

Introduction

permitted irregularities in the disposal of prize goods. In June 1667, while peace negotiations were under way, the Dutch made a spoiling raid on the river approaches to the capital, carrying off from Chatham the *Royal Charles*, the pride of the English fleet.

Through all these difficulties Pepys kept his head, though not without fears for the outcome. He threw on work. In 1664 he was appointed a member of the Fishery Corporation. In 1665 he undertook the Treasurership of the Tangier Committee in addition to his other duties – an arduous appointment, but lucrative, gained in competition with a well-placed and high-born rival, Henry Brouncker. To live in the company of crisis stimulated him. Friendships and love affairs multiplied; theatre visits became more frequent; diary entries longer. In February 1665 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, where he took his place as one of the amateurs of miscellaneous learning who constituted most of the Society's membership, and attended discourses and demonstrations on all manner of subjects – from comets and hydrostatics to French methods of baking bread – watching the experiments with a delight that was occasionally tinged with incomprehension.

But work for the navy remained his first concern. It was, of course, impossible for the Navy Board, under the spur of war – and of Pepys – to become, of a sudden, quite united and thoroughly efficient. It remained a prey to delays and corruption – its accounts improperly kept and in arrear, its meetings irregular. But it had its successes. It handled greater sums of money than had ever been granted for war purposes before; it made larger contracts; at Pepys's initiative it achieved reforms in the victualling system and the methods of checking pursers' and storekeepers' accounts. It was Pepys who defended the office before Parliament – his three-hour speech on pay tickets on 5 March 1668 was clearly a notable performance – and who in November 1669 drew up an eighteen-point memorandum replying with crushing effect to the report of the Brooke House committee which had criticised the office's conduct of its responsibilities during the war.¹

By the time the diary ended in the spring of 1669, Pepys's professional and social success was well established. He was, in Albemarle's phrase, 'the right hand of the Navy'; master of an elegant household; owner of a coach and pair; rich enough to retire