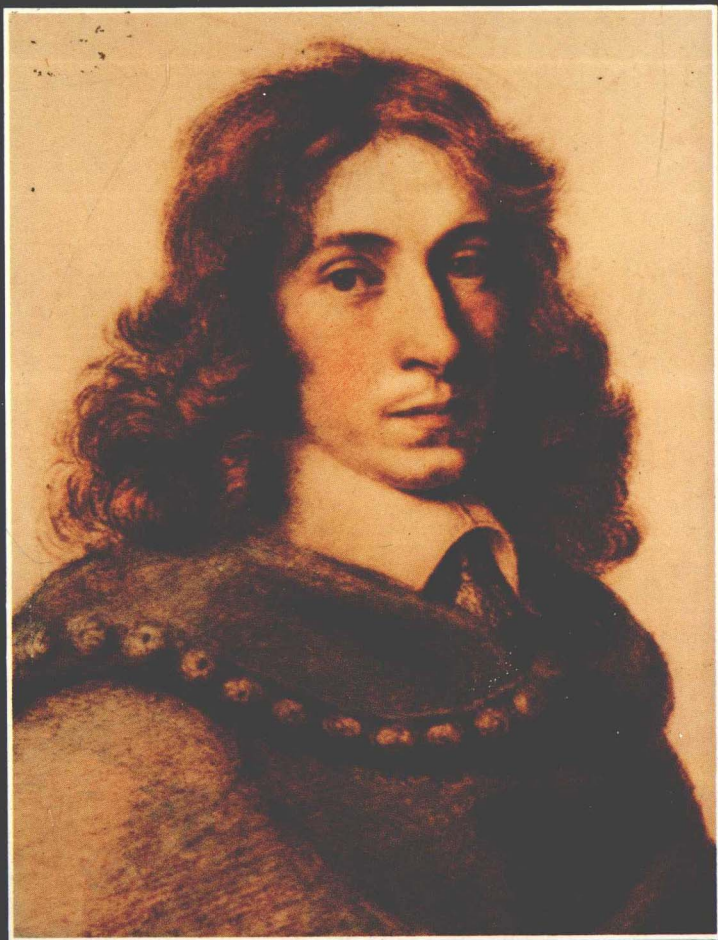


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# THE DIARY OF JOHN EVELYN



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*The Diary of  
John Evelyn*

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*Selected and Edited with  
an Introduction by*

JOHN BOWLE

Oxford New York  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1985

*Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP*

*London New York Toronto*

*Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi*

*Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo*

*Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town*

*Melbourne Auckland*

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*The Diary of John Evelyn was first published in six volumes  
by the Clarendon Press in 1955*

*The one-volume abridged Oxford Standard Authors edition was  
published by Oxford University Press in 1959*

*This selection first published 1983*

*First issued as a World's Classics paperback 1985*

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

*Evelyn, John, 1620-1706*

*The diary of John Evelyn.— (The World's Classics)*

*1. Great Britain—History—Stuarts, 1603-1714—Sources*

*I. Title II. Bowle, John, 1905-*

*942.06'092'4 DA370*

*ISBN 0-19-281529-6*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

*Evelyn, John, 1620-1706.*

*The diary of John Evelyn.*

*(World's Classics)*

*Originally published: 1983.*

*Bibliography: p. Includes index.*

*1. Evelyn, John, 1620-1706. 2. Great Britain—History—Stuarts, 1603-1714. 3. Great Britain—Court and courtiers—Biography. I. Bowle, John. II. Title.*

*DA447.E9A3325 1985 941.06'092'4 [B] 85-340*

*ISBN 0-19-281529-6 (pbk.)*

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Hazell Watson & Viney Limited  
Aylesbury, Bucks*

# Introduction

## I

JOHN EVELYN is famous as a diarist, or, more accurately, as the author of memoirs; and in his own day he won celebrity as *Sylva* Evelyn, the writer of *Sylva, a Discourse of Forest Trees*, which, published in 1664, when landowners were restoring estates devastated during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, found a large and lasting public. He was also a pioneer of more open and attractive gardening, contrasting with the formal Tudor and early Stuart fashions, a connoisseur of architecture, painting, and coinage, and a versatile amateur of experimental science.

His immense *Diary* runs to six volumes in the definitive annotated edition by E. S. de Beer (Clarendon Press, 1955), and the one-volume slightly shortened version (Oxford University Press, 1959), also edited by de Beer, covers 1307 pages. The present selection covers about a third of the one-volume edition.

The Diaries were bound to be long for they extend from 1620 in the reign of James I to 1706 in the reign of Queen Anne, and cover the transformation of England from an enterprising but still minor country on the verge of empire to one of the great powers of Europe and the world, victorious in the Marlborough wars. Even more important, they also cover the momentous change in the climate of opinion from the 'Ancient' to the 'Modern', when the kind of baroque English of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* was superseded by the clear prose of Dryden and Swift and by the neo-classical confidence of the age of Newton, prelude to the eighteenth century, while the old Conciliar Monarchy of Divine Right was adapted to a more constitutional form of government by the Revolution of 1688.

After avoiding the Civil Wars by travel abroad, Evelyn was an eager eye-witness of decisive events; and after the Restoration of 1660 he went everywhere and knew nearly everyone of importance. He also revised his *Diary* twice: the bound up manuscript *Kalendarium*, the main source, covers his life from 1620 to 1697 and continues on loose sheets until 1706; but most of it was written

up from contemporary notes retrospectively. The first part, from the beginning up to the visit to Rome in 1644, was written in 1660; the second, from 1644 to 1684, written in 1680-84, and only from 1684 onwards does it become a contemporary Diary. The *Kalendarium* is thus at once an unconscious self portrait and – principally – a considered memoir.

It was not written for publication, and only quite by chance was the first selection ever published. In 1813 Lady Evelyn, widow of Sir Frederick Evelyn, the diarist's great-great-grandson, was conversing in the Evelyn house at Wotton, Surrey, with William Upcott, a minor librarian and bibliophile, who, when asked his hobbies, replied 'Collecting manuscripts and autographs'. 'Autographs!' she exclaimed, 'What do you mean by autographs? Surely you don't mean old letters such as these?' Then, opening a drawer, she showed him a heap of manuscripts lately used for cutting out patterns for a dress. Upcott pounced upon the find and at once discovered their importance; whereat Lady Evelyn declared with easy-going insouciance, 'Oh, if you like papers like that, you shall have plenty, for *Sylva* Evelyn and those who succeeded him kept all their correspondence, which has furnished the kitchen with abundance of waste paper.' She then instructed her housekeeper to 'take the key of the ebony cabinet, procure a basket' and 'bring down some bundles'. So Upcott discovered the original manuscript of the *Kalendarium*.

But Lady Evelyn was not much interested. She merely remarked, 'Bless me if here isn't old *Sylva*'s diary, why I haven't seen it for years!', and concluded that it would neither interest the public nor be worth the expense of printing. But, alerted by Upcott, a neighbouring antiquary with more social standing now became interested, and before she died Lady Evelyn had permitted the Revd William Bray, aged seventy-nine and assisted by Upcott, to make the first selection of *Memoirs Illustrative of the Life and Writings of John Evelyn*, published in 1818.\* Such were the vicissitudes of the *Kalendarium*.

In spite of Lady Evelyn's doubts, the *Memoirs* sold well, and by an irony of fate led to the publication of Pepys's *Diary*, destined to overshadow Evelyn's own reputation with the general public. For where Pepys was an open-hearted character who revealed his intimate life, Evelyn was evasive and reserved, and Bray's selection

left out anything shocking to a public fast becoming evangelical and prudish, and depicted Evelyn as an honorary early Victorian. And indeed, though himself the grandson of a business tycoon who had made a great fortune out of gunpowder, Evelyn was extremely fastidious and suffered from a Puritanical guilt from which Pepys was happily emancipated.

## II

Evelyn was a good family man, and this selection opens with an affectionate and perceptive account of his parents. His father, Richard, had inherited a large and wealthy estate at Wotton from the original George, who in 1589, the year after the battle against the Armada had shown up the deficiency of gunpowder in the Navy, had been granted the patent to manufacture it throughout most of England. Having surpassed all competitors, grandfather George had made a vast fortune and, after investing the proceeds in land, launched twenty-four children and himself outlived all but six of them. His son John carried on the business, and the diarist's father, Richard, settled down as a rich country gentleman at Wotton.

On most of the Continent the Evelyns would not have been accepted into even the minor *noblesse*; but the flexible English establishment accepted them for their wealth and they became armigerous gentry. John Evelyn, in the third generation, had all the sentiments and the fine manners of his class, and, when the future Duke of Marlborough began to rise in the world, looked down on the Churchill family as originally minor office holders and provincial squires. Moreover, in 1625 Charles I nationalized the gunpowder business, the Evelyn patent ran out, and the family connection with 'black powder' lapsed, leaving the founder's estates a reputable source of wealth and status.

Evelyn's father was an affluent and independent country gentleman, who did his duty as High Sheriff of the County, entertained lavishly in traditional style and had no interest in the Court. He sent his eldest son and heir George to Oxford, and intended John for Eton; but John, abetted by his maternal grandmother, characteristically avoided this plan and lived mainly at Lewes, Sussex, until he was sixteen. For Richard had married

Eleanor Standsfield, heiress of a landowner in that neighbourhood, a lady who, worn out with births and miscarriages, had died in 1635 when John, who took after her in piety and method, was fourteen. With this prosperous and conventional background – his father disapproved of his artistic talent ('Painting and such things will do you no good hereafter') – in 1637 John went up as a Gentleman (or Fellow) Commoner to Balliol College, Oxford.

Unlike his near contemporary John Aubrey, for whom Oxford was a liberation and a joy after a restricted boyhood, Evelyn did not make much of it, and the entries in the pocket books he kept there (still in the library at Balliol College) are meagre. Soon, like many of the Caroline gentry, he took Chambers, along with his brother, at the Middle Temple to learn the rudiments of Law.

Evelyn appears to have been a vague and rather wayward undergraduate, with no particular purpose or ambition, and certainly little interest in the Law; but in 1640 his conventional upbringing was disrupted by the early death of his father. Wotton, the main property, went to his elder brother, but even as a younger son John Evelyn was left, not rich, but independent. The conflict of King and Parliament was now imminent, and in 1641 Evelyn decided to 'absent himself from this ill face of things at home'. That summer, 'a young Gent apt for all Impressions', he set out for his first tour abroad to the Dutch and Spanish Netherlands.

The Holland of Rembrandt and Vondel was still at war with Spain, but the long conflict had been the making of the Protestant United Provinces, already a great commercial sea and colonial power which had profited from the blockade of Antwerp, and where the Calvinist oligarchy had been unable to prevent religious toleration. Evelyn records his first expedition to the Continent in vivid detail – his first encounter with a culture that made England seem provincial. He then proceeded to the Spanish Netherlands, where Rubens had died the year before, saw his first fine Jesuit baroque church in Antwerp, and, in the autumn of 1641, returned by Brussels and Ostend. His first experience abroad had been a revelation.

Back in England, by October 1642 the Civil War had begun at the battle of Edgehill; but Evelyn, by temperament no warrior, only belatedly joined the King's army threatening London; he records 'I came in with my horse and Armes just at the retreat.' After a

winter at Wotton, he again decided to 'evade the doing of very unhandsome things' by further travel abroad, and in November 1643 set out for France, not, as he wrote, 'Just to count Steeples' and tour 'like a goose swims down a river', but to practise an 'intelligent and taciturn observation'.

He spent Christmas in Paris, then the cultural capital of Europe and for the time being, since Louis XIV was only five, under the Regency of Anne of Austria, the Dowager Queen of Louis XIII. He carefully and fully records the sights, and in the spring of 1644 he moved down to Orléans, Blois, and Tours, where he improved his French; then, by boat down the Rhône to Valence, he arrived in September at Avignon and so to Marseilles and his first sight of the Mediterranean. His account of the Royal Galley slaves is particularly vivid; in spite of atrocious conditions, they appeared 'Cherefull and full of vile knavery'.

Evelyn's tour of Italy, extending to Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples, Venice, and Padua, he afterwards wrote up in such detail from fashionable guide books that relatively little of the account can here be included: but the famous Italian cities and works of art made a profound impression on him and gave him standards for the rest of his life. A highlight of the tour was the *cavalcado* celebrating the enthronement of Pope Innocent X.

He returned by way of the then dangerous Simplon pass, where his companion, a belligerent Captain Wray, got into trouble with the Swiss because his dog had killed a goat, and descending the valley of the upper Rhône Evelyn fetched up in Geneva, where he developed and recovered from smallpox. Thence he proceeded to Paris, thankful that he had 'gotten so neare home', and there during the winter of 1646-7 he recuperated: 'the only time in my whole life I spent most idly'.

In June 1647, aged twenty-six, he married Mary Browne, ten years his junior, and daughter of Sir Richard Browne, the Royalist Ambassador to France. She proved a devoted wife and brought him the chance to buy her father's property at Sayes Court, Deptford, which became their cherished home until, in 1699, Evelyn inherited Wotton since George had died without a male heir.

The first Civil War, which Evelyn had prudently avoided, was now over; but, in spite of some cautious reconnaissance, Evelyn did not settle in England until after the execution of Charles I in 1649,



and the defeat of Charles II at Worcester in 1651 had made it expedient to make the best of the Republic.

By January 1653 he had purchased his father-in-law's property at Sayes Court, settled there with his wife and their first son, and was 'setting out the overall Garden' which would become a show-piece. They detested what they considered the usurpations of Cromwell and the heavy taxation they imposed, but were most exasperated because the Anglican services were banned, including the keeping of Christmas. But the Republican Government was anxious to conciliate the crypto-Royalist gentry of substance, and the Evelyns were not persecuted; it is indeed remarkable how their social life went on. Evelyn complains; but, unlike the loyal Wiltshire gentry in the Penruddocke rising of 1655, he was not taking any risks. The *Diary* is particularly illuminating on such a characteristically English attitude; in 1654 Evelyn took his wife on a sight-seeing tour to Oxford, Stonehenge and the Cotswolds, and on to Cambridge and Ely, all attractively recorded.

Then, at last, with the death of Oliver Cromwell and the collapse of his regime, an entirely unexpected prospect opened, and with the Restoration of 1660 Evelyn, like Charles II, came into his own. Contacts made with the exiled royal court in Paris now bore fruit and he found himself in high favour. He witnessed the King's joyous entry into London: 'I stood in the strand, and beheld it, and blessed God.' The King now 'owned him particularly' as his 'old Acquaintance', and he recorded how the 'carkass of that arch-rebell Cromwell was dugg up' and hanged at Tyburn. All his versatile interests now had scope; he was nominated by the King to the Council of the reconstituted Royal Society, Prince Rupert confided his new method of engraving or 'Mezzo-Tinto', and – had Evelyn desired the honour – he might have been a Knight of the Bath.

In the spring of 1661 Evelyn was 'wonderfully astonish'd' at the Election ceremonies at Westminster School by the lively abilities of the boys, though – with his continental experience – shocked at their Anglicized pronunciation of Latin; and he wrote a brisk pamphlet on the 'inconveniencie of the aer and smoak of London', dedicated to Charles II. The monarch promised to act on it, but was defeated by the vested interests concerned. He went yachting with the King and the Duke of York, a new sport derived from the Dutch, and held the candle while Cooper, the miniaturist, was

drawing the King's profile to make a stamp for the new money. He found Catherine of Braganza's 'olivaster' complexion 'sufficiently unagreeable' when in May 1662 she arrived at Portsmouth; at Sayes Court he entertained the Queen Mother, Henriette Marie, 'who recounted many observable stories of the sagacity of some Dogs that she had formerly had'; and he approved the new fashion of skating in St James's Park 'after the manner of the Hollanders'.

In February 1664 Evelyn published *Sylva*, his most famous book commissioned two years earlier by the Royal Society to promote the planting and preservation of timber for the Navy. It is practical, comprehensive, thorough, summing up the ideas then prevalent, and it was followed by the *Gard'ner's Almanack*, an '*Hortulan Calendar*' covering the entire year. His Diary records how he planted elms at Sayes Court and how the King planted elms at Greenwich, and how Charles with his own hands and Evelyn's crayon sketched the plan of a rebuilt Whitehall – 'which royal draft' Evelyn 'reserved as a rarity'. Still in his mid-thirties, he was at a peak of his career, as is reflected by the Diary; and *Sylva*, in the long run, contributed to the wooden walls of Nelson's Navy.

When by 1665 public affairs took a turn for the worse and the Second Dutch War broke out, Evelyn was nominated a Commissioner for Kent and Sussex to provide for the sick, wounded, and prisoners to be expected in such important districts. He was brought into contact with Clarendon, Buckingham, Albemarle and other great men, and travelled about the Kentish coast in a 'cold buisy but not unpleasant Journey'. But the Great Plague was now spreading in London, and by the summer Evelyn sent all his family down to Wotton, while, with singular courage, he himself resolved to stay at his post, though even St James's was a 'dismal passage', coffins exposed, shops shut and 'mournfull silence'. As more prisoners came in, Evelyn and Pepys did their best for them, 'with no money provided almost for the doing of it', and Evelyn was 'peremptory' to Albemarle that 'unless we had £10,000, the prisoners would sterve'. Some Dutch prizes were sold off for cash, and Evelyn, still in London and 'invironed with multitudes of poore pestiferous creatures', himself survived.

In March 1666 he tried, with the King's support, to promote a permanent Infirmary for those disabled by the war, then with Christopher Wren surveyed the 'General decays of Old St. Pauls,

that ancient and venerable church . . . to set downe the particulars what was fit to be done'.

There was no time to act on them: on 2 September 1666, 'this fatal night, about ten, began that deplorable fire' – the Great Fire of London. Evelyn wrote a vivid and circumstantial account of it – here included; of how the Thames was covered with floating goods and the fields with carts and tents while the houses blazed and 'all the skie were of a fiery aspect . . . God grant mine eyes may never behold the like . . . the noise and crakling and thunder of the impetuous flames, the shreeking of Women and Children . . . the fall of Towers'. He describes how Charles II and the Duke of York fought the fire in person, the King 'showing his affection for his people and gaining theirs'. And, after the worst was over, Evelyn on foot explored the ruins, observed calcified stone and melted lead. War, Plague, and Fire had combined, he thought, to punish the nation for ingratitude to God for the Restoration. But in June 1667 the Dutch captured Sheerness, entered the Medway and blockaded the Thames, 'a Dreadfull Spectacle as ever any English men saw, and a dishonour never to be wiped off'. Evelyn had to remove his own best treasures from Sayes Court.

Public opinion blamed Lord Chancellor Clarendon, whom Charles commanded to surrender the Great Seal. Evelyn, to whom he had long been 'a particular kind friend', 'found him in his bedchamber very sad'. He thought him the victim of the 'boufoones and Ladys of Pleasure' at Court, and last saw him in his garden 'sitting in his Gowt Wheele Chaire . . . he looked and spoke very disconsolately'. On 29 November 1667 Clarendon fled to France and banishment for life.

Charles II now had to manage parliament through shifty and factious politicians, who played upon the religious fear and fanaticism following the Civil War and Interregnum. The rudiments of political 'parties' now emerged – the Tories, High Anglican and Royalist; the Whigs, the remnant of the Republican Calvinist and Independent interest. Evelyn disliked this faction-fighting and turned to artistic and academic interests. His wife had now borne six sons, but in the usual seventeenth-century way only one had survived infancy and was now, at fourteen, at Trinity College, Oxford. In June 1669 Evelyn attended the first Encaenia in the newly completed Sheldonian, an occasion he fully describes;

and having arranged for the presentation to the University of the Arundel Marbles from the collection of the late Earl of Arundel he was accorded an honorary Doctorate. By contrast to this grand occasion, the following year he was persuaded to visit a Bear-Garden – ‘a rude and dirty pasetime’. He also visited Newmarket Heath, ‘sweete turf and down, like Salisbury plaine, the Jockeys breathing their fine barbs and racers’.

By January 1671 Evelyn had made a fortunate and famous discovery. Walking in the fields near Sayes Court, he chanced to look through the window of a ‘poor thatched house’ to see a young man carving in wood a ‘large crucifix of Tintorets’ – work of such ‘studious exactness’ that Evelyn had never in all his travels seen before. The youth turned out to be Grinling Gibbons; and Evelyn had him bring his carving to Court. Charles II, a monarch of taste, was interested; Wren took Gibbons up, and he became the most famous wood carver in England.

That year Evelyn also found his widest official scope as one of the King’s Council for Foreign Plantations. It included the Duke of York, Prince Rupert, the Dukes of Buckingham and Ormond, and the Earl of Lauderdale. They were concerned mainly with the development of the West Indies and the English Colonies in North America. This important business (he fully records the cautious handling of the Puritan Massachusetts) appealed to Evelyn more than the King’s own way of life, and he was shocked by the Monarch’s ‘very familiar discourse . . . with Mrs. Nellie [Nell Gwyn] as they cal’d an impudent Comedian, she looking out of her Garden on a Tarrace at the top of the Wall, and – standing on the greene Walke under it: I was heartily sorry at this scene’. Evelyn, indeed, though a pious Anglican, had a strong streak of the prudish Puritan, and his diary is pervaded by laborious accounts of sermons, of which he was a formidable connoisseur. Few of them will be found in this selection; but they meant much to him, as did his habit of anxious propitiatory prayer and his regular thanks to God at the end of years of misfortune, for sparing him.

Even when, sedately married in middle age, in 1673 he began a romantic friendship with Margaret Blagge aged twenty-one, it was religiously high-minded; and when, after her marriage to Sidney Godolphin, she died in 1678 in childbirth, he wrote with rare emotion: ‘this stroake did pierce me to the utmost depth . . . never

was a more virtuous and inviolable friendship'. He even composed an elaborate life of her, stressing her austere piety.

Politics, meanwhile, would not go away. Evelyn records fully the iniquities of Titus Oates and the crisis of 1678-9 over the alleged Popish Plot, an early example of whipped-up popular hysteria. He soon considered Oates a 'profligate wretch' whose evidence 'should not be taken against the life of a dog'; and found it more congenial to help found Chelsea Hospital for 'emerited soldiers', which, he insisted, should include a library in case a few of them might like to read. But the Rye House or 'Protestant' Plot to assassinate Charles II and York made even the King 'very melancholy': 'The Lord in Mercy', exclaimed Evelyn, now in his mid-sixties, 'avert the sad omen that we do not provoke him farther!' In spite of the King's political finesse in allowing the Whig extremists enough rope to hang themselves and so secure the legitimate succession of York, the Duke's Catholicism boded ill for a Protestant and insular country.

Since Evelyn had known Charles II fairly well, he is particularly illuminating on his character, when in February 1685, aged only fifty-four, he died, 'surpriz'd in his bed chamber by an Apoplecktical fit' - 'A Prince of Many Virtues and many great Imperfections, Debonaire, easy of accesse . . . his countenance fierce, the voice greate . . . a lover of the sea . . . An excellent Prince doubtlesse had he been lesse addicted to Women.'

James II seemed at once set 'to bring in Poperie amain'; but Evelyn thought him able, and was relieved when, after his rebellion, Monmouth in the West 'gave it over and fled', to be executed with 'five chopps' by a clumsy headsman. He even predicted - for here the *Memoirs* become a contemporary diary - 'much happiness to this nation as to its political government', fervently though he wished that the King were 'of the National religion'. But as James II's Catholic policy developed, coincident with Louis XIV's persecution of the Protestants in France, Evelyn became more uneasy, torn between conscience and the fear of civil strife. The trial of the seven bishops and the birth of a Prince of Wales added to his alarm, and, like most Englishmen of property, by 1688 he feared civil war; for James still had an army larger than the expedition landed on 5 November by William of Orange at Torbay. But the King in fear 'forsook himself' and his subjects; and Evelyn

describes William, very foreign, 'stately serious and reserved' with his Dutch guards in Whitehall. The *Diary* is particularly revealing on how the supposedly 'Glorious Revolution' was in fact only just muddled through, many conservatives 'aledging the danger of dethroning' as putting the whole social order at risk, and hoping for a Regency. Evelyn has to implore God so to compose the crisis 'that we may be at last a Nation and a Church under some fixt and sober establishment'; but for a long time all seemed in jeopardy with James in Ireland supported by the French and with William's Continental Coalition not yet in action; indeed, the hasty change of monarch still appeared but 'a sad Revolution in this sinful Nation'. Evelyn's view is probably representative.

In spite of James II's defeat at the Boyne, Evelyn long continued to fear a French invasion, until in May 1692 he could at last record the 'utter ruine of the French Fleet' off Cape La Hogue. But he seems unappreciative of William III's gruelling campaigns in the Low Countries and of his patient diplomacy in creating a Grand Alliance. He also distrusted Marlborough, 'the first who betrayed and forsooke his Master K: James'; and when in February 1702 William III was thrown from his horse hunting and died, Evelyn still thought the country in a very 'dangerous conjuncture', with all Europe poised to enter 'the most dangerous Warr that it ever suffered', and 'unprovided to resist the deluge of the French'. But the populace showed little grief; and Queen Anne – 'an English queen with an English heart', as Mary Evelyn put it – was immediately and peacefully proclaimed.

Evelyn's family life had long had a new setting. In 1691 George of Wotton's only son, aged thirty-five, had died of a stroke, having already three years before had a 'fit' through drinking healths to the Prince of Orange in riotous company, and John Evelyn and his surviving son 'Young John' had become the heirs of Wotton. There had been opposition from George's daughters and grand-daughters, but, after some wavering, George had determined to bequeath the estate to the male line. In May 1694 the Evelyns had left Sayes Court to live with George at Wotton, and when in 1699 George had died, in his eighty-third year, Evelyn had inherited an estate of about 7,500 acres. He had paid off the other claimants and settled down to a 'sedate and amicable composure'.

Sayes Court now had to take its chance. In 1696 it had been let

to Admiral Benbow, not exactly a 'polite tenant', then early in 1698 requisitioned by the King for the young Tsar Peter of Muscovy, who 'had a mind to see the building of ships'. His household had proved 'right nasty', broken the furniture and 'damnified' the precious garden. Evelyn had avoided paying his respects to his alarming sub-tenant, and in April had thankfully recorded 'the Czar of Mosco went from my house towards Russia'.

Much had also gone wrong in Evelyn's family. 'Young John', overshadowed by his father, had never been a worldly success: he was intelligent and humorous, but too easy-going. Evelyn, of course, had arranged his marriage – to the step daughter of the proprietor of an estate at Radley, now the site of Radley College – and had allowed him £500 a year and sent his son, Jack, to Eton. But in 1692 'Young John' had been reduced to a Commissionership in the Revenue in Dublin, whence after four years he had returned so ill that in 1699 Evelyn wrote 'To my exceeding grief and affliction after a languishing illness . . . died my remaining son, John . . . leaving me one grandson, now at Oxon: whom I beseech A. God to preserve.' Though he caught smallpox at Balliol, this boy, Jack, survived; he was charming, intelligent and even able to cope with his grandfather's overwhelming solicitude. As Evelyn's heir, he became the main interest of his old age.

This was as well, for only one of Evelyn's daughters had survived. In May 1685, soon after the death of Charles II, the talented and beloved Mary had died of smallpox, aged eighteen: 'Ô how desolate hast Thou left us, sweete, obliging, happy creature!' Then Elizabeth, aged seventeen, though 'bred up with the utmost circumspection', had eloped with a young man whom the Evelyns thought unsuitable, and by August had also died of smallpox. There remained Susanna, 'a good Child, religious, Ingenious, and qualified with all the ornaments of her sex', who in April 1693, the year before Evelyn became heir to Wotton, had married William Draper, the already affluent heir to a large estate. Surviving the perils of childbirth, she, and her husband, became a support of the Evelyns' declining years, which were increasingly clouded by his gloomy religious obsessions and political anticipations.

With old age, Evelyn, so inconsequent in youth, reverted to his family type, and became the possessive and ambitious man of property, determined to promote his descendants' fortunes. But

where his father had been an independent country gentleman who had kept clear of the Court, now, with the growing power of central government and the need to keep up with growing wealth, Evelyn and his kind had become dependent on government patronage. And here he was lucky in his friendship with Sidney Godolphin, widower of his beloved Margaret, who, now Lord Godolphin and in 1702 Lord High Treasurer, disposed of great patronage. Moreover, his son, Francis, had made friends with young Jack at Eton; so, upon the inheritance of Wotton, Evelyn's plan for Jack's advancement took shape, and he was married in 1704 to Godolphin's niece, Ann Boscawen, daughter of Edward Boscawen (of substantial Cornish gentry) and his wife Joel, Lord Godolphin's sister. After long and tenacious negotiations, Jack, the heir to an unencumbered estate and through Godolphin's patronage now a Commissioner of the Prizes at £500 a year, was set up in life to continue the Evelyn line at Wotton. Evelyn's private victory coincided with the resounding public victory at Blenheim. He lapsed into decline with growing infirmities but undiminished faith, and died at the age of eighty-five on 27 February 1706, cared for by Mary, who survived him by six years.

### III

Such, by way of introduction to the *Diary*, are the major landmarks of Evelyn's life. But while the Selection records them, it contains many other facets of Evelyn's versatile mind. He had a sharp eye for the exotic, and admirably describes the 'Entrance of the Russian Ambassador' to the Court of Charles II, clad 'after the Eastern manner, rich furs, caps; some carrying Haukes, furs, Teeth, Bows etc.', and how he delivered his speech in 'the Russe language alowd, but without the least motion of his body'. Again, he records how the 'Morocco Ambassador' was received with 'a string of pearls oddly woven in his Turbant'; 'I fancy the old Roman habite was little different as to the Mantle.'

Evelyn was always fascinated by strange animals, and often exactly describes them, while meticulous on the very peculiar experiments conducted by the Royal Society, and on the risky operations then performed by doctors ignorant of anaesthetics. For he was a man of the late Northern Renaissance, interested in



everything, and living before the fragmentation of specialized knowledge; at once a humanist and a Christian. Indeed, in a wider view, Evelyn is singularly representative of his time. Francis Bacon, Viscount St Albans, had advocated 'renovating' knowledge for the deliberate 'betterment of man's estate', but had never brought himself to believe that the Earth went round the Sun: Evelyn, a much younger man who shared Bacon's interest in experiments, accepted that it did. But, though one of the founders of the Royal Society, he had little conception of the kind of ordered universe as depicted by Newton; he believed that Providence might at any moment intervene to punish mankind for sin, and thought nature unfathomably mysterious. Without the optimism that set in with the 'Moderns', he was haunted by an exacting and vengeful God; and although in France by the 1680s Fontenelle, President of the French Academy of Science, was adumbrating the novel idea of intellectual 'progress', Evelyn, though an admirer of Boyle, never really assimilated it. Though full of eager and versatile curiosity, he had, perhaps fortunately, little flair for abstractions, and so the better set down the lasting record of his experience of life.

To many readers he will perhaps be most attractive for his love of gardens: as when a brief entry in the *Diary* seems to transcend time when, at thirty-two, he 'plants the orchard' at Sayes Court, 'new moone, wind west'; or when in old age he plants elms for his descendants at Wotton; or when he writes in a Plan of a Garden Book, 'The model, which I perceive you have seen will abundantly testify my abhorring of those painted and formal projections of our cockney gardens and plots, which appear like gardens of paste board and marchpane and smell more of paint than of gardens and verdure.'

JOHN BOWLE

*Oxford 1982*