

Preface

from a knowledge of historical fact or of Pepys's orthography and linguistic usages elsewhere than in the diary. The commentary, in which I had the help of several colleagues, was principally my responsibility. This edition, occupying eleven volumes, was the first in which the diary had been printed without excisions of any sort and in which the text had been equipped with a large-scale editorial apparatus. The present volume is a recension of that work, reproducing in reduced form its text and (to a less extent) its editorial commentary. It is designed for the reader who requires a version which can be contained within one volume but which at the same time gives a substantial proportion of what Pepys wrote.

The selection amounts to about one-third of the original million-and-a-quarter words. Something is lost in any selection – perhaps in this case the loss is principally the impression given by the full diary of the author's prodigious mental energy – but I have tried to make the abridgement as representative of the whole work as I can. There is no attempt to offer 'The Best of Pepys'. It is designed to reflect as clearly as its parent text Pepys's concern to write both autobiography and history, and his habit of reporting the usual as well as the unusual.

A variety of methods has been employed in making cuts in the text. The biggest reductions have been made by omitting entire entries – sometimes a whole succession of them. At other points sentences or paragraphs are sacrificed, and, on a few rare occasions, phrases are telescoped where this can be done without damage to the sense. For instance, at 27 May 1663, where Pepys reports parliamentary news from his cousin Roger Pepys, the words here given in italics are omitted: 'He tells me that the King hath sent to them [the Commons] to hasten to make an end by Midsummer, *because of his going into the country*; so they have set upon four bills to despatch'. (Neither at this point nor elsewhere are marks of omission inserted.) On the other hand, as often as possible, whole entries have been reproduced without abbreviation so that the reader may appreciate the virtues of Pepys's habit of recounting the full tale of each day's happenings and observations. Similarly, where he tells the story of a critically important episode – the Fire or the Dutch raid on the Medway or his affair with Deb Willet – there are virtually no excisions of any sort.