

**SAMUEL PEPYS: A
PORTRAIT
IN MINIATURE**

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Samuel Pepys: a portrait in miniature by J. Lucas-Dubreton & H. F. Stenning

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J. LUCAS-DUBRETON & H. F. STENNING

**SAMUEL PEPYS: A
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Samuel Pepys

A Portrait in Miniature

By
J. Lucas-Dubreton

Translated from the French by
H. J. Stenning



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CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

“JOHN PEPYS, tailor and citizen of London, married a laundress, by whom he had several children. Samuel, the eldest, was born on the 23rd February, 1633.”

It would seem our hero is of plebeian birth. He does not acknowledge the fact, as among his ancestors were officials and sheriffs and he is related to the Montagu family, which was socially well placed. Moreover, in one of his books we read :

“Samuel Pepys of Brampton in Huntingdonshire, Esq., Descended from ye antient family of Pepys of Cottenham in Cambridgeshire.”

This is the finished style of Pepys ; the pompous phrases are designed to impose the book upon posterity. Still, a tailor and a laundress are not precisely on the steps of the throne. We are precluded from conjecturing that the family was a noble one fallen into decay by Samuel's

own admission in his truthful journal : " My family was never considerable." Moreover, these distinctions of plebeians and patricians never had in his country the same significance as elsewhere. The English aristocracy was an affair of money and office. That fortunate island scarcely knew feudalism in the French sense of the word.

Samuel never tumbled about the London pavements nor trailed along the streets in the wake of the City apprentices. He lived—happy boy—partly in the town and partly in the country. Thus he retains a rustic flavour, an odour of the fields. In fine, this official smells the reverse of musty. At the age of seventeen he is a bursar at Cambridge ; Trinity Hall, and then Magdalen College.

Does he work ? Does he idle ? There is only one indication to guide us. On the 21st October, 1653, Samuel is severely admonished for being scandalously drunk with a comrade. This is not sufficient to condemn a man, least of all a student. We know that he learned to read Latin, write Greek, and mumble Italian, French, and Spanish. At the age of twenty-two, having taken his degree but being penniless, what is this young Englishman, son of an artisan and member of an eminently practical race, to do ? He gets married. His