

Preface

No alterations have been made in the original manuscript except for these reductions and a few (very rare) editorial intrusions (in square brackets) made in the interests of clarity, principally where Pepys's meaning has been made obscure by editorial compression. His accidental repetitions and omissions ('wife' for 'my wife' and so on) are left uncorrected where they do not impede understanding. They are very few and have a certain significance in that they reflect the fact that he was writing informally and not for publication.

The spelling follows that of the text in the eleven-volume edition and is as far as possible Pepys's own. He wrote plainly and only a handful of passages where the ink has faded or the writing is cramped are difficult to read. The problems of transcription arise rather from other causes. One is that the shorthand is inefficient in that it fails to represent diphthongs and to distinguish between long and short vowels (e.g. between 'bit' and 'bite', 'ris' and 'rise', 'down' and 'done'). It also makes it easy to confuse certain vowels when they occur between consonants.⁴ A second source of difficulty is that Pepys often uses abbreviations in both the shorthand and the longhand, making the initial letter or syllable do service for the whole word. The longhand 'h', for instance, stands for all forms of the verb 'to have', and the choice between 'has' and 'hath' has to be made by the editor. Pepys's own longhand spellings in his letters of the period have provided the means of determining many of these doubtful points. Where names in longhand are abbreviated, the context usually gives the clue to the answer – as to whether 'WH' represents Will Hewer or Will Howe, or whether 'Exch' is the Exchange or the Exchequer.

In the case of certain shorthand words, the spelling is made clear by the shorthand itself – 'then' for the modern 'than', 'themselfs' for 'themselves', 'fallow' for 'follow' etc. In other cases, we can sometimes reconstruct a probable spelling from Pepys's longhand usages. (Certainty is impossible because his usages were far from consistent.) But in those cases where we have no guidance from the shorthand and no evidence from his longhand habits, shorthand words are spelt out in modern style. To this there is no alternative, since there was no standard seventeenth-century orthography.

Pepys's eccentric ways with capital and lower-case letters have