

**THE DIARY OF THE
REV. RALPH JOSSELYN,
1616-1683. VOL. XV**

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The Diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683. Vol. XV by E. Hockliffe

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THE DIARY OF THE
REV. RALPH JOSSELIN

1616-1683

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BY

E. HOCKLIFFE M.A.

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PREFACE

The diary of Ralph Josselin, Vicar of Earles Colne from 1640 to 1683, consists of 185 pages about 8 inches by 5 written very closely on both sides of the page in a very fine and clear hand. It is bound in calf with the royal arms stamped on either cover with the letter G on the one side and the letter K on the other side of the shield ; doubtless this cover belonged originally to some other book. In the year 1702 the diary was still in the possession of the family as on one of the pages are the words " John Spicer his book ; " it will be seen that a Mr. Spicer married the Vicar's youngest daughter Rebekah. Its subsequent history is unknown, until it was discovered among the late Mrs. Oliphant's books after her death ; how it came into her possession is uncertain.

Less than half the original diary is here published. There are many entries of no interest whatever—endless thanks to God for his goodness " to mee and mine, " prayers, notes about the weather or his sermons, innumerable references to his constant " rheums " and " poses, " trivial details of every day life, records of visits to his friends etc. etc. The aim of the present edition has been to extract so much personal detail as is required to give a picture of the actual life of the author, and to include everything that possesses any historical interest. The author's spelling has been carefully preserved.

The entries in the diary are frequent and are made almost daily in the earlier years, but from about 1665 onwards the vicar seems to have made usually only one entry a week.

Ralph Josselyn belonged to the ancient family of Josselyn whose name is supposed to be connected with the town of Josselin in Brittany, the head of the senior branch of which is the Earl of Roden. There was a Ralph Josselyn of Roxwell in Essex, yeoman, whose will was proved on May 4, 1632; he had seven sons of whom the eldest was John. John Josselyn was born about 1583 and died in 1636, and was the father of the author of the diary; he had six other brothers one of whom, Thomas, emigrated to New England in 1635; and in Dr. Shaw's "History of the English Church during the Civil Wars &c." will be found the names of other members of the same family. The following extract from the will of Ralph Josselyn of Roxwell (the grandfather of the author of the diary) will show that the family was clearly well to do. "Ralph Josselyn of Roxwell in the county of Essex yeoman. To wife Dorothy a yearly rent of £20 for life, she abiding with my sons Ralphe and Symon. I have given unto my eldest son John his full part of my estate amounting to £800. To my son Richard £200 for his portion. To my son Joseph Josselyn £160." It will be seen from the diary April 30, 1647, that the author after some difficulty with his uncles received "free and peaceable possession of those parcels of land given to Joseph; this land part of our ancient inheritance; now I have about £20 per annum in land."¹

Ralph was born on January 26, 1616-17, though, judging from an entry in the diary under the date January 25, 1654-5, "rose this morning and I found my birthday was 26 not this day as I thought hitherto", he had up to that time reckoned the 25th as the day of his birth. The greater portion of his life was spent at Earles Colne of which he became Vicar in the year 1640.

It is an ancient town which owes its prefix Earles to the fact that the Earls of Oxford were the founders of the Priory which flourished till the Dissolution. Effigies of some of the family may still be seen at the Priory, a comparatively modern house near the site of the ancient monastery. "The 17th Earl of Oxford sold Earles Colne, with

¹ My thanks are due to John H. Josselyn Esq. of Ipswich for this information about the Josselyn family; also to Mr. Ralph Nevill, F.S.A., for his interest in the subject.

the tombs of his ancestors, to his steward Roger Harlakenden for £2,000 in Sept. 1583 " and with the Harlakendens of his day our Vicar was very intimate. The church itself was built in 1532 and upon the tower may be seen the quarterings of John de Vere, 16th Earl of Oxford, supported by two reindeer with boar for crest. From it in the year 1641 " upon an order of the House of Commons to that purpose we took down all images and pictures and such like glasses. " The Vicar had come there in 1640, stayed with Mr. R. Harlakenden, preached on the Lords Day and " upon their approbacon they desired mee I would come and live with them as yr minister. " So after he had " passed all with the bishop ", he took " peaceable possession " in March 1640 and remained there till his death in 1683.

In the " Valor Ecclesiasticus " the value of the living appears as £8. 10s. 8*d.* but from the diary under the year 1640 it will be seen that the actual value was £80, made up as follows.

Tithes	£40. 0. 0.
Mr. Rich. Harlakenden wood and money	20. 0. 0.
His tenants in contribucon	2. 0. 0.
Mr. Thomas Harlakenden	3. 0. 0.
The town contribucon.	15. 0. 0.

But the Vicar rarely gathered in the whole of this income.¹

Ralph Josselyn appears to have begun to keep a full record of his life only in the year 1644. In that year he wrote " Many things I have omitted ; but now henceforward I shall be more exact and particular, " and from that time till the day of his death we have a full account of his life. Through all the chances and changes of that time he remains Vicar of Earles Colne. No sketch of his career need be given here ; its details are plainly recorded in the following pages and a study of them will give a very graphic picture of the life of this pious and at the same time business-like clergyman of the 17th century. By legacies, by profits from his farm, by augmentations to his living, by his salary as schoolmaster or as

¹ Further information upon this with the text of the Harlakenden endowment in 1673 will be found in Morant's *Essex*, ii, 214.

Chaplain to Col. Harlakenden's regiment, he gradually amassed a fortune which enabled him to portion one of his daughters with "my house I dwell in and land belonging thereto worth £400, and an £100;" to another daughter about a month later he gave "£500 down and with my blessing sent her away." "Halfe I have gained" he writes at another time "hath not been from Colne but on other occasions." Clearly he enjoyed a greater measure of prosperity than many a clergyman of that day.

The price of land, food, cows and pigs, the wages of servants, the cost of a birthday entertainment, the salary of a schoolmaster, the excise duty on hops—such details as these will be found scattered over the various pages of the diary. We may see the books he reads, we may watch him at work upon his *Reconciler*, in which he attempts to reconcile passages of scripture apparently contradictory, or discussing the choice of elders with other ministers; we may hear him lamenting "the heavy burthen of the book of Common Prayer;" at another time he tells us how he administers the Sacrament upon Easter day 1665—"I believe its 22 or 23 years since received on that day or occasion;" he is appointed "an assistant in ejecting of ministers or schoolmasters for inefficiency," he grumbles vigorously at the Quakers, he is summoned to the Bishop's court in 1669 for not wearing the surplice, and returns "safe;" he remained obstinate upon the point apparently till 1680. Under May 17 of that year he writes "Rid to court; the matter is the surplice which I see no sin to use and shall endeavour to live as quietly as may be to the end of my race."

The picture in fact is full of interesting detail, and perhaps more than enough has already been said to describe the general character of the book. Such as Josselyn was, no doubt were many of his contemporaries; pious and devout, a preacher of long sermons, a devoted adherent of the Parliament, a hater of Laud—"that great enemy of the power of godliness" he writes, "that great stickler for all the outward pomp in the service of God left his head on Tower Hill" and in that simple entry there sounds a note of triumph such as doubtless thrilled many a Puritan of that day. But devoted as he was to the Parliamentary cause, he yet laments "the black

providence of putting the king to death," and is evidently reconciled to the return of Charles II. He has all the curious egotism which is the mark of a certain type of religious mind; when in one week he has lost both a child and a "dear friend," though he laments their deaths, he seems at the same time to regard them chiefly as a warning, in fact a "great mercy" sent by God to himself. (*vide* June 4, 1650.)

Yet with all his piety, his continued "exercises" and "expoundings, his "profitable and spiritual discourses," he combined a strict attention to his interests as a farmer, and shrewd business calculations jostle cheek by jowl with fervid expressions of piety. We hear that "Huggins is undone," and in the same breath that Josselyn has taken care to seize his crop for rent.

A kindly if somewhat self-seeking figure he lives again in the pages of this diary, and when his story ceases abruptly on July 27, 1683, with a broken entry, we feel with real sorrow that we have parted from a friend.

NOTE.

From a paper on the Harlakenden family contributed to the Topographer by G. Steinman (*Windsor Herald*) it appears that Josselin's diary was in the year 1847 in the possession of the family of Carwardine which is descended from the Harlakendens. The diary also seems to have been at Colne Priory in the year 1765. This information, for which I am indebted to Capt. Geoffrey Probert, Equerry to H.R.H. Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, unluckily reached me too late for insertion in the first page of the Preface.

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