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DANIEL DEFOE

ROBINSON CRUSOE

with an introduction by DAVID G. PITT

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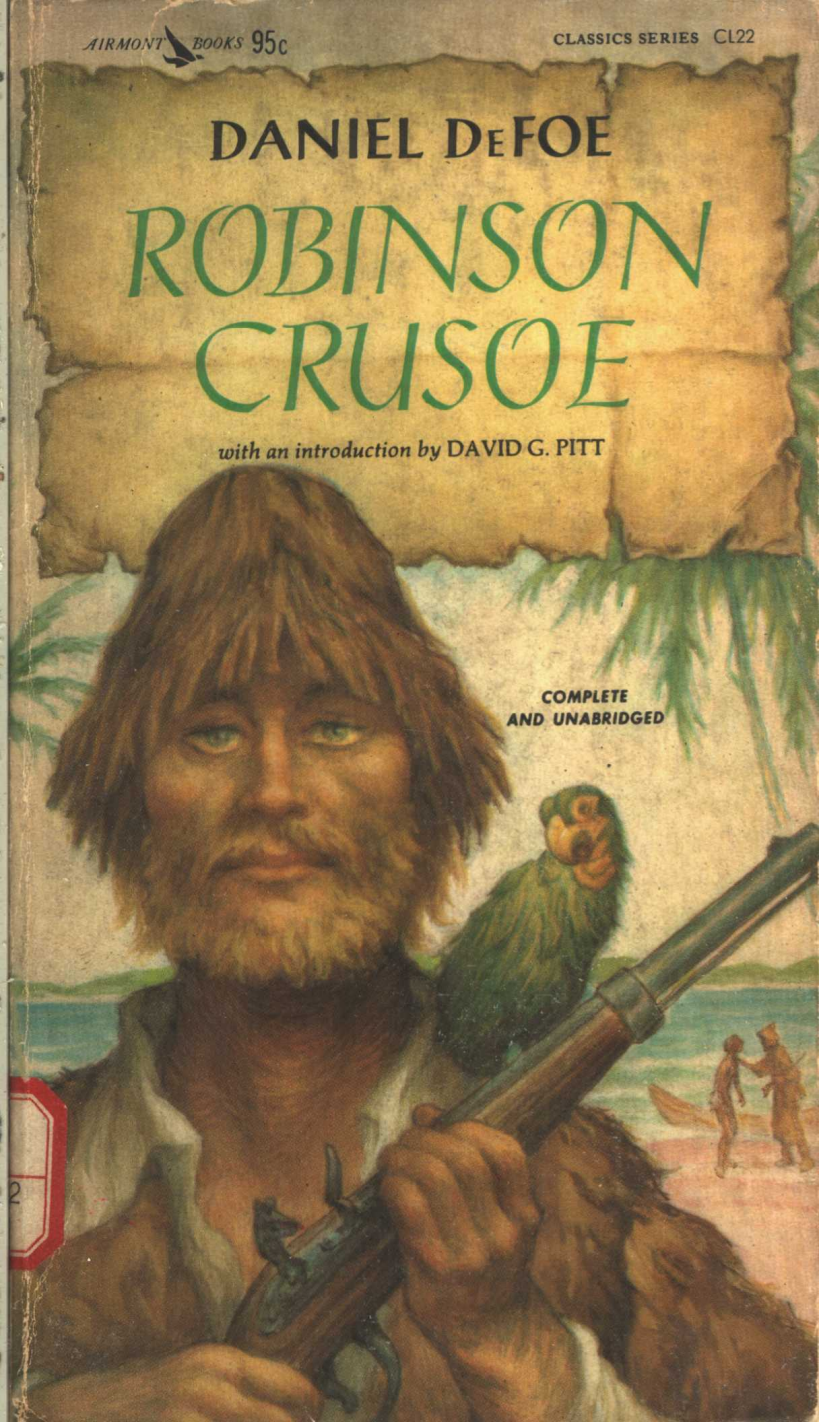

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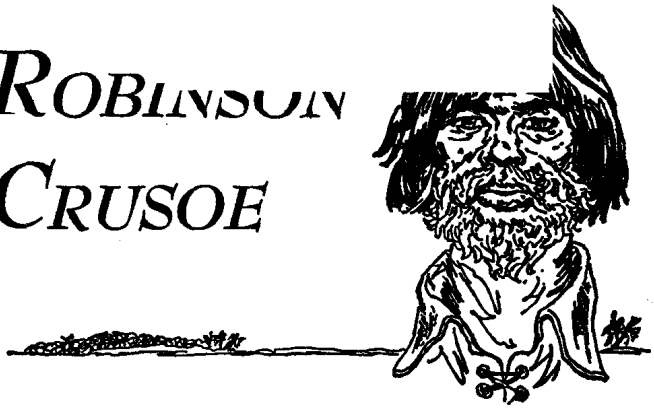

DANIEL DEFOE

Introduction

In the ancient burial ground of Bunhill Fields in the heart of London stands a simple stone shaft bearing these words: *Daniel Defoe Born 1661 Died 1731 Author of Robinson Crusoe.* The monument is plain, the inscription brief, but a thousand words and a column as tall as Nelson's could not attest more certainly to the immortality of Defoe's name than the simple epigraph: *Author of Robinson Crusoe.*

Yet this book is but a minute part of Defoe's total literary production, for he was one of the most prolific writers that ever lived. Just how many works—pamphlets, poems, novels, histories and pseudo-histories—came from his pen we shall probably never know, for many of his writings were published unsigned. Estimates by scholars place the number between two hundred and fifty and four hundred. Yet for all this literary abundance most readers know him only as the author of that great favorite of their early years—and, very likely, the companion of their later ones, too—*Robinson Crusoe.* Indeed, there are probably many who know intimately the castaway, his island, and Man Friday, yet think of his story as one

of those great folk tales or myths that have grown out of the past and the imagination of the race without an identifiable author at all. For such is the quality of this marvelous tale as to suggest that part of our traditions where history and legend merge, a tale that seems too strange and wonderful to be the history of an ordinary mortal, and yet too credible and real to be the matter of mere invention. It is not surprising then, perhaps, that there are many who know Crusoe's history but cannot even name his creator.

The man who wrote *Robinson Crusoe* was real enough, very much a part of this world, and a keen participant in its practical affairs. He was born in London, probably in 1660, the son of a butcher and candlestick-maker named James Foe. The father had little schooling, but the son was sent to a famous Nonconformist academy where he received a fairly good general education. His subsequent history reads almost like one of his own tales: travel in Europe, marriage (and in time seven children), participation in the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion of 1685, commercial undertakings in the hosiery and later the brick and tile business, financial troubles and debts to pay off, and, after writing in 1702 a pamphlet offensive to the Church of England, exposure in the pillory, fine and imprisonment. After his release in 1704, he became for a time a secret agent of the government, working for the union of England and Scotland; served a second short term in prison after conviction for libel arising from another of his pamphlets; and finally, in 1719—in his sixtieth year—settled down to the work that was to make him immortal.

The first part of *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* was published in April, 1719, and was immediately a great success. It went into four editions even before the second part appeared in August of the same year. In the next ten years more than a score of major works came from Defoe's pen, as well as innumerable minor pieces. Among his more important contributions to English literary history are *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, The Jour-*

nal of the Plague Year (after *Robinson Crusoe,* probably his best-known work), *The History of Colonel Jack,* and *Roxana the Fortunate Mistress.* All these are important works and would have assured Defoe a significant place in English literature had he never written *Robinson Crusoe.* Yet this single work has always overshadowed his other writings.

Robinson Crusoe stands, like *Gulliver's Travels,* in the tradition of the travel tale, of which there had been many examples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some of these were true accounts of actual exploits, though often embellished with fictional detail; others, like More's *Utopia,* were frankly imaginary from beginning to end. There was, however, in its ancestry no book that really resembled Defoe's masterpiece. The exploits of William Dampier, world-traveler and buccaneer, recounted in his *New Voyage Round the World* (1697) and *Voyages and Descriptions* (1699), undoubtedly had an influence upon Defoe's imagination. But the main inspiration for *Robinson Crusoe,* though not its source (apart from Defoe's fertile imagination and observant mind, it has no "source" in the usual sense), was probably the actual history of a Scottish mariner, Alexander Selkirk, a sailing master in one of Dampier's expeditions, who was marooned on the island of Juan Fernandez from September, 1704 to January, 1709. Defoe, it seems, met Selkirk in Bristol after his return to England, and received from him a firsthand account of his adventures, which were also published in 1712.

But *Robinson Crusoe* goes far beyond, in scope and detail, anything that Selkirk may have told Defoe, or that he may have read about him. It has, besides, a more serious purpose than merely to fictionize the story of a castaway, or to astonish its readers with "strange and surprizing adventures." Accounts of such as these it does indeed contain, reading which, as Coleridge observed of them, "Our imagination is kept in full play, excited to the highest." But Defoe is also concerned with Man and his relation to Nature and Nature's God. I see the book, in part at least, as an attempt to show that Man, deprived

of almost all the benefits of civilization except, notably, his religion, does not necessarily sink into that "state of Nature" in which, as the philosopher Hobbes had not long since described it, the life of man is "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The book has thus strong moral and religious implications that cannot be overlooked. But for the modern reader its chief appeal lies undoubtedly in its skillful and convincing mingling of the extraordinary and extravagant with the familiar and commonplace. For though Defoe portrays a life that is remote from anything that we have ever actually known, in doing so he draws so faithfully upon the facts of our human nature, and brings all before us in such calm, unexcited literalness, that we cannot but accept every word and be convinced that it is true. For a time, Crusoe's life becomes ours and we the solitary castaway himself. To be able to bring this about is indeed the supreme gift of the great storyteller.

DAVID G. PITT, M.A., Ph.D.
Professor of English
Memorial University of Newfoundland

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PREFACE

If ever the story of any private man's adventures in the world were worth making public, and were acceptable when published, the editor of this account thinks this will be so.

The wonders of this man's life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant; the life of one man being scarce capable of a greater variety.

The story is told with modesty, with seriousness, and with a religious application of events to the uses to which wise men always apply them (viz.) to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence in all the variety of our circumstances, let them happen how they will.

The editor believes the thing to be a just history of fact; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it. And however thinks, because all such things are disputed, that the improvement of it, as well to the diversion, as to the instruction of the reader, will be the same; and as such, he thinks, without further compliment to the world, he does them a great service in the publication.

I GO TO SEA

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise and, leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name "Crusoe," and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of which was lieutenant-colonel to an English regiment of foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Colonel Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Kunkirk against the Spaniards; what became of my second brother I never knew, any more than my father or mother did know what was become of me.

Being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts. My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house education and a country free school generally goes, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea; and my inclination to this led me so strongly against the will, nay the commands, of my father, and against all the entreaties and persuasions of my mother and other friends that there seemed to be

something fatal in that propension of nature tending directly to the life of misery which was to befall me.

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon the subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortune by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortunes on the other, who went abroad upon adventures, to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me I might judge of the happiness of this state by this one thing, viz., that this was the state of life which all other people envied; that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequences of being born to great things, and wished they had been placed in the middle of the two extremes, between the mean and the great; that the wise man gave his testimony to this as the just standard of true felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty nor riches.

He bade me observe it, and I should always find that the calamities of life were shared among the upper and lower part of mankind; but that the middle station had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind; nay, they were not subjected to so many distempers and uneasiness either of body or mind, as those were who, by

vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on one hand, or by hard labour, want of necessaries, and mean or insufficient diet on the other hand, bring distempers upon themselves by the natural consequences of their way of living; that the middle station of life was calculated for all kind of virtues, and all kind of enjoyments; that peace and plenty were the handmaids of a middle fortune; that temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life; that this way men went silently and smoothly through the world, and comfortably out of it, not embarrassed with the labours of the hands or of the head, not sold to the life of slavery for daily bread, or harassed with perplexed circumstances, which rob the soul of peace and the body of rest; not enranged with the passion of envy, or secret burning lust of ambition for great things; but in easy circumstances sliding gently through the world, and sensibly tasting the sweets of living, without the bitter, feeling that they are happy, and learning by every day's experience to know it more sensibly.

After this, he pressed me earnestly, and in the most affectionate manner, not to play the young man, nor to precipitate myself into miseries which nature and the station of life I was born in seemed to have provided against; that I was under no necessity of seeking my bread; that he would do well for me, and endeavour to enter me fairly into the station of life which he had been just recommending to me; and that if I was not very easy and happy in the world, it must be my mere fate or fault that must hinder it, and that he should have nothing to answer for, having thus discharged his duty in warning me against measures which he knew would be to my hurt. In a word, that as he would do very kind things for me if I would stay and settle at home, as he directed, so he would not have so much hand in my misfortunes as to give me any encouragement to go away. And to close all, he told me, I had my elder brother for an example, to whom he had used the same earnest persuasions to keep him from go-

ing into the Low Country wars, but could not prevail, his young desires prompting him to run into the army, where he was killed; and though he said he would not cease to pray for me, yet he would venture to say to me that if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel, when there might be none to assist in my recovery.

I observed in this last part of his discourse, which was truly prophetic, though I suppose my father did not know it to be so himself; I say, I observed the tears run down his face very plentifully, especially when he spoke of my brother who was killed; and that when he spoke of my having leisure to repent, and none to assist me, he was so moved that he broke off the discourse, and told me his heart was so full he could say no more to me.

I was sincerely affected with this discourse, as indeed who could be otherwise? and I resolved not to think of going abroad any more, but to settle at home according to my father's desire. But alas! a few days wore it all off; and in short, to prevent any of my father's further importunities, in a few weeks after, I resolved to run quite away from him. However, I did not act so hastily neither as my first heat of resolution prompted, but I took my mother, at a time when I thought her a little pleasanter than ordinary, and told her that my thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the world that I should never settle to anything with resolution enough to go through with it, and my father had better give me his consent than force me to go without it; that I was now eighteen years old, which was too late to go apprentice to a trade, or clerk to an attorney; that I was sure, if I did, I should never serve out my time, and I should certainly run away from my master before my time was out, and go to sea; and if she would speak to my father to let me go one voyage abroad, if I came home again and did not like it, I would go no more, and I would promise by a double diligence to recover that time I had lost.

This put my mother into a great passion. She told me

she knew it would be to no purpose to speak to my father upon any such subject; that he knew too well what was my interest, to give his consent to anything so much for my hurt, and that she wondered how I could think of any such thing, after such a discourse as I had had with my father, and such kind and tender expressions as she knew my father had used to me; and that, in short, if I would ruin myself, there was no help for me; but I might depend I should never have their consent to it; that for her part she would not have so much hand in my destruction; and I should never have it to say, that my mother was willing when my father was not.

Though my mother refused to move it to my father, yet, as I have heard afterwards, she reported all the discourse to him, and that my father, after showing a great concern at it, said to her with a sigh, "that boy might be happy if he would stay at home, but if he goes abroad, he will be the most miserable wretch that was ever born; I can give no consent to it."

It was not till almost a year after this that I broke loose, though in the meantime I continued obstinately deaf to all proposals of settling to business, and frequently expostulating with my father and mother about their being so positively determined against what they knew my inclinations prompted me to. But being one day at Hull, where I went casually, and without any purpose of making an elopement that time; but I say, being there, and one of my companions being going by sea to London in his father's ship, and prompting me to go with them, with the common allurement of seafaring men, viz., that it should cost me nothing for my passage, I consulted neither father or mother any more, nor so much as sent them word of it; but leaving them to hear of it as they might, without asking God's blessing, or my father's, without any consideration of circumstances or consequences, and in an ill hour, God knows, on the first of September, 1651, I went on board a ship bound for London. Never any young adventurer's misfortunes, I believe, began sooner or continued longer than mine. The ship was no

sooner gotten out of the Humber but the wind began to blow, and the sea to rise in a most frightful manner; and as I had never been at sea before, I was most inexpressibly sick in body and terrified in mind. I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my father's house and abandoning my duty; all the good counsel of my parents, my father's tears, and my mother's entreaties came now fresh into my mind, and my conscience, which was not yet come to the pitch of hardness to which it has been since, reproached me with the contempt of advice and the breach of my duty to God and my father.

All this while the storm increased, and the sea, which I had never been upon before, went very high, though nothing like what I have seen many times since; no, nor like what I saw a few days after. But it was enough to affect me then, who was but a young sailor and had never known anything of the matter. I expected every wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought, in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more; and in this agony of mind I made many vows and resolutions, that if it would please God here to spare my life in this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again while I lived; that I would take his advice, and never run myself into such miseries as these any more. Now I saw plainly the goodness of his observations about the middle station of life, how easy, how comfortably he had lived all his days, and never had been exposed to tempests at sea or troubles on shore; and I resolved that I would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home to my father.

These wise and sober thoughts continued all the while the storm continued, and indeed some time after; but the next day the wind was abated and the sea calmer, and I began to be a little inured to it. However, I was very grave for all that day, being also a little seasick still; but

towards night the weather cleared up, the wind was quite over, and a charming fine evening followed; the sun went down perfectly clear, and rose so the next morning; and having little or no wind, and a smooth sea, the sun shining upon it, the sight was, as I thought the most delightful that ever I saw.

I had slept well in the night, and was now no more sea-sick, but very cheerful, looking with wonder upon the sea that was so rough and terrible the day before, and could be so calm and so pleasant in so little time after. And now lest my good resolutions should continue, my companion, who had indeed enticed me away, comes to me. "Well, Bob," says he, clapping me upon the shoulder, "how do you do after it? I warrant you were frightened, wa'n't you, last night, when it blew but a capful of wind?" "A capful, d'you call it?" said I. " 'Twas a terrible storm." "A storm, you fool, you," replies he; "do you call that a storm? why, it was nothing at all; give us but a good ship and sea room, and we think nothing of such a squall of wind as that; but you're but a fresh-water sailor, Bob; come, let us make a bowl of punch, and we'll forget all that; d'ye see what charming weather 'tis now?" To make short this sad part of my story, we went the old way of all sailors; the punch was made, and I was made drunk with it, and in that one night's wickedness I drowned all my repentance, all my reflections upon my past conduct, and all my resolutions for the future. In a word, the sea was returned to its smoothness of surface and settled calmness by the abatement of that storm, so the hurry of my thoughts being over, my fears and apprehensions of being swallowed up by the sea being forgotten, and the current of my former desires returned, I entirely forgot the vows and promises that I made in my distress. I found indeed some intervals of reflection, and the serious thoughts did, as it were, endeavour to return again sometimes; but I shook them off, and roused myself from them as it were from a distemper, and applying myself to drinking and company, soon mastered the return of those fits (for so I called them), and I had in five or six days got as

complete a victory over conscience as any young fellow that resolved not to be troubled with it could desire. But I was to have another trial for it still; and Providence, as in such cases generally it does, resolved to leave me entirely without excuse. For if I would not take this for a deliverance, the next was to be such a one as the worst and most hardened wretch among us would confess both the danger and the mercy.

The sixth day of our being at sea we came into Yarmouth Roads; the wind having been contrary, and the weather calm, we had made but little way since the storm. Here we were obliged to come to anchor, and here we lay, the wind continuing contrary, viz., at southwest, for seven or eight days, during which time a great many ships from Newcastle came into the same roads, as the common harbour where the ships might wait for a wind for the river.

We had not, however, rid here so long, but should have tided it up the river, but that the wind blew too fresh; and after we had lain four or five days, blew very hard. However, the roads being reckoned as good as a harbour, the anchorage good, and our ground tackle very strong, our men were unconcerned, and not in the least apprehensive of danger, but spent the time in rest and mirth, after the manner of the sea; but the eighth day in the morning, the wind increased, and we had all hands at work to strike our topmasts and make everything snug and close, that the ship might ride as easy as possible. By noon the sea went very high indeed, and our ship rid forecastle in, shipped several seas, and we thought once or twice our anchor had come home; upon which our master ordered out the sheet anchor; so that we rode with two anchors ahead, and the cables veered out to the bitter end.

By this time it blew a terrible storm indeed, and now I began to see terror and amazement in the faces even of the seamen themselves. The master, though vigilant in the business of preserving the ship, yet as he went in and out of his cabin by me, I could hear him softly to him-