoping to be able to reach Flanders and take on board the thirty or forty thousand troops furnished by the Duke of Parma.

News having reached Tilbury of the gallant fight the Channel fleet was making against such overwhelming odds, Lord Henry Seymour, who was in command of the Thames fleet intended to

guard London,* left that duty to the troops at Tilbury, sailed out to support Lord Howard, and joined him off Calais.

Eight fire-ships were sent amongst the Spanish fleet while at anchor during the night. This so alarmed the admiral that he ordered the cables to be cut. The English fleet then fell upon the Spaniards while in confusion, got between them and the port where they hoped to land, and drove them northwards.

The wind being south-west, the Spaniards had no alternative but to sail into the North Sea, try to round Scotland, and so reach home.

In the fighting of July and August the Spaniards lost fifteen ships, seventeen were wrecked on the coast of Ireland, and many were never heard of again, so that fifty-two battered hulks were all that returned to Spain of that magnificent armament which was too boastfully called 'The Invincible Armada.'

The manuscripts give the exact date of the arrival in the county of the news of the beginning of the fighting (pp. 22, 23),

* The Thames fleet consisted of the

<i>Vanguard,</i>	250 men,	Capt. Sir Wm. Winter.
<i>Rainbowe,</i>	250 "	" L ^d Hen. Seymour.
<i>Antelope,</i>	250 "	" Sir H. Palmer,
<i>Bull,</i>	100 "	" Turner.
<i>Tiger,</i>	100 "	" (* * *)
<i>Tremontance,</i>	70 "	" Luke Ward.
<i>Scout,</i>	70 "	" Astley.
<i>Achates,</i>	60 "	" Rigges.
<i>Martin,</i>	35 "	" Boore.
<i>Sonne,</i>	30 "	" White.
<i>Signett,</i>	20 "	" Ward.
<i>George,</i>	20 "	" Hodges.
<i>The Galley,</i>	—	" Borrough.

1255 men.

The above vessels belonged to the Royal Navy, but in addition Lord Seymour had three 'Hoies' from Ipswich and Harwich, five ships and one pinnace from the Cinque Ports, one ship from Colchester, one from Aldborough, one ship and one pinnace from each of Yarmouth and Lyna, and two ships and one pinnace from Hull.

which came apparently by letter, not by beacon-light, as Lord Macaulay says. It is remarkable, too, that it was transmitted by Lord Mordaunt, whose sister was a 'Recusant' (p. 3).

They also show that some regard was still paid to the old divisions into hundreds, each hundred being required to furnish about one hundred men.

Sir Henry Cromwell's speeches are valuable as indicating the feeling that animated the nation, and though his language is 'strong,' to have suppressed them would have been to give a false idea of the times, the issues at stake, and of Sir Henry himself.

History is only valuable when truly reported.

To Lord de Ramsey, for so kindly allowing him the use of his valuable manuscripts, the editor begs to tender his sincere thanks.