

PEPYS AND HUMANITY

BY GAMALIEL BRADFORD

PEPYS brings to the portrayal of his manifold general relations with humanity the same infinite straightforwardness that he applies to all his dealings with every aspect of life and death.

And first, he delighted in the various phases and manifestations of human intercourse and activity. He was never tired of watching men live, make their strange, unaccountable gestures, go through their merry, or dreary, or passionate antics, and then settle quietly down into the grave. He liked travel, made caustic and vivid notes on his journeys. No matter how tired his legs might be, his eyes were keen. Whether in Brampton or Tangier, he was always on the watch: rugged, homely English peasants and draped, melodramatic Moors, all alike were game for him. He must have been a delightful traveling companion, if the fleas and the bills and the delays and the bad food did not fret him too much: they may have.

Anyway, there was matter enough right at home, in the parks and the back streets and the public places of London, to satisfy even his almost insatiable curiosity. And always, on every figure and every little incident that crops up about him, there is some odd, suggestive, startling observation, which leaves them unforgettable. Take the graveyard scene and the civil gravedigger, who might have stepped right out of *Hamlet*: "He would, for my father's sake, do my brother that is dead all the civility he can; which was to disturb other corps that are not quite rotten, to make room for him; and methought his manner of speaking it was very remarkable; as of a thing that now was in his power to do a man a courtesy or not."

It is to be noted that in all this vast presentation of the surface of life, which would seem to afford so much of humourous contrast and comic diversion, Pepys almost never succeeds in making the reader laugh with him, and does not very often attempt it.

In actual talk he might have made you laugh freely when he laughed. As a writer of diary you often smile good-naturedly at him, but you do not take him for a humourist. It is true that he himself sometimes laughs loud and long; but you read the account of it and, though you sympathize, you are hardly overcome. And there are his occasional practical jokes, like the farce in connection with the stealing of Sir William Penn's tankard, or the pleasant jest of the swearing boys. These are not unamusing, but belong to a rather elementary type of fun.

Also, they are somewhat suggestive of ill-nature, like a good many practical jokes; yet Pepys was not ill-natured: he only saw life and took it as it came. Indeed, he had his marked share of human sensibility, quick and ready response to the emotions of those about him, sympathetic understanding and kindly appreciation. He is sensitive to human sorrow in general, keenly aware of the large and haunting misery of our mortal lot. The sight of a murdered man makes the diary even more undecipherable than usual: "a sad spectacle, and a broad wound, which makes my hand now shake to write of it." The memory of a dead body left floating upon the Thames for four days, with no one bothering to take it out, proves strangely troubling. The melancholy story of the mistress of the Beare Tavern, who drowned herself, excites most dismal reflections, much augmented by her having been "a most beautiful woman, as most I have seen".

And he has direct social sympathy, puts himself in other people's places, feels the awkwardness of a domestic situation more, perhaps, than the actors themselves. When a lady whom he is visiting scolds her husband, Pepys hardly knows which way to look. Or, take the much deeper note in the charming scene with the old woman in the country, surprised by the arrival of the young girl she loved: "When comes in another poor woman, who, hearing that Deb was here, did come running hither, and with her eyes so full of tears, and heart so full of joy, that she could not speak when she come in, that it made me weep too: I protest that I was not able to speak to her, which I would have done, to have diverted her tears."

But what is most attractive about Pepys's sympathy, and what is perhaps also somewhat in advance of his time, is his tenderness

and consideration for animals. He seems to have been fond of pets, to have watched them, and fostered them, and cherished them. And, with the true instinct in such things, he clings to the old and cannot get used to the new. He is much troubled to hear that the canary bird, which he has had for three or four years, is dead. On the other hand, when his wife is presented with a mighty pretty spaniel, "as a newcomer, I cannot be fond of her". Suffering, or ill-treatment, of dumb creatures irritates and distresses him. When he finds a son of Sir Heneage Finch beating a poor dog to death, it makes him mad to see it.

The same elements of kindness, combined in due proportion with irritability and imperiousness, appear in Pepys's relation with the long series of domestic servants whose coming and going is chronicled in his pages. And as the variegated train of boys and maids files before us, we begin to feel that few things better exhibit fundamental traits than a man's—or woman's—dealing with those who make his daily existence tolerable—or intolerable.

It is evident that Pepys believed in family discipline. These boys were put into his hands partly for his convenience, partly also for their own good. Strict and rigorous measures were absolutely necessary, if he was to get his service out of them, and incidentally, if their souls were to be saved. The boy tells a lie. The lie is brought home to him, so that he cannot possibly deny it, or explain it. Whereupon the master beats him thoroughly: "I did extremely beat him, and though it did trouble me to do it, yet I thought it necessary to do it." The same thing happens again; only the master frankly confesses that the rods were so small that the castigating arm was considerably more damaged than the boy.

Yet there was also much genuine, sweet, normal affection in these domestic relations. There were dependence and counsel and even pleasant and profitable talk on suitable occasions. Here, as with the pets, it is clear that Pepys was loyal, got attached to persons and faces, clung to them, hated to part from them, and was glad to see them return. When "poor Jane, my old, little Jane", comes to us again, we are greatly contented. When we are obliged to dismiss one who has served us long and well, the tears are very near coming, and this not on one occasion, but on

several, so closely do these humble but essential ministers of comfort twine themselves into our lives.

Pepys's dealings with the different members of his family are of constant interest and importance to his readers. No one realized more fully than he, though perhaps he does not definitely analyze it, the clinging quality of the blood relationships. Our friends are bound to us by links of sympathy which are too apt to change with age, so that the friendships wither and leave us. Our blood connections are often less warm, because such sympathy does not enter into them, but they last, and even, with the fading of friendship, they are apt to acquire more strength. As the years pass, uncles and cousins, though fairly distant and though at times subject to suspicion and controversy over little questions of inheritance, seem somehow to become more and more part of ourselves.

In what is usually the closest blood relation of all Pepys is not particularly impressive. We get very little glimpse of his childish dependence upon and affection for his mother, and during the diary period she appears as rather fretful and querulous, not perhaps actually broken, but certainly not active and efficient. Pepys remonstrates with her on the economical quality of her table, which seems a little hard, considering that it is all saving to him. He is obliged to snub her appeal in behalf of a younger brother's waywardness, though he endeavours to do it in kind words. Above all, she is too disposed to friction with her husband, as about the maid, "which my father likes and my mother dislikes". The son feels bound to lecture on all these topics. Then the mother dies, and the approach of death, as is the remorseless habit of it, brings up old memories and strange forgotten tenderness; and the haunting presence of the one we loved and slighted, though it fades in the pressure of daily business, comes back upon us with burning intensity in the solitude of night. Yet we have, after all, a practical mind, and when the final word comes, though I weep and my wife weeps, I console myself with pointing out to her how much better it is that my mother should die now than survive my father and me and be thrown dependent upon the harsh world: "So to my tailor's, and up and down, and then home, and to my office a little, and then

to supper and to bed, my heart sad and afflicted, though my judgment at ease." The exquisite aptness of the distinction! And the strange, swift, deadening, protecting current of daily life!

With his father, Pepys's tone is constantly quite different from that in which he alludes to his mother. There is indeed a shade of patronage, which, taken in connection with the financial support, does not seem wholly compatible with the finest delicacy of feeling. Yet it is clear enough that there was enduring sympathy, comfort, confidence, between the two. Pepys goes down into the country to visit his father, discusses business with him, travels about with him, shares his room, confers with him on all important matters, and recognizes the value of his judgment and experience. The father comes to London, and the son wants to have him come, looks forward to his coming, and hopes it will revive his spirits and relieve him from something of the drag of domestic infelicity. When he is taken suddenly ill, everything is done to make him comfortable, and the son can scarce forbear weeping at the sight of his distress. When he returns home, he is missed and regretted, and the regret is expressed in terms, which, if a trifle condescending, are by no means without charm: "It rejoices my heart that I am in condition to do anything to comfort him, and could, were it not for my mother, have been contented he should have stayed always here with me, he is such innocent company."

Then there is brother Tom, whose marriage causes Samuel so much anxiety. Worldly goods must be looked into and all other circumstances must be considered and weighed before the final decision is adopted. And, as so often happens, too great caution spoils the whole project, all the successive projects, and Tom is left to conclude his not too reputable existence a hopeless bachelor. On his illness and death the diary is priceless, as on death always. Pepys frequents the bedside with fraternal solicitude, and also with a clear vision of the various difficulties and vexations involved in the prospective decease. He avoids the death chamber when actual dissolution is imminent, having no mind to see his brother die, but returns immediately after and gives a somewhat gruesome account of the process of laying out, as

practised in the seventeenth century. And then comes the final comment after the funeral, a comment of which the dry, direct, bare horror of commonplace oblivion has not been surpassed by Pepys or any one else: "But, Lord! to see how the world makes nothing of the memory of a man, an hour after he is dead! And, indeed, I must blame myself; for, though at the sight of him dead and dying, I had real grief for a while, while he was in my sight, yet presently after, and ever since, I have had very little grief indeed for him."

As for brother John, not dying within the range of our acquaintance, he is saved from such another unceremonious epitaph. It is evident that Samuel tried to do his duty by him, giving not only financial assistance, but good and intelligent advice when it was needed. Perhaps the advice was not always desired, or digested. Yet, after all, a brother is a brother. John has a sudden, violent attack of illness, "and he was fallen down all along upon the ground dead, which did put me into a great fright; and, to see my brotherly love! I did presently lift him up from the ground, he being as pale as death . . . I never was so frightened but once, when my wife was ill at Ware upon the road, and I did continue trembling a good while and ready to weepe to see him."

As for the sister, Pall (Paulina), it cannot be said that she was ever a source of much satisfaction. At a very early stage of the *Diary* she is registered as ill-natured, and forfeits affection because she is "so cruel a hypocrite that she can cry when she pleases". Pepys has her up to London, to assist in his domestic economy. This is done with the explicit understanding that she is to be a servant, and only a servant, to which she agrees with humility and gratitude, London probably representing the acme of her dreams. Further, the menial position is emphasized by the absolute refusal to let her sit at table with the family. Under these conditions, perhaps it was not strange that the experiment should fail and Pall be relegated in disgrace to the country.

Her brother does not forget her, however, and, as the years go on, realizing that she "grows old and ugly", as he expresses it, he finally arranges a match. "I take her to be so cunning and ill-natured, that I have no great love for her; but only she is my

sister, and must be provided for." Now I would give a good deal to know what Mr. Jackson, whom she married, thought.

It will be easily understood that all these family relations were much complicated, as they so often are, by the matrimonial element. Mrs. Pepys did not always get on happily with her husband's kin, not with any of them, unless perhaps the unfortunate John. Then there are Mrs. Pepys's relatives, who are usually unobjectionable and can be kept at a distance, but do occasionally cause solicitude. When her father seems at the point of death, Pepys has his priceless mortuary comment: "Which, God forgive me, did not trouble me so much as it should, though I was indeed sorry for it." The mother was harmless, and lived for many years, and was always appreciative of what her son-in-law did for her. Pepys was helpful to the brother Balty (Balthazar) and the helpfulness was acknowledged.

From the narrower circle of Pepys's family relations we pass to his extensive contact with humanity at large. Among the vast numbers of men that he was obliged to meet and deal with there were many who were mere indifferent shapes and shadows, going and coming, many whom he liked and enjoyed, some also naturally whom he disliked and who, perhaps causelessly, inspired ill-feeling and disgust. It must at once be recognized that with these Pepys was inclined to keep his irritation to himself. It was a fighting age, and he carried a sword. He may have had some theoretical experience in using it. But he was by nature a man of peace, and tempers of that kind avoid quarrels with surprising facility and agility.

I fancy that Pepys, in courage as in so many other things, was an average human being. But here, as always, we must remember the candour, perhaps here even more than usual; for the average man does not usually confess his tremors, and a good argument may be made to show that confession tends too much to augment them. Pepys confessed them, at any rate, noted them with absolute indifference and sincerity, at times almost seems to gloat over them, with something of the curious satisfaction which they afford his readers.

As to human friction, the diarist does not hesitate to reiterate his dislike of it. Let others quarrel and bluster, if they will. Let

Sir William Penn knock a couple of ruffians off their horses, and be proud of it. Such proceedings fill us with a certain disgust. To be sure, we can swagger on instinct, when impulse gets the better of us. There is the inimitable incident of the street set-to: "So I being called, went thither, and the fellow coming out again of a shop, I did give him a good cuff or two on the chops, and seeing him not oppose me, I did give him another." Does it not remind you of the charming bit in *A King and No King*, when the citizen's wife says to her damaged retainer: "Why did he strike thee, Philip?" and Philip replies, "Because I leaned on him." "And why didst thou lean on him?" "Because I did not think he would have struck me."

Yet even in that age of quick and susceptible honour there is not the slightest indication that people made fun of Pepys's timidity, or despised him for it, or were even aware of it. Without indulging in Rosalind's "swashing and martial outside", I fancy he kept up a good semblance of manly dignity. And I feel sure that the resentment he so simply and honestly expresses over the ill-treatment of two ladies quite unknown to him would have impelled him to act not unnobly when occasion called for it: "I was troubled to see them abused so; and could have found in my heart, as little desire of fighting as I have, to have protected the ladies."

Still, it must be admitted that Pepys is more winning, if not more instructive, in friendly relations than in hostile. It does not appear that he was closely intimate with any one. But he knew an immense variety of men and women, knew them and liked them, and they apparently liked him, and he exhibits his connection with them at all points with his usual clinging and telling veracity.

On the whole, his attitude to his social, as to his official, superiors, is satisfactory. Certainly he does like to get up in the world, to establish and assert his position, to take steps and do deeds and say words that will accomplish this end. Yet through it all one gets an impression of dignity and independence, of proper and becoming deference and respect, yet accompanied with the recognition and assertion of substantial worth and manliness on one's own part, which is not to be disregarded or

put down by the insolence of the great. Especially does Pepys appear well in his relations with his patron and relative, Lord Sandwich. The Earl had made him all he was in the world, and he admits it freely and is grateful. But he is not going to truckle or be played with. He will submit to unrewarded toil, will work hard and face sacrifices at his friend's behest. But he will not be neglected or maltreated. Also, when he sees the Earl making mistakes, he does not hesitate to point them out, to lament his vices and deplore his follies. He gives respectful advice, which is not only well meant but well worded, and deserves to be, and is, well received. When there is a temporary estrangement, his comment upon it is admirable in tone, and is in itself sufficient to make one esteem the writer.

But there are freer and easier and gayer relations with men than these difficult and ceremonious dealings with peers and chancellors. There are hours of forgetful, careless jollity, when the good meat warms, and the wine flows, and office frets and troubles cease to bother. One gets many a vision of merry outings, of joyous dinners at country inns, of hours gaily spent in song and jest and the pleasant exchange of words that were light-hearted, if not deep-thoughted. It is evident that the diarist liked company and could be good company himself.

Also, there was much more grave and serious intercourse, intelligent talk with intelligent men on matters that were worth while. There is Mr. Hill, with whom one can discuss music, or the universal character, or the art of memory, or Granger's counterfeiting of hands. And in the later years, when there was more leisure, we should not overlook the charming picture of Pepys's mature friendships, both as indicated by Evelyn and as suggested in the following passage of a letter from one who knew him well: "Mr. Pepys, who entertained us with that obliging kindness which engages all that he converses with into a love and respect for his person, which time, that destroys other things, does digest into a habit, and renders it so perfect that it generally lasts as long as a man's life. Of this there has been many examples; several of Mr. Pepys's friends continuing so, notwithstanding all accidents, till death; and the rest are likely to do the same."

With women of his own class, good women, sensible women, Pepys also enjoyed himself thoroughly, and liked to associate with them. It is true that he preferred the handsome ones. Yet there are many who are approved, not for mere looks, but for gravity and good counsel and sober carriage. Altogether, there are few things more delightful than to pass an afternoon in the sweet, gay, innocent company of a parcel of gentle and frolicsome girls: "Where, when we come, we were bravely entertained, and spent the day most pleasantly with the young ladies, and I so merry as never more."

How Pepys appeared to the young ladies we shall never know. I do not imagine him quick and sprightly in conversation, inexhaustible in wit, always ready with that ingenious repartee which sets the air a-sparkle, even though in a mere inflammation of nothing. He may have had these gifts, but the *Diary* does not suggest them, and I have an idea that, when he did not force himself into a slightly laboured gayety, he was inclined to be quiet, to watch and make internal notes, and even in delicate situations to be a trifle awkward. The self-consciousness, the embarrassment, which he admits on more than one occasion, must have often beset him. Indeed, social as he was, it is evident that he also knew the shrinking from all society, the sense of its hollowness, its insufficiency. In the midst of the gayest and most gleeful social occasion he would have understood the damning comment of Sly, the tinker, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, as the merry farce is enacting before him: "'Tis a very excellent piece of work: would it were done." When the company is gayest about him, and the laughter merriest, his soul suddenly stops like a run-down watch, and with a sigh he registers: "So to supper with them at Sir W. Batten's, and do counterfeit myself well pleased, but my heart is troubled and offended at the whole company."

And when you are most in the mood for jollity, when care has left you for the moment, and the heart is light and the heels lighter, you may go out with great expectations, and all your hope may be thwarted by some untoward circumstance. Pepys dines with a friend; but the appearance of the friend's aged mother is such as to damage appetite, and the presence of a sick

wife does not add to the hilarity. He gets a charming company to dinner, but the folly of one sets his sensitive nerves all a-jangle: "My simple Dr. do talk so like a fool that I am weary of him."

Also, the company may be delightful, and you may know it; a choice gathering of your nearest friends, with whom you ought to find pleasure, if with any one. Yet you may be simply out of the vein yourself, there may be some little pricking sting of office care, or you may be a few shillings wrong in your accounts, or there may have been a trying domestic scene during the day, and you are unfit for pleasure and the gayest merry-making in the world sounds like the crackling of thorns under a pot. Yet, if you have the social chord in you, and Pepys undoubtedly had, as most of us have, somewhere, the contact of your fellows will pull you at times out of even the worst of these blue fits. Your nerves will begin to thrill and quiver, the corners of your mouth will lift at the tinkle of laughter. The sight of a gay company absorbed in a game will stir you, so that you long to be with them. Cards? In the abstract Pepys does not care much for cards. When he loses sixpence, it is annoying. When he wins nine shillings, it is most agitating, and he prays God it may not tempt him to play again. Yet, after all, these cards are strange diverting things: there is oblivion in them, there is triumph in them, best of all there is laughter, a chance to laugh oneself, and to see pretty women laugh, and to sit near them and to melt away an evening in mutual, contenting gayety. And there are other trifling games, such as "Love my love with an A", which Pepys has even seen the dukes and duchesses play at Court; silly, idle things, to be sure, yet somehow they have a singular felicity in making hearts dance and eyes sparkle.

And if you want really to forget yourself and your troubles, perhaps the best of all means is to go on a journey, with a frolic cavalcade, like Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims. Little incidents and queer faces turn up, and set everybody quipping and jesting. You revel in the sunshine and you smile at the rain. You clatter through the mud, and you brush off the dust. What do rain or dust matter to a merry heart? And you are so exhilarated, so clean intoxicated, by the mere fun of the thing, that you play all sorts of giddy pranks which would seem strangely out of place in

staid London. "Of all the journeys that ever I made this was the merriest, and I was in a strange mood for mirth. . . . By and by we come to two little girls keeping cows, and I saw one of them very pretty, so I had a mind to make her ask my blessing, and telling her that I was her godfather, she asked me innocently whether I was not Ned Wooding, and I said that I was, so she kneeled down and very simply called, 'Pray, godfather, pray to God to bless me,' which made us very merry and I gave her twopence."

But unquestionably Pepys's most attractive social aspect is as a host. He did love to gather his friends about him and entertain them and feed them, and be himself the wildest and gayest of the lot. The blend of ostentation and pride and agonized economy and mad abandonment and real, hearty kindness, which appears in page after page of the *Diary*, as it describes these social meetings, is as fascinating as it is thoroughly human. The climax of all Pepys's social ecstasy occurs near the end of the record, when ampler means permitted indulgence with a clearer conscience. This magnificent orgy of hospitality could only be dimmed by comment or expatiation: "We fell to dancing, and continued, only with intermission for a good supper, till two in the morning, the musick being Greeting, and another most excellent violin, and theorbo, the best in town. . . . And so broke up with extraordinary pleasure, as being one of the days and nights of my life spent with the greatest content; and that which I can but hope to repeat again a few times in my whole life. This done, we parted, the strangers home, and I did lodge my cozen Pepys and his wife in our blue chamber. My cozen Turner, her sister, and The., in our best chamber; Bab., Betty, and Betty Turner, in our own chamber; and myself and my wife in the maid's bed, which is very good. Our maids in the coachman's bed; the coachman with the boy in his settle-bed, and Tom where he uses to lie. And so I did, to my great content, lodge at once in my house, with the greatest ease, fifteen, and eight of them strangers of quality." Oh, what a regal night!

GAMALIEL BRADFORD.

ÉMILE BERGERAT

A PARISIAN JOURNALIST OF YESTERDAY

BY JOHN HUNTER SEDGWICK

BALZAC in *Les Chouans* chose for his theme a dawn without a morrow, and M. Joseph Galtier in *Le Temps* uses much the same conception of the career of Émile Bergerat, who for so many years delighted Paris with his chronicles, his articles and his criticisms. It has seemed not unprofitable to me to consider how much in fact M. Galtier's idea applies to Bergerat and to many another journalist. Summing up the work and the life of Bergerat, this very able Frenchman says of it that it has *point de lendemain*, and though he says it in all kindliness, he has a tone of finality that makes one somewhat rebel. To be buried under flowers is no more satisfactory than sepulture under uncritical stones.

Émile Bergerat was not only a man well liked, but a high minded, a very talented journalist and man of letters, a critic of art who could discover a Forain, and a playwright who never quite succeeded. Instead, he was one of the best *Chroniqueurs* of the French press, a branch of work in which he was ranked with Aurélien Scholl, Henri Fouquier, Albert Wolff and the irrepressible marquis, Henri de Rochefort. He knew the art of the *Chroniqueur* and developed it as a literary form; he liked it, he served it faithfully, but always in his heart pulled back from the guiding of the gods who would not push him toward the theatre. The chronicle as it was understood in his period was not an essay, it was not reviewing, but something quite of itself. It had a lightness that is grievously lacking in many essays, a combination of familiar style and the restraints of knowledge quite unknown to mere reporting, and it had a certain literary ripeness by no means conspicuous in writings that one reads now and yet are more pretentious. But, if you please, we shall leave the work to one side and first regard a little the man.