

THE NAVAL HERITAGE. By David Mathew. (Collins; 12s. 6d.).

The war years, so deficient in the production of poetry, have brought English prose to a new high level. This has been shown, not only in the admirable publications of the Services recording their brilliant achievements, but also in works of history and historical fiction dealing with the English past. The part this country has played in world affairs has been and is so consistent with her historical traditions that a general interest has focussed itself upon those main episodes in our history where the English genius has shown itself most vividly; as, for instance, in the Napoleonic wars which Mr. Arthur Bryant has so well portrayed.

It is, therefore, most fitting that Dr. Mathew should have chosen this moment to give us an account of that part of our national story which he is so well equipped to do, *The Naval Heritage*. To this task he has applied the technique which he and his brother have perfected, that of illustrating general principles and movements by particular instances and characters, richly coloured and derived largely from original and unpublished sources. His aim, in general, is to trace 'the inter-action of the Navy . . . and the general life of England', to show how the social conditions of the country at any one moment were mirrored upon the decks of the frigates and ships of the line. But in doing so he has included many fascinating details of Naval life, sea-battles, the design and material of warships, and especially the characters of the great Admirals. In the section on the Hanoverian Navy, which is the most fully treated, the sketches of Lords Howe, St. Vincent, Rodney and Hood are especially valuable. This does not mean that the later Naval personalities and developments are neglected. One of Dr. Mathew's most interesting passages is that describing the expedition of Napier into Russian waters during the Crimean War, while the evolution of the ironclad and the impact of Lord Fisher's personality and mind upon the Navy are very fully described. The magnificent record of the Fleets in this war is still better appreciated when seen against this background and for this reason alone we should be grateful to Dr. Mathew for this new service in adding to the general knowledge of our common heritage. P.U.F.

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