

A portrait of John Evelyn, a 17th-century English naturalist, diarist, and politician. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark blue or black robe over a white shirt. He has long, dark, wavy hair and is looking slightly to the right with a contemplative expression. His right hand is resting on a human skull, which is positioned in the lower left foreground. The background is dark and indistinct.

THE DIARY OF
JOHN
EVELYN
VOL. 1&2

John Evelyn

The Diary of John Evelyn (Vol. 1&2)

Editor: Richard Garnett and William Bray

e-artnow, 2021

Contact: info@e-artnow.org

EAN: 4066338129871

Table of Contents

[Volume 1](#)

[Volume 2](#)

Volume 1

1620-1664

[Table of Contents](#)

[Evelyn's Diary](#)

[Editor's Introduction](#)

[Diary of John Evelyn](#)

EVELYN'S DIARY

[Table of Contents](#)

The two chief diarists of the age of Charles the Second are, *mutatis mutandis*, not ill characterized by the remark of a wicked wit upon the brothers Austin. "John Austin," it was said, "served God and died poor: Charles Austin served the devil, and died rich. Both were clever fellows. Charles was much the cleverer of the two." Thus John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys, the former a perfect model of decorum, the latter a grievous example of indecorum, have respectively left us diaries, of which the indecorous is to the decorous as a zoölogical garden is to a museum: while the disparity between the testamentary bequests of the two Austins but imperfectly represents the reputation standing to Pepys's account with posterity in comparison with that accruing to his sedate and dignified contemporary.

Museums, nevertheless, have their uses, and Evelyn's comparatively jejune record has laid us under no small obligation. But for Pepys's amazing indiscretion and garrulity, qualities of which one cannot have too little in life, or too much in the record of it, Evelyn would have been esteemed the first diarist of his age. Unable for want of these qualifications to draw any adequate picture of the stirring life around him, he has executed at least one portrait admirably, his own. The likeness is, moreover, valuable, as there is every reason to suppose it typical, and representative of a very important class of society, the well-bred and well-conducted section of the untitled aristocracy of England. We may well believe that these men were not only the salt but the substance of their order. There was an

ill-bred section exclusively devoted to festivity and sport. There was an ill-conducted section, plunged into the dissipations of court life. But the majority were men like Evelyn: not, perhaps, equally refined by culture and travel, or equally interested in literary research and scientific experiment, but well informed and polite; no strangers to the Court, yet hardly to be called courtiers, and preferring country to town; loyal to Church and King but not fanatical or rancorous; as yet but slightly imbued with the principles of civil and religious liberty, yet adverse to carry the dogma of divine right further than the right of succession; fortunate in having survived all ideas of serfdom or vassalage, and in having few private interests not fairly reconcilable with the general good. Evelyn was made to be the spokesman of such a class, and, meaning to speak only for himself, he delivers its mind concerning the Commonwealth and the Restoration, the conduct of the later Stuart Kings and the Revolution.

Evelyn's Diary practically begins where many think he had no business to be diarising, beyond the seas. The position of a loyalist who solaces himself in Italy while his King is fighting for his crown certainly requires explanation: it may be sufficient apology for Evelyn that without the family estates he could be of no great service to the King, and that these, lying near London, were actually in the grasp of the Parliament. He was also but one of a large family and it was doubtless convenient that one member should be out of harm's way. His three years' absence (1643-6) has certainly proved advantageous to posterity. Evelyn is, indeed, a mere sight-seer, but this renders his tour a precise record of the objects which the sight-seer of the seventeenth century was expected to note, and a mirror not only of the taste but of the feeling of the time. There is

no cult of anything, but there is curiosity about everything; there is no perception of the sentiment of a landscape, but real enjoyment of the landscape itself; antiquity is not unappreciated, but modern works impart more real pleasure. Of the philosophical reflections which afterward rose to the mind of Gibbon there is hardly a vestige, and of course Evelyn is at an immeasurable distance from Byron and De Staël. But he gives us exactly what we want, the actual attitude of a cultivated young Englishman in presence of classic and renaissance art with its background of Southern nature. We may register without undue self-complacency a great development of the modern world in the æsthetical region of the intellect, which implies many other kinds of progress. It is interesting to compare with Evelyn's narrative the chapters recording the visit to Italy supposed to have been made at this very period by John Inglesant, who inevitably sees with the eyes of the nineteenth century. Evelyn's casual remarks on foreign manners and institutions display good sense, without extraordinary insight; in description he is frequently observant and graphic, as in his account of the galley slaves, and of Venetian female costumes. He naturally regards Alpine scenery as "melancholy and troublesome."

Returned to England, Evelyn strictly follows the line of the average English country gentleman, execrating the execution of Charles I., disgusted beyond measure with the suppression of the Church of England service, but submissive to the powers that be until there are evident indications of a change, which he promotes in anything but a Quixotic spirit. Although he is sincerely attached to the monarchy, the condition of the Church is evidently a matter of greater concern to him: Cromwell would have done much to reconcile the royalists to his government, had it been

possible for him to have restored the liturgy and episcopacy. The same lesson is to be derived from his demeanor during the reigns of Charles and James. The exultation with which the Restoration is at first hailed soon evaporates. The scandals of the Court are an offense, notwithstanding Evelyn's personal attachment to the King. But the chief point is not vice or favoritism or mismanagement, but alliances with Roman Catholic powers against Protestant nations. Evelyn is enraged to see Charles missing the part so clearly pointed out to him by Providence as the protector of the Protestant religion all over Europe. The conversion of the Duke of York is a fearful blow, James's ecclesiastical policy after his accession adds to Evelyn's discontent day by day, while political tyranny passes almost without remark. At last the old cavalier is glad to welcome the Prince of Orange as deliverer, and though he has no enthusiasm for William in his character as King, he remains his dutiful subject. Just because Evelyn was by no means an extraordinary person, he represents the plain straightforward sense of the English gentry. The questions of the seventeenth century were far more religious than political. The synthesis "Church and King" expressed the dearest convictions of the great majority of English country families, but when the two became incompatible they left no doubt which held the first place in their hearts. They acted instinctively on the principle of the Persian lady who preferred her brother to her husband. It was not impossible to find a new King, but there was no alternative to the English Church.

Evelyn's memoirs thus possess a value far exceeding the modest measure of worth allowed them by De Quincey: "They are useful as now and then enabling one to fix the date of a particular event, but for little besides." The Diary's

direct contribution to historical accuracy is insignificant; it is an index, not to chronological minutiae, but to the general progress of moral and political improvement. The editor of 1857 certainly goes too far in asserting that "All that might have been excluded from the range of his opinions, his feelings and sympathies embraced"; but it is interesting to observe the gradual widening of Evelyn's sympathies with good men of all parties, and to find him in his latter days criticising the evidence produced in support of the Popish Plot on the one hand, and deploring the just condemnation of Algernon Sydney on the other. It is true that, so far as the sufferings of his country are concerned, his attitude is rather that of the Levite than of the Samaritan; but more lively popular sympathies would have destroyed the peculiar value attaching to the testimony of the reluctant witness. We should, for example, have thought little of such a passage as the following from the pen of Burnet, from Evelyn it is significant indeed:—

October 14, 1688.—The King's birthday. No guns from the Tower as usual. The sun eclipsed at its rising. This day signal for the victory of William the Conqueror against Harold, near Battel in Sussex. The wind, which had been hitherto west, was east all this day. Wonderful expectation of the Dutch fleet. Public prayers ordered to be read in the churches against invasion.

It might be difficult to produce a nearer approximation in secular literature to Daniel's "*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.*"

There is little else in the Diary equally striking, though Evelyn's description of Whitehall on the eve of the death of Charles the Second ranks among the memorable passages

of the language. It is nevertheless full of interesting anecdotes and curious notices, especially of the scientific research which, in default of any adequate public organization, was in that age more efficaciously promoted by students than by professors. De Quincey censures Evelyn for omitting to record the conversation of the men with whom he associated, but he does not consider that the Diary in its present shape is a digest of memoranda made long previously, and that time failed at one period and memory at the other. De Quincey, whose extreme acuteness was commonly evinced on the negative side of a question, saw the weak points of the Diary upon its first publication much more clearly than his contemporaries did, and was betrayed into illiberality by resentment at what he thought its undeserved vogue. Evelyn has in truth been fortunate; his record, which his contemporaries would have neglected, appeared (1818) just in time to be a precursor of the Anglican movement, a tendency evinced in a similar fashion by the vindication, no doubt mistaken, of the Caroline authorship of the "Icon Basilike." Evelyn was a welcome encounter to men of this cast of thought, and was hailed as a model of piety, culture, and urbanity, without sufficient consideration of his deficiencies as a loyalist and a patriot. It also conduced to his reputation that all his other writings should have virtually perished except his "Sylva," like his Diary a landmark in the history of improvement, though in a widely different department. But for his lack of diplomatic talent, he might be compared with an eminent and much applauded, but in our times somewhat decrescent, contemporary, Sir William Temple. Both these eminent persons would have aroused a warmer feeling in posterity, and have effected more for its instruction and entertainment, if they could occasionally have dashed their

dignity with an infusion of the grotesqueness, we will not say of Pepys, but of Roger North. To them, however, their dignity was their character, and although we could have wished them a larger measure of geniality, we must feel indebted to them for their preservation of a refined social type.

Richard Garnett

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

[Table of Contents](#)

Evelyn lived in the busy and important times of King Charles I., Oliver Cromwell, King Charles II., King James II., and King William, and early accustomed himself to note such things as occurred, which he thought worthy of remembrance. He was known to, and had much personal intercourse with, the Kings Charles II. and James II.; and he was in habits of great intimacy with many of the ministers of these two monarchs, and with many of the eminent men of those days, as well among the clergy as the laity. Foreigners distinguished for learning, or arts, who came to England, did not leave it without visiting him.

The following pages contribute extensive and important particulars of this eminent man. They show that he did not travel merely to count steeples, as he expresses himself in one of his Letters: they develop his private character as one of the most amiable kind. With a strong predilection for monarchy, with a personal attachment to Kings Charles II. and James II., formed when they resided at Paris, he was yet utterly averse to the arbitrary measures of these monarchs.

Strongly and steadily attached to the doctrine and practice of the Church of England, he yet felt the most liberal sentiments for those who differed from him in opinion. He lived in intimacy with men of all persuasions; nor did he think it necessary to break connection with anyone who had ever been induced to desert the Church of England, and embrace the doctrines of that of Rome. In writing to the brother of a gentleman thus circumstanced, in 1659, he expresses himself in this admirable manner: "For

the rest, we must commit to Providence the success of times and mitigation of proselytical fervors; having for my own particular a very great charity for all who sincerely adore the Blessed Jesus, our common and dear Saviour, as being full of hope that God (however the present zeal of some, and the scandals taken by others at the instant [present] affliction of the Church of England may transport them) will at last compassionate our infirmities, clarify our judgments, and make abatement for our ignorances, superstructures, passions, and errors of corrupt times and interests, of which the Romish persuasion can no way acquit herself, whatever the present prosperity and secular polity may pretend. But God will make all things manifest in his own time, only let us possess ourselves in patience and charity. This will cover a multitude of imperfections."

He speaks with great moderation of the Roman Catholics in general, admitting that some of the laws enacted against them might be mitigated; but of the Jesuits he had the very worst opinion, considering them as a most dangerous Society, and the principal authors of the misfortunes which befell King James II., and of the horrible persecutions of the Protestants in France and Savoy.

He must have conducted himself with uncommon prudence and address, for he had personal friends in the Court of Cromwell, at the same time that he was corresponding with his father-in-law, Sir Richard Browne, the Ambassador of King Charles II. at Paris; and at the same period that he paid his court to the King, he maintained his intimacy with a disgraced minister.

In his travels, he made acquaintance not only with men eminent for learning, but with men ingenious in every art and profession.

His manners we may presume to have been most agreeable; for his company was sought by the greatest men, not merely by inviting him to their own tables, but by their repeated visits to him at his own house; and this was equally the case with regard to ladies, of many of whom he speaks in the highest style of admiration, affection, and respect. He was master of the French, Italian, and Spanish languages. That he had read a great deal is manifest; but at what time he found opportunities for study, it is not easy to say. He acknowledges himself to have been idle, while at Oxford; and, when on his travels, he had little time for reading, except when he stayed about nineteen weeks in France, and at Padua, where he was likewise stationary for several months. At Rome, he remained a considerable time, but, while there, he was so continually engaged in viewing the great variety of interesting objects to be seen in that city, that he could have found little leisure for reading. When resident in England, he was so much occupied in the business of his numerous offices, in paying visits, in receiving company at home, and in examining whatever was deemed worthy of curiosity, or of scientific observation, that it is astonishing how he found the opportunity to compose the numerous books which he published, and the much greater number of Papers, on almost every subject, which still remain in manuscript; to say nothing of the very extensive and voluminous correspondence which he appears to have carried on during his long life, with men of the greatest eminence in Church and State, and the most distinguished for learning, both Englishmen and foreigners. In this correspondence he does not seem to have made use of an amanuensis; and he has left transcripts in his own hand of great numbers of letters both received and sent. He

observes, indeed, in one of these, that he seldom went to bed before twelve, or closed his eyes before one o'clock.

He was happy in a wife of congenial dispositions with his own, of an enlightened mind, who had read much, and was skilled in etching and painting, yet attentive to the domestic concerns of her household, and a most affectionate mother.

His grandfather, George, was not the first of the family who settled in Surrey. John, father of this George, was of Kingston, in 1520, and married a daughter of David Vincent, Esq., Lord of the Manor of Long Ditton, near Kingston, which afterward came in the hands of George, who there carried on the manufacture of gunpowder. He purchased very considerable estates in Surrey, and three of his sons became heads of three families, viz, Thomas, his eldest son, at Long Ditton; John, at Godstone, and Richard at Wotton. Each of these three families had the title of Baronet conferred on them at different times, viz, at Godstone, in 1660; Long Ditton, in 1683; and Wotton, in 1713.

The manufacture of gunpowder was carried on at Godstone as well as at Long Ditton; but it does not appear that there ever was any mill at Wotton, or that the purchase of that place was made with such a view.

It may be not altogether incurious to observe, that though Mr. Evelyn's father was a man of very considerable fortune, the first rudiments of this son's learning were acquired from the village schoolmaster over the porch of Wotton Church. Of his progress at another school, and at college, he himself speaks with great humility; nor did he add much to his stock of knowledge, while he resided in the Middle Temple, to which his father sent him, with the intention that he should apply to what he calls "an impolished study," which he says he never liked.

The "Biographia" does not notice his tour in France, Flanders, and Holland, in 1641, when he made a short campaign as a volunteer in an English regiment then in service in Flanders.¹ Nor does it notice his having set out, with intent to join King Charles I. at Brentford; and subsequently desisting when the result of that battle became known, on the ground that his brother's as well as his own estates were so near London as to be fully in power of the Parliament, and that their continued adherence would have been certain ruin to themselves without any advantage to his Majesty. In this dangerous conjuncture he asked and obtained the King's leave to travel. Of these travels, and the observations he made therein, an ample account is given in this Diary.

The national troubles coming on before he had engaged in any settled plan for his future life, it appears that he had thoughts of living in the most private manner, and that, with his brother's permission, he had even begun to prepare a place for retirement at Wotton. Nor did he afterward wholly abandon his intention, if the plan of a college, which he sent to Mr. Boyle in 1659, was really formed on a serious idea. This scheme is given at length in the "Biographia," and in Dr. Hunter's edition of the "Sylva" in 1776; but it may be observed that he proposes it should not be more than twenty-five miles from London.

As to his answer to Sir George Mackenzie's panegyric on Solitude, in which Mr. Evelyn takes the opposite part and urges the preference to which public employment and an active life is entitled—it may be considered as the playful essay of one who, for the sake of argument, would controvert another's position, though in reality agreeing with his own opinion; if we think him serious in two letters to Mr. Abraham Cowley, dated 12th March and 24th August,

1666, in the former of which he writes: "You had reason to be astonished at the presumption, not to name it affront, that I, who have so highly celebrated recess, and envied it in others, should become an advocate for the enemy, which of all others it abhors and flies from. I conjure you to believe that I am still of the same mind, and that there is no person alive who does more honor and breathe after the life and repose you so happily cultivate and advance by your example; but, as those who praised dirt, a flea, and the gout, so have I public employment in that trifling Essay, and that in so weak a style compared with my antagonist's, as by that alone it will appear I neither was nor could be serious, and I hope you believe I speak my very soul to you.

*'Sunt enim Musis sua ludicra mista Camoënis
Otia sunt——'*

In the other, he says, "I pronounce it to you from my heart as oft as I consider it, that I look on your fruitions with inexpressible emulation, and should think myself more happy than crowned heads, were I, as you, the arbiter of mine own life, and could break from those gilded toys to taste your well-described joys with such a wife and such a friend, whose conversation exceeds all that the mistaken world calls happiness." But, in truth, Mr. Evelyn's mind was too active to admit of solitude at all times, however desirable it might appear to him in theory.

After he had settled at Deptford, which was in the time of Cromwell, he kept up a constant correspondence with Sir Richard Browne (his father-in-law), the King's Ambassador at Paris; and though his connection must have been known, it does not appear that he met with any interruption from the government here. Indeed, though he remained a decided

Royalist, he managed so well as to have intimate friends even among those nearly connected with Cromwell; and to this we may attribute his being able to avoid taking the Covenant, which he says he never did take. In 1659, he published "An Apology for the Royal Party"; and soon after printed a paper which was of great service to the King, entitled "The Late News, or Message from Brussels Unmasked," which was an answer to a pamphlet designed to represent the King in the worst light.

On the Restoration, we find him very frequently at Court; and he became engaged in many public employments, still attending to his studies and literary pursuits. Among these, is particularly to be mentioned the Royal Society, in the establishment and conduct of which he took a very active part. He procured Mr. Howard's library to be given to them; and by his influence, in 1667, the Arundelian Marbles were obtained for the University of Oxford.

His first appointment to a public office was in 1662, as a Commissioner for reforming the buildings, ways, streets, and incumbrances, and regulating hackney coaches in London. In the same year he sat as a Commissioner on an inquiry into the conduct of the Lord Mayor, etc., concerning Sir Thomas Gresham's charities. In 1664 he was in a commission for regulating the Mint; in the same year was appointed one of the Commissioners for the care of the Sick and Wounded in the Dutch war; and he was continued in the same employment in the second war with that country.

He was one of the Commissioners for the repair of St. Paul's Cathedral, shortly before it was burned in 1666. In that year he was also in a commission for regulating the farming and making saltpetre; and in 1671 we find him a Commissioner of Plantations on the establishment of the board, to which the Council of Trade was added in 1672.

In 1685 he was one of the Commissioners of the Privy Seal, during the absence of the Earl of Clarendon (who held that office), on his going Lord Lieutenant to Ireland. On the foundation of Greenwich Hospital, in 1695, he was one of the Commissioners; and, on the 30th of June, 1696, laid the first stone of that building. He was also appointed Treasurer, with a salary of £200 a year; but he says that it was a long time before he received any part of it.

When the Czar of Muscovy came to England, in 1698, proposing to instruct himself in the art of shipbuilding, he was desirous of having the use of Sayes Court, in consequence of its vicinity to the King's dockyard at Deptford. This was conceded; but during his stay he did so much damage that Mr. Evelyn had an allowance of £150 for it. He especially regrets the mischief done to his famous holly hedge, which might have been thought beyond the reach of damage. But one of Czar Peter's favorite recreations had been to demolish the hedges by riding through them in a wheelbarrow.

October, 1699, his elder brother, George Evelyn, dying without male issue, aged eighty-three, he succeeded to the paternal estate; and in May following, he quitted Sayes Court and went to Wotton, where he passed the remainder of his life, with the exception of occasional visits to London, where he retained a house. In the great storm of 1703, he mentions in his last edition of the "Sylva," above one thousand trees were blown down in sight of his residence.

He died at his house in London, 27th February, 1705-6, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and was buried at Wotton. His lady survived him nearly three years, dying 9th February, 1708-9, in her seventy-fourth year, and was buried near him at Wotton.

Of Evelyn's children, a son, who died at the age of five, and a daughter, who died at the age of nineteen, were almost prodigies. The particulars of their extraordinary endowments, and the profound manner in which he was affected at their deaths, may be seen in these volumes.

One daughter was well and happily settled; another less so; but she did not survive her marriage more than a few months. The only son who lived to the age of manhood, inherited his father's love of learning, and distinguished himself by several publications.

Mr. Evelyn's employment as a Commissioner for the care of the Sick and Wounded was very laborious; and, from the nature of it, must have been extremely unpleasant. Almost the whole labor was in his department, which included all the ports between the river Thames and Portsmouth; and he had to travel in all seasons and weathers, by land and by water, in the execution of his office, to which he gave the strictest attention. It was rendered still more disagreeable by the great difficulty which he found in procuring money for support of the prisoners. In the library at Wotton, are copies of numerous letters to the Lord Treasurer and Officers of State, representing, in the strongest terms, the great distress of the poor men, and of those who had furnished lodging and necessaries for them. At one time, there were such arrears of payment to the victuallers, that, on landing additional sick and wounded, they lay some time in the streets, the publicans refusing to receive them, and shutting up their houses. After all this trouble and fatigue, he found as great difficulty in getting his accounts settled.² In January, 1665-6, he formed a plan for an Infirmary at Chatham, which he sent to Mr. Pepys, to be laid before the Admiralty, with his reasons for recommending it; but it does not appear that it was carried into execution.

His employments, in connection with the repair of St. Paul's (which, however, occupied him but a brief time), as in the Commission of Trade and Plantations, and in the building of Greenwich Hospital, were much better adapted to his inclinations and pursuits.

As a Commissioner of the Privy Seal in the reign of King James II., he had a difficult task to perform. He was most steadily attached to the Church of England, and the King required the Seal to be affixed to many things incompatible with the welfare of that Church. This, on some occasions, he refused to do, particularly to a license to Dr. Obadiah Walker to print Popish books;³ and on other occasions he absented himself, leaving it to his brother Commissioners to act as they thought fit. Such, however, was the King's estimation of him, that no displeasure was evinced on this account.

Of Evelyn's attempt to bring Colonel Morley (Cromwell's Lieutenant of the Tower, immediately preceding the Restoration) over to the King's interest, an imperfect account is given in the "Biographia." The fact is, that there was great friendship between these gentlemen, and Evelyn did endeavor to engage the Colonel in the King's interest. He saw him several times, and put his life into his hands by writing to him on 12th January, 1659-60; he did not succeed, and Colonel Morley was too much his friend to betray him; but so far from the Colonel having settled matters privately with Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, or General Monk, as there described, he was obliged, when the Restoration took place, actually to apply to Evelyn to procure his pardon; who obtained it accordingly, though, as he states, the Colonel was obliged to pay a large sum of money for it. This could not have happened, if there had been any previous negotiation with General Monk.

Dr. Campbell took some pains to vindicate Mr. Evelyn's book, entitled, "Navigation and Commerce, their Origin and Progress," from the charge of being an imperfect work, unequal to the expectation excited by the title. But the Doctor, who had not the information which this Journal so amply affords on this subject, was not aware that what was so printed was nothing more than an Introduction to the History of the Dutch War; a work undertaken by Evelyn at the express command of King Charles II., and the materials for which were furnished by the Officers of State. The completion of this work, after considerable progress had been made in it, was put a stop to by the King himself, for what reason does not appear; but perhaps it was found that Evelyn was inclined to tell too much of the truth concerning a transaction, which it will be seen by his Journal that he utterly reprobated. His copy of the History, as far as he had proceeded, he put into the hands of his friend, Mr. Pepys, of the Admiralty, who did not return it; but the books and manuscripts belonging to Mr. Pepys passed into the possession of Magdalen College, Cambridge.

From the numerous authors who have spoken in high terms of Mr. Evelyn, we will select the two following notices of him.

In the "Biographia Britannica" Dr. Campbell says, "It is certain that very few authors who have written in our language deserve the character of able and agreeable writers so well as Mr. Evelyn, who, though he was acquainted with most sciences, and wrote upon many different subjects, yet was very far, indeed the farthest of most men of his time, from being a superficial writer. He had genius, he had taste, he had learning; and he knew how to give all these a proper place in his works, so as never to pass for a pedant, even with such as were least in love with

literature, and to be justly esteemed a polite author by those who knew it best."

Horace Walpole (afterward Earl of Orford), in his Catalogue of Engravers, gives us the following admirably drawn character: "If Mr. Evelyn had not been an artist himself, as I think I can prove he was, I should yet have found it difficult to deny myself the pleasure of allotting him a place among the arts he loved, promoted, patronized; and it would be but justice to inscribe his name with due panegyric in these records, as I have once or twice taken the liberty to criticise him. But they are trifling blemishes compared with his amiable virtues and beneficence; and it may be remarked that the worst I have said of him is, that he knew more than he always communicated. It is no unwelcome satire to say, that a man's intelligence and philosophy is inexhaustible. I mean not to write his biography, but I must observe, that his life, which was extended to eighty-six years, was a course of inquiry, study, curiosity, instruction, and benevolence. The works of the Creator, and the minute labors of the creature, were all objects of his pursuit. He unfolded the perfection of the one, and assisted the imperfection of the other. He adored from examination; was a courtier that flattered only by informing his Prince, and by pointing out what was worthy of him to countenance; and really was the neighbor of the Gospel, for there was no man that might not have been the better for him. Whoever peruses a list of his works will subscribe to my assertion. He was one of the first promoters of the Royal Society; a patron of the ingenious and the indigent; and peculiarly serviceable to the lettered world; for, besides his writings and discoveries, he obtained the Arundelian Marbles for the University of Oxford, and the Arundelian Library for the Royal Society. Nor is it the least part of his

praise, that he who proposed to Mr. Boyle the erection of a Philosophical College for retired and speculative persons, had the honesty to write in defense of active life against Sir George Mackenzie's 'Essay on Solitude.' He knew that retirement, in his own hands, was industry and benefit to mankind; but in those of others, laziness and inutility."

Evelyn was buried in the Dormitory adjoining Wotton Church.

On a white marble, covering a tomb shaped like a coffin, raised about three feet above the floor, is inscribed:

Here lies the Body
of JOHN EVELYN, Esq.,
of this place, second son
of Richard Evelyn, Esq.;
who having serv'd the Publick
in several employments, of which that
of Commissioner of the Privy-Seal in the
Reign of King James the 2d was most
honourable, and perpetuated his fame
by far more lasting monuments than
those of Stone or Brass, his learned
and usefull Works, fell asleep the 27 day
of February 1705-6, being the 86 year
of his age, in full hope of a glorious
Resurrection, thro' Faith in Jesus Christ.
Living in an age of extraordinary
Events and Revolutions, he learnt
(as himself asserted) this Truth,
which pursuant to his intention
is here declared—
*That all is vanity which is not honest,
and that there is no solid wisdom*

but in real Piety.

Of five Sons and three Daughters
born to him from his most
vertuous and excellent Wife,
Mary, sole daughter and heiress
of Sir Rich. Browne of Sayes
Court near Deptford in Kent,
onely one daughter, Susanna,
married to William Draper
Esq., of Adscomb in this
County, survived him; the
two others dying in the
flower of their age, and
all the Sons very young, except
one named John, who
deceased 24 March, 1698-9,
in the 45 year of his age,
leaving one son, John, and
one daughter, Elizabeth.

DIARY OF JOHN EVELYN.

[Table of Contents](#)

I was born at Wotton, in the County of *WOTTON* Surrey, about twenty minutes past two in the morning, being on Tuesday the 31st and last of October, 1620, after my father had been married about seven years,⁴ and that my mother had borne him three children; viz, two daughters and one son, about the 33d year of his age, and the 23d of my mother's.

My father, named Richard, was of a sanguine complexion, mixed with a dash of choler: his hair inclining to light, which, though exceedingly thick, became hoary by the time he had attained to thirty years of age; it was somewhat curled toward the extremities; his beard, which he wore a little peaked, as the mode was, of a brownish color, and so continued to the last, save that it was somewhat mingled with gray hairs about his cheeks, which, with his countenance, were clear and fresh-colored; his eyes extraordinary quick and piercing; an ample forehead—in sum, a very well-composed visage and manly aspect: for the rest, he was but low of stature, yet very strong. He was, for his life, so exact and temperate, that I have heard he had never been surprised by excess, being ascetic and sparing. His wisdom was great, and his judgment most acute; of solid discourse, affable, humble, and in nothing affected; of a thriving, neat, silent, and methodical genius, discreetly severe, yet liberal upon all just occasions, both to his children, to strangers, and servants; a lover of hospitality; and, in brief, of a singular and Christian moderation in all his actions; not illiterate, nor obscure, as,

having continued Justice of the Peace and of the Quorum, he served his country as High Sheriff, being, as I take it, the last dignified with that office for Sussex and Surrey together, the same year, before their separation. He was yet a studious decliner of honors and titles; being already in that esteem with his country, that they could have added little to him besides their burden. He was a person of that rare conversation that, upon frequent recollection, and calling to mind passages of his life and discourse, I could never charge him with the least passion, or inadvertency. His estate was esteemed about £4000 per annum, well wooded, and full of timber.

My mother's name was Eleanor, sole daughter and heiress of John Standsfield, Esq., of an ancient and honorable family (though now extinct) in Shropshire, by his wife Eleanor Comber, of a good and well-known house in Sussex. She was of proper personage; of a brown complexion; her eyes and hair of a lovely black; of constitution more inclined to a religious melancholy, or pious sadness; of a rare memory, and most exemplary life; for economy and prudence, esteemed one of the most conspicuous in her country: which rendered her loss much deplored, both by those who knew, and such as only heard of her.

Thus much, in brief, touching my parents; nor was it reasonable I should speak less of them to whom I owe so much.

The place of my birth was Wotton, in the parish of Wotton, or Blackheath, in the county of Surrey, the then mansion-house of my father, left him by my grandfather, afterward and now my eldest brother's. It is situated in the most southern part of the shire; and, though in a valley, yet really upon part of Leith Hill, one of the most eminent in

England for the prodigious prospect to be seen from its summit, though by few observed. From it may be discerned twelve or thirteen counties, with part of the sea on the coast of Sussex, in a serene day. The house is large and ancient, suitable to those hospitable times, and so sweetly environed with those delicious streams and venerable woods, as in the judgment of strangers as well as Englishmen it may be compared to one of the most pleasant seats in the nation, and most tempting for a great person and a wanton purse to render it conspicuous. It has rising grounds, meadows, woods, and water, in abundance.

The distance from London little more than twenty miles, and yet so securely placed, as if it were one hundred; three miles from Dorking, which serves it abundantly with provision as well of land as sea; six from Guildford, twelve from Kingston. I will say nothing of the air, because the pre-eminence is universally given to Surrey, the soil being dry and sandy; but I should speak much of the gardens, fountains, and groves that adorn it, were they not as generally known to be among the most natural, and (till this later and universal luxury of the whole nation, since abounding in such expenses) the most magnificent that England afforded; and which indeed gave one of the first examples to that elegance, since so much in vogue, and followed in the managing of their waters, and other elegancies of that nature. Let me add, the contiguity of five or six manors, the patronage of the livings about it, and what Themistocles pronounced for none of the least advantages—the good neighborhood. All which conspire here to render it an honorable and handsome royalty, fit for the present possessor, my worthy brother, and his noble lady, whose constant liberality gives them title both to the

place and the affections of all that know them. Thus, with the poet:

Nescio quâ natale solum dulcedine cunctos
Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui.

I had given me the name of my grandfather, my mother's father, who, together with a sister of Sir Thomas Evelyn, of Long Ditton, and Mr. Comber, a near relation of my mother, were my susceptors. The solemnity (yet upon what accident I know not, unless some indisposition in me) was performed in the dining-room by Parson Higham, the present incumbent of the parish, according to the forms prescribed by the then glorious Church of England.

I was now (in regard to my mother's weakness, or rather custom of persons of quality) put to nurse to one Peter, a neighbor's wife and tenant, of a good, comely, brown, wholesome complexion, and in a most sweet place toward the hills, flanked with wood and refreshed with streams; the affection to which kind of solitude I sucked in with my very milk. It appears, by a note of my father's, that I sucked till 17th of January, 1622, or at least I came not home before.⁵

1623. The very first thing that I can call to memory, and from which time forward I began to observe, was this year (1623) my youngest brother, being in his nurse's arms, who, being then two days and nine months younger than myself, was the last child of my dear parents.

1624. I was not initiated into any rudiments until near four years of age, and then one Frier taught us at the church-porch of Wotton; and I do perfectly remember the great talk and stir about Il Conde Gondomar, now Ambassador from Spain (for near about this time was the match of our Prince with the Infanta proposed); and the effects of that comet, 1618, still working in the prodigious revolutions now beginning in Europe, especially in Germany,