CHAPTER II
THE PRACTICE OF THE PICARESQUE NOVEL
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: DANIEL DEFOE

Daniel Defoe had a genius for verismilitude that finally turned fiction writers towards naturalism. After him the portrayal of real life and the accurate observation of nature was assured. With Defoe the power to surround fictitious situations with all the circumstances of actuality was discovered and apparently, by chance.

The son of non conformist and intended for the ministry Defoe (1659-1731) had an adventurous career. By turns he was pamphleteer, author and journalist; going bankrupt as a hosiery, he recovered his fortune as a manufacturer of bricks and pantiles. He became a political agent employed on secret mission by the government wrote satirical doggerel verse, turned biographer, economist and editor of news papers. His energies were prodigious and untiring. The handful of novels by which he is chiefly remembered today came late in his career and appeared as by-products, as it were.

He is said to have created every known branch of journalism spoke five language, read a sixth, described himself as a master of astronomy, geography and history. Everything human was of interest to him; he interviewed criminals on their way to Tyburn, and one occasion published from his cell in Newgate a minute account of the
great storm of 1703 within a few days of its occurrence. Always first in the field with circumstantial obituary biography, whether of the celebrated or the infamous, all was literary grist that came to Defoe's mill. In a sense, the relation Defoe bears to the artist is that of the forger, but he was forging not works of Art but transcripts of actual experience. We see him as a novelist after the event, as it were, a novelist was the last thing he wished to appear as; and by a paradox, it, it is exactly this that makes him the archetypal novelist the Oxford companion to English Literature has published his honourable and adventurous career as following.

"Defoe, Daniel (1660-1731) born in London, the son of James Foe, a butcher. He changed his name to Defoe C. 1703. He married Mary Tuffley in Jan. 1683/4, being at that time a hosiery merchant in corn hill and having apparently travelled in Spain, Italy, Germany and France. He took part in Monmouth's rebellion, and joined William III's army in 1688. In 1701 he published 'The true born Englishman,' a satirical poem combating the popular prejudice against a king of foreign birth. In 1702, appeared. 'The shortest way with the Dissenters,' a notorious pamphlet in which Defoe, himself a dissenter, ironically demanded the total suppression of dissent, at any cost, to show the absurdity of ecclesiastical intolerance. For this he was fined, imprisoned, (May-Nov. 1703) and pilloried. Although he was regarded as a hero by the people, the sense of his unjust treatment appears to have affected his character. Under the influence of this
and of pecuniary distress he attributed his ruin to his imprisonment. He became shiftily and mercenary in public affairs. He wrote his 'Hymn to the Pillory' a mock pendaric ode, while imprisoned and started his newspaper 'The Review' (q.v.) in 1704. In the same year appeared his pamphlet 'Giving Alms no Charity' and in 1706 his 'True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal' a vivid piece of reporting of a current ghost story.

During the following years he was employed as a secret agent of Harley and Godolphin, largely in Scotland, in support of the union, but his fidelity to his employers in questioned. Certain ironical anti-jacobite pamphlets in 1712-13 led to his prosecution by the Whigs for treasonable publication and to a brief imprisonment. He now started a new trade journal 'Mercator' in place of 'The Review'. In 1715, he was convicted of libelling lord Annesley, but escaped punishment by the favour of Lord Townshend, the Whig secretary of state, to whom he sold his services as a secret agent and journalist.

He published the first volume of his best known work 'Robinson Crusoe' (q.v.) in 1719. The 'Farther Adventures' of his hero following a few months later. The next five years saw the appearance of his most important works of fiction as follows: 'Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell'. The deaf and dumb conjurer and 'Captain Singleton' (q.v.) in 1720. Moll Flanders (q.v.) 'A general plague year (q.v.)'. 'The history of Peter the Great,' and 'Colonel Jack' (q.v.) in 1722, 'Roxana' (q.v.), the 'Memoirs of a Cavelier' (q.v. not quite certainly
by Defoe), his tracts on Jack Shepherd (q.v.) and 'A New Voyage round the world', in 1724; The four voyages of Captain George Robbers' in 1726. The 'Memoirs of Captain George Carleton' (q.v.), which appeared in 1728, were probably largely by his hand. His Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain', a delightful guide book in three volumes, appeared in 1724-7. During the last six years of his life (1715-31) his principal works were 'The complete English Tradesman' (1726), Augusta Triumphans, or the way to make London the most Flourishing city in the Universe (1728), 'A Plans of the English Commerce' (1728), 'And the complete English gentleman', not published until 1890. In addition to the works mentioned above, Defoe produced a vast number of pamphlets on all sorts of subject; in all the published over 250 works. He died in his lodgings in Ropemaker's Alley, moorfields and was buried in what is now Bunhill Fields, Defoe, apart from the political shiftiness above alluded to, was not only an extraordinarily prolific and versatile, but a liberal, humane and moral writer.

When he wrote the first part of the Life and strange surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner by far the best known of the three hundred and seventy-five works with which he is authoritatively credited, Defoe was fifty nine. By any standard he was one of the most remarkable men who ever lived. Yet while it would be absurd to maintain that his genius has not received its due, one does notice quite commonly in his critics a
certain meanness of spirit towards him; praise tends to be grudging; and one can only see in this the vestigial remains of the contempt, which is one of class, expressed in Swift's reference to him as 'the fellow that was pilloried, I have forgot his name? Insect, Defoe was almost the prototype of a kind of Englishman increasing prominent during the eighteenth century and reaching its apotheosis in the nineteenth; the man from the lower classes, whose bias was essentially practical and whose success in life, whether in trade or industry, was intimately connected with his Protestant religious beliefs and notion of personal responsibility they inculcated. It was men of this kind who made the industrial revolution, first as scientists and technologists like Joseph Priestley and Watt, and then as industrialists, like the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile manufacturers.

Defoe stands to these in the relation of a prosaic Leonardo without benefit of a university, He was man of wide learning, speaking half a dozen languages, and reading seven. His interest and activities were many; he was in turn shopkeeper, manufacturer, journalist and government spy, and his title to be considered the founder of English Journalism is as great as his claim to be the father of the novel. His curiosity was endless, he was a man, as his essay on Project and A tour through Great Britain show, who had only to look for his mind to be filled with ideas, ideas concerned always with the practical, with man as trader, manufacturer, agriculturalist.

This new type of Englishman, empirical, self reliant,
energetic, with the sense of a direct relation with a god made in his own image, he expresses in the character of Crusoe. The sources of the book have been hunted down by scholars, but his indebtedness to earlier writer can not take away from Defoe's originality. In writing Crusoe he was not, of course, consciously writing a novel. He was writing a spoof-autobiography which was to be taken by his readers as fact. Crusoe sums up, as it were, within itself all the travel books that had gone before it from the time of Hakluyton. It is in its way a highly scientific work, its facts, geographical and otherwise, are as accurate as the knowledge of his day could make them. This was of the nature of the man. The secret of the uncanny verisimilitude he achieves has often been analysed. He was master of the literal, he produces his illusion of complete reality by employing a mass of circumstantial detail of a kind no one, we think as we read, would bother to invent. In Robinson Crusoe, for example, the shipwreck and the hero's sojourn on his island though the most important part of the book, are still only parts. Before he reaches the point of being cast away, Crusoe passes through a whole gamut of adventures, including a period in slavery to the Barbary Corsairs. By the time we reach the shipwreck it has already become in our mind something that would inevitably happen to a man like him. It is, in other words, in character. The smaller lies have conditioned us to accept the bigger one. It is certainly incredible enough: Crusoe is on his island twenty-eight years, two months and nineteen days the exactitude is
characteristic; it is partly because we can follow Crusoe experiences at times from day to day and always from year to year, with the dates given, that we swallow the impossible. In a way, the impossible has been caged by the calendar and tamed.

But we accept Crusoe's story even more readily because Defoe puts the stress all the time not on the island or on the dangers surroundings his hero but on Crusoe the man himself. It is Crusoe who fills the picture, and he does so as a truly heroic figure, a man of dominating nature. Crusoe is the first great individualist, but he convinces as such by his ordinarness having assumed his large impossibility, Defoe hence forward is scrupulous in keeping within the bounds of the possible. As Coleridge pointed out, in what he does Crusoe 'arrives at no excellence.... the carpentering, tailoring, pottery, etc., are all just what will answer his purpose.... Crusoe ruses only to the point to which all men may be made to feel that they might.

It was coleridge's contention that Crusoe was 'the universal representative, the person, for whom every reader could substitute himself.' If this so, it is because of the fidelity and the thoroughness with which Defoe has drawn Crusoe's likeness. Here, in his excursion into imaginary autobiography, Defoe had nothing to guide him but his own genius. Indeed, the phrase 'imaginary autobiography is itself misleading if it suggests that there were autobiographic extant that Defoe could use as models. Apart from a few works from remote
periods, such as the confessions of St. Augustine, the prose literature of self revelation scarcely existed in Defoe's day: the diaries of Pepys and Evelyn written during his boyhood, were not made public until the nineteenth century. Yet Crusoe is strikingly complete character; though there are whole areas of human experience on which he has nothing to say, this does not make his completeness and roundness the less, for those he does report on are rendered, so fully that we can work out for ourselves his attitude to the others.

At first sight the clue to Crusoe character may seem to be his: 'It was in vain to sit still and wish for what was not to be had, and this extremity rouz'd my application; together with his powers of observation and deduction, as shown for instance in his account of his first encounter with the goats on the island.

"I observed if they saw me in the vellays tho' they were upon the rocks, they would run away as in a terrible fright; but if they were feeding in the vellays, and I was upon the rocks, they took no notice of me from when I concluded that by the position of their opticks, their sight was so directed downward, that they did not readily see objects that were above them; so afterward I took this method, I always climed the rocks first to get above them, and then had frequently a fair mark.\(^{11}\)

But there is also the other side to Crusoe, the religious side, his preoccupation with theology, his moralizing, it comes out especially

\(^{11}\) Walter Allen, "The English Novel": short critical history. (Great Britain: Aldine Press, 1954) P. 37
in such a passage as this:

"This renew'd contemplation which had often come to my thoughts in former time, when first I began to see the merciful dispositions of Heaven in the dangers we run through in this life; how wonderfully we are delivered when we know nothing of it; how when we are in a quandary, as we call it, a doubt or hesitations, whether to go this way or that way, a secret hunt shall direct us this way, when we intended to go that way, nay, when sense, our own inclination and perhaps business has call'd us go the other way, yet a strange impression upon the mind, from we know not what springs and by we know not what power, shall overrule us to go this way; and it shall afterwards appear that had we gone the way we should have gone, and even to our imagination ought to have gone, we should have been ruined and lost. Upon these and many like reflection I afterwards made it a certain rule with me, that whenever I found those secret hints or pressing of my mind, to doing or not doing anything that presented, or going this way or that way, I never failed to obey the secret dictate; though I knew no other reason for it than that such a pressure or such a hint hung upon my mind".¹²

As much as Milton, Crusoe is God's Englishman, and God helps those who help themselves. The sense of partnership between God and man is with Crusoe all the time.

The two side of Crusoe, the practical and the religious and

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¹² Walter Allen, P. 37
it is none the less religious because so often expressed in moralistic terms - come together in such a passage, which coleridge acclaimed as 'worthy of Shakespeare', as:

"I smil'd to myself at the sight of money : 'O drug' said I aloud.... However, upon second thoughts, I took it away; and wrapping all this in a piece of canvas"....

His achievement is even more remarkable when we add to Robinson Crusoe his other fiction. At that time he was fifty nine years of age and he was busy editing several journals besides leading his pen to the government in its efforts to combat Jacobite activities.

Even in the age of Reason Defoe did not despite a good ghost story and the Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal to her friend Mrs. Bargrave was a masterpiece of journalistic investigation and reporting. It showed the same power of creating detail and building up stroke by stroke a convincing piece of circumstantial evidence that was to make Robinson Crusoe a landmark fiction.

"This story that has delighted the young, and the old for that matter, for over two hundred years was actually based on an experience in the life of a seaman. Alexander Selkirk who spent four years on the deserted island of Juan Fernandez. But Selkirk's four years become thirty in Defoe's hand and the story itself is turned into microcosm of the eighteenth century's triumph over nature. During the thirty years of his stay on the island Crusoe establishes himself.

13. Ibid, p. 38
very comfortably, converts his native servant Friday to Christianity, overcomes the savages and is hailed as their master. By the happy device of allowing Crusoe to rescue ammunition and material from his wrecked ship before the storm finally destroys it, Defoe is able to invest every moment of life on the island, with interest. Any holding of belief was impossible when the reader was confronted with the thousand details of Crusoe's everyday activities - making a sieve, milking goats, preparing his food and fortifying his home. Nothing was omitted that might delight the new reading public, eager for facts, enchanted by documentry records and demanding the illusion of truth.  

In the eyes of the practical middle class for whom Defoe wrote, Robinson Crusoe was the epitome of their virtues. He was immensely practical, resourceful, pious and utterly devoid of imagination in the whole of his stay on the island he never once remarked on the beauty of nature or rhapsodized over a sunset. The prosaic realism that would have discredited him with a romantic age was a recommendation to his own. And, too, his unreflective utilitarianism was congenial to a generation that eschewed introspection and sought in external activity relief from melancholy. A new public with different tastes required new canons of fiction.

The success of Robinson Crusoe, it was translated into many language and inspired many imitations - led Defoe to develop

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the market for this kind of fiction. It is possible that he may have had literary sources for his masterpiece, he was a great leader of travel books and knew Dampier's New voyage round the world, but his photographic memory of which he boasted that as a child he never forgot anything they told him and his extraordinary powers of rapid assimilation were the catalyst of his peculiar genius. A second part - the further adventures of Robinson Crusoe - was added in 1719. In this, with Friday, Crusoe revisits his island, is attacked by a fleet of Canoes on his departure and loses Friday in the encounter. The serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe, with his vision of the Angelick world, appeared in 1720. In the same year Defoe wrote Captain Singleton, the story of a boy stolen by gypsies who takes to a career of a piracy. So realistic are the descriptions that in the record of a journey across central Africa Defoe seems to have followed his hero's adventures map in hand.

The Oxford companion to English Literature has given a brief summary as following -

Singleton Adventures of Captain, a romance of adventures by Defoe (q.v.) published in 1720. Singleton, who is the narrator of his own story having been kidnapped in his infancy is sent to sea. Having no sense of virtue of religion; he takes part in a mutiny and is put ashore in Madagascar with his Comrades; he reaches the continents of Africa and crosses it from east to west, encountering many adventures and obtaining much gold, which he dissipates on
his return to England. He takes once more to the sea, becomes a pirate, carrying on his depredation in the West Indies, Indian Ocean and China seas, acquires great wealth, which he brings home, and finally marries the sister of a shipmate.

His next work, Moll Flanders published in 1721, added a love interest, but much of it so improbable that Moll would, infect, have needed ten lives to have gone through so many adventures. Although the story is picaresque in form it has not the customary insouciant moral abandon, Since the heroine perpetually laments the wickedness that cruelty of circumstances forces her to commit. Moll Flanders has never lost its popularity with a wide section of the reading public.

Moll, who hides her real identity behind a pseudonym, is an attractive creature inspite of her criminal records, for she is generous, impulsive and so obviously the victim of fate. She acquires husbands at an alarming rate and discards children with automatic case and packs enough experiences in her life to maintain atleast ten modern novels.

The steps by which she is led to commit her first crime and so to start, the career which brings her almost to the gallows are brilliantly observed. Here Defoe describes the first temptation.

Wandering thus about, I knew not whether I passed by an apothecary's shop in Leadenhall street, where I saw lie on a stool just before the counter a little bundle wrapped in a white cloth;
beyond it stood a maid servant with her back to it, looking up
towards the top of the shop, where the apothecary’s apprentice, as
I suppose, was standing upon the counter, with his back to the
door, and a candle in his hand, looking and reaching up to the
upper shelf, for something he wanted; so that both were engaged,
and no body else in the shop.

"This was the bait; and the devil who laid the snare
prompted me, as if he had spoke, for I remember, and shall never
forget it. It was like a voice spoken over my shoulder, "Take the
bundle; be quick; do it this moment." It was no sooner said but I
stepped into the shop and with my back to the wench, as if I had
stood up for a cart that was going by. I put my hand behind me
and took the bundle, and went off with it, the maid or fellow not
perceiving me or any one else".

"It is impossible to express the horror of my soul all the
while I did it when I went away I had no heart to run, or scarce to
mend my pace. I crossed the street indeed, and went down the first
turning I cam to, and I think it was a street that went through into
Fenchurch Street; from thence I crossed and turned through so many
ways and turnings that I could never tell which way it was, nor
where I went; I felt not the ground I stepped on, and the farther I
was out of danger, the faster I went, till tired and out of breath I was
forced to set down on a little bench at a door, and then I found I was
got into Thames Street, near Billings gate. I rested me a little and
went on, my blood was all in a fire; my heart beat as if I was in a sudden fright. In short, I was under such a surprise that I knew not whither I was a going, or what to do.¹⁵

Familiarity soon hardens Moll to the life of theft and even worse temptations assail her. There is psychological realism in the episode in which Moll is nearly driven by fear to murder.

"I went out now by daylight, and wandered about I knew not whither, and in search of I knew not what, when the devil put a snare in my way of a dreadful nature indeed, and such a one as I have never had before or since. Going through Aldersgate Street, there was a pretty little child had been at a dancing - school and was going home all alone : and my prompter, like a true devil set me upon this innocent creature I talked to it, and it prattled to me again, and I took it by the hand and led it along till I came to a paved alley that goes into Bartholomew Close, and I led it in there. The child said that was not its way home. I said, "Yes, my dear it is : I will show you the way home" The child had a little necklace on of gold beads, and I had my eyes upon that and in the dark alley I stooped, pretending to mend the Child's clog that was loose and took of her necklace and the child never felt it, and so led the child on again. Here, I say, the devil put me upon killing the child in the dark alley, that it might not cry, but the very thought frightened me so that I was ready to drop down : but I turned the child about and

¹⁵. Diana Neil, PP. 52-53
bade it go back for that was not its way home; the child said she would"......

After many misadventures and at the age of seventy, having made good in America whither she had been deported, Moll returns to England with her husband.

"Where we resolve to spend the remainder of our years in sincere penitence for the wicked lives we have led."16

"The next year, 1722, Defoe produced the journal of the Plague year, an essay in fictitious history in which he handles with eclectic freedom a mass of material based on documents and recollections. It relates the public measure taken by the authorities, such as sequestration of the sick, the closing of infected houses, and the prohibition of assemblies. The symptoms of the disease, the grue some circulation of the dead carts, the mass burials in great pits and the lamentable scenes witnessed by the supposed narrator are described with extra ordinary vividness. Pity is avoided but the grim matter of fact tone and dry precision with which details are enumerated heightens the sense of horror. Sir Walter Scott maintained that if Defoe had not been the author of Robinson Crusoe he would have deserved immortality for the genius displayed in this work".17

A similar technique of unsentimental documentation is to be noted in his fictitious autobiography of a celebrated Courtesan, Roxana, or the fortunate mistress, published in 1724, Roxana, an

16. Ibid, pp. 53
17. Ibid, pp. 54
adventuress, flies higher than Moll Flanders, and after gaining a fortune by disruptable means queens it over London society for seven years in her house in Pall Mall. An exciting emotional tension pervades the book from the dramatic incidents that culminate in Roxana's betrayal by the daughter she neglected in infancy. A current of middle class prejudice is carefully directed against Roxana, whose vices have helped to raise her too far above her own station. The story ends somewhat abruptly and in confusion, but not before Roxana has suffered a reversal of fortune, is imprisoned for debt and dies in a state of penitence.

*Roxana or the fortunate Mistress whose brief story has been given in the Oxford Companion to English Literature as following.*

*Roxana, or the fortunate Mistress, a romance by Defoe (q.v.) published in 1724.*

This purports to be the autobiography of Mlle Beleau, the beautiful daughter of French protestant refugees, brought up in England and married to a London brewer, who, having wasted his property, deserts her and her five children. She enters upon a career of prosperous wickedness, passing from one protector to another in England, France and Holland, a massing much wealth and receiving the name Roxana, by accident, in consequence of a dance that she performs. She is accompanied in her adventures by a faithful maid, Amy, a very human figure. She finally marries a Dutch merchant and lives as a person of consequence in Holland, until he discovers
the deceit, that has been put upon him. He shortly afterwards dies, leaving her only a small sum of money. She is imprisoned for debt, and dies in a state of penitence.

Colonel Jack (1722) present a vivid picture of London life in the eighteenth century drawn with masculine vigour and exuberance. Jack, a tractable enough dog, had anybody been willing to teach him, is the illegitimate off spring of vegabonds who initiate him into the vicious life of London's underworld. Defoe's descriptive realism grips the imagination in the account of the homeless boys sleeping at night in the warm ashes of Dalton's glass - house in Rosemary Lane. One episode in the book deservedly moved Charles Lamb to rhapsodies of delight. Jack has stolen a well filled wallet, and, fearing it will be taken from him by the other boys, goes out into the fields of Bethnal Green and puts it for safety in a tree, But the tree is hollow and the precious treasure falls through. Jack's anguish at the sudden eclipse of his fortune and his mad joy on discovering by accident that there is a hole at the bottom of the tree through which he can recover the wallet are unforgottably portrayed.18

The short story of Colonel Jack is given below according to The Oxford Companion to English Literature -

The history and remarkable life of Colonel Jacque, commonly called a romance of adventure by Defoe (q.v.) published in 1722.

18. Ibid, pp. 54
The supposed narrator, abandoned by his parents in childhood, falls into bad company and becomes a pickpocket, his profession grows distasteful to him, and he enlists, and presently deserts to avoid being sent to serve in Flanders. He is kidnapped, sent to Virginia and sold to planter. He is promoted to be an observer, is given his liberty, becomes himself a planter, and acquires much wealth. He returns home, has a series of unfortunate matrimonial adventures, but finally ends in prosperity and repentance. Defoe spares no pains to convince us that he is telling the truth. No writer has ever surpassed Defoe's skill in choosing the vivifying detail. All his novels are autobiographical narrative in the first person; an elaborate, deliberately, "artistic" arrangement of materials was, therefore, out of the question. One can not say that Defoe never uses suspense Crusoe's agony between the discovery of the footprints in the sand and the arrival of cannibals comes immediately to mind - but he does not use it often. His favorite method is to produce step by step, without preparation or foresight, to touch tightly and pass on. So his method here part him from many achievements, yet it is difficult to speak of it as a difficult, for it was part of simplicity which had its own special virtues. As narrator pure and simple this man is the best that English fiction has to show.

Every schoolboy is familiar with the inimitable account of Crusoe's adventures on the island, the landing of stores from the wreck, the building of his fortified houses, the unexpected growth of
the barley and rice, the domestication of his goats, the frequent mishaps that failed to daunt his courage, the making of a boat to carry him to the mainland and his ignominious failure to get her into the water, the shock when he discovered the footprint of a man, the arrival of the savages on his part of the island when he had been alone for eighteen years, his panic and then his scheme for capturing one of their prisoners, the fight with the cannibals and the rescue of Friday, and, later on, Crusoe's deliverance of the Spaniard and the mission for the rescue of the other Spaniards on the mainland, an enterprise unexpectedly interrupted by the advent of an English ship, the crew of which had mutinied and deposed the captain, the battle with the mutineers, recapture of the ship, and Crusoe's return of England with his man Friday: not Hamlet, not the Pilgrim's Progress, is better known than this immortal story.

"No story, indeed, whether true or fictitious, has ever been told with such a combination of minute and inexhaustible realism and of the curiosity that keeps the mind on the stretch to the very end. There had been no fiction such as this from when literature began; there has been nothing quite like it since. The matters recounted were all but incredible. The world has wondered at Selkirk's four years of solitude on Juan Fernandez: Crusoe lived alone for twenty-eight. Other unfortunates in a like situation had managed to exist: Robinson Crusoe made himself comfortable, and so secure that when marauders came on the scene he triumphed
over them and was hailed as "Governor." His resourcefulness, his almost super-human feats of invention and endurance, his marvellous patience and self-sufficiency, needed powerful corroboration if they were to win poetic faith. Dofe meant them to be accepted as categorical facts. Hence, he was driven to that untiring registration of the smallest incidents, the trivialities, the irrelevancies, the superfluities, which are the mark of honest, untutored narrative, and which became the trade-mark of Dofe's story-telling, though nowhere else was it necessary to carry it to such an extreme as in Robinson Crusoe. 19

The essence of his method was to tell, not merely that something was done, but how it was done. He was the man of practical genius, and his mind delighted in these minute details. The average narrator would, for instance, have mentioned simply that Crusoe made a sieve, and having no better material constructed it of the stuff in a seaman's neckcloth. Dofe makes of this petty matter a whole paragraph, and we read it with absorption:

"My next difficulty was to make a sieve, or search, to dress my meal, and to part if from the bran and the husk, without which I did not see it possible I could have any bread. This was a most difficult thing, so much as but to think on, for to be sure I had nothing like the necessary thing to make it; I mean fine thin canvas or stuff, to search the meal through. And here I was at a

full stop for many moths, nor did I really know what to do; linen
I had none left, but what was mere rags; I had goats'-hair, but
neither knew I how to weave it or spin it; and had I known how,
here was no tools to work it with. All the remedy that I found for
this was, that at last I did remember I had, among the seamen's
clothes which were saved out of the ship, some neckcloths of calico
or muslin; and with some pieces of these I made three small sieves,
but proper enough for the work; and thus I made shift for some
years. How I did afterwards, I shall show in its place. 20

Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders, both these novels are
ture to life. "The secret of the uncanny verisimilitude he achieves has
often been analysed. He was the master of literal; He produces his
illusion of complete reality by employing a mass of circumstantial
detail of a kind no one, we think as we read, would bother to
invent". In Robinson Crusoe the story is told in infinitive detail so
that the reader feels that the writer must certainly have known
Crusoe very well and in some way seen everything that took place.
Precision shows specially in the matter of dates. Crusoe was wrecked
on 30th September in 1659. He spent altogether twenty eight years,
two months, and nineteen days on the Island. Thus bounded by the
calendar Crusoe appears more sharply defined.

His another novel Moll Flanders is realistic because the
social conditions and injustice, the squalor and deceit of his age are

described here in great detail. Her own story is following -

"Modesty forbids me to reveal the secrets of the marriage-
bed, but nothing could have happened more suitable to my
circumstances than that, as above, my husband was so fuddled
when he came to bed that he could not remember in the morning
whether he had had any conversation with me or no, and I was
obliged to tell him he hed, though in reality he had not, that I might
be sure he could make no inquiry about anything else".

"It concerns the story in had very little to enter into the
farther particulars of the family or of myself for the five years that
I lived with this husband, only to observe that I had two children by
him, and that at the end of the five years he died. He had been
really a very good husband to me, and we lived very agreeably
together; but as he had not received much from them and had in the
little time he lived acquired no great matters, so my circumstances
were not great, nor was I much mended by the match. Indeed. I had
preserved the elder brother's bonds to me to pay me 500. Which he
offered me for my consent to marry his brother: and this, with what
I had saved of the money he formerly gave me and about as much
more by my husband, left me a window with about 1200 in my
pocket".

"My two children were, indeed, taken happily off of my
hands by my husband's father and mother, and that was all they
got by Mrs. Betty".
"I confess I was not suitably affected with the loss of my husband: nor can I say that I ever loved him as I ought to have done or was suitable to the good usage I had from him, for he was a tender, kind, good-humoured man as any woman could desire: but his brother being so always in my sight, at least while we were in the country, was a continual snare to me; and I never was in bed with my husband but I wished myself in the arms of his brother. And though his brother never offered me the least kindness that way after our marriage, but carried it just as a brother ought to do, yet it was impossible for me to do so: in short, I committed adultery and incest with him every day in my desires, which, without doubt, was as effectually criminal. Before my husband died, his elder brother was married, and we, being then removed to London, were written to by the old lady to come and be at the wedding. My husband went, but I pretended indisposition, so I stayed behind; for, in short, I could not bear the sight of his being given to another woman though I knew I was never to have him myself."

"I was now, as above, left loose to the world, and being still young and handsome, as everybody said of me, and I assure you I thought myself so, and with a tolerable fortune in my pocket. I put no small value upon myself. I was courted by several very considerable tradesmen and particularly very warmly by one, a linen-draper, at whose house after my husband’s death I took a lodging, his sister being my acquaintance."  ..........21
He was mouth piece of the new class of readers who belonged to trade and commerce. His religious instincts were sound but he took good care to salt his moralizing with plenty of entertaining matter and he never allowed the moral to spoil the story. At last the lower middle class and the humble orders saw their lives and circumstances, their interests are enthusiasms, represented in literature with sympathy and seriousness. These readers were immensely concerned with the details of daily life, anxious to read about themselves, but resentful of ideals that had no practical outcome and with a non conformist contempt for fantasy.

There is no denying that the lack of imagination displayed by a class that was to become increasingly important during the greater century of novel writing - the eighteenth - stunted and limited the scope of fiction. His reader would swallow the grossest fictions, but only when they were presented as facts. This was Defoe's public and he seized on its salient desires and cleverly exploited them.

His own imagination was fired by facts and his prose style, the product of journalism and propaganda, was the perfect medium for the prosaic realism of his material. A style sample, racy and unadorned, It was even devoid of the allusiveness and wealth of classical references that are typical of the period. It never occurred to Defoe to consider novel writing as an art his intrinsic genius saw what had to be done with fiction and he did it.

He reverted if firmly to the earth, and from now on through
the great age of Richardson, Fielding and Smollett the novel will deal with the lives ordinary people lead as they endeavour to learn the lesson Crusoe had to teach; "The invincible patience, indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances". This is the formula for what might be called the non conformist age of English fiction. The old struggle between vice and virtue was still raging, but no longer on an abstract, imaginary plane. The vices were now subtly embodied in worldly temptations while the virtues that resisted them were precariously in the alloy of character.

Defoe was a prolific and facile journalist. He wrote nine volume of newspaper called review and contributed regularly to other papers. By contemporary accounts Defoe, appears to have been a rather shifty, shrewd man, and political opportunist. His contemporary, the great essayist Joseph Addison, once described him as "a false, shuffling, prevaricating rascal unqualified to give his testimony in a court of Justice."

As a religious dissenter and political hack writer of extraordinarily persuasive force, Defoe was always in danger of imprisonment or worse, but he generally managed to keep a few steps ahead of his enemies.

In 1711 Alexander Selkirk caused a sensation in England. Having run away to sea, he returned after spending five years as a solitary castaway on John Fernandez Island of the coast of Chile.
Selkirk, after a quarrel with his captain, had been put ashore the island at his own request, and was ultimately rescued by one captain Woodes Rogers.

The ways in which the castaway had survived on his Island fascinated people and several accounts of his story were published on his return. Never one to let a literary opportunity pass; Defoe wrote to his most famous book Robinson Crusoe, a fictional elaboration of Selkirk's adventures, Couched in so plain and unadorned, a narrative style that it appeared to be true.

Robinson Crusoe has influenced many authors including Swift (Gulliver's travels) Stevenson (Treasure Island) and of Course Wys (The Swiss Family Robinson)

Despite its plain, crude style Robinson Crusoe has epic qualities often reminiscent of the odyssey. Frightfully lonely, sometimes sick and often afraid, Crusoe manages not only to stay same during his long years of isolation but to build a little civilization of his own on his Island, Defoe seems to be saying that no matter how mortally weak the average man may be he has unknown and untapped source of courage, stamina and ingenuity.

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