



Poxed and Scurvied: The Story of Sickness and Health at Sea

Kevin Brown

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When European sailors began to explore the world, keeping crews healthy on long voyages became an acute problem. As navies developed, the well-being of crews became a dominant factor in the success of naval operations, and the Royal Navy led the way in shipboard medicine, sponsoring many of the advances in diet and hygiene, which by the Napoleonic Wars gave its fleets a significant advantage over all its enemies. Eventually, the struggle to improve the fitness of seamen became a national concern, manifest in a series of far-reaching public health measures, generally directed against the effects of drunkenness and the pox.

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