

THE  
LIFE  
AND  
*ADVENTURES*  
OF  
ROBINSON CRUSOE, &c.

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer;<sup>1</sup> but by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called, nay we call ourselves, and write our name Crusoe, and so my companions always called me.

I had two elder brothers, one of which was lieutenant colonel to an English Regiment of Foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Col. Lockhart, and was killed at the battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards.<sup>2</sup> What became of my second brother I never knew any more than my father or mother did know what was become of me.

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

My father, a wise and grave man, gave me serious and excellent counsel against what he foresaw was my design. He called

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- 1 The German name suggests either “nearer the cross” or “to cruise, to journey” [Ayers].
  - 2 In June 1658 Sir William Lockhart (1621–75) was sent by Oliver Cromwell to reinforce French troops against the Spanish in the Battle of the Dunes, leading to the Spanish surrender of Dunkirk. Dunkirk remained an English possession for several years, and the battle was seen as an important victory in the expensive and unpopular Anglo-Spanish war.

me one morning into his chamber, where he was confined by the gout, and expostulated very warmly with me upon this subject. He asked me what reasons more than a mere wandering inclination I had for leaving my father's house and my native country, where I might be well introduced, and had a prospect of raising my fortunes by application and industry, with a life of ease and pleasure. He told me it was for men of desperate fortunes on one hand, or of aspiring, superior fortune on the other, who went abroad upon adventures, to rise by enterprise, and make themselves famous in undertakings of a nature out of the common road; that these things were all either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle state, or what might be called the upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labour and sufferings of the mechanic<sup>1</sup> part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition and envy of the upper part of mankind. He told me, I might judge of the happiness of this state, by this one thing, *viz.* that this was the state of life which all other people envied, that kings have frequently lamented the miserable consequences of being born to great things, and wished they had been placed in the middle of the two extremes, between the mean and the great; that the wise man gave his testimony to this as the just standard of true felicity, when he prayed to have neither poverty or riches.<sup>2</sup>

He bid me observe it, and I should always find, that the calamities of life were shared among the upper and lower part of mankind; but that the middle station had the fewest disasters, and was not exposed to so many vicissitudes as the higher or lower part of mankind; nay, they were not subjected to so many distempers<sup>3</sup> and uneasinesses either of body or mind, as those were who, by vicious living, luxury and extravagancies on one hand, or by hard labour, want of necessaries, and mean or insuf-

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1 Employed in manual labor.

2 Proverbs 30:8–9: “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” The “wise man” is King Solomon, to whom the Book of Proverbs has been traditionally attributed. (Biblical quotations in the notes come from the King James Version, first published in 1611, the standard translation used in Protestant churches during Defoe's lifetime.)

3 Illnesses, disorders.

ficient diet on the other hand, bring distempers upon themselves by the natural consequences of their way of living; that the middle station of life was calculated for all kind of virtues and all kinds of enjoyments; that peace and plenty were the handmaids of a middle fortune; that temperance, moderation, quietness, health, society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life; that this way men went silently and smoothly through the world, and comfortably out of it, not embarrassed with<sup>1</sup> the labours of the hands or of the head, not sold to the life of slavery for daily bread, or harassed with perplexed circumstances, which rob the soul of peace, and the body of rest; not enraged with the passion of envy, or secret burning lust of ambition for great things; but in easy circumstances sliding gently through the world, and sensibly tasting the sweets of living, without the bitter feeling that they are happy, and learning by every day's experience to know it more sensibly.

After this, he pressed me earnestly, and in the most affectionate manner, not to play the young man, not to precipitate<sup>2</sup> myself into miseries which Nature and the station of life I was born in, seemed to have provided against; that I was under no necessity of seeking my bread; that he would do well for me, and endeavour to enter me fairly into the station of life which he had been just recommending to me; and that if I was not very easy and happy in the world, it must be my mere fate or fault that must hinder it, and that he should have nothing to answer for, having thus discharged his duty in warning me against measures which he knew would be to my hurt. In a word, that as he would do very kind things for me if I would stay and settle at home as he directed, so he would not have so much hand in my misfortunes, as to give me any encouragement to go away. And to close all, he told me I had my elder brother for an example, to whom he had used the same earnest persuasions to keep him from going into the Low Country wars, but could not prevail, his young desires prompting him to run into the army where he was killed; and though he said he would not cease to pray for me, yet he would venture to say to me, that if I did take this foolish step, God would not bless me, and I would have leisure hereafter to reflect upon having neglected his counsel when there might be none to assist in my recovery.

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1 Obstructed by, held back by.

2 To throw into an undesirable state.