ASPECTS OF LIFE AND THOUGHT IN *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

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(*Continued*)

III.—The Commercial Element in *Robinson Crusoe*

1. *The Character of the Middle-Class in "Robinson Crusoe."*

The first two pages of the novel contain a long panegyric of the middle-class station in life. Robinson Crusoe's father draws his son's attention to the fact 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" (p. 17). This praise of the secure life of a "bourgeois" was calculated to captivate the reader. Defoe did not write his book for the learned, he wrote it for the large public of tradesmen, apprentices, and shopkeepers. *Robinson Crusoe* is Defoe's first novel, and the reasons why he turned from journalism and miscellaneous writing to prose fiction was "an increasing desire to make money through his pen in order to portion his daughters." [1] This is an explanation of the numerous traits in the novel which are clearly in the range and to the taste of a middle-class reader.

What strikes us most is Defoe's way of describing such scenes as were likely to produce terror and astonishment in the reader. Thus, in the first and in the last scenes of his book, he managed to describe adventures with wild beasts, such as lions, wolves, and bears. Nothing could be better calculated to secure an uncultivated reader's attention than the description of such thrilling scenes as that of the terrible storm on the coast of England in which Robinson Crusoe and the whole crew of the ship almost perished (p. 20), than the description of the "horrible noises and hideous cries and

[1] W. P. Trent, in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. ix, p. 19.

howlings," produced by the beasts on the coast of Guinea (p. 24), Robinson's near escape from death through his being thrown on the shore of his island by huge waves which he describes as follows: " . . . for I saw the sea come after me as high as a great hill, and as furious as an enemy, which I had no means or strength to contend with " (p. 30). Defoe's middle-class reader did not ask for refined literary achievements. He craved for thrilling adventures, exciting scenes of battles, earthquakes (pp. 41, 42), tempests and the like. Defoe knew how to keep his reader in anxious suspense and how to relax the tension by introducing at the last moment a miraculous deliverance. Thus, for instance, Robinson Crusoe fell upon the savages at a very well-timed moment when they were going to kill the Spaniard: " I had now," Robinson says, " not a moment to lose, for nineteen of the dreadful wretches sat upon the ground all close huddled together, and had just sent the other two to butcher the poor Christian . . . and they were stooped down to untie the bands at his feet. I turned to Friday. Now, Friday, said I, do as I bid thee. . . ." (p. 91).

A large share of the book's popularity with the middle-class reader is due to the strong comic element which Defoe introduced into the novel. Defoe's humour is not a refined and delicate one, it very often borders on the burlesque. Thus, after the terrible scene of the battle with the cannibals and the rescuing of the Spaniard and Friday's father, Defoe depicts the immense joy of Friday at the sight of his father: " It would have moved any one to tears," says Robinson Crusoe, " to have seen how Friday kissed him, cried, laughed, halloed, jumped about, danced, sung, then cried again, wrung his hands, beat his own face and head, and then sung and jumped about again like a distracted creature " (pp. 92, 93). Friday is the comic figure of the novel. Robinson Crusoe in person is far too severe and gloomy a Puritan to be able to induce the reader to smile. Friday's expressive gestures, his naïve words, and his sheer good-nature form a sympathetic contrast to the prim and proper figure of his master.

Some other traits in this novel which clearly indicate that it was calculated to appeal to the middle-class reader can easily be found. The circumstantial descriptions of Robinson Crusoe's manual labour were sure to interest any of his readers employed in similar occupations. Robinson's habit of " taking a dram " before he undertook a difficult business or in order to give himself courage

is characteristic of the members of his social class. Very popular is the remedy which Robinson Crusoe applied against the violent cold he had caught: he ate green tobacco leaves soaked in rum (p. 46). The theological instruction which he conveyed by way of soliloquy to the reader is by no means above the powers of comprehension of the average middle-class man. One exemplary passage begins like this: "As I sat there, some such thoughts as these occurred to me. What is the earth and sea, of which I have seen so much? . . . Sure we are all made by some secret power, who formed the earth and sea, the air and sky; and who is that?—Then it followed, most naturally: it is God that has made it all" (p. 45).

2. *The Character of the Merchant.*

When discussing the ethics of the Puritan merchant, we saw that his chief qualities were prudence, honesty, diligence, moderation, sobriety, and thrift. They are the essential qualities of the middle-class, and, during his life on the island, Robinson Crusoe acquired them all. He belonged to the middle-class and was told so by his father, who said: "that mine (Robinson's) 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" (p. 17). Though the author personally had not been fortunate in his commercial enterprises, Robinson Crusoe, the hero whom Defoe created, grew rich by his trade. Defoe had evidently in his youth been fascinated by the seafaring merchants of his time. He learned that overseas trade was very lucrative and, therefore, he liked to send his imagination wandering into foreign countries and over far seas. Defoe was destined by his parents for the ministry; Robinson Crusoe was designed for the law (p. 17). Defoe renounced his career as a Nonconformist divine and took to trade; Robinson Crusoe, irresistibly attracted by the wonderful life of the seafaring merchants, ran away from home and enlisted on a ship.

Despite his "wandering inclination," Robinson Crusoe has all the essential qualities of a merchant. The contempt he professes for the money which he could not use on his island seems to be elaborately strained: "I had," says he, "a parcel of money, as well gold as silver, about thirty-six pounds sterling; alas! there

the nasty, sorry, useless stuff lay ; I had no manner of business for it, and I often thought with myself, that I would have given a handful of it for a gross of tobacco pipes, or for a hand-mill to grind my corn " (p. 57). The value which Robinson normally attributed to riches appears clearly when he learns that he has become a millionaire during his absence on the island. " It is impossible," says he, " to express the flutterings of my very heart when I looked over these letters, and especially when I found all my wealth about me ; . . . In a word, I turned pale and grew sick, and had not the old man ran and fetched me a cordial, I believe the sudden surprise of joy had overset nature, and I had died upon the spot. Nay, after that I continued very ill, and was so some hours, till a physician being sent for . . . he ordered me to be let blood, after which I had relief and grew well ; but I verily believe, if I had not been eased by the vent given in that manner to the spirits, I should have died " (p. 107 f.).

This intensity of emotion seems the more astonishing as Robinson is usually level-headed and master of himself in the most trying circumstances. He would never have been able to rescue Friday and the Spaniard from the hands of the cannibals if he had not executed his plan of action with as much courage as cool calculation. When attacked by more than three hundred ravenous wolves, he managed to direct the fire of his small troop with such admirable calmness, that he was able to have still a reserve volley in store : " I was loath to spend our last shot too hastily ; so I called my servant . . . and giving him a horn of powder, I bade him lay a train all along the pieces of timber . . ." (p. 113).

We have seen that this domination of instinct and emotion by will is ultimately a result of the ascetic doctrine of Puritanism. To the same religious source can be traced the spirit of drudgery, the effort of unceasing hard labour which we discover in Robinson Crusoe. He worked very hard, especially during the first days of his confinement on the island. Speaking of his primitive method of making boards, he says : " It is true, by this method I could make but one board out of a whole tree, but this I had no remedy for but patience, any more than I had for the prodigious deal of time and labour which it took me up to make a plank or board " (p. 38). On May 6 he writes in his diary : " Worked on the wreck, got several iron bolts out of her, and other pieces of iron work, worked very hard, and came home very much tired, and had thoughts

of giving it over " (p. 43). But he returned to work on the wreck on the following days and afterwards every day for more than a fortnight. He indeed lived up to his maxim, never to abandon that which he had once begun : " . . . for I seldom gave anything over without accomplishing it, when I once had it in my head enough to begin it " (p. 70).

3. *The Habits of the Merchant.*

When concluding some business, Robinson always insists on having a written contract if possible signed by a lawyer. In this habit he makes not even an exception with his dearest friends (p. 107). One might ask oneself where Robinson could have learned these commercial usages, having spent twenty-eight years of his life on a desert island and having never been an apprentice in a trader's business. He had even a manifest aversion to anything like a trade : " I was now eighteen years old, which was too late to go apprentice to a trade, or clerk to an attorney . . . 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 down to business " (p. 18). The answer to the question is that Defoe gave his hero the benefit of all the experience and knowledge in commerce which he had acquired in the course of his own life.

Frequent disclosures in the narrative show us that the commercial instinct played a strong and important part in the everyday life of our hero. Hübener, in his study on " Der Kaufmann Robinson Crusoe," thinks it legitimate to speak of the " Erfülltheit des Romans (I. Teil) im Inselleben des Helden so gut wie in der Vorgeschichte und am Schlusse von kaufmännischem, frühkapitalistischem Geiste." [1] Though this statement may contain some exaggeration, it is true that Robinson Crusoe shows a clear predilection for the use of certain commercial methods, such as accounts, balance-sheets, a journal, and catalogues of goods.

If Robinson wants to bring clearness into his thoughts, he writes them down in the form of a balance-sheet : on the left or debit side he writes, for instance, all the causes why he has to complain over his misfortunes, and on the right hand side he puts as many reasons why he can console himself. The words and ideas with which he

[1] G. Hübener, " Der Kaufmann Robinson Crusoe," *Englische Studien*, 1920, liv, pp. 367–398.

introduces this balance-sheet are characteristic: he uses conscientiously the technical expressions of business-life: "I now began to consider seriously my condition and the circumstance I was reduced to, and I drew up the state of my affairs in writing, not so much to leave them to any that were to come after me, for I was like to have but few heirs, as to deliver my thoughts from daily poring upon them . . . and as my reason began now to master my despondency, I began to comfort myself as well as I could, and to set the good against the evil, that I might have something to distinguish my case from worse; and I stated it very impartially, like debtor and creditor, the comforts I enjoyed against the miseries I suffered, thus:—" (p. 37).

We find many more examples of this habit of making commercial accounts whenever there was an opportunity of so doing. Thus, Robinson enumerates the reasons he has to risk sailing on his raft from the wreck to the island: "I had three encouragements," says he, "1st. A smooth, calm sea. 2nd. The tide rising, and setting in to the shore. 3rd. What little wind there was blew me towards the land" (p. 32). A similar list contains the required qualities of a dwelling-place: "I consulted several things in my situation which I found would be proper for me: 1st. Health, and fresh water. . . . 2ndly, Shelter from the heat of the sun. 3rdly, Security from ravenous creatures, whether man or beast. 4thly, A view to the sea . . ." (p. 35). The conscientiousness and exactness with which Robinson draws up these accounts is remarkable. In like manner he gives a division of the year and the months according to the seasons: "I found now that the seasons of the year might generally be divided . . . into the rainy seasons and the dry seasons, which were generally thus:

Half February, March, Half April } Rainy, the sun being then on or near the equinox.

Half April, May, June, July, Half August } Dry, the sun being then to the north of the line."

And in this manner he goes on for the whole course of the year (p. 50).

Very interesting from this point of view is the description given by Robinson Crusoe of his day's work. It shows at the same time the methodical, rationalistic tendency of his character: " . . . I was very seldom idle, having regularly divided my time according to the several daily employments that were before me, such as, first, my duty to God and reading the scriptures, which I constantly set apart some time for thrice every day. Secondly, the going abroad with gun for food, which generally took me up three hours every morning when it did not rain. Thirdly, the ordering, curing, preserving, and cooking what I had killed or catched for my supply . . ." (p. 52).

Robinson Crusoe is methodical in all his doings. He carefully considers the reasons *pro* and *contra* before he takes in hand some work. Thus, for instance, after having decided to protect his flock of goats from all dangers, he continues: " To this purpose, after long consideration, I could think but of two ways to preserve them: one was to find another convenient place . . . and the other was to inclose two or three little bits of land . . . and this, though it would require a great deal of time and labour, I thought was the most rational design " (p. 68).

Robinson Crusoe obviously strives to regulate his life in a way most appropriate to the laws of reason. He determines beforehand what he is going to eat: " my food was regulated thus: I eat a bunch of raisins for my breakfast, a piece of the goat's flesh, or of the turtle, for my dinner . . . and two or three of the turtle's eggs for supper " (p. 49).

Another commercial form often used by Robinson Crusoe is the inventory or catalogue. He has the shopkeeper's pride when he says: " I had the biggest magazine of all kinds now that ever was laid up, I believe, for one man; but I was not satisfied still; for, while the ship sat upright in that posture, I thought I ought to get everything out of her that I could . . ." (p. 34). And later on: " So that had my cave been to be seen, it looked like a general magazine of all necessary things; and I had everything so readily at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great " (p. 38). The things he found in the ship are enumerated thus: " in the carpenter's stores, I found two or three bags full of nails and spikes, a great screw-jack, a dozen or two of hatchets, and, above all, that most useful thing, called a grind-stone. All

these I secured, together with several things belonging to the gunner, particularly two or three iron crows, two barrels of musket bullets, seven muskets, and another fowling-piece, with some small quantity of powder more ; a large bag-full of small shot, and a great roll of sheet-lead. . . . Besides these things, I took all the men's clothes that I could find, and a spare fore-topsail, a hammock, and some bedding . . ." (p. 33). His exactness goes so far as to note carefully the charge of the guns with which he shoots the cannibals : " I prepared two muskets and my ordinary fowling-piece. The two muskets I loaded with a brace of slugs each, and four or five smaller bullets, about the size of pistol bullets, and the fowling-piece I loaded with near a handful of swan-shot of the largest size ; I also loaded my pistols with about four bullets each " (p. 70). Another enumeration, very characteristic of the commercial and methodical habits of Defoe, is this : " Our strength was now thus ordered for the expedition : 1. The captain, his mate, and passenger. 2. Then the two prisoners of the first gang . . . 3. The other two whom I kept till now in my bower pinioned . . . 4. These five released at last . . ." (p. 103).

Another passage which bears witness to the book-keeping habits of which Robinson Crusoe was so fond is this : " . . . The account of the rest is as follows :

3 Killed at our shot from the tree.
2 Killed at the next shot.
2 Killed by Friday in the boat.
2 Killed by ditto, of those at first wounded.
1 Killed by ditto, in the wood.
3 Killed by the Spaniard.
4 Killed, being found dropped here and there, of their wounds, or killed by Friday in chace of them.
4 Escaped in the boat, whereof one wounded, if not dead.

21 in all " (p. 92).

Another instance of Robinson Crusoe's commercial way of thinking is his diary, which he calls significantly enough " journal." Feeling the obligation to render himself an account " of every day's employment " (p. 38), he began this diary and, a few weeks later, had to leave it off, " for having no more ink " (p. 38).

IV.—The Social Element in *Robinson Crusoe*

1. *Robinson Crusoe's Egoism.*

The loneliness of the individual man in the sight of God, his isolation in the middle of human society, is one of the cardinal traits of Calvinism. In the most important question of human life, the question of salvation, man stands alone and with nobody to help him. No church and no priest can be of any use to the Calvinist. He does not believe in the miracle-working power of the sacraments. He despises such a belief as superstition and blasphemy. The result is a cold individualism. Social intercourse is no more based on mutual love and understanding, but on distrust and reckless egoism. Bunyan's pilgrim is characteristic of this frame of mind. As soon as the divine call has awakened him, he leaves wife and children to themselves, holds his hands over his ears, and runs away across the fields towards his heavenly destination. Only when he sees himself safe, he begins to think of his family and thinks it were very soothing if they could be with him. Love for one's neighbour is not a matter of spontaneous affection with the Puritan. He exercises charity because it is also a means of contributing to the greater glory of God, because the Bible commands him to do so. His relation to his neighbour is therefore an impersonal one, it is part of his striving for a rational life and rational society. Calvinism has bred those "saints" who give clearly the impression of a heroic life, and who are iron-hard and clear-headed in "a world of troubles."

The self-consciousness of the "elect" is sometimes but little different from the conceit and vain gloriousness of the "lost." Thus we find in Robinson Crusoe a firm belief in the great importance which his personal salvation has for God and the Devil. He quite seriously considers the possibility of a visit paid him by Satan: "I had no sleep that night," says he, speaking about the day when he had discovered the footprint on the shore. ". . . Sometimes I fancied it must be the devil; and reason joined in with me upon this supposition. . . . But then to think that Satan should take human shape upon him in such a place, where there could be no manner of occasion for it, but to leave the print of his foot behind him, and that even for no purpose too (for he could not be sure I should see it), this was an amazement the other way; I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to

have terrified me, than this of the single print of a foot; that as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not . . . all this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil" (pp. 65, 66). It appears clearly from passages like this that Robinson Crusoe is decidedly self-assertive and thinks himself the centre of the world. He discovers the mysterious influence of the heavenly powers in his life: September 20 is the day on which all the remarkable events in his life fell. Thus he says: "The same day of the year I was born on viz., the 20th of September, the same day I had my life so miraculously saved twenty-six years after, when I was cast on shore in this island; so that my wicked life and solitary life," *sc.* holy life, "both began on a day" (p. 59). The self-complacent and egotistic attitude of Robinson Crusoe manifests itself strikingly in his exclamations of satisfaction at being different from the cannibals: "When I came a little out of that part of the island," *sc.* where he had seen the marks of the inhuman feastings of the savages, "I looked up with the utmost affection of my soul, and, with a flood of tears in my eyes, gave God thanks, that had cast my lot in a part of the world where I was distinguished from such dreadful creatures as these . . . and this above all, that I had, even in this miserable condition, been comforted with the knowledge of himself and the hope of his blessing, which was a felicity more than sufficiently equivalent to all the misery which I had suffered or could suffer" (p. 69).

This self-complacency and egoism appear more often in things which Robinson Crusoe does not say than in those which he says, and actions speak louder than words. Thus, on his flight from Salee, he had to choose whether to throw Xury, the young boy, or the grown-up Moor overboard. The Moor is strong enough to swim to the shore, whereas the boy would have been drowned. What prevented Robinson from dispatching Xury was no humanitarian reason whatever—his own interest alone decided the question: "I could have been content to have taken this Moor with me, and have drowned the boy; but there was no venturing to trust him" (p. 23). He wants a strong and capable servant, and a humble and admiring companion at the same time. Later again he wants Xury on his island: "Now I wished for my boy Xury and the long-boat, with the shoulder-of-mutton sail, with which I had sailed

above a thousand miles on the coast of Africa; but this was in vain" (p. 56). On his journey through the Pyrenees, he has no word of compassion or common kindliness for the guide who had been wounded by the wolves. He leaves him behind with the cold remark: "The next morning our guide was so ill, and his limbs so swelled with the rankling of his two wounds, that he could go no further; so we were obliged to take a new guide there . . ." (p. 113).

2. *Robinson Crusoe's Domineering Attitude.*

This reckless and egoistic attitude towards one's neighbour results naturally in a strong impulse to dominate and to command. Even among the dumb animals of his household on the island Robinson Crusoe is fond of asserting his position as their absolute master: "It would have made a stoic smile," he says, "to have seen me and my little family sit down to dinner; there was my majesty, the prince and lord of the whole island; I had the lives of all my subjects at absolute command; I could hang, draw, give life and liberty, and take it away, and no rebels among all my subjects. Then to see how like a king I dined too, all alone, attended by my servants. Pol, as if he had been my favourite, was the only person permitted to talk to me; my dog, which was now grown very old and crazy . . . sat always at my right hand; and two cats, one on one side the table, and one on the other, expecting now and then a bit from my hand, as a mark of special favour" (p. 63). The first words in English which Friday has to learn are his own name and that of Robinson Crusoe, which is "master": "I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name" (p. 82). Robinson Crusoe is very fond of comparing himself to a king. After the rescue of the Spaniard and of Friday's father he thinks himself entitled to say: "My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects, and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I looked; first of all the whole country was my own property, so that I had an undoubted right of dominion; secondly, my people were perfectly subjected, I was absolute lord and lawgiver; they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion for it, for me" (p. 93). He is fond of hearing himself called "His Excellency," "Commander,"

or " Governor." His overbearing desire for domination reaches its highest point when he is allowed to act the part of Providence and to influence decisively men's lives. He describes at great length Friday's expressions of gratitude when he had just been saved from death; " . . . and I could then perceive that he stood trembling, as if he had been taken prisoner . . . and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down every ten or twelve steps. . . . At length he came close to me, and then he kneeled down again, kissed the ground, and laid his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head . . ." (p. 81). Robinson Crusoe is apparently very pleased when the marooned Spanish captain takes him for an angel: " Gentlemen, said I, do not be surprised at me, perhaps you may have a friend near you when you did not expect it.—He must be sent directly from heaven, then, said one of them very gravely to me, pulling off his hat at the same time. . . . All help is from heaven, said I. . . . The poor man, with tears running down his face, and trembling, looking like one astonished, returned, Am I talking to God or man? Is it a real man or an angel?—Be in no fear about that, sir, said I . . ." (p. 98).

Robinson Crusoe is the born military commander: he has authority and knows how to impose it. When with Friday he attacks the cannibals at their horrible feast, he never loses his complete self-possession; and his orders to Friday are sharp, clear, and decisive (p. 91). He has a strong sense of the measures to take in a dangerous situation. When commander over an " army " of eight men, he resolved the most arduous problems of strategy. He divided the troop of mutinous sailors and attacked and overwhelmed them singly. He worked out a most ingenious plan for the seizing of the ship, a project which the captain " liked wonderfully well " (p. 102). On the journey through the Pyrenees, he proved to be a leader full of prudence and courage, so that the members of the little caravan were entirely justified in relying unreservedly upon him. Although Robinson Crusoe was a man of the middle-class, he had the genius of the born commander. He knew how to organize carefully all his enterprises and carried them through with authority. His rational and ingenious designs invariably commanded success, and they call forth the reader's sympathetic interest; and this ability of Robinson Crusoe's probably reflects Defoe's own position as director of the Pantile Works at Tilbury, where he commanded a great body of workmen.

3. *Robinson Crusoe's Patriarchal Ideas.*

Akin to this authoritative tendency in Robinson Crusoe's character is his idea of the patriarchal power belonging to the head of the family. According to the Calvinistic doctrine of the *patria potestas*, the power of a father is unlimited.[1]

Defoe was married and had six children. But he does not seem to have had much authority over his sons: he complains in a letter, that his son Benjamin, whom he had entrusted with the administration of all his goods, withheld his mother's and his sister's property and thus obliged them "to beg their bread at his door."[2]

Obedience to the commands of his parents is the first duty of a child. Robinson Crusoe considered being cast on a desert island a proper and well-deserved punishment for his disobedience to his father's commands. He says: ". . . through all the varieties of miseries that had to this day befallen me, I never had so much as one thought of it being the hand of God, or that it was a just punishment for my sin, my rebellious behaviour against my father . . ." (p. 44). The repentant sailor Atkins, in the course of a conversation with Robinson, confessed that nothing pained him more than the idea of all the sorrow and grief he had caused his father through disobedience: "whenever we come to look back upon our lives, the sins against our indulgent parents are certainly the first that touch us, the wounds they make lie deepest, and the weight they leave will lie heaviest upon the mind of all the sins we can commit."[3]

According to a Calvinistic doctrine, family life should, on a correspondingly smaller scale, emulate that of the Church, with all affection directed towards Christ as the spiritual head. There is not much room left for love among the members of the family themselves.[4] Duty and reverence serve instead. The only mention which Robinson Crusoe makes of his sisters on coming back from his island is singularly like a business remark: "At the same time," he says, "I sent my two sisters in the country each of them a hundred pounds, they being, though not in want, yet not in very good circumstances; one having been married and left a widow,

[1] P. Lobstein, *Die Ethik Calvins in ihren Grundzügen entworfen*, Strassburg, 1877, p. 105.
[2] *Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv, p. 290.
[3] *Further Adventures*, p. 47.
[4] Cf. P. Lobstein, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

and the other having a husband not so kind to her as he should be" (p. 108). Robinson Crusoe loves his wife dearly, and when once this "sage counsellor was gone," he feels "like a ship without a pilot, that could only run before the wind." [1] It was she, who, with her wise counsels, kept him from following his "rambling genius." [2] Nevertheless, it is significant, that she died exactly at the moment when his "wandering disposition . . . like the returns of a violent distemper, came on with an irresistible force upon me, so that nothing could make any more an impression upon me." [3] It seems as if her life was less precious than her husband's felicity, which she had to buy at a great price, that of death itself.

G. von Schulze-Gaevernitz says: "Als Vorkämpfer des Kapitalismus haben Calvin und seine neuenglischen Nachfolger dem Grossbürgertum, der Klassenscheidung, der Sklaverei den Weg gebahnt." [4] We have seen that this spirit of domination reigned not only in society but also in the family of the Puritan. *Robinson Crusoe* contains many proofs of this statement.

V.—Conclusion

1. *The Critics' Opinions.*

In the course of this study we have seen that Daniel Defoe's greatest novel presents three chief aspects of life and thought, a religious, a commercial, and a social aspect. We have been able to discern the spiritual links which connect these different elements with one another. It has become apparent that the three main elements penetrate each other, and that none of them stands isolated from and unaffected by the other two.

The different literary critics who have dealt with *Robinson Crusoe* have all of them declared one or the other of these elements to be the greatest one. On the whole, we can distinguish two kinds of opinion supported by students of Defoe's work: *Robinson Crusoe* is considered either as a novel which shows in its hero the matter-of-fact, ordinary, unromantic character of an English tradesman of the beginning of the eighteenth century, or throughout as an

[1] *Further Adventures*, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[4] G. v. Schulze-Gaevernitz, "Die geistesgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der anglo-amerikanischen Weltsuprematie": *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, vols. 56, 58, 1926, 1927; p. 64 in vol. 58.

expression of Defoe's religious idea, a striking manifestation of Puritanism. We will now take a general survey of the two groups of critics, beginning with the supporters of the predominance of the religious aspect of the novel.

Trent considers the religious element in *Robinson Crusoe* of greater importance than any other sphere of life and thought. He writes: "Defoe wrote it [*sc. Robinson Crusoe*] for the edification, rather than for the delectation, of his readers, although he did not evade giving them pleasure and although, assuredly, he took pleasure himself in his own creation." [1]

And of the same opinion is Paul Dottin, the French critic and biographer of Defoe. He says: "En composant un récit fictif, ou, comme il finit par le prétendre, allégorique, dans le louable dessein de détourner du démon ses compatriotes hésitants, il ne faisait que suivre la grande voie lumineuse tracée par un des dieux de sa jeunesse, l'auteur illustre du 'Progrès du Pèlerin.' . . . De Foe, c'est Bunyan en costume laïque. . . ." [2]

Of the German critics we mention only Ullrich, Schöffler, and Dibelius. The latter finds in Robinson Crusoe's character an interesting contrast of asceticism and energetic recklessness. Robinson Crusoe "ist ein Draufgänger und Asket zugleich." [3] Dibelius afterwards asserts, that Defoe endowed his hero with a reckless spirit only in order to throw into sharp relief another and more important feature of his character. By this acknowledgment Dibelius implies that he too considers the Puritan element of first importance in the novel.

Ullrich sees the solution of the problem in the "religiöse Betontheit" of Robinson's character,[4] and Schöffler states, "dass das erbauliche Moment des Buches, wenn es dem Autor nicht im Vordergrunde gestanden hat, doch von ihm in den Vordergrund geschoben worden ist." [5]

The opposite opinion is supported by two eminent critics of the last century, Leslie Stephen and William Minto. They consider Robinson Crusoe's practical turn of mind of greater consequence than any other aspect of his character. They are chiefly

[1] *C.H.E.L.*, vol. ix, p. 20.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 326.
[3] W. Dibelius, *Englische Romankunst*, 2nd ed., Berlin and Leipzig, 1922, vol. i, p. 36.
[4] H. Ullrich, *Zum Robinsonproblem*, Englische Studien, vol. 55, p. 235.
[5] H. Schöffler, *Protestantismus und Literatur*, Leipzig, 1922, p. 161.

struck by the total absence of sentimental elements in the mind of the hero of the novel. Minto says: "All Defoe's heroes and heroines are animated by this practical spirit, this thoroughgoing subordination of means to end. When they have an end in view . . . they allow neither passion, nor resentment, nor sentiment in any shape or form to stand in their way. Every other consideration is put on one side when the business of the shop has to be attended to. They are all tradesmen who have strayed into unlawful courses." [1]

It is also the matter-of-fact and prosaic character of Robinson Crusoe which chiefly appeals to Leslie Stephen. When speaking of the reasons which induced Defoe to write his first novel, he says: "He brings out the shrewd vigorous character of the Englishman thrown upon his own resources with evident enjoyment of his task," and later on he states the obvious "want of power in describing emotion as compared with the amazing power of describing facts." [2]

The strongest supporter of this side of the question is Gustav Hübener. His essay on "Der Kaufmann Robinson Crusoe" furnishes many arguments well worth considering. The extreme views taken by Hübener may be seen in this statement of his: "Das Ergebnis vorangehender Untersuchung zeigt, dass auch dort, wo im *Robinson Crusoe* nicht ausdrücklich von Geld und Geschäften die Rede ist, während des Insellebens, der Held den rechenhaften Menschentypus verkörpert, der als Träger der frühkapitalistischen Gesellschaftsordnung anzusehen ist." [3]

2. *Summary.*

We must try now to explain and, if possible, to reconcile these contradictory statements. In our first chapter we found that Defoe's religious feeling was very strong. Robinson Crusoe showed a sincere and ardent faith in the goodness of Providence, a high esteem and veneration for the word of God, the Bible, and, what is also full of significance, an unaffected dread of the Devil. On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that the old Calvinistic doctrine appears strangely altered and changed in Defoe. Its

[1] W. Minto, *Daniel Defoe. English Men of Letters*, new edition, London, 1887, p. 156.
[2] L. Stephen, *Hours in a Library*, New York, 1875, p. 44.
[3] G. Hübener, *op. cit.*, vol. liv, p. 385.

original severity is mitigated, its sternness is less awful. When Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe*, Puritanism was fast losing its original force. As early as the year 1689 the Act of Toleration had established an approximate equality of rights between Anglicans and Puritans. Defoe himself believed in the possibility of a reconciliation of the two churches. Both of them should be indulgent and should endeavour to know and esteem each other. Thus he argued in his pamphlet on *The Shortest Way to Peace and Union*: "Dissenters should concede to the Church of England its great use and service in association of religion with the State, the Church in its turn conceding to Dissenters a full toleration." [1]

The genuine Calvinistic spirit was gone and Defoe had only retained its outward appearance as we found it in the methodical and rational character of his hero. There is a great difference between Bunyan's and Defoe's Puritanism. And what accounts for this difference is the influence of rationalism and liberalism. We have recognized in Robinson Crusoe a thorough merchant and a man full of the adventurous, enterprising spirit of his age. These traits in Robinson's character are not less strongly marked than the religious ones. One can explain and also excuse many apparent inconsistencies and many puzzling riddles in the behaviour of his hero, if one takes into account the fact that Defoe was a Dissenter and that the Calvinistic doctrine lies at the bottom of his soul. It appears to us, though, that this fact has been overrated by those critics who considered the religious element of primary importance. Daniel Defoe himself was not a fervent, not even a conscientious Dissenter. His life is anything but that of a strict follower of an austere creed and, as William Minto puts it: "We often find peeping out in Defoe's writings that roguish cynicism which we should expect in a man whose own life was far from being straightforward." [2]

On the other hand, Robinson Crusoe's practical turn of mind is so evident, the pleasure it affords him to struggle for his life and also for his comfort is so obvious, his resourcefulness so stupendous, and his adventurous spirit so unrestrained, that it seems legitimate to consider the commercial and social aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* of greater importance than the religious one. The main charm of the book is and has always been its adventurous hero; his singular

[1] H. Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

[2] W. Minto, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

exploits and his ingenious expedients have kept in anxious suspense many a reader in the last two centuries.

We think it therefore best to conclude thus : the religious aspect of *Robinson Crusoe* is strongly marked and the spirit of the Puritan permeates the whole novel. Calvinistic theology often furnishes explanations for phenomena which it would be hard to explain in any other way. The commercial and social elements in the novel take first place in importance among the aspects of life and thought met with therein. They are, so to speak, the substance of the book and constitute also the larger part of its literary value.