

THE PEPYS TERCENTENARY

HERBERT L. STEWART

A YEAR ago, we were threatened with the celebration of a tercentenary before it was due. There is really no ground to believe that Samuel Pepys was born in 1632, and but for the impatience of those eager to revive so piquant a memory the genuine date—23rd February, 1633—might scarcely have been questioned. But when the real time came, when one could mark the tercentenary with a clear historical conscience, it was taken up with a zest that is very eloquent indeed of the hold he has upon the imagination of his countrymen.

I

Everyone thinks of Pepys primarily as a diarist, and very many people know him as a diarist only. Though the *Diary* itself sets forth at least nine years of his active career in the public service, it is not upon those sections that the interest of the reader is most likely to dwell, and their content is very easily forgotten in haste to learn more of the personal qualities, personal adventures, personal foibles which this most intimate of autobiographies has to disclose. In the present year a vigorous effort is being made, if not to forget Pepys the diarist, at least to bring Pepys the naval reformer into the centre of the stage, and it does appear as if that aspect of him had been unduly neglected. At all events, a man sufficiently important to be studied on any side will be better understood even in that single reference when one has reconstructed his whole story, and the whole story of Pepys may be soon told.

He was a Londoner, born in Salisbury Court, near St. Bride's churchyard, one of the eleven children of John Pepys, a tailor. There is no record of the part his father took in the great civil convulsions of his childhood, but it is known that the family had relatives at Huntingdon, where Samuel went for some time to school,¹ and it is not perhaps too fanciful to suppose that he caught up something of the local enthusiasm for Huntingdon's great citizen. Cromwell's victories were, of course, on every lip. Later, as a schoolboy at St. Paul's, Pepys was a youthful zealot for the cause of the parliament. He was an eye-witness of the beheading of

1. *Diary*, 15th March, 1660.

Charles I on 30th January, 1649, and so little was he affected by the scene as to suggest to a companion that a preacher might well take for his text at such a time "The memory of the wicked shall rot".¹

The following year he went into residence at Cambridge, where he was elected to a sizarship, first at Trinity Hall, afterwards at Magdalene. It is suggestive of his indigence that he had to avail himself of what was then a charitable provision, and he has scarcely anything to say of his Cambridge days except that at Magdalene there was a "preciseness in their discourse, specially on Saturday nights" which on a visit seven years after his graduation he found to have disappeared. The later visit was in March, 1660, on the eve of the Restoration. Cambridge was already shedding its Cromwellian atmosphere.

Though poor, and of humble origin, Pepys had at least one influential kinsman, in Sir Edward Montagu, afterwards Lord Sandwich, and it must surely have been on Montagu's encouragement that he married at the age of twenty-two, before he had a post or fixed income of any kind. At all events, he and his wife, a French Huguenot girl, then only fifteen years old, immediately after their wedding settled down as part of Sir Edward's household, where Pepys acted as manager or steward. This was the beginning of his career.

A small clerkship in the Exchequer, secured no doubt by the same influential kinship, introduced him to the public service. It may be that Montagu desired to quarter a poor relation upon the State, rather than accept the personal burden indefinitely. But from whatever motive it was done, the State was a gainer. Pepys removed with his wife to a house in Axe Yard, Westminster, and in the Exchequer—feeling that his post was important in promise far beyond its immediate advantages—he began to show the industry for which he was afterwards famous.

It was the Restoration year. A few months trial of Richard Cromwell were enough to show that Oliver's nomination of his successor had been, in Carlyle's phrase, laying the Twelve Labours of Hercules upon an un-Herculean back. At the moment when *Pepys's Diary* opens, the signs had begun to point to a monarchist revival. Certain regiments of the invincible army were quartered near Westminster, under the strangely divided command of Fleetwood, Lambert, Desborough and Harrison, while the bulk of it was on service in Scotland under Monk. Incessant quarrels of parliament with local army leaders and of local army leaders with

1. *Diary*, Oct. 13th, 1660. Cf. *Nov.* 1.

one another had worn out the faith of even zealous republicans, while in the regiments on the other side of the Tweed anger was fast rising at the report of such scandalous disorder in the capital. More and more clearly the choice seemed to lie between recall of the royal house and submission to a military despotism in which the despot might be different from week to week. Pepys, doing his daily task at a Government office, committed cautious memoranda to his *Diary* at this time about the tokens of change, especially when Monk at the head of 7,000 troops had started southward, and men remembered how Monk's first command in the civil war had been with the royal standards. When the free parliament—or rather Convention—assembled in response to his "writs" had voted to bring back Charles Stuart to the throne, Pepys records the event without a word on the wisdom or unwisdom of its choice. Even in cipher, on some subjects, he was reticent. It is safe to guess that when during the following months he saw Fifth-Monarchy men hanged,¹ and regicides not only hanged but drawn and quartered, he kept his reflections discreetly to himself.

What else could one expect from a minor clerk in the Exchequer? It flashed upon Pepys's mind that he had expressed himself once very incautiously as he stood in the crowd at Whitehall watching the execution of Charles I. Was his unfortunate remark likely to be remembered and reported?² Anyhow, he must take his chance, and adjust himself with all speed to the new régime. It was a great joy to him to be included in the official party which sailed for Holland in the *Swiftsure*, to conduct Charles II back to the throne of his father. Sir Edward Montagu still continued to press his kinsman's claims. He was himself in such high favour at Court as to be raised from a baronetcy to the Earldom of Sandwich, and he obtained for Pepys the position of "Clerk of the Acts of the Navy", with a place on the Navy Board. The promotion was rapid enough to turn the heads of most civil servants. But for Pepys it meant only more strenuous effort to use the wider opportunity, a change into a more commodious and impressive house, and the advance to a more generous scale of living, after very cautious review of accounts and forecast of coming liabilities.

For the next ten years he was immersed in Admiralty business, developing both enthusiasm and talent for a task which had been at first altogether unfamiliar. Inspection of yards, purchase of supplies, victualling of ships, enlistment of crews,—all acquired an interest as he came to see in the navy both importance and possi-

1. *Diary*, Jan. 21, 1661.

2. *ibid.*, Nov. 1st, 1660.

bilities which no one else saw. As the Duke of Albermarle remarked, he was attentive to features that no one else was troubling about,¹ and naturally, for Pepys felt that the island kingdom, whose security must always be on the sea, and which had in the past produced the great Elizabethan seamen, was being ill served by those into whose care her marine service had passed. Within three years after his appointment he was becoming known as "the right hand of the navy".² How he toiled at accumulating data is to be seen in his collection and arrangement of material for his projected *Navalia*, and he was increasingly consulted—though his advice was not seldom forgotten or ignored—by the heads of the Government. Like all technical advisers before and since, he had his hopeless conflicts with the Treasury, and amid the disasters of the Dutch war he could but confide to his cipher record his views on the real but unmentionable cause.

Those were years too of another interest, quite outside his official occupation. Pepys was among the earliest and most eager promoters of the lately established Royal Society, in which the quickened zeal of scientific research had brought together so many Englishmen whose names are immortal. It fell to his lot, in 1685, to sign officially the order authorizing the publication of Newton's *Principia*. By that time he had been twenty years in active membership. One reads with curious interest of the experiments that were being conducted on the day of his initiation, 15th February, 1665. They were experiments, he says, "on fire, and how it goes out in a place where the air is not free, and sooner out where the air is exhausted" . . . "which they showed by an engine on purpose". It sounds somewhat simple for a Royal Society exhibit. But those were the days when the modern science of chemistry was being founded, and Boyle was there showing its foundation principles to his colleagues. Within the same Society Sir William Petty was setting the first pattern in statistics, Ray and Woodward and Sir Hans Sloane were pioneer naturalists, while Sir Christopher Wren was presenting new ideas in architecture and John Evelyn on scientific gardening. It was a constant joy to Pepys to follow this expanding knowledge. Many entries in his *Diary* are about this occupation of his leisure time, when such enquires were a real novelty, and a new scientific instrument was the exciting news of the hour. Here and there the entry has a touch of humour. We read of the observations on Jupiter and Saturn which he and his friend Reeves took "from the leads" with a "twelve-foot glass";³

1. *Diary*, April 24, 1665.

2. *loc. cit.*

3. *ibid.*, Aug. 7, 1666.

also about "that most curious bauble", the microscope, which Pepys had bought for £5-10-0;¹ and again about a contribution of £40 which he gave, somewhat reluctantly, to the building of Royal Society premises, his enthusiasm having for once a hard struggle with his thrift². It was one of the current impish suggestions that experiments on blood-transfusion should go beyond dogs and cats, and should include letting the blood of a Quaker into the veins of an archbishop!³

In 1673 his fortunes reached their highest point. He was favoured by the accident of outer circumstance. It was a time of rising passion in the country in regard to the safeguards of Protestantism, and the prospect that the next king would be a Roman Catholic was already rousing those efforts which, six years later, culminated in the Exclusion Bill. Their immediate product was the Test Act, excluding all but Protestants from tenure of public office, though not from succession to the Crown. The Act received royal assent on March 29, 1673, and was naturally followed by the Duke of York's resignation from Secretaryship of the Navy. Pepys was promoted to the vacant place, and a few months later was elected to parliament as member for Castle Rising. The obvious merits by which he had earned this did not save him from unscrupulous attack; indeed it was his very merits which roused keenest hostility. Years earlier he had been warned that his zeal against corruption was exasperating the whole naval service,⁴ and in 1669—in the midst of his sorrow for the death of his wife—he had to meet a fierce personal onslaught on his conduct in the Commission of Public Accounts. His candidature for parliament was opposed on the extraordinary ground that he was a disguised Papist! If this charge could have been made good, he would, of course, have been disqualified for his position at the Admiralty as well as for a seat in parliament. But a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Shaftesbury, whose name ought to have been a guarantee of strictness to even the most violent Protestant, investigated the charge and reported it to be groundless.

The struggle of those years to raise the navy from a ruinous to a competent condition was disturbed by recurrence of the same futile calumny. Men who had personal grudge against Pepys for thwarting their intrigues or castigating their negligence were keen to exploit the chance of that atmosphere of suspicion, of alarm and of general hysteria so vividly described in *Peveril of the Peak*.

1. *Diary*, Aug. 13, 1664.

2. *ibid.*, April 2, 1668.

3. *ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1666.

4. *ibid.*, July 31, 1663.

A ready ear was lent to the tale that Pepys, known as an intimate friend of the Duke of York, had betrayed naval secrets to the French Government, especially when a former servant in the Pepys household swore that the Secretary of the British Admiralty was a Roman Catholic in private life. Slowly it emerged that the chief informant about dealings with France was a scoundrel seeking revenge upon the man who had exposed his frauds, and the former servant confessed on his deathbed that his story about the Pepys household was a fabrication. But the charges had sufficient vogue to procure the arrest of Pepys and his confinement in the Tower until — after a delay longer than should have been required — the “case” against him was once more exploded, and he was again free, though no longer Secretary of the Navy.

Whether it was the suspicion of his Protestantism which endeared him to the Duke of York, or the too obvious favour of the Duke of York which caused his Protestantism to be suspected, it seems impossible to say. But there is no doubt about the intimacy of the friendship, and it is clear that the duke exerted himself perseveringly to make good to Pepys the loss he had suffered. One Court favour after another marked the few years between his deposition from the Admiralty and his restoration at the royal initiative. He was placed once more in control of naval administration. When the Duke of York became James II his prestige was much enhanced, and naturally three years later he had to share his patron's doom. His short tenure of office was notable rather for its promise than for its fulfilment. With his old vigour he summoned a Commission, in 1686, to investigate the numerous faults which had arisen in the Service during the interval of his own absence. But the public situation was fast growing too disordered for quiet administrative work, suspicions were once again thickening around the head of the secretary as the monarch who had restored him lost his own ground, and the flight of James to France was the signal for Pepys once more to resign. About the senseless revival of the old charges against him, and a brief renewal of his imprisonment for enquiry, it is enough to say that they were but aspects of the contemporary tumult.

But his active career had indeed ended for good in 1690. His *Memoirs of the Navy*, which appeared in that year, served to remind the framers of the Revolution Settlement that high service to the State had not been found always incompatible with zeal for the House of Stuart, but under William III there was no proposal to reinstate so obvious a Jacobite in high public trust. Pepys in retirement for the next dozen years found much to engage his

attention,—his library, the collecting of ballad literature, society of such friends as Newton and Evelyn, the opportunities he had as Governor of Christ's Hospital to influence the management of a great school. For a time it had seemed possible that he might be called back to Cambridge as Provost of King's College, and he was undoubtedly held in high esteem in learned circles. It cannot indeed be said that his old age was one of complete contentment, as shown by a reference in one of his letters to the "unaccountable usage" he had sustained, and for which he continued to hope that reparation of some sort would yet be made. But the reparation never came, nor indeed could he reasonably have expected under the new régime anything more than an opportunity of honourable retirement. Probably his greatest gratification was the letter of thanks in Latin from the University of Oxford for his gift of a portrait of Wallis. How he must have enjoyed the opening words—*Vir ornatissime!* And the reference to those wooden walls with which he had fortified his native land, so that while others had achieved so much for her prosperity, it was he who had made the achievements possible. That tribute came to him in 1702,—sweet no doubt to one so eager, in his own words—to be "a man much taken notice of." Seven months later he died.

II

It is due not only to his memory, but to the historical opportunities of this occasion, that Pepys should be considered in respect of what he thought his own chief work. No one knows whether he meant to be known as a diarist, or whether his memoirs of himself were made for his own eye alone. But beyond doubt he did desire to be remembered as a naval reformer. And by degrees the greatness of his achievement in transforming—almost recreating—the English navy has been made clear.

It was in 1677, when he was Secretary of the Navy, with a seat in parliament, and with fast increasing public distinction, that he made his memorable and successful appeal to have thirty new ships built at once. But the need for altogether novel measures in this service had been impressing itself on his mind when he was a subordinate official. Pepys was a member of the Navy Board from 1662, during the years of the disastrous war with Holland which had its climax when Admiral Ruyter's fleet in 1667 sailed up the Thames to Gravesend, forced the boom which protected the Medway, burned three English warships at anchor in the river, and withdrew in complete mastery of the Channel. The *Diary* records

that people began to murmur,—to say that such things had not been wont to occur in Oliver's time.¹ It turned out, on enquiry, that when the Dutch fleet arrived, neither ships nor forts were manned on the English side to offer resistance. Naturally, parliament wanted to know what use had been made of funds meant for this purpose.

To Pepys was entrusted the questionable honour of stating the case in reply on behalf of the Navy Board. According to his own report, his speech of three hours length, stimulated by alcohol in a succession and a variety he specifies, was acclaimed on all sides as a masterpiece.²

In true official spirit he made the best of a deplorable situation, but as to his genuine view of the matter we have much better evidence than the contents of the speech. For a long time back the *Diary* had been strewn with lamentations and with direful forecasts. We read there of the shame with which he had watched bonfires lit for a victory which had never been gained. It was in March, 1667, that the great naval humiliation was suffered, and an entry in November, 1666, had recorded Pepys's belief that no English fleet would be fit to go out the following year at all. Numerous entries explain the reason. The sailors were unpaid;³ discontent among the crews was rising into frequent mutiny;⁴ a visitor asking why women so predominated on the streets of the capital would have to be told that men had fled from the peril of the navy press-gang.⁵ Discipline, according to one of the Commissioners, was in such a state as to suggest that the Devil must be in command.⁶ The *Diary* is quite frank about causes. My Lord Treasurer, wrote Pepys, would find it difficult to explain what had been done with the money the House of Commons had granted, some £4,000,000, for the needs of the Dutch war.⁷ Another memorandum will have piquant suggestiveness for those who know the methods of corruption in our time. We read that Sir W. Coventry had enquired about a scandalous rumor of timber sales, carried out under an assumed name, by a member of the Navy Commission to the Navy Board. Pepys assured him that he could safely believe it, and supplied further information of a like sort.⁸ The truth, as confided not to the House but to the *Diary*, was that though larger and larger amounts had been voted by parliament for national

1. *Diary*, 12th July, 1667.

2. *ibid.*, 8th March, 1668.

3. *ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1667.

4. *ibid.*, June 25, 1667.

5. *ibid.*, July 6, 1666.

6. *ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1668.

7. *ibid.*, Sep. 1666.

8. *ibid.*, May 9, 1667.

defence, the Treasury remained ever empty, and by October, 1666, the discrepancy between what the king had received and what he had expended for this purpose came to no less than £2,390,000. So what, Pepys triumphantly asks, has become of all this sum?¹ Peculation on one side, incompetence on the other! An entry as far back as 1664 tells us that in view of the way business was conducted by the Navy Council, it was surprising that anything succeeded at all,² and the following year Pepys writes of his friends Povy and Lord Peterborough that each thinks the other a fool, and that in that point neither is much mistaken.³

How far did Pepys contribute to the reforming of naval abuses? On his purposes and his method our information is fairly complete, not only from his own *Memoirs of the Navy*, which might be suspected of self-praise, but from the fourteen volumes of his *Admiralty Letters*, which show just how he dealt with his Department. On the degree of his success we have the invaluable evidence of an official report made in the reign of William III, after Pepys had been displaced and his work had been investigated by critics predisposed to be hostile; they reported that it had been carried out "with great exactness, sufficiency and frugality".

Of the abuses he had to combat the greatest of all, during the period when he was Clerk of the Acts, was one which neither he nor anyone else dared openly to arraign. For the impoverishment by the Treasury withholding pay, so that British sailors took service with the Dutch, and British voices could be heard from enemy ships during a naval battle, the chief blame lay with the king. What Charles II did with the money was best known to such persons as Lady Castlemaine and the Duchess of Portsmouth, but at least in those early Restoration years no investigation of subordinates could be undertaken if the trail was likely to lead to the throne. There were other matters, however, of great moment, which were not thus barred from enquiry. What Pepys saw was not corruption only, but sheer disorder of book-keeping, waste and negligence all through the Service, failure for example to discover where timber could be bought for ships most profitably, slovenly drafting of contracts, new ships allowed to decay for want of the simplest technical attention.

He was haunted by the thought that the nation's dearest interest was being managed in such a way as would bring any private concern to disaster; and as his own authority increased, discipline and order and business vigour began to supersede the reign of Chaos

1. *Diary*, Oct. 10, 1666.
2. *ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1664.
3. *ibid.*, March 27, 1665.

and Old Night. In particular, he declared war on the custom of permitting "gentlemen commanders" a license which was denied to others; he ridiculed out of existence the habit of transferring military officers with no sea training to the command of ships under the absurd title "generals at sea"; and he instituted a strict examination test for those seeking commission as naval lieutenants. His eyes, in short, were everywhere—in the dockyards, in the victualing department, on the officers absent from their ships without leave, on the previously "unaccountable" leakages in funds for which he resolved very quickly to account. The occasional severity of his letters may be appreciated by his warning to an officer seeking promotion that unless certain things in the gentleman's past were explained, he was much more likely to make a vacancy than to fill one. It is needless to add that such procedure made the Clerk of the Acts an object of incessant reviling to those who had enjoyed a more lax control. As Bagehot said of Henry Brougham—what a nuisance to a quiet administration was this vehement, industrious man, proposing to untie papers, and not proposing to overlook errors!

One of the few redeeming virtues of James II was his zeal for the good management of the navy, and while as Duke of York he held the position of Lord High Admiral, he was discerning enough to lean almost entirely upon the advice of Pepys. The famous document, issued under the duke's signature, setting forth to all officials concerned the faults which must be remedied forthwith, is known to have been the composition of the Clerk of the Acts. One may guess, too, that the recall of Pepys to the Secretaryship, five years after he had been sacrificed to the public mania about a "popish plot" was due to the influence of James upon his royal brother. When, in 1684, the reforming spirit was thus invoked again, it was to find that the demons of disorder and corruption had in the interval returned eagerly to their repast. But with an equal eagerness Pepys began his search into those foci of departmental disease which he knew only too well. He toured the dockyards, he examined the accounting, he reviewed the qualifications of officers lately appointed or promoted, and within a few months he was ready with a summary statement of what was wrong, together with what he called a "Proposition" to the king for "the recovery of the lost discipline and industry of your Navy". On his visit to the dockyards Pepys had found to his disgust that the thirty new ships, for which he had toiled so hard in 1677 to obtain a parliamentary appropriation, were already rotting, and that the slothful incompetents to whom this was due had invented an excuse about the

intrinsic defects of East Country timber! In the accounts he found the usual yawning gulf between estimates and actual cost which the fraudulent official can always manipulate to his own advantage. On every side, as he reported to the king, "supineness, wastefulness and neglect of order," so that the Service as compared with what it was ten years before had "declined to a yet more deplorable state of calamity".

The report reached the hands of Charles II only when that last illness had begun which incapacitated the king from strenuous attention to anything. But with the accession of James the project was taken up in real earnest. Special commissioners, nominated by Pepys himself for their tried and proved efficiency, entered on office in 1686, and the king at an inaugural meeting in St. James's Palace addressed them on the urgency of their duties in a speech whose authorship it needs no higher critic to detect. Not the least suggestive of the memoranda from the Secretary was a list of names of men whom he described as "eminently unsuitable" for employment, and his list of all the leading shipwrights in the kingdom had the qualities of each very candidly, often very caustically, attached. Naval officers too, who had been rejoicing in the indulgent ways of the preceding five years, felt a sudden tightening of the rein when confronted with a brand new scheme of regulations, which—for a novelty—were this time to be observed. In three years the Special Commission had completed its reforming task as set forth in the several paragraphs of the famous memorandum. If the Royal Navy has never since been chargeable with the sort of faults which at length alarmed even Charles II, the change owes at least its inauguration to the vigilant and far-seeing Minister who to most persons of our time is but the author of a flippant and only partially printable *Diary*.

III

Yet it is to the *Diary* with his private life, more than to the whole record of his public services, that one comes back in this tercentenary year. What a marvellous source-book for the phenomena of Restoration England is this intimate journal, kept in cipher for his own eye and thus with no motive to deceive, by one who was himself an average sample of Restoration citizenship, but exceptionally observant and intensely curious! In the field of social gossip, what the pedlar in the *Winter's Tale* called "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles",—and these trifles are often so revealing.

The period, for example, is generally supposed to have been at least one of courtly manners, of returning Cavalier politeness. So what

startles us in the account of an afternoon at the play is not so much to read of the audience holding up umbrellas against the rain that drips from the roof, as to read of noblemen in reliance upon their rank talking so loudly to one another as to drown the voices of the actors, and of the orange-girls who had been sent by these gentlemen with fruit to ladies in another part of the house having to come back and wrangle fiercely with their patrons for the money. It is well known that Restoration clergy had a difficult environment in which to exercise their prophetic office; but one was scarcely prepared to hear of a bishop's sermon against extravagance being interrupted by bursts of laughter in the congregation,¹ of glasses more suited to the opera being in use through the church to beguile the tedium of the ear with the diversions of the eye, or of such social strictness that a verger had to protect certain pews from being occupied by anyone below the rank of wives of knights-baronets.² As we accompany Pepys of a morning on his rounds, he will draw our attention to the new heads which have been affixed over-night in grinning ghastliness on Temple Bar; if it should be the 27th January, he will certainly ask us to wait to see the procession of three sleds conveying through the streets the three judges who had sentenced Charles I, with ropes round their necks to the gallows and back again;³ if we go with him riding in the country after dark, he will warn us of the risk that we may easily bump unawares against a suspended corpse.⁴ Pepys will take us to the House of Commons, and point out among the demonstrations of recovered liberty that profane swearing is in vogue again,⁵ and that a problem still unsolved is how to stop members of parliament from speaking simultaneously at the top of their voices, after dinner, for the space of perhaps half-an-hour.⁶ The sections of the *Diary* which cover the successive years of the Great Plague and the Great Fire disclose a good deal which we should not otherwise have suspected. It is amazing, for example, to find that amid the conflagration, when the Secretary of the Admiralty feared total loss of the building in which all his documents were stored, he had to betake himself to the palace to get the king's leave for levelling houses, and that reference to the Lord Mayor found that official in a state of complete helplessness.¹¹ It is further eloquent of the times that Pepys could

1. Dec. 25, 1662.
2. March 17, 1667.
3. Jan. 27, 1662.
4. April 11, 1661.
5. Aug. 4, 1661.
6. Dec. 19, 1666.

think of no better way to secure his money than by digging a hole in his garden and burying the bags of sovereigns under cover of night, with many a furtive glance around to make sure that he was not being watched.

It is an historical commonplace that the time was one of recoil from Puritanism, that the maypole had been re-established, the joys of bear-baiting and cock-fighting brought back, and the stage restimulated by sprightly drama. Even John Locke welcomed the change. One gets from historians the impression of an outburst of merriment, disapproved of course by the grim veterans drawn up on Blackheath whom not even the smile of the gay Charles II on his return could soften, but condoned in general as a blessed relief. The contribution of Pepys alters none of the elements in this scene, but it does make a serious difference in the perspective. According to the *Diary* the illusion was soon over, the Merry Monarch became very quickly indeed an object of public disgust, and the Cromwellian fanaticism had not been followed by a mood of sheer genial indifference, but by a new mood of religious persecution whose motive was a haunting fear. It is often said of Pepys himself that he was at heart a Puritan, but with frequent lapses into Restoration licence; it would be perhaps nearer the truth to say that he was a *bon vivant*, but with periodic and often violent recoil to his Puritan upbringing. The importance of the picture lies in the fact that herein he seems not to have been exceptional, but rather typical.

Look, for example, at the record in the *Diary* of long and confidential talks between Pepys and John Evelyn, both in deepening alarm—early in 1667—lest the Restoration settlement should be overturned through public rage at the royal seraglio and the habits of the king's most trusted friends. Plainly though *Hudibras* had become the most popular of poems and *St. Bartholomew's Fair* had come back with great acclaim to the stage, the spirit of Puritan England had by no means wholly vanished. In 1663, for example, parliament was still ready to set apart a day of fasting and national contrition for unfavourable weather. Pepys is our authority for sneers in the theatre at the king's private life,¹ for mocking quips about Lady Castlemaine's nomination of a bishop, for the daring of a court preacher who chose to address his sovereign from the tale of David and Uriah, and for the satiric petition supposed to come from the *filles de joie* of the metropolis praying immunity from official interference as they practised on their own humble scale the calling whose pattern was set so magnificently at the palace.

1. July 29, 1667.

A feature of the time which the *Diary* sets forth with special vividness is the revival of religious persecution. Not by any means a happy release from what the Cavaliers used to call "the fanaticism of the last age"! Our bare historical narrative about an Act of Uniformity and the dispossession of those clergy who would not make use of the Service Book is lit up by Pepys's entries on the last day given to the Puritan remnant for compliance, on the unseemly cries of "Porridge" with which here and there a dissatisfied congregation greeted the recital of the liturgy,¹ on the spectacle of a Roman Catholic priest actually caught in his vestments and thus arrested *in flagrante delicto*,² and on the Quakers apprehended in the streets to be marched by scores to jail. The kindly Pepys enters in his record of these things that he wishes the rebels against authority would either change their minds or become adroit enough to escape capture.³ Such a reflection as we find on April 1, 1660, that it is needful above all things to get Anabaptists out of the fleet, strikes the reader of our slack age as an extremely curious memorandum on naval business. But it was when the Great Fire of London broke out, that clearest proof was given of belief in a uniform Church as the guarantee of national safety. There were some indeed, as shown by the famous resolution of the House of Commons, who suspected the fire had been caused by the anger of Heaven at the writings of Thomas Hobbes. But the less speculative thinkers attributed it to the papists, and were strong enough to have an official inscription set up to that effect. The *Diary* here is most suggestive. It reminds us that the Number of the Beast in the Apocalypse is 666; and although the year of the Fire was 1,666, the coincidence was near enough and exegetic resource was sufficiently elastic to convince people of a connection. Still easier was it to identify the Beast. Pepys tells us that a collection of two or three hundred knives, shaped like poniards and obviously with a lethal purpose, was found in the charred ruins of a house owned by a Roman Catholic; they were actually laid as an exhibit on the table of parliament. Certain papists were quoted as having made a prediction that just about that time England would have the hottest weather she had ever known; and on 10th November, 1666, our diarist went with some misgiving to bed, because November 11 had been the date fixed in a widely circulated forecast of massacre. How far Pepys shared the general credulity is not clear; but for some reason he turned back that autumn to read Potter's *Discourse upon*

1. Aug. 24, 1662.

2. Feb. 16, 1663.

3. Aug. 7, 1664.

666, and declared its conclusions, whether right or wrong, to be "mighty ingenious."

Nothing in his experience was too trivial to find a place in the *Diary*,—not even his taste in upholstering furniture, his idea of painting a coach, or his love for gay periwigs and his fear that those he had collected might lose their value after the Great Plague, through general suspicion that they had been made out of hair cut from corpses. What comment can do justice to an entry such as the following?

Went to church this morning. Excellent sermon, but distracted by back view of pretty girl in the pew in front. Offered her a hymn-book to make her turn round. Front view disappointing, and looked cross. Plate instead of offertory-bag. Nuisance. Had to give half-a-crown. Must remember to put sixpences in my pocket.

We know Pepys indeed as we know very few persons of centuries back, his slightest habits and preferences as well as his public performances. We understand his vigilance in his office where he guarded the public treasury and national defence, but not less his concern at home where he was nervous about burglars,¹ minute in budgetting for a picnic, rapturous in rearranging his books,² and beside himself with rage when he saw a painted woman. We know his passion for music, and the remarkable variety of instruments which he at least tried to play—in itself an interesting feature of a seventeenth century middle-class London household. Suggestive, too, is his love of the theatre, so intense that he felt the need to protect himself against it as also against alcohol by a vow, though one admires his zeal more than his judgment when he tells us that *Twelfth Night* is a very silly piece, and *Romeo and Juliet* the worst play he had ever seen. We hear of his curious little superstitions and credulities;—about the high wind at night which made him wonder whether the queen had died or what other personage was important enough for such celestial obituary;⁴ about his long freedom from sickness for which he could assign no likelier cause than his habitual carrying of a hare's foot in his pocket;⁵ about his mingled sorrow and joy at the death of an opulent uncle;⁶ about the headache that followed a bout of hard drinking; and about his own strange condition one night, when though too tipsy to read prayers,

1. *Diary*, July 11, 1664.

2. Feb. 2, 1668.

4. Oct. 19, 1663.

5. Jan. 21, 1665.

6. July 6, 1661.

he was sufficiently master of himself to know that he should not make the attempt in presence of the servants.¹ We read of the ghost stories which made him afraid to go to bed alone,² though ashamed to acknowledge the fear, and about the time when he slept in a reputedly haunted room, to be terrified by a white figure which by degrees he came to identify as a pillow. After his own fashion, Pepys was a psychical researcher; not only does his *Correspondence* reveal intense concern to collect well attested cases of second sight, but the *Diary* has a most diverting passage about his enquiry into a drum beaten by invisible hands every night at Tedworth, Wiltshire, and popularly supposed to give forth diabolic music. He satisfied himself that the agency of the devil might be excluded, because although the drum would in general answer any tune that was played in the neighborhood, one failure was recorded against it. Why Satanic action, if otherwise credible, should be disproved by this discovery, is not clear. Pepys says the argument was a good one. But it surely involved a gratuitous assumption that musical talent in the Prince of Darkness is without limit.

The sections on his family affairs have attracted an inevitable, but disproportionate, degree of interest. One is a little surprised to learn that the Secretary of the Admiralty so lost his temper with a maid for some neglect round the hall door as to *take a broom and baste her till she cried extremely*, expressing no regret in his *Diary* except on the ground that a page boy of his neighbour—Sir William Pen—whom he disliked had been an eye-witness of the occurrence and might possibly gossip about it. In his prosperous times Pepys made a bargain with his own sister to come to his house strictly as a servant,⁵ having her meals in the servants' quarters, but whether she would be liable to the same methods of correction is not stated. What he means by telling us of two occasions when his family went to bed without prayers *because next day was washing day*, I am wholly at a loss to conjecture.⁶

But whatever else readers may miss in the *Diary*, there is none who fails to note the ever-recurring episodes of domestic infelicity, in which Mrs. Pepys had certainly ground for complaint, and probably much more than she knew, but in which the reader is always glad to see the happy ending. Sometimes it is on the smallest scale, a mere threatening of trouble, which is judiciously handled

1. *Diary*, Sep. 29, 1661.

2. *ibid.*, March 23, 1669.

3. *ibid.*, June 15, 1663.

4. *ibid.*, Dec. 1, 1660. cf. Ap. 12, 1667.

5. *ibid.*, Nov. 12, 1660.

6. *ibid.*, March 1, 1663. cf. Oct. 9, 1664.

and so does not develop, like the occasion when Pepys returned home and saw by his wife's manner that she had "something in her gizzard", but thought it best to make no enquiries and not even to seem to notice it: nothing came of it that time. At the other extreme is the terrific scene described in an entry for January 12, 1669; "At last", we read, "about one o'clock, she came to the side of the bed, and drew my curtain open, and with the tongs red hot at the ends made as if she did design to pinch me with them, at which in dismay I rose up." The cause of trouble seems to have been always the same,—the unfortunate general diffusion of her husband's romantic sensibility: Mrs. Knipp, Mrs. Mercer, Mrs. Martin, and—alas—various others. Apart from this, however, he seems to have treated Mrs. Pepys well; in general their harmony was good, and after each lapse he records contrition in his *Diary*.

He had a remarkable interest in preachers, not only in listening to them, but in reading a published discourse. Nor was it only the fashionable and famous sort, like Stillingfleet at St. Paul's,¹ for whom officials so readily feign an attraction. The most commonplace of men who chanced to officiate where Pepys happened that Sunday to go to church was pretty certain to have his subject noted down in the *Diary*, together with some comment, though it should be only the unkind one about a vicar that he was an old dunce, and the sermon was good beyond expectation,² or the merry one about a reader in the Abbey, that it was hard to keep one's gravity at a prayer for the Most High to imprint His word upon the right hand thumbs and the right great toes of the worshipper.³ On the boat going down the Thames to Gravesend he was lost in a volume called *Five Sermons of Five Several Styles*, and committed afterwards to his *Diary* his preference for the Presbyterian and the Independent over the Anglican specimens which it contained.⁴ By the advice of a friend, too, he resolved to buy at once a new book entitled *Causes of the Decay of Piety*⁵. This interest, in view of some personal disclosures of his *chronique scandaleuse*, has moved certain critics to mock; but the paradox of human nature has many a surprise greater than this, where there is no need to suppose insincerity. Pepys had his *roué* periods, but there was a primitive Puritanism in him into which he often lapsed back again. When he railed at the habits of Charles II in keeping such shameful company in public, he was not just officially alarmed, but genuinely shocked.⁶ Again and again he tried to read

1. *Diary*, April 16, 1665.

2. *ibid.*, Nov. 11, 1666.

3. *ibid.*, Sep. 23, 1660.

4. *ibid.*, Sep. 6, 1668.

5. *ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1668.

6. *ibid.*, Feb. 17, 1669.

Hudibras, but could never reconcile himself, for the sake of its wit, to its contemptuous treatment of men he revered. Whether this zealot for pure administration had any corrupt adventures of his own, is not altogether clear. He was certainly accused of it, notably in a document attributed to Andrew Marvell, but the charge was so intermingled with one of papist plotting as to make one pay little attention to it. More striking is the fact that Pepys, having no private means, managed somehow in the third year of his clerkship to make £3,560 though his salary was no more than £350, and that this year was the first when he looked after contracts for victualling the garrison at Tangier. There seems to be no doubt that he followed the custom of accepting—perhaps of exacting—personal fees from naval officers on their promotion. He acted too, at least once, in a capacity we can describe only as that of a marriage-broker (July 31, 1665), but it seems to have been without fee. Captain Philip Holland once advised him to enter five or six fictitious servants on board ship, and to sequester their pay for himself.¹ Pepys does not say whether he did this, but records no disapproval. There was a curious incident, too, about the Tangier Committee, when Captain Grove, for whom he had secured an appointment, put an envelope in his hand which was unmistakably a cover for money. But, says our diarist, "I did not open it till I came home—not looking into it till all the money was out, that I might say I saw no money in the paper, if ever I should be questioned about it".² Finally, there is a suggestive passage about a statement Pepys thought of making to a Commission regarding his personal profit on naval prizes. He had consulted his lawyer about this, had been warned that a refund might be compelled, and had been advised to tell the whole truth voluntarily rather than have it forced from him, as it would be.³ Pepys went away glad to have a definite direction, though he foresaw that his profits were going to shrink, and he immediately afterwards notes—apropos of nothing—what heaps of money he had seen lying on the lawyer's table!⁴

IV

On what is called the problem of the *Diary*, speculation is still rife, but the problem as elusive as ever. When a man keeps a journal that is published long after his death, who can tell—unless there is some definite memorandum or some clear implication in

1. *Diary*, March 8, 1660.
2. *ibid.*, April 3, 1663.
3. *ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1668.
4. *loc. cit.*

his own words—whether he meant it posthumously for the public or not? There are parts of this *Diary* which it seems very improbable that anyone would desire to be printed and circulated under his name. The editors of successive editions have given it to the public under varying degrees of censorship, and those who have seen the original, in the *Bibliotheca Pepysiana* at Cambridge, know why a quite unexpurgated copy can never be issued, at least in England. But it is perhaps no harder to understand how a man should have written those amazing sections for publication than to understand how he should have written them even in cipher as a record for himself. Must then Pepys have done either one or other? On either supposition he must have been eccentric; but perhaps there is a third possibility. He did not present that voluminous manuscript to Magdalene College, the volumes standing exactly as he had himself placed them, without the intention that someone should read it. But is it needful to suppose that he meant it to be published to the world? He may have meant it as a source-book for historians, who would of course quote him as their authority for the period. And it is perfectly possible that so vain a man judged it a greater tribute to his own personality than to the *savants* of the future he should be known wholly as he was than that he should avail himself of the conventional disguise. Vanity of one's vices is not unknown among those who adore their own genius.

There is doubt about what he intended, but none about what he achieved. The *Diary* is no work of literary skill; no artistry can be seen in its execution; but its very artlessness is its charm. It stands as a unique revelation of nine years of English life, reflected in a single typical Englishman of the seventeenth century,—disclosing this as the excavated Herculaneum or Pompeii discloses the life of a city of southern Italy under the early Caesars, all the more veracious and convincing because there was no chance for an artist to rearrange it or for an antiquary to “restore” it.

* * * * *

The tercentenary was kept this year with fitting ceremonies in the places of his habitual resort. His Cambridge college held a dinner, to whose attractions Mr. Kipling contributed a new poem in which Pepys was likened to an oak which furnishes not only the ship to challenge an ocean's storms, but also branches to be swayed by “gentler Gods than Wind or Tide”, not only a guarantee of national safety, but also a nesting place for doves and a prop for the clasping vine. Fellows of the Royal Society rose at their meeting for a moment of reverential silence in remembrance of one of the earliest of their Presidents, the friend of Newton and Boyle, of Wallis and Wren, not indeed himself of that great company in

scientific talent, but a busy civil servant whose appreciation of the stirring intellectual period had been passionate, and whose zeal to promote its progress had been unremitting. To readers of the *Diary* perhaps most interesting of all was the memorial service attended by the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London in the little church of St. Olave's; where Pepys had so constantly been seen, sometimes attentive, sometimes asleep; sometimes alert, like a Scottish sermon-taster, to mark whether the discourse was "good, honest and painful" or "tedious, unreasonable and impertinent;" sometimes *distract* like a Restoration courtier, as quite other thoughts obtruded themselves,—the thoughts for which he would enter in his *Diary* a prayer to be forgiven, because the sight of female beauty had so diverted the exercises of a devout mind.

In An Auction Room

ALEXANDER LOUIS FRASER

What a strange meeting place,—old Time's discard,
 The burial place of Sentiment, for here
 Are piled so many things that once were dear
 To owners, but now held in light regard.
 Here Custom's besom, aye swift-wielded, hard,
 Makes room for Innovation; while austere
 Misfortune, maybe, saw a random tear,
 As some old relic was left thus in ward.

Had they a tongue, how much they'd call to mind—
 These books with fingered margins, and that toy
 With some dead Christmas touch about it yet!
 A place this is where things seek new employ,
 Like emigrants at a strange station met,
 Who, leaving, fresh affiliations find.