

way, singing cheerfully, working patiently, in the face of discouragement and failure. That writers of far less genius were exalted to favor, while he remained poor and obscure, does not seem to have troubled him in the least. For over forty years he labored diligently at book engraving, guided in his art by Michael Angelo, but inventing his own curious designs, at which we still wonder. The illustrations for Young's "Night Thoughts," for Blair's "Grave," and the "Inventions to the Book of Job," show the peculiarity of Blake's mind quite as clearly as his poems. While he worked at his trade he flung off — for he never seemed to compose — disjointed visions and incomprehensible rhapsodies, with an occasional little gem that still sets our hearts to singing:

Ah, sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Rise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sunflower wishes to go!

That is a curious flower to find growing in the London street; but it suggests Blake's own life, which was outwardly busy and quiet, but inwardly full of adventure and excitement. His last huge prophetic works, like *Jerusalem* and *Milton* (1804), were dictated to him, he declares, by supernatural means, and even against his own will. They are only half intelligible, but here and there one sees flashes of the same poetic beauty that marks his little poems. Critics generally dismiss Blake with the word "madman"; but that is only an evasion. At best, he is the writer of exquisite lyrics; at worst, he is mad only "north-northwest," like Hamlet; and the puzzle is to find the method in his madness. The most amazing thing about him is the perfectly sane and cheerful way in which he moved through poverty and obscurity, flinging out exquisite poems or senseless rhapsodies, as a child might play with gems or straws or sunbeams indifferently. He was a gentle, kindly, most unworldly little man, with extraordinary eyes, which seem even in the lifeless portraits to reflect some unusual hypnotic power. He died obscurely, smiling at a vision of Paradise, in 1827. That was nearly a century ago, yet he still remains one of the most incomprehensible figures in our literature.

Works of Blake. The *Poetical Sketches*, published in 1783, is a collection of Blake's earliest poetry, much of it written in boyhood. It contains much crude and incoherent work, but also a few lyrics of striking originality. Two later and better known volumes are *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, reflecting two widely different views of the human soul. As in all his works, there is an abundance of apparently worthless stuff in these songs; but, in the language of miners, it is all "pay dirt"; it shows gleams of golden grains that await our sifting, and now and then we find a nugget unexpectedly:

My lord was like a flower upon the brows
Of lusty May; ah life as frail as flower!
My lord was like a star in highest heaven,
Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness;
My lord was like the opening eye of day;
But he is darkened; like the summer moon
Clouded; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down;
The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.

On account of the chaotic character of most of Blake's work, it is well to begin our reading with a short book of selections, containing the best songs of these three little volumes. Swinburne calls Blake the only poet of "supreme and simple poetic genius" of the eighteenth century, "the one man of that age fit, on all accounts, to rank with the old great masters."¹ The praise is doubtless extravagant, and the criticism somewhat intemperate; but when we have read "The Evening Star," "Memory," "Night," "Love," "To the Muses," "Spring," "Summer," "The Tiger," "The Lamb," "The Clod and the Pebble," we may possibly share Swinburne's enthusiasm. Certainly, in these three volumes we have some of the most perfect and the most original songs in our language.

Of Blake's longer poems, his titanic prophecies and apocalyptic splendors, it is impossible to write justly in such a brief work as this. Outwardly they suggest a huge chaff pile, and

¹ Swinburne's *William Blake*.

the scattered grains of wheat hardly warrant the labor of winnowing. The curious reader will get an idea of Blake's amazing mysticism by dipping into any of the works of his middle life, — *Urizen*, *Gates of Paradise*, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America*, *The French Revolution*, or *The Vision of the Daughters of Albion*. His latest works, like *Jerusalem* and *Milton*, are too obscure to have any literary value. To read any of these works casually is to call the author a madman; to study them, remembering Blake's songs and his genius, is to quote softly his own answer to the child who asked about the land of dreams:

"O what land is the land of dreams,
What are its mountains and what are its streams?
— O father, I saw my mother there,
Among the lilies by waters fair."

"Dear child, I also by pleasant streams
Have wandered all night in the land of dreams;
But though calm and warm the waters wide,
I could not get to the other side."

MINOR POETS OF THE REVIVAL

We have chosen the five preceding poets, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, and Blake, as the most typical and the most interesting of the writers who proclaimed the dawn of Romanticism in the eighteenth century. With them we associate a group of minor writers, whose works were immensely popular in their own day. The ordinary reader will pass them by, but to the student they are all significant as expressions of very different phases of the romantic revival.

James Thomson (1700–1748). Thomson belongs among the pioneers of Romanticism. Like Gray and Goldsmith, he wavered between pseudo-classic and the new romantic ideals, and for this reason, if for no other, his early work is interesting, like the uncertainty of a child who hesitates whether to creep safely on all fours or risk a fall by walking. He is

"worthy to be remembered" for three poems, — "Rule Britannia," which is still one of the national songs of England, *The Castle of Indolence*, and *The Seasons*. The dreamy and romantic *Castle* (1748), occupied by enchanter Indolence and his willing captives in the land of Drowsyhed, is purely Spenserian in its imagery, and is written in the Spenserian stanza. *The Seasons* (1726–1730), written in blank verse, describes the sights and sounds of the changing year and the poet's own feelings in the presence of nature. These two poems, though rather dull to a modern reader, were significant of the early romantic revival in three ways: they abandoned the prevailing heroic couplet; they went back to the Elizabethans, instead of to Pope, for their models; and they called attention to the long-neglected life of nature as a subject for poetry.

William Collins (1721–1759). Collins, the friend and disciple of Thomson, was of a delicate, nervous temperament, like Cowper; and over him also brooded the awful shadow of insanity. His first work, *Oriental Eclogues* (1742), is romantic in feeling, but is written in the prevailing mechanical couplets. All his later work is romantic in both thought and expression. His "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands" (1750) is an interesting event in the romantic revival, for it introduced a new world, of witches, pygmies, fairies, and mediæval kings, for the imagination to play in. Collins's best known poems are the odes "To Simplicity," "To Fear," "To the Passions," the little unnamed lyric beginning "How sleep the brave," and the exquisite "Ode to Evening." In reading the latter, one is scarcely aware that the lines are so delicately balanced that they have no need of rime to accentuate their melody.

George Crabbe (1754–1832). Crabbe is an interesting combination of realism and romanticism, his work of depicting common life being, at times, vaguely suggestive of Fielding's novels. *The Village* (1783), a poem without a rival as a picture of the workingmen of his age, is sometimes like Fielding

in its coarse vigor, and again like Dryden in its precise versification. The poem was not successful at first, and Crabbe abandoned his literary dreams. For over twenty years he settled down as a clergyman in a country parish, observing keenly the common life about him. Then he published more poems, exactly like *The Village*, which immediately brought him fame and money. They brought him also the friendship of Walter Scott, who, like others, regarded Crabbe as one of the first poets of the age. These later poems, *The Parish Register* (1807), *The Borough* (1810), *Tales in Verse* (1812), and *Tales of the Hall* (1819), are in the same strain. They are written in couplets; they are reflections of nature and of country life; they contain much that is sordid and dull, but are nevertheless real pictures of real men and women, just as Crabbe saw them, and as such they are still interesting. Goldsmith and Burns had idealized the poor, and we admire them for their sympathy and insight. It remained for Crabbe to show that in wretched fishing villages, in the lives of hard-working men and women, children, laborers, smugglers, paupers,—all sorts and conditions of common men,—there is abundant romantic interest without exaggerating or idealizing their vices and virtues.

James Macpherson (1736–1796). In Macpherson we have an unusual figure, who catered to the new romantic interest in the old epic heroes, and won immense though momentary fame, by a series of literary forgeries. Macpherson was a Scotch schoolmaster, an educated man, but evidently not over-tender of conscience, whose imagination had been stirred by certain old poems which he may have heard in Gaelic among the Highlanders. In 1760 he published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands*, and alleged that his work was but a translation of Gaelic manuscripts. Whether the work of itself would have attracted attention is doubtful; but the fact that an abundance of literary material might be awaiting discovery led to an interest such as now

attends the opening of an Egyptian tomb, and a subscription was promptly raised in Edinburgh to send Macpherson through the Highlands to collect more "manuscripts." The result was the epic *Fingal* (1762), "that lank and lamentable counterfeit of poetry," as Swinburne calls it, which the author professed to have translated from the Gaelic of the poet Ossian. Its success was astonishing, and Macpherson followed it up with *Temora* (1763), another epic in the same strain. In both these works Macpherson succeeds in giving an air of primal grandeur to his heroes; the characters are big and shadowy; the imagery is at times magnificent; the language is a kind of chanting, bombastic prose:

Now Fingal arose in his might and thrice he reared his voice. Cromla answered around, and the sons of the desert stood still. They bent their red faces to earth, ashamed at the presence of Fingal. He came like a cloud of rain in the days of the sun, when slow it rolls on the hill, and fields expect the shower. Swaran beheld the terrible king of Morven, and stopped in the midst of his course. Dark he leaned on his spear rolling his red eyes around. Silent and tall he seemed as an oak on the banks of Lubar, which had its branches blasted of old by the lightning of heaven. His thousands pour around the hero, and the darkness of battle gathers on the hill.¹

The publication of this gloomy, imaginative work produced a literary storm. A few critics, led by Dr. Johnson, demanded to see the original manuscripts, and when Macpherson refused to produce them,² the Ossianic poems were branded as a forgery; nevertheless they had enormous success. Macpherson was honored as a literary explorer; he was given an official position, carrying a salary for life; and at his death, in 1796, he was buried in Westminster Abbey. Blake, Burns, and indeed most of the poets of the age were influenced by

¹ There are several omissions from the text in this fragment from *Fingal*.

² Several fragments of Gaelic poetry, attributed to Ossian or Oisín, are now known to have existed at that time in the Highlands. Macpherson used these as a basis for his epic, but most of the details were furnished by his own imagination. The alleged text of "Ossian" was published in 1807, some eleven years after Macpherson's death. It only added another mystery to the forgery; for, while it embodied a few old and probably genuine fragments, the bulk of it seems to be Macpherson's work translated back into Gaelic.

this sham poetry. Even the scholarly Gray was deceived and delighted with "Ossian"; and men as far apart as Goethe and Napoleon praised it immoderately.

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770). This "marvelous boy," to whom Keats dedicated his "Endymion," and who is celebrated in Shelley's "Adonais," is one of the saddest and most interesting figures of the romantic revival. During his childhood he haunted the old church of St. Mary Redcliffe, in Bristol, where he was fascinated by the mediæval air of the place, and especially by one old chest, known as Canynge's coffer, containing musty documents which had been preserved for three hundred years. With strange, uncanny intentness the child pored over these relics of the past, copying them instead of his writing book, until he could imitate not only the spelling and language but even the handwriting of the original. Soon after the "Ossian" forgeries appeared, Chatterton began to produce documents, apparently very old, containing mediæval poems, legends, and family histories, centering around two characters, — Thomas Rowley, priest and poet, and William Canynge, merchant of Bristol in the days of Henry VI. It seems incredible that the whole design of these mediæval romances should have been worked out by a child of eleven, and that he could reproduce the style and the writing of Caxton's day so well that the printers were deceived; but such is the fact. More and more *Rowley Papers*, as they were called, were produced by Chatterton, — apparently from the archives of the old church; in reality from his own imagination, — delighting a large circle of readers, and deceiving all but Gray and a few scholars who recognized the occasional misuse of fifteenth-century English words. All this work was carefully finished, and bore the unmistakable stamp of literary genius. Reading now his "Ælla," or the "Ballad of Charite," or the long poem in ballad style called "Bristowe Tragedie," it is hard to realize that it is a boy's work. At seventeen years of age Chatterton went for a literary

career to London, where he soon afterwards took poison and killed himself in a fit of childish despondency, brought on by poverty and hunger.

Thomas Percy (1729-1811). To Percy, bishop of the Irish church, in Dromore, we are indebted for the first attempt at a systematic collection of the folk songs and ballads which are counted among the treasures of a nation's literature.¹ In 1765 he published, in three volumes, his famous *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. The most valuable part of this work is the remarkable collection of old English and Scottish ballads, such as "Chevy Chase," the "Nut Brown Mayde," "Children of the Wood," "Battle of Otterburn," and many more, which but for his labor might easily have perished. We have now much better and more reliable editions of these same ballads; for Percy garbled his materials, adding and subtracting freely, and even inventing a few ballads of his own. Two motives probably influenced him in this. First, the different versions of the same ballad varied greatly; and Percy, in changing them to suit himself, took the same liberty as had many other writers in dealing with the same material. Second, Percy was under the influence of Johnson and his school, and thought it necessary to add a few elegant ballads "to atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems." That sounds queer now, used as we are to exactness in dealing with historical and literary material; but it expresses the general spirit of the age in which he lived.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, Percy's *Reliques* marks an epoch in the history of Romanticism, and it is difficult to measure its influence on the whole romantic movement. Scott says of it, "The first time I could scrape a few shillings together, I bought myself a copy of these beloved volumes; nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm." Scott's own poetry is strongly modeled

¹ For various other collections of songs and ballads, antedating Percy's, see Phelps's *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement*, ch. vii.

upon these early ballads, and his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* is due chiefly to the influence of Percy's work.

Besides the *Reliques*, Percy has given us another good work in his *Northern Antiquities* (1770), translated from the French of Mallet's *History of Denmark*. This also was of immense influence, since it introduced to English readers a new and fascinating mythology, more rugged and primitive than that of the Greeks; and we are still, in music as in letters, under the spell of Thor and Odin, of Freia and the Valkyr maidens, and of that stupendous drama of passion and tragedy which ended in the "Twilight of the Gods." The literary world owes a debt of gratitude to Percy, who wrote nothing of importance himself, but who, by collecting and translating the works of other men, did much to hasten the triumph of Romanticism in the nineteenth century.

III. THE FIRST ENGLISH NOVELISTS

The chief literary phenomena of the complex eighteenth century are the reign of so-called Classicism, the revival of romantic poetry, and the discovery of the modern novel. Of these three, the last is probably the most important. Aside from the fact that the novel is the most modern, and at present the most widely read and influential type of literature, we have a certain pride in regarding it as England's original contribution to the world of letters. Other great types of literature, like the epic, the romance, and the drama, were first produced by other nations; but the idea of the modern novel seems to have been worked out largely on English soil;¹ and in the number and the fine quality of her novelists, England has hardly been rivaled by any other nation. Before we study the writers who developed this new type of literature, it is well to consider briefly its meaning and history.

¹ The first books to which the term "novel," in the modern sense, may be applied, appeared almost simultaneously in England, France, and Germany. The rapid development of the English novel had an immense influence in all European nations.

Meaning of the Novel. Probably the most significant remark made by the ordinary reader concerning a work of fiction takes the form of a question: Is it a good story? For the reader of to-day is much like the child and the primitive man in this respect, that he must be attracted and held by the story element of a narrative before he learns to appreciate its style or moral significance. The story element is therefore essential to the novel; but where the story originates is impossible to say. As well might we seek for the origin of the race; for wherever primitive men are found, there we see them gathering eagerly about the story-teller. In the halls of our Saxon ancestors the scop and the tale-bringer were ever the most welcome guests; and in the bark wigwams of the American Indians the man who told the legends of Hiawatha had an audience quite as attentive as that which gathered at the Greek festivals to hear the story of Ulysses's wanderings. To man's instinct or innate love for a story we are indebted for all our literature; and the novel must in some degree satisfy this instinct, or fail of appreciation.

The second question which we ask concerning a work of fiction is, How far does the element of imagination enter into it? For upon the element of imagination depends, largely, our classification of works of fiction into novels, romances, and mere adventure stories. The divisions here are as indefinite as the border land between childhood and youth, between instinct and reason; but there are certain principles to guide us. We note, in the development of any normal child, that there comes a time when for his stories he desires knights, giants, elves, fairies, witches, magic, and marvelous adventures which have no basis in experience. He tells extraordinary tales about himself, which may be only the vague remembrances of a dream or the creations of a dawning imagination, — both of which are as real to him as any other part of life. When we say that such a child "romances," we give exactly the right name to it; for this

sudden interest in extraordinary beings and events marks the development of the human imagination, — running riot at first, because it is not guided by reason, which is a later development, — and to satisfy this new interest the romance¹ was invented. The romance is, originally, a work of fiction in which the imagination is given full play, without being limited by facts or probabilities. It deals with extraordinary events, with heroes whose powers are exaggerated, and often adds the element of superhuman or supernatural characters. It is impossible to draw the line where romance ends; but this element of excessive imagination and of impossible heroes and incidents is its distinguishing mark in every literature.

Where the novel begins it is likewise impossible to say; but again we have a suggestion in the experience of every reader.

The Novel There comes a time, naturally and inevitably, in the life of every youth when the romance no longer enthralled him. He lives in a world of facts; gets acquainted with men and women, some good, some bad, but all human; and he demands that literature shall express life as he knows it by experience. This is the stage of the awakened intellect, and in our stories the intellect as well as the imagination must now be satisfied. At the beginning of this stage we delight in *Robinson Crusoe*; we read eagerly a multitude of adventure narratives and a few so-called historical novels; but in each case we must be lured by a story, must find heroes and "moving accidents by flood and field" to appeal to our imagination; and though the hero and the adventure may be exaggerated, they must both be natural and within the bounds of probability. Gradually the element of adventure or surprising incident grows less and less important, as we learn that true life is not adventurous, but a plain, heroic matter of work and

¹ The name "romance" was given at first to any story in one of the Romance languages, like the French metrical romances, which we have considered. Because these stories were brought to England at a time when the childish mind of the Middle Ages delighted in the most impossible stories, the name "romance" was retained to cover any work of the unbridled imagination.

duty, and the daily choice between good and evil. Life is the most real thing in the world now, — not the life of kings, or heroes, or superhuman creatures, but the individual life with its struggles and temptations and triumphs or failures, like our own; and any work that faithfully represents life becomes interesting. So we drop the adventure story and turn to the novel. For the novel is a work of fiction in which the imagination and the intellect combine to express life in the form of a story; and the imagination is always directed and controlled by the intellect. It is interested chiefly, not in romance or adventure, but in men and women as they are; it aims to show the motives and influences which govern human life, and the effects of personal choice upon character and destiny. Such is the true novel,¹ and as such it opens a wider and more interesting field than any other type of literature.

Precursors of the Novel. Before the novel could reach its modern stage, of a more or less sincere attempt to express human life and character, it had to pass through several centuries of almost imperceptible development. Among the early precursors of the novel we must place a collection of tales known as the Greek Romances, dating from the second to the sixth centuries. These are imaginative and delightful stories of ideal love and marvelous adventure,² which profoundly

¹ This division of works of fiction into romances and novels is a somewhat arbitrary one, but it seems, on the whole, the most natural and the most satisfactory. Many writers use the generic term "novel" to include all prose fiction. They divide novels into two classes, stories and romances; the story being a form of the novel which relates certain incidents of life with as little complexity as possible; and the romance being a form of novel which describes life as led by strong emotions into complex and unusual circumstances. Novels are otherwise divided into novels of personality, like *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Silas Marner*; historical novels, like *Ivanhoe*; novels of romance, like *Lorna Doone*; and novels of purpose, like *Oliver Twist* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. All such classifications are imperfect, and the best of them is open to objections.

² One of these tales was called *The Wonderful Things beyond Thule*. It is the story of a youth, Dinias, who for love of a girl, Dercyllis, did heroic things and undertook many adventures, including a journey to the frozen north, and another to the moon. A second tale, *Ephesiaca*, is the story of a man and a maid, each of whom scoffs at love. They meet and fall desperately in love; but the course of true love does not run smooth, and they separate, and suffer, and go through many perils, before they "live happily ever after." This tale is the source of the mediæval story, *Apollonius of Tyre*, which is used in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and in Shakespeare's *Pericles*. A third tale is the pastoral love story, *Daphnis and Chloe*, which reappeared in many forms in subsequent literature.

affected romance writing for the next thousand years. A second group of predecessors is found in the Italian and Spanish pastoral romances, which were inspired by the *Eclogues* of Virgil. These were extremely popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and their influence is seen later in Sidney's *Arcadia*, which is the best of this type in English.

The third and most influential group of predecessors of the novel is made up of the romances of chivalry, such as are found in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. It is noticeable, in reading these beautiful old romances in different languages, that each nation changes them somewhat, so as to make them more expressive of national traits and ideals. In a word, the old romance tends inevitably towards realism, especially in England, where the excessive imagination is curbed and the heroes become more human. In Malory, in the unknown author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and especially in Chaucer, we see the effect of the practical English mind in giving these old romances a more natural setting, and in making the heroes suggest, though faintly, the men and women of their own day. The *Canterbury Tales*, with their story interest and their characters delightfully true to nature, have in them the suggestion, at least, of a connected story whose chief aim is to reflect life as it is.

In the Elizabethan Age the idea of the novel grows more definite. In Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580), a romance of chivalry, the pastoral setting at least is generally true to nature; our credulity is not taxed, as in the old romances, by the continual appearance of magic or miracles; and the characters, though idealized till they become tiresome, occasionally give the impression of being real men and women. In Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1627) we have the story of the discovery by mariners of an unknown country, inhabited by a superior race of men, more civilized than ourselves, — an idea which had been used by More in his *Utopia* in 1516. These two books are neither romances nor novels, in the strict sense, but studies

of social institutions. They use the connected story as a means of teaching moral lessons, and of bringing about needed reforms; and this valuable suggestion has been adopted by many of our modern writers in the so-called problem novels and novels of purpose.

Nearer to the true novel is Lodge's romantic story of *Rosalynde*, which was used by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*. This was modeled upon the Italian novella, or short story, which became very popular in England during the Elizabethan Age. In the same age we have introduced into England the Spanish picaresque novel (from *picarò*, a knave or rascal), which at first was a kind of burlesque on the mediæval romance, and which took for its hero some low scoundrel or outcast, instead of a knight, and followed him through a long career of scandals and villainies. One of the earliest types of this picaresque novel in English is Nash's *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), which is also a forerunner of the historical novel, since its action takes place during that gorgeous interview between Henry VIII and the king of France on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. In all these short stories and picaresque novels the emphasis was laid not so much on life and character as on the adventures of the hero; and the interest consisted largely in wondering what would happen next, and how the plot would end. The same method is employed in all trashy novels and it is especially the bane of many modern story-writers. This excessive interest in adventures or incidents for their own sake, and not for their effect on character, is what distinguishes the modern adventure story from the true novel.

In the Puritan Age we approach still nearer to the modern novel, especially in the work of Bunyan; and as the Puritan always laid emphasis on character, stories appeared having a definite moral purpose. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) differs from the *Faery Queen*, and from all other mediæval allegories, in this important respect, — that the

characters, far from being bloodless abstractions, are but thinly disguised men and women. Indeed, many a modern man, reading the story of Christian, has found in it the reflection of his own life and experience. In *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1682) we have another and even more realistic study of a man as he was in Bunyan's day. These two striking figures, Christian and Mr. Badman, belong among the great characters of English fiction. Bunyan's good work,—his keen insight, his delineation of character, and his emphasis upon the moral effects of individual action,—was carried on by Addison and Steele some thirty years later. The character of Sir Roger de Coverley is a real reflection of English country life in the eighteenth century; and with Steele's domestic sketches in *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian* (1709–1713), we definitely cross the border land that lies outside of romance, and enter the region of character study where the novel has its beginning.

The Discovery of the Modern Novel. Notwithstanding this long history of fiction, to which we have called attention, it is safe to say that, until the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*, in 1740, no true novel had appeared in any literature. By a true novel we mean simply a work of fiction which relates the story of a plain human life, under stress of emotion, which depends for its interest not on incident or adventure, but on its truth to nature. A number of English novelists—Goldsmith, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne—all seem to have seized upon the idea of reflecting life as it is, in the form of a story, and to have developed it simultaneously. The result was an extraordinary awakening of interest, especially among people who had never before been greatly concerned with literature. We are to remember that, in previous periods, the number of readers was comparatively small; and that, with the exception of a few writers like Langland and Bunyan, authors wrote largely for the upper classes. In the eighteenth century the spread of education

and the appearance of newspapers and magazines led to an immense increase in the number of readers; and at the same time the middle-class people assumed a foremost place in English life and history. These new readers and this new, powerful middle class had no classic tradition to hamper them. They cared little for the opinions of Dr. Johnson and the famous Literary Club; and, so far as they read fiction at all, they apparently took little interest in the exaggerated romances of impossible heroes and the picaresque stories of intrigue and villainy which had interested the upper classes. Some new type of literature was demanded, and this new type must express the new ideal of the eighteenth century, namely, the value and the importance of the individual life. So the novel was born, expressing, though in a different way, exactly the same ideals of personality and of the dignity of common life which were later proclaimed in the American and in the French Revolution, and were welcomed with rejoicing by the poets of the romantic revival. To tell men, not about knights or kings or types of heroes, but about themselves in the guise of plain men and women, about their own thoughts and motives and struggles, and the results of actions upon their own characters,—this was the purpose of our first novelists. The eagerness with which their chapters were read in England, and the rapidity with which their work was copied abroad, show how powerfully the new discovery appealed to readers everywhere.

Before we consider the work of these writers who first developed the modern novel, we must glance at the work of a pioneer, Daniel Defoe, whom we place among the early novelists for the simple reason that we know not how else to classify him.

DANIEL DEFOE (1661(?)–1731)

To Defoe is often given the credit for the discovery of the modern novel; but whether or not he deserves that honor is an open question. Even a casual reading of *Robinson Crusoe*

(1719), which generally heads the list of modern fiction, shows that this exciting tale is largely an adventure story, rather than the study of human character which Defoe probably intended it to be. Young people still read it as they might a dime novel, skipping its moralizing passages and hurrying on to more adventures; but they seldom appreciate the excellent mature reasons which banish the dime novel to a secret place in the haymow, while *Crusoe* hangs proudly on



DANIEL DEFOE

the Christmas tree or holds an honored place on the family bookshelf. Defoe's *Apparition of Mrs. Veal*, *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, and *Journal of the Plague Year* are such mixtures of fact, fiction, and credulity that they defy classification; while other so-called "novels," like *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*, are but little better than picaresque stories, with a deal of unnatural moralizing and repentance added for puritanical effect. In *Crusoe* Defoe, brought the realistic adventure story to a very high stage of its development; but his works hardly deserve to be classed as true novels, which must subordinate incident to the faithful portrayal of human life and character.

Life. Defoe was the son of a London butcher named Foe, and kept his family name until he was forty years of age, when he added the aristocratic prefix with which we have grown familiar. The

events of his busy seventy years of life, in which he passed through all extremes, from poverty to wealth; from prosperous brickmaker to starveling journalist, from Newgate prison to immense popularity and royal favor, are obscure enough in details; but four facts stand out clearly, which help the reader to understand the character of his work. First, Defoe was a jack-at-all-trades, as well as a writer; his interest was largely with the working classes, and notwithstanding many questionable practices, he seems to have had some continued purpose of educating and uplifting the common people. This partially accounts for the enormous popularity of his works, and for the fact that they were criticised by literary men as being "fit only for the kitchen." Second, he was a radical Nonconformist in religion, and was intended by his father for the independent ministry. The Puritan zeal for reform possessed him, and he tried to do by his pen what Wesley was doing by his preaching, without, however, having any great measure of the latter's sincerity or singleness of purpose. This zeal for reform marks all his numerous works, and accounts for the moralizing to be found everywhere. Third, Defoe was a journalist and pamphleteer, with a reporter's eye for the picturesque and a newspaper man's instinct for making a "good story." He wrote an immense number of pamphlets, poems, and magazine articles; conducted several papers,—one of the most popular, the *Review*, being issued from prison,—and the fact that they often blew hot and cold upon the same question was hardly noticed. Indeed, so extraordinarily interesting and plausible were Defoe's articles that he generally managed to keep employed by the party in power, whether Whig or Tory. This long journalistic career, lasting half a century, accounts for his direct, simple, narrative style, which holds us even now by its intense reality. To Defoe's genius we are also indebted for two discoveries, the "interview" and the leading editorial, both of which are still in daily use in our best newspapers.

The fourth fact to remember is that Defoe knew prison life; and thereby hangs a tale. In 1702 Defoe published a remarkable pamphlet called "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," supporting the claims of the free churches against the "High Fliers," i.e. Tories and Anglicans. In a vein of grim humor which recalls Swift's "Modest Proposal," Defoe advocated hanging all dissenting ministers, and sending all members of the free churches into exile; and so ferociously realistic was the satire that both Dissenters and Tories