

Introduction

at the age of 36, burdened by debts which Pepys had to pay off.

Pepys himself was sent for a while during the Civil War to the grammar school at Huntingdon, and then lived, in all probability, with his uncle Robert Pepys of Brampton, who was steward to the Mountagus of Hinchingsbrooke nearby. Edward Mountagu, the young squire of Hinchingsbrooke – eight years older than Pepys and later his patron – was related to the Pepyses through his mother, a great-aunt of the diarist, and it is likely that it was at this time that he and the young Pepys became acquainted. Soon after the end of the war Pepys returned to London and was put to school at St Paul's, which he left in 1651 with an exhibition to Cambridge. He was probably meant for the law, and was at first entered at Trinity Hall, a lawyers' college, but before going up was transferred to Magdalene. What little we know about Pepys during his college days seems to be recognisably characteristic of him. He was awarded scholarships, he made friends, some of them close and dear ones, like Dick Cumberland (later a bishop) whom he later hoped his sister Paulina might marry; he was reprimanded for drunken misbehaviour; he knew at least one lady of the town; and he wrote an unfinished romance (later torn up) entitled 'Love a Cheate'.

Soon after taking his degree in 1654 Pepys entered the service of Edward Mountagu as his secretary and agent in London. Mountagu, one of Cromwell's young colonels in the Civil War, had broken with the army extremists and retired to his estates in 1648, but in the spring of 1653 had been returned as M.P. and at the end of the year had been made a Councillor of State in Cromwell's Protectorate. He now needed a man of business to look after his official lodgings in Whitehall Palace, and Pepys for his part needed a career. By December 1655 he was able to marry Elizabeth St Michel, a pretty fifteen-year-old daughter of a Huguenot refugee. His responsibilities mounted: in 1656 his patron was made a General-at-Sea, and, being away in the summers on naval service, and in the winters often away at Hinchingsbrooke, he came to depend a great deal on Pepys's assistance. Pepys proved a faithful steward – prompt in the execution of orders, punctual and systematic in his accounts. Sometime in or after 1656 he was introduced to a post in the public service as clerk to George Downing in the Exchequer. He had, in a modest way, arrived.