

B A N T A M C L A S S I C

ROBINSON CRUSOE



Daniel Defoe

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DANIEL DEFOE



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A Bantam Book

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DANIEL DEFOE was born Daniel Foe in London in 1660. (He assumed the more genteel "De" when he was thirty-five years old.) His father, a tallow chandler, sent him to Reverend Charles Morton's academy to study for the ministry. But Defoe turned to trading and, later, to the brick-and-tile business. Both bankrupted him, and from then on he was plagued by debt.

It was perhaps inevitable that Defoe, an outspoken man, would become a political journalist. As a Puritan, he believed God had given him a mission to print the truth; that is, to proselytize on religion and politics, and in fact, he became a prolific pamphleteer satirizing the hypocrisies of both church and state. Defoe admired William III, and his poem *The True-Born Englishman* (1701) won him the king's friendship. But an ill-timed satire on High Church extremists, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," published during Queen Anne's reign, resulted in his being pilloried and imprisoned for seditious libel in 1703. Rescued by the Tory minister Robert Harley, whom he later served as writer and spy, Defoe went on to publish the *Review* (1704–13), one of London's earliest and best miscellaneous journals.

At fifty-nine Defoe turned to fiction, completing *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), partly based on the saga of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor; *Moll Flanders* (1722); *Colonel Jack* (1722); *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722); and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724).

Defoe is the father of the English novel, preceding both Fielding and Richardson. As James Joyce observed, Defoe is "the first English author to write without imitating or adapting foreign works, to create without literary models and to infuse into the creatures of his pen a truly national spirit, to devise for himself an artistic form which is perhaps without precedent...."

Defoe's important novel *Robinson Crusoe* has been acknowledged by Samuel Johnson as one of the few books "written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers," and it has been praised by Virginia Woolf as "a simplicity." Daniel Defoe died "of a lethargy" on April 24, 1731, in Ropemaker's Alley, London, and was buried along with such worthy Puritans as John Bunyan in Bunhill Fields.

PREFACE

IF EVER the story of any man's private 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 honor 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 dispatched, 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 farther compliment to the world, he does them a great service in the publication.

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A WARNING

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 Dunkirk 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 this 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 labor 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 or riches.

He bid 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 uneasinesses either of body or mind as those were who, by vicious living, luxury, and extravagances on one hand, or by hard labor, 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 kinds of virtues and all kinds 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 labors of the hands or of the head, not sold to the life of slavery for daily bread, nor harassed with perplexed circumstances, which rob the soul of peace and the body of rest; not enraged 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, not 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 endeavor 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 going 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, and especially when he spoke of my brother who was