

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

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of
Committee on Thesis

The undersigned, acting as a Committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Sue M. Burton for the degree of Master of Arts. They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date June 9, 1922

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report
of
Committee on Examination

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Sue M. Burton final oral examination for the degree of

Master of Arts

We recommend that the degree of

Master of Arts

be conferred upon the candidate.

C. A. Moore Chairman

Joseph R. Beard

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Date _____

A COMPARISON OF THE PICARESQUE METHODS
OF DEFOE AND LESAGE

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A Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Minnesota

by

Sue M. Burton

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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A Comparison of the Picaresque Methods
of Defoe and Lesage.

The following comparison of the picaresque methods employed by Lesage and Defoe is limited to Le Diable Boiteux and Gil Blas of Lesage, Captain Singleton, Colonel Jack and Moll Flanders of Defoe. Sources are considered only as they relate to the methods of the two writers. The introductory chapter on the Spanish novela picaresca is included to make the later discussion more intelligible. The purpose of the paper is to attempt to prove that both Lesage and Defoe, while continuing to employ the picaresque form, tend, the one toward "le roman de mœurs", and, the other, toward the thesis novel or the novel of reform and the novel of pure adventure. Incidentally, it might not be beside the point to discredit the prevalent theory that Defoe was influenced by the Gil Blas of Lesage; a theory which appears to have no justification beyond the mere external evidence of the publication of the first six books of Gil Blas in 1715, several years prior to Defoe's own attempts in the picaresque field.

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Chapter I. THE PICARESQUE NOVEL.

The several definitions of the novela picaresca and a brief review of its modifications, together with a summary of the philosophy of the true picaro of Spain are given to make the later discussion of Defoe and Lesage more intelligible and discriminating. Chandler: "As conceived in Spain and matured in France, the picaresque novel is the comic biography (or more often the auto-biography) of an anti-hero who makes his way in the world through the service of masters, satirizing their personal faults as well as their trades and professions. It possesses, therefore, two poles of interest,- one the rogue and his tricks, the other, the manners he pillories."¹ Fonger de Haan: "The novela picaresca is the autobiography of a picaro, a rogue, and in that form a satire upon the conditions and persons of the time that gives it birth."²

Like all other types of literature, the picaresque novel seems to have had numerous literary antecedents on the continent. "Master Reynard",³ the anti-hero of the Roman de Renart, a bestial romance of the Middle Ages, and the German rogue stories of the tricks of "Til Eulenspiegel" are sometimes mentioned as possible forerunners of the picaresque realism. Doubtless Rabelais's

1. F. W. Chandler, "Literature of Roguery", vol. I, p. 5.
2. Fonger de Haan, "An Outline of the Novela Picaresca in Spain", p. 1.
3. J. J. Jusserand, "English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare", p. 292.
A. M. Chisholm, "Recreations of a Physician", p. 228.
Fonger de Haan, "An Outline of the Novela Picaresca in Spain", pp. 6-7.

"Panurge", "Encolpius" of Petronius and "Phormio" of Terence helped to form the character of the picaresque hero. The Asinus Aureus of Apuleius perhaps suggested the auto-biographic form. In Spain the Celestinas which satirize all classes of society in their relation to one another, and the Libro de Cantares of the Arcipreste de Hita in which he describes himself as an unscrupulous person, over-fond of women, are considered as leading up to the picaresque, yet by no means meeting its requirements.

The hero of the novela picaresca, the picaresque hero, is defined as a "person of the lowest class, ragged and dirty, who is employed in low work; to which was later added the meaning 'astute'; he who by skill and dissimulation attains what he desires".⁴ The etymology of the word picaresque, in spite of the efforts of numerous scholars, has remained uncertain. The derivation of the word from pica, a lance, or from 'picar', to pick up, is unsatisfactory. "The picaresque hero was first mentioned in literature in a letter by Eugenio de Salazar, written probably not later than 1660. He is here defined as in the company of the worst rabble in the city. The picaresque hero was a member of a class that bore a bad reputation. He did not work for a living, spent what he could get on eating and drinking, and did not concern himself about honor".⁵ "The picaresque hero as an actual member of Spanish society formerly designated the boy who stands with his basket in the market place to carry what is intrusted to him."⁶ The picaresque hero of Spain is neither the criminal English rogue nor is he the philosophical French 'gueux'. He is a trickster, a knave,

4. Fonger de Haan, "Outline of the Novela Picaresca", p. 2.
 5. " " " " " " " " p. 4.
 6. " " " " " " " " p. 2.

if you will, but he never descends to pure villainy. "He may cheat at cards or snatch purses. He may forge a check or a will. He may beg with a painted ulcer, or float a commercial bubble..... He may levy blackmail, play the quack, crack a safe, or even rob on the highway. But the use of personal violence usually ends his career as a rogue and stamps him the villain."⁷

This ragged vagabond, our picaresque hero, has a philosophy superior to the wear and tear of the road. His motto "sequere sortem" relieves him of all worldly cares. He is by turns human, sympathetic, lovable; tricky, thievish and unreliable-- a melange of Oliver Goldsmith and François Villon. We forgive him the faithless, shameless avowals of his own trickery only because they are so filled with a buoyancy and joy of living, which result from much eating and little moral reflection. The picaresque fasts when he is full and eats when he is hungry. "He is ever young in spirit and devoid of conscience"⁸. A happy sense of irresponsibility adds to his charm. Through all his numerous adventures "his conscience remains untouched and a moral sense is denied him". He fails to recognize the distinction of *meum* and *tuum*----

.....the good old rule
Sufficeth him, the simple plan
That they should take who have the power
And they should keep who can".

The picaresques were soldiers of fortune. They abandoned themselves to "la bonne chance", like Guzman who "prit le chemin qui sembla le plus agréable, allant où il pouvait."⁹ "As he naively puts it "mes pieds me conduisaient et je les suivais"¹⁰ Like Gil Blas they

7. F. W. Chandler, "Literature of Roguery", vol. I, p. 4.

8. Taylorian Lectures (1889-99). H. B. Clarke, p. 315.

9. Guzman D'Alfarache, Livre I, Chap.V. Traduit par Lesage.

10. " " " " " " " " " "

rose from "des bas en hauts", or more often fell from "des hauts en bas". This sudden change of fortune engendered in the picaro a certain philosophy not without its attraction. The adventures by the roadside, the unknown tomorrow, while appealing to their passionate desire for adventure also induced a kind of fortitude against misadventure. The Spanish call this attitude "la conformidad"--a kind of Oriental fatalism, but it is distinguished from the latter because it demands patience, gaiety, and serene confidence. "Elle est le secret d'accepter les choses comme elles viennent, de se distraire et de se consoler; elle rend la joie facile, et on dirait qu'elle désarme le destin"¹¹. All picaros are depicted as the playthings of destiny. Their philosophy and wisdom are learned in the school of hard knocks, and like Guzman they find that the surest remedy from outrages is to scorn them. Notwithstanding the autobiographical form employed, the novela picaresca is an impersonal detached recital, never attempting to excuse or weaken the hero's faults. "Ils sont comme Dieux l'a voulu". They confess with ironical indifference to their fate. "Ils peignent comme ils le voient, le monde qui les entourent; ils se peignent eux-mêmes à peu près tels qu'ils sont"¹².

These traits of picaresque activity and philosophy are found in the first picaresque novel in Spain, La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, which appeared in 1554. It was formerly ascribed to Diego Mendoza, but this attribution is now commonly rejected on the authority of Morel-Fatio's study of the Lazarillo. Fonger de Haan thinks that it is the real auto-biography of a mature person of the

11. G. Reynier, Le Roman Realiste au XVII Siecle, p. 51.

12. " " " " " " " " p. 55.

lower class who passed through adventures similar to those related. The simplicity of the narrative justifies this supposition and the parallel case of Le Page Disgracié of Tristan l'Hermite makes the theory even more plausible. The book is a satire on the existing social conditions under the reign of Charles 5th. The boy, Lazarus, of low birth, serves successively as leader of a blind man, servant to a mean priest, squire to a poor but proud Hidalgo, messenger to a beggarly monk, boy to a vendor of indulgences, assistant to a sign-board painter and an alguazil, culminating his fine career as town-crier of Toledo, an office scarcely less enviable than that of public executioner. The keynote of the book is hunger. Lazarillo's only thought is to keep his stomach well filled at the expense of his master, or if that is impossible to profit by all chances of the road, begging, lying and stealing with equal skill. Young Lazarillo is a trickster, a rascal, yet withal a lovable rogue. He comments with nice wit on his various masters. Especially does he vent his satire on the clergy- the priest and the pardoner. He never descends to mere moralizing---he merely relates, pausing to comment with sharp humor on the frailties of humanity as he views it. The Lazarillo meets the requirements of Fonger de Haan's definition. It is "the prose auto-biography of a real (?) person who strives by fair means and by foul to make a living and in relating his experience in various classes of society, points out the evils which come under his observation".¹³ The Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes was followed by Aleman's Guzman de Alfarache in 1599; Los Marcos de Obregon of Espinel, el Buscón of Quevedo, and a horde of the same type continued through the seventeenth century, all having

13. Fonger de Haan, "Outline of the Novela Picaresca", p. 8.

for their hero, the picaresque, and for their purpose, the satirical exposure of contemporary society.

The picaresque novel, because of its diffuseness and general lack of form does not lend itself readily to a summary, but it has several definite characteristics which distinguish it from other classes of the novel. The form is elementary and the plot poorly constructed. The numerous incidents are connected only by the character of the hero. The narrator frequently interrupts his relation to interpolate an episode or to inculcate a moral. Often the tale is not concluded and continuations which have been prepared for, by the author's repeated hints, never occur. The hero is of low or illegitimate birth. He usually has numerous intrigues with feminine picaresque, which sometimes culminate in marriage as in the case of the Guzman tale. The hero pretends to serve humanity through relating his story, and the purpose, as stated in the author's preface is primarily a moral one. Incidentally the narrator expects to amuse the clever reader who is willing to appreciate his tricks, and perhaps desires to alarm the sensibilities of the delicate reader by his frankness. Although the picaresque type does not pretend to the requirements of the modern novel, it might not prove amiss to include an outlined comparison of the two forms which C. E. Horne develops in The Technique of the Novel.

- ¹⁴1. Plot--is a mere string of incidents as told by the same person.
2. Motive--merely to present common life - often to protest against its evils. Verisimilitude---the most important point of all.
3. Character portrayal---more fully detailed than ever before, though still external, dealing almost wholly with man's follies and vices as seen by the eye.

4. Emotional excitement abandoned in reaction, perhaps, against its exaggeration in the chivalric romances.
5. Background--prominent, sometimes seeming the real subject of the tale.
6. Style--usually witty and clever with a clear conception of how to reach its audience."

The fifth point which Horne makes demands special attention. The careful study of backgrounds and fine accuracy of detail are remarkable after the carelessness of the chivalric romances in matters of definite settings and time duration. In the novela picaresca every detail is reproduced. The hero's companions are described - their clothes receive special attention. Next to the cook the most important prop of the picaro is the tailor, who prescribes for the hero's vanity. Incidents of the road, the inns at which they stop, sleeping chambers, the table service, even the menu for each meal are all closely examined under the magnifying glass. In the Guzman story every detail is so painfully elaborated and lingered over that the final picture resembles a scene from Defoe, lacking only his graphic power of narration.

Next in importance to the background are the episodes which include not only a relation of the hero's actions, but also an account of his companions' adventures, not to mention the profusion of tales of love and intrigue which are bandied back and forth by the characters like so many after-dinner jokes. These episodes, in keeping with the character of the hero, are of the low comedy variety; sometimes vulgar, more often indecent. Lazarillo, tricking his blind master with the cold turnip which he has substituted for the delicious sausage, or playing the nibbling mouse with the miserly priest,

is merely humorous; but Guzman throwing omelettes of bad eggs at his hostess, or Buscon showered with chamber pots descends to vulgarity.

As the picaro heroes pass from master to master, the great variety of misfortunes with which they meet sharpens their already shrewd conception of the world and they begin to comment on the numerous classes of society with which they come in contact. They see no virtue in society; hence, their comments reveal only its vices. The picares present society as they see it, but they choose to portray only the rascally side of life. It follows that the picture which they develop is limited by reason of their biased observation. The picaresque novel, then, is not only a novel of low character and intrigue, but it is also an approach to the novel of manners in its description of the numerous classes of society, through which the rogue pursues his course.

The later picaresque novel of the eighteenth century lost many of its original characteristics, and frequently became associated with the novel of adventure. But the circumstance of an anti-hero passing from one adventure to another does not constitute the true picaresque. Neither does the mere event of a master and his squire traveling through the country and meeting with varied adventure meet the requirements of a *novela picaresca*. The tale must be autobiographical; the picaro hero must pass from master to master and in so doing call attention to their faults. It is true that in later developments of the picaresque, the autobiographic form is not always regarded as necessary and sometimes the satirical element is absent. In this case it approaches the realistic novel, presenting society in such a light that satire is unnecessary to point the moral. The Spanish *novela picaresca* proved too restricted to continue its exact form. "First one element, then another, fell away

from the scheme. Le Roman Comique of Scarron considers a single class, a strolling group of actors, and it dispenses with the service of masters. Simplicissimus dwelt on adventures; the English rogue forgot satire and manners in assembling mere tricks and Defoe eschewed humor."¹⁵

After Defoe Eighteenth Century writers continued to employ picaresque devices, but the gusto picaresco is lacking. The English rogue is too much of a moralist; he is too conscious of his conscience to play the role of a light-hearted picaro. Or if he has not a moral conscience he descends to the criminal and terminates his career on the gallows, thus pointing a moral. The French "gueux", Francion and Le Page, are too introspective to become the role of a ragged picaro. They are philosophers whose moral reflections are tinged with learning and seasoned with generations of French thought. Too, they are of good birth; they associate with a class superior to the ragged picaro, and their adventures have a holiday gaiety which bespeak the student amateur rather than the hardened professional. In short, both the English rogue and the French "gueux" lack the simplicity and native charm which characterize the band of Spanish picaros. "Of all rogues the Spanish is after all the only agreeable companion; a French rogue is nothing to him and your Jerry Sharpes are mere dullards in comparison (Gil Blas and Le Roman Comique are excused from this category). Individuals of Tyburn and Newgate Calendar show too much reality in their deeds, but the Spanish rogue is too light for the gallows; hemp was not sown for him."¹⁶

15. F. W. Chandler, *Literature of Roguery*, vol. I, p. 5.

16. *Retrospective Review*. Vol. 5, p. 189, London, 1822.

Introductory Statement.

Any comparison presupposes certain qualities common to the objects or authors compared. In the special instance of Defoe and Lesage the comparison of the picaresque methods employed by the two writers is justified by the use which they made consciously or unconsciously of the picaresque form. Lesage used this type consciously as his heritage from the realistic novel of Seventeenth century France and the Spanish novela picaresca. From this combination of models he produced the first "roman de mœurs". Defoe had as his literary models the criminal biographies and secret journals which continued in popularity through the early Eighteenth century. In fact, he, himself, wrote many such accounts, elaborating on facts, until he produced in his later works, a kind of picaresque form, tending, however, in the special instance of Captain Singleton toward the novel of pure adventure, and in Moll Flanders, toward the novel of purpose. Taine would doubtless attribute this difference in the writings of the two authors to "le race-le moment -et le milieu". It is in point of fact, the result of differences in purpose, models, and temperament or genius- and so far agrees with Taine's ingenious theory.

A study in comparison, as well as a question of influences, has its dangers. We are prone to become too categorical and stretch a point in order to establish a clear distinction in the works under comparison, or failing to discover a point in one author's method with which to balance an already established one in the others, we avoid the problem altogether. In order to elucidate this discussion, as far as possible, the picaresque methods of Defoe and Lesage are

considered at first apart, and in the concluding chapter are reviewed point by point, with an idea of explaining their variations from the Spanish novela picaresca, and more particularly with a view toward determining the differences in their works, which result from a difference in purpose, method and individual genius.

Chapter II. Literary Influences on Lesage,

Le Diable Boiteux; Gil Blas.

"To speak of Lesage is to speak of Gil Blas". But to better appreciate the genius of Lesage and to observe the gradual growth in his work toward the novel of manners it is necessary to review the various influences or models which helped to form his work and accounted in part for the superiority of Gil Blas as a picaresque novel. Also, to trace the development from the purely picaresque, and more especially to illustrate the methods with which Lesage manipulated his sources, some account of an earlier work Le Diable Boiteux is desirable.

Lesage forms the connecting link between the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries in France. "Il a été dit un peu pourtant que Lesage est le créateur du roman réaliste en France; il a été dit peut-être encore plus qu'il formait une transition entre le septième siècle et le dix-huitième siècle--deux banalités, également vrai. Il est classique et il est ancien."¹⁷ His plays and novels are redolent of Sorel's Francion- of Scarron's Roman Comique- of the comedies of Molière, les Caractères of La Bruyère and Les Mémoires of Sandras. Equally they reflect another influence- that of Spain. "Je sais que cette Espagne de picaros et d'alguazils résonnante du grélot des mules empanachées du chant des guitares nocturnes et du grincement des épées que croisent les galants contre les frères ou les maris que l'honneur éveille: cette Espagne-là a toujours eu le privilège d'amuser notre imagination française."¹⁸ We might say

17. E. Fagnat, Études Littéraires, 1890, p. 54.

18. G. Lanson, Hommes et Livres, Étude sur Gil Blas, p. 191.

that from Spain Lesage borrowed the framework of his novels along with much of the matter, and that from his French predecessors he inherited his method of direct observation of men and their manners. From this combination of matter and method he shaped, if not the first novel of manners, at least the first near approach to the later developed form.

Brunetière would deny any heritage to Lesage from the picaresque and burlesque writings of Scarron, Sorel and Furetière- at the same time admitting the influence of Molière, Courtilz de Sandras and La Bruyère. Similarly Le Breton recognizes only a slight approach in the Seventeenth century toward "les mœurs françaises", de vivantes silhouettes traversent le Francion, le Roman Comique, le Roman Bourgeois. Mais la vérité ne s'y présente jamais que sous l'apparence du mensonge, pris dans son ensemble, le récit est une vaste épopée héroïque ou burlesque, et ne se cache point d'être un récit imaginaire".¹⁹ When we remember that the Page Disgracie of Tristan L'Hermite is the actual autobiography of Tristan, that many of the scenes in the Francion are taken from direct observation, and that the province of Mans, its bourgeois inhabitants and strolling group of actors were intimately studied by Scarron, we cannot concede that these attempts toward the realistic novel are mere "récits imaginaires". It is true that they are burlesques, often gross caricatures, but so to a lesser degree are the characters and incidents of Gil Blas and Le Diable Boiteux. Before the close of the century, this tendency to heighten the effect through enlarging the picture was refined by Les Caractères of La Bruyère, whose purpose to "peindre le particulier" became the watch word of

19. Le Breton, Le Roman au XVIII Siècle, p. 4.

the classic school. Lesage profited by La Bruyère's method, and his own objective observation aided him to more nearly approach reality. Notwithstanding his impersonal transcription of the life which surrounded him and the minute quality of his observation, his love for "des idées universelles" made him incline toward the vast perspectives of the Seventeenth century. As Faguet so nicely puts it, "il voulut faire le tour du monde en une volume", and in so doing he tended to over-emphasize the most salient characteristics of "les hommes et les moeurs", as his predecessors had already done. It appears that Brunetière and Le Breton are equally rash in denying any inheritance from Sorel and Scarron. The English Fielding acknowledged his indebtedness to Le Roman Comique in Joseph Andrews; Molière pillaged several scenes from Le Francion, and it is not unlikely that Lesage, who borrowed from memoirs, Spanish plays and novelas alike, was influenced in many of his literary devices by the comic romance writers of the Seventeenth century. The influence of milieux cannot be avoided by the most inventive of authors unless he be secluded. "Une oeuvre, quelque originale quelle soit, tient toujours par quelque attache à son temps et à la société qui la voit naître."²⁰

The reason for the continued popularity of Gil Blas over the picaresque type on which it is modelled, lies in this inheritance in part from the Seventeenth century comic romances, and in particular from Les Caractères of La Bruyère, Les Comédies of Molière, and Les Mémoires et Histoires Secrètes of Sandras. Le Francion may be as Claretie says, "un des livres les plus édifiants pour l'histoire intime des coutumes, modes ridicules et opinions d'alors; et en ce

20. Claretie, Lesage, Romancier, p. 103.

sens, le livre renferme une partie de vérité. Mais il faut refuser à Francion le nom de roman de moeurs parce que cette vérité n'y est qu'à l'état latent.²¹ It is a reaction against the exaggerated prose romances of ^{the} period and its purpose is to make us laugh - not to depict manners. Scarron in Le Roman Comique produces a huge caricature of Mans, the bourgeoisie and the actors. A buffon as well as poet, he cannot avoid the opportunity of playing the comic role and serving up Ragotins to tickle the palate of the most delicate reader. "C'est l'honneur de Scarron d'avoir frayé la voie à notre grand comique et d'avoir rouvert en France les sources nationales de la satire et la gaieté."²² But Scarron is too engrossed in his mock heroic gaities, too carried away by mere buffonery to confine himself to reality. The essence of reality is there, a remarkable quality of observation, and detailed description of incident, but it is concealed beneath gross exaggerations. Le Roman Bourgeois of Furetière continues to present caricatures instead of characters. It touches reality and attempts to "peindre une condition", but it is photography without interpretation.

It was in the theater of Molière that the "tableau d'un société vraisemblable", was first presented. Molière created the comedy of character. His types "L'Avare", "L'Etourdi", and "le Misanthrope" are individuals as well as type characters. They are presented in scenes, "qui prennent l'apparence plus précise de petits tableaux de genres d'après nature. Ils nous transmettent les moeurs du temps".²³ Molière borrowed freely from the Spanish theater. Lesage also translated Spanish comedies and borrowed from the same sources,

21. Claretie, Lesage, Romancier, p. 119.

22. Morillot, Le Roman en France, p. 69.

23. Claretie, Lesage, Romancier, p. 127.

Calderon, Lopa de Vega, and Rojas, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that he owes to Molière the succession of scenes and tableaux which he employs to advantage in Le Diable Boiteux and Gil Blas.

The enormous influence of Les Caractères on succeeding literature cannot well be determined, but their special influence on the writings of Lesage is apparent in both his comedies and novels. In Le Diable Boiteux he has imitated the gallery of La Bruyère. The old courtesan, the comedian, the dramatic author, the rake, are taken bodily from les Caractères. However, he makes an improvement in the characters, introducing them in relation to each other in the milieux best fitted to bring in relief their striking features - not as in La Bruyère, in an unrelated succession of portraits. But, says Le Breton, whatever his obligation, "il a un mérite bien à lui; c'est ce qu'il sait de la vie, il ne formule pas en maximes abstraits, il le traduit en un dialogue, en une silhouette. Il avait des yeux de peintre, le don d'animer l'abstraction et chez lui, les vérités morales se revêtent d'une forme plastique. Elles revêtent l'apparence des gens qui vont et reviennent, qui bavent et qui mangent, que nous voyons et entendons. En un mot, un roman de Lesage c'est quelque chose comme les Caractères de La Bruyère en action."²⁴

From the appearance of Les Caractères in 1688 to Gil Blas in 1715, there was little literature of note in France unless we except the Memoirs and Secret Histories of Courtilz de Sandras. These pseudo-historical accounts contain many pretended true relations, gallant and licentious tales which have something of the charm of

24. Le Breton, Le Roman au XVIII Siècle, p. 47.

Gil Blas. Les Mémoires de M. D'Artagan, L'Histoire Secrète du Duc de Rohan, M. de L.C.D.R. are episodic like the romances of Lesage. They are in the auto-biographical form and make a serious attempt to portray contemporary society. But the style is frequently crude, the tableaux unfinished, and the whole offers a mere confusion of episodes without a charming hero to unify and unite the incidents. A comparison of the voyage of Gil Blas through society with that of Le Duc de Rochefort offers many parallels, both in the incidents and the classes of society which are reviewed. Hence it is not unreasonable to assume that Lesage, along with his contemporaries, read Sandras and unconsciously perhaps caught the trick of his sprightly charm in relating licentious tales. Notwithstanding the evident indebtedness of Lesage to this writer of scandal novels, the greatest single influence of Seventeenth century France upon his method and style continued to be Les Caractères, while the Spanish theater and novela picaresca offered an inexhaustible supply of plot material for his skillful remodelling.

It is unnecessary at this point to consider in full the influence of the Spanish theater and novela picaresca, which can better be included in the discussion of the separate novels of Lesage. It is sufficient to know that Lesage as well as his predecessors, Scarron, Thomas Corneille and Molière imitated the theater of Calderon, Lope de Vega and Rojas. At first he translated several comedies which were never staged. Then, in 1692, a translation of Rojo Noay's Amigo para Amigo called Le Point d'honneur was played, in which the character, Crispin, first appeared. In 1707, Don Cesar Ursin, a free adaptation of Calderon's Peor que Estana, was successfully produced. It is perhaps from this study of the Spanish theater that the idea of borrowing plots from the novelas first

suggested itself to the versatile mind of Lesage. Several of the characters and incidents in the plays are later included in Gil Blas and are of interest only as they reveal the Gil Blas in embryo. Although many of Lesage's earlier plays were decided failures on the stage, two of them, Crispin, Rival de son Maître, 1707, and Turcaret 1709, scored marked success. These, too, contain hints of Gil Blas in the sequence of scenes and in the special interest in situation and character portrayal. Lesage's interest in the picaresque literature of Spain seems to have developed along with his study of the Spanish theater. In 1704, a translation of Don Quichotte D'Avellan-
de came out, and in 1732, a free adaptation of Aleman's Guzman D'Al-
farache, not to mention Estanville de Gonzales and Le Bachelier de
Salamanque, which are equally eloquent of the Spanish interest. The Guzman in particular is a good example of the peculiar ability of Lesage to transform a crude and dull novela into something approaching form and literary excellence. It is characteristic of his impatient genius that he omits the greater part of Aleman's wearying sermons and contents himself with following the rogue Guzman through his varied adventures and amours. Notwithstanding Lesage's evident interest in the Spanish picaresque and his use of Spanish setting and Spanish characters, his novels have the flavor of France and Paris rather than of Spain and Madrid. They are the product of a French temperament and a French inheritance--of a romancer who indulges in Spanish plays and portraits only to gain an opportunity to vent his keen wit and satire on Paris and the world of letters, which for a long period refused to recognize his genius.

That the Spanish picaresque type did not constitute Lesage's sole literary model accounts in part for the superiority of his novels and their continued popularity. His heritage from the Seven-

teenth century comic and burlesque writers, the comedies of Molière, the satire and close observation of the Caractères and the vivacious accounts of intrigue in Sandras aided him to create from a familiar form and borrowed material, an original work, the first novel of manners, Gil Blas. But before we can estimate the improvements in Gil Blas over the Spanish picaresque it is necessary to consider the methods employed by Lesage in his earlier masterpiece Le Diable Boiteux.

The liberal definition of an author as "un homme qui prend aux livres tout ce qui lui passe par la tête" applies aptly to Lesage who unscrupulously pillaged plots, incidents, and characters alike, from the most available sources. Le Diable Boiteux appeared in 1707. It met with popular favor and ran through several editions in its first year. The Spanish source of Le Diable Boiteux, is El Diable Cojuelo o Novela de la otra Vida of Guevara. It also owes "quelques vers et images" to the Dia y Noche de Madrid of Francesco Santos. Despite the evident borrowings and imitations, Lesage has created a typical French novel of Parisian life and manners rather than of the social classes of Madrid. Le Diable Boiteux or the Devil upon Two Sticks affords a striking example of Lesage's method of assembling and unifying the incidents of his various sources until he finally creates a novel which is the product of his own special genius and peculiar turn of imagination.

Le Diable Boiteux is not a picaresque novel. It is rather a novel of allegory and adventure. It is, however, picaresque in the method employed to disclose the existing social evils and in the manner of holding up to ridicule the vanities and vices of humanity. Moreover, the demon hero, Asmodée, despite his supernatural attributes is a true picaro, a rogue who plays all manner of tricks on

unsuspecting humans and then laughs at their discomfiture. The relation is concerned with the observations which the devil, or Cupid, the demon of mischance, and a student, Don Cleophas, make from the tower of San Salvador on the houses of Madrid.

The plot, if it can be so called, consists of a play within a play. Don Cleophas frees the Devil from a bottle where he has been confined by a famous astrologer and in return the Devil promises to reveal the houses of Madrid with their roofs off. They take up their station on the tower of San Salvador and commence the review of society, passing from palace to brothel; gaming houses, cafés, concerts, weddings, and intrigues are all revealed by this sprightly devil, whose shrewd comments smack of the bourgeois solidity and good sense of Lesage. Frequently the devil interrupts his review of all classes and conditions to relate the life history of the more interesting characters, introducing the old episodic tale in a slight relation at least to the story proper. After the story of the loves of Belfor and Leonor, he removes the prison roofs which gives the author a nice opportunity to direct his biting satire against the abuses and corruptions of the courts. They then pay a visit to the gruesome casa de los locos. Here Asmodée assigns vanity, jealousy, greed, enmity, and grief as the various causes for the insanity of the inmates. Next, he ironically points out various persons who by reason of their idiosyncrasies should also be incarcerated in the mad-house. After attending a large fire and rescuing a fair maiden, the devil conducts Don Cleophas to the Tombs, where the Shades pass in review before them. Their histories are briefly commented upon, their petty ambitions and vanities pointed out by this omniscient demon, and then they are hurried off the stage. The Shadow of Death calls the onlookers

from the Tombs, and they proceed to follow her flitting shape through the dim streets of Madrid. To some she brings relief, to others sorrow. To the living she brings joy in the freedom and wealth which they have gained by the death of a husband, a lover, or a father. The figure of death is grim and terrible, but not more horrible than the invective irony with which the devil or the author assails humanity.

But the devil does not forget that he is the distorted God, Eros, and he hastens to relieve one harsh picture of avarice and mistrust by one of love and devotion. Incidentally the author exhausts nearly a hundred pages in the history of "La Force de l'Amitié." To break the monotony of the long relation, the devil and Don Cleophas witness a quarrel between a writer of comedy and one of tragedy, in which each attempts to prove the superiority of his own kind of writing. These varied observations continue until daybreak, when the two invisible onlookers pause to learn the designs of the army of people who issue forth on the streets of Madrid. But at this point the poor devil is ordered back to his bottle by the astrologer, whose magic he cannot withstand, and Don Cleophas is left alone to interpret as best he may the revelations of the night.

The source of Le Diable Boiteux, El Diable Cojuelo, is an allegorical novel in six parts; first, the deliverance of the devil; second, the observations which he makes from the tower of San Salvador; third, the allegorical incidents which the devil and the student witness at Madrid; fourth, the adventures at the inn where the dramatic poet awakens the travelers to read his comedy. From this point Lesage departs from his model, not at his own desire but to satisfy the taste of his nation. "Plût au ciel.... que la

nécessité de m'accomoder au génie de ma nation m'eût permis de vous copier exactement."²⁵ In his novel of intrigue, Guevara had assembled a confused number of unrelated portraits and incidents. These Lesage skillfully manipulates and places in an orderly gallery so as to produce a series of tableaux, which we might justly group under the title of a novel of observation. The influence of La Bruyère is everywhere evident. The old coquette, the tragic poet, the usurer, the duped lover, the lascivious rake, are merely copies of Les Caractères. But they are presented as in a play, in relation to other characters and with the shrewd devil to interpret them, they approximate reality-- a sordid, grim reality, as misshapen as "le diable boiteux". This long gallery of Hogarthian portraits is dominated by Molière type characters, yet they are but hastily sketched and rushed off the stage for a new number so that they often leave only a blurred outline.

Lesage was handicapped by his didactic purpose. He attempted to reveal too many vices and foibles. In his anxiety to picture a "comédie humaine" he crowded his canvass and spoiled the effect. It is true that this didactic quality is so nicely sheathed with clever epigrams that we frequently forgive the author his moral aim and remember only that he has clothed it in aphoristic phrasings. As the devil remarks, "Il faut bien couvrir le vice d'une apparence agréable, autrement il ne plairoit pas".²⁶

The excellence of the style, the fine phrasings and cadenced dropping off of the sentence suggest the later Gil Blas. "Remarquez avec quelle rapidité la Mort fait ses opérations; elle a déjà tranché la destinée de ce jeune seigneur, et je la vois prête à

25. Le Diable Boiteux, Preface, p. 1.

26. Le Diable Boiteux, p. 13.

faire une autre expédition. Elle s'arrête sur un couvent, elle descend dans une cellule, fond sur un bon religieux, et coupe le fil de la vie pénitente et mortifiée qu'il a mené depuis quarante ans." ²⁷

The discourse on the corrupt courts and the glimpse of prison life foreshadow the treatment which Gil Blas receives in the prison, where he is stripped of his belongings and left helpless in the claws of justice. Also the false philosophers, ambitious poets, wrinkled courtesans, pretentious scholars and quack doctors reappear in the later book, but in it they are revealed through their own actions or more often by the shrewd interpretations of the hero. Here they are exposed by a malicious, sardonic demon who has seen too much of the world's vanities to laugh with the philosophic gaiety of a Gil Blas. Don Cleophas remonstrates against the injustices of the inquisition - "Doucement interrompit le boiteux: Gardez-vous bien de vous fâcher contre ce tribunal, il a des espions partout, on lui rapporte jus-qu'à des choses qui n'ont jamais été dites..... Moi-même si j'avais le malheur d'être ^{entre} les griffes de la justice je ne pourrais m'en tirer qu'en finançant". ²⁸

Again the clever devil philosophizes: "J'admire messieurs les hommes; leur propres défauts leur paraissent des minuties, aux lieu qu'ils regardent ceux d'autrui avec un microscope". ²⁹ This distorted demon is almost too willing to shoot humanity with an epigram and then probe its gory corpse with an inquisitive crutch. We could wish that the author had exercised more artistic restraint and curbed his restless demon.

In the characters presented and in the apt observations which Asmodée makes on their foibles and vices we glimpse Gil Blas. But

27. Le Diable Boiteux, p. 177.

28. Ibid., p. 92.

29. Ibid., p. 152.

the devil is a supernatural figure--he has already formed his attitude toward life and he views it either with ironical indifference or ill-concealed bitterness. He lacks the naive charm of Gil Blas whose philosophy along with that of the entire band of picares 'is learned in the school of hard knocks. In spite of sad experience, Gil Blas looks forward to the morrow. But Le Diable Boiteux is age-weary and intolerant. Then, too, he takes up his omniscient position on the tower of San Salvador, looking down on the human race and consequently magnifying their vices. On the other hand, Gil Blas mingles with the crowd, draws them together - connects in some curious manner the king's dining-hall with the servant's kitchen, and does it with so much good wit and humor that we overlook his frequent deviations from virtue and remember only his irrepressible gaiety. After all, only the hero is lacking to Le Diable Boiteux. With another such hero to draw the strings and tie the knots, we should have an earlier, inimitable Gil Blas.

This allegorical novel of character and observation, contains in truth the matter for a thousand novels. It is a note-book, a neatly copied esquisse on which the author draws again and again and never quite exhausts. And yet, despite its endless observations and countless interruptions, the whole is tedious because it is so persistently clever and never surprises in so being. The constant play of wit, the mordant satire and flashing epigram irritate and in a measure spoil the balance and effectiveness of the series of pictures which at best are only an improvement over Les Caractères of La Bruyère; an improvement which is largely the result of dramatic devices and arranging of tableaux in the manner of scenes. But whatever its limitations, Le Diable Boiteux is significant as a novel of observation and character, especially as it serves to il-

illustrate the method by which Lesage manipulated his sources to produce through his own dramatic invention, a genuinely original piece of work. The method of procedure in the earlier novel suggests the method later employed in Gil Blas. Not only is the later work suggested in the matter of unifying sources and incidents, but also in the epigrammatic brilliancy of style in the succession of scenes and in the gallery of portraits after the manner of La Bruyère.

After Le Diable Boiteux, what more natural than a human "diable," the inimitable Gil Blas? But a Gil Blas with a "question" and that of sources! This "frage" has furnished material for numerous dissertations in German, French, English and Spanish, and so no doubt has served a worthy purpose. It is curious to note that the efforts of succeeding erudites to establish the sources of Gil Blas have resulted in an ever increasing number of borrowings, until at present it is to be wondered that any writer could so ingeniously weave such a variety of sources into a novel to which critics assign the honor of the first "roman de mœurs". Briefly the recognized borrowings in Gil Blas are from the French translations of "Le Disgracia del comte D'Olivares",³⁰ originally an Italian satire, Ferrante Pallavicino, "Anecdotes du comte-duc D'Olivares, tirées et traduites de l'italien de Mercusio-Secy., 17-22, and "L'Histoire du Comte-duc avec des réflexions politiques et curieuses", Cologne, 1683. Lesage employs this material in the second part of Gil Blas which appeared in 1724, and is concerned with Gil Blas's adventures at court and his relations to the Duc de Lerme. He also draws upon the third source in particular for the two political memoirs which Gil Blas composed while in the service of the Count of Olivares.

30. F. Brunetière, "Histoire et littéraire", pp. 241-69.

In fact, the greater part of the contents of Books 8, 11 and 12 is taken from these sources, especially with reference to historical backgrounds. The borrowings from the Spanish are about ten incidents from Les Marcos d'Obregon of Espinel which have been collected by successive scholars. In Neufchateau these episodes were only three in number, while Ticknor has increased them to six or seven and Francescon to ten, not to mention the efforts of the German scholars Tieck and Gustav Haack to extend these borrowings to slender parallelisms which even a comparison of texts does not seem to justify. Doubtless Lesage benefited by reading Juan Manuel's Conde Lucanor, Aleman's Guzman, and certain comedies of Rojas, Calderon and Moreto. The suggestion that Lesage merely translated a Spanish novela was due to Voltaire's remark in "le Siècle de Louis XIV", "Il est entièrement pris du roman espagnol intitulé," "La Vida de le Escudero don Marcos de Obregon". In 1787, a Jesuit father, Père Isla, translated Gil Blas into the Spanish language under the impression that it was originally a Spanish manuscript which Lesage had pillaged. This conception has now become a myth, but it served as an impetus to scholarly debate and the question of the sources of Gil Blas was revived and attacked with renewed vigor through the nineteenth century. M. Brunetière in his article on la Question de Gil Blas in Histoire et Littéraire, has somewhat dictatorially yet at the same time convincingly disposed of the matter of sources as of little importance in the final estimation of Gil Blas, which is to be considered as a superior novela picaresca and the first novel of manners rather than as a fertile debating ground for argumentative scholars. Similarly, M. Gustave Lanson, in Hommes et Livres turns the question aside: "Partout et toujours on demande compte à l'auteur de la manière dont il traite son sujet, non pas du lieu

dont il le tire; partout et toujours on ne s'inquiète pas de savoir quels mauvais ouvrages ont inspirés les chefs-d'oeuvres; on sait assez que ceux-là ont pu être l'occasion mais ne sont pas la cause de ceux-là".³¹ It is to be remembered that Lesage had besides these recognized sources the realistic novels of (the) Seventeenth Century France, the Memoirs of Sandras and the Caractères of La Bruyère, not to mention the embryonic form of the novel in Le Diable Boiteux and the several comedies in which he had served his literary apprenticeship. From this combination of satire and comedy, with the novela picaresca to furnish the form, was produced the first novel of manners, the 'inimitable' Gil Blas.

Just as Lesage employed the picaresque method in the form of his Gil Blas, he continued the tradition of picaresque writers by publishing his work piece-meal in several volumes with promises of following installments. However, unlike the majority of writers of picaresque fiction, he fulfilled his promises and the book remains entire. The Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane came out in three separate parts. The first six books were published in two volumes in 1715; nine years later a second volume made its appearance and in 1735 the final volume was added.

The purpose of the book is professedly moral, but the author does not obtrude the moral beyond the introductory allegory, which is after the manner of the novela picaresca. In fact, this allegory is taken directly from Espinel's introduction to Obregon, but it is served up with infinitely more wit and grace. It is an account of two students on the road to Salamanca who stopped before a tomb on which was inscribed "aquí esta encerrada el alma del licenciado

31. Gustav Lanson, Hommes et Livres, p. 190.

Pedro Garcias."³² The youngest student laughed at the idea of a soul being enclosed in a tomb and traveled on, but the other, of a more reflective nature, stopped and dug around the tomb with his knife. He unearthed a purse which contained one hundred ducats and a note in Latin, "sois mon héritier, toi qui a eu assez d'esprit pour démêler le sens de l'inscription et fais un meilleur usage que moi de mon argent". To this little allegory the author appendages a nice bit of advice for the benefit of his readers: "Qui que tu sois, ami lecteur, tu vas ressembler à l'un ou à l'autre de ces deux écoliers. Si tu lis mes aventures sans prendre garde aux instructions morales qu'elles renferment tu ne tireras aucun fruit de cet ouvrage; mais si tu les lis avec attention, tu y trouveras suivant le précepte d'Horace l'utile mêlé avec l'agréable." 'Utile et dulci' is surely the motto of this charming work which contains within its pages so much of worldly wisdom and philosophic gaiety. On the whole, the purpose is to amuse and incidentally instruct, for the author is too much of an artist to obtrude the moral and thus mar the agreeable effect of the whole. In following the devious road which his charming hero treads through the world of his adventures, the author momentarily forgets the moral which he has so carefully planned in the introduction and remembers only that he is representing "la vie des hommes tel qu'elle est". And yet the book continues moral by very reason of its apparent neglect of any didactic aim. It is as its amiable critics agree "moral comme l'expérience".

In the method of composition employed in Gil Blas, Lesage is continuing picaresque tradition, but unlike preceding picaresque tales, the work does not fall off in literary merit, rather it improves and

32. Gil Blas, Gil Blas au Lecteur, Tome I.

from a picaresque tale develops into a novel of manners. The three parts which appeared from 1715 to 1735 reflect a philosophic growth and change of attitude in the author. The first six books are decidedly imitative of the Spanish picaresque. They treat of the youth of Gil Blas, of the trickeries of the hero and his picaresque companions. The tone is one of youthful irrepressible gaiety. Gil Blas is an impractical rascal with an insatiable taste for adventure and an inordinate vanity. He is a gay young fop, proud of his conquests and ever willing to aid his masters in the pursuit of their pleasures. He lives only for the present, forgetful of his parents and of the original intent of his journey. But the Gil Blas of the third volume has developed a conscience. His character is gradually formed under a succession of adversities and he has learned the habit of reflection. Too, he rises in position, his fortunes improve and he loses something of his earlier naïveté. The work is more mature and genial. Gil Blas comments on the vanities and vices of the society which surrounds him with greater tolerance. The satire becomes more kindly and consequently more effective. Along with his creator, the hero has emerged a philosopher who observes and then passes judgment on men and manners after the fashion of a kindlier "diable boiteux". It is in this third volume that the "roman de mœurs" emerges. From the favorite of the Archbishop of Granada, Gil Blas advances after numerous departures from grace, to secretary to the Duc de Lerme. Here his position seems assured, but he is suddenly thrust into prison and on his release, weary of the vanities of worldly ambition, he retires to his estate at Lirias, where he weds the beautiful Antonia. The fourth volume is indicative of the mellowing philosophy of Lesage. It is written in a slower, contemplative strain, with less satire and more amiable re-

flections on humanity. The hero and his valet, Scipion, retire with their respective wives to enjoy the beauties of country living. They settle down to a peaceful, sober life, after having tasted the bitterness of worldly success and defeat. This last volume is almost worthy of the pastoral idylls of George Sand. It is also permeated with a pre-Rousseauistic strain of the beauties of Nature and solitary life, far from the corrupting influences of society: "Je me suis formé des agréments de la vie champêtre; une idée, qui m'enchanté, et qui m'en fait jouir par avance. Il me semble que déjà je vois l'émail des prairies, que j'entends chanter les rossingols et murmurer les ruisseaux; tantôt je crois prendre le divertissement de la chasse, et tantôt celui de la pêche. Imagine-toi mon ami tous les différents plaisirs dans la solitude, et tu en seras charmé comme moi. A l'égard de notre nourriture, la plus simple sera la meilleure.....Le frugalité est une source de délice merveilleuse pour la santé."³³

M. Brunetière in an article in "la Revue de Deux Mondes" suggests that Gil Blas's rise in position resembles the history of the period; "Le chemin de la servitude à la puissance"³⁴ was common in Lesage's own day. In the continuation Lesage develops a "roman de mœurs" from a tableau of grotesque adventures. Three distinct developments or changes are noted: the satire becomes less bitter and more tolerant, the characters less caricatured and more natural, and the scale is increased until the final resembles a "comédie humaine" in which all classes are presented in relation to one another. But if the whole is a marked approach to the novel of manners, the first six books at least are decidedly after the manner of the picaresque.

33. Gil Blas, Tome II, p. 270.

34. La Revue Deux Mondes, Mars 15, 1883.

In the first two volumes Gil Blas is following the traditions of the Spanish picaresque who leaves home either at the instigation of his parents or urged on by his youthful imagination to seek a fine fortune and see something of the unknown, romantic world. Lazarillo was apprenticed by his mother to a blind beggar and Guzman ran away, "la tête pleine de chimères et la bourse presque vide d'argent".³⁵ As he so naively puts it, "mes pieds faisaient l'office de ma tête et je les suivais sans savoir où ils me conduisaient". However, Gil Blas makes a more respectable departure. He leaves home ~~as~~^{like} many another young student of the period, to obtain a position in the University of Salamanca. He is provided with money and a mule. He parts from his parents amicably, after receiving their blessing. Then, too, he is of legitimate birth, his father, a retired soldier and his mother of the lesser bourgeoisie, while Guzman is an illegitimate, and Lazarus of low parentage. Also, Gil Blas has the reputation of a savant and great disputer in his native village, while his Spanish brothers have only their native wit and intelligence, which seem to have stood them in better stead than the learning of poor Gil Blas. For he, despite his powers of disputation, is successively preyed upon by sharpers, captured by robbers (who, by the way, treat him very considerately), cast into prison, stripped of his clothing and money-- and yet he continues optimistic through it all. Nor does he profit by experience. He is duped by a lady of whom he is enamoured, but his philosophy continues imperturbed: "Je rappelais mon courage; et pour me consoler, je disais en m'habillant, 'je suis encore trop heureux que les fripons n'aient pas emporté mes habits et quelques ducats que j'ai dans mes poches'".³⁶

35. Guzman D'Alfarache, Bk. I, Ch. V.

36. Gil Blas, Tome I, p. 96.

Like all picaros, Gil Blas is a fatalist. He considers himself the plaything of destiny: "Je suis né pour être le jouet de fortune"³⁷ He submits to fortune with good grace and when a piece of good luck arrives he attributes it to his destiny: "La fortune m'y conduisoit pour me faire jouer de plus grands rôles que ceux qu'elle m'avait déjà fait faire."³⁸ When fortune has laid him low he apostrophizes her thus bitterly: "O fortune! voilà comme tu dispense tes faveurs¹ plus souvent. Le stoïcien Epictète n'a pas tort de te comparer à une fille de condition qui s'abandonne à des valets".³⁹ But Gil Blas, despite the adversities which fortune continues to inflict upon him, does not become embittered nor does he degenerate as do Lazarillo and Guzman into thieves and disposers of their wives' favors.

Gil Blas represents the picaro who rose from "des bas en hauts". The account of his adventures through the world is indicative of the gradual development of his character through experience. He is ever on the upward plane, although there are numerous deviations before he attains the felicitous position of owner of a country estate and possessor of the title of gentleman. The chief points of difference in the character of Gil Blas and his Spanish brothers are summarized by M. Brunetière: "Lesage gave to his hero humanity. Lazarus and Guzman have the insulting and cynical impudence of scoundrels bronzed and tanned by crime. Gil Blas is not in revolt against society as are the picaros of Spain; neither is he a professional scoundrel who glories in his own rascality. His birth is honest if humble and his departure from his native village of Oviedo was not only to see the country, but to procure a respectable living

37. Gil Blas, Tome II, p.80.

38. Ibid., p. 80.

39. Ibid., p. 212.

at the University."⁴⁰ M. Brunetière puts the case somewhat too emphatically, but undoubtedly Gil Blas is superior to the Spanish picaros, because his creator has invested him with much of his own philosophy, his fertile imagination and his ability to crack an epigram or turn a neat maxim.

As our hero reviews the society through which his adventures carry him, he comments on its foibles with greater wit and less invective irony than do his Spanish brothers. He regards man's vanities tolerantly and by his very humanity softens the bitter irony of the earlier comments of Le Diable Boiteux. Gil Blas holds up all classes of society for the reviewer's inspection. False pedants, false priests, false philosophers, false mistresses, false poets and false doctors are flitted across the curtain, and reviewed by this critical guide until humanity is stripped of all its slender virtues and there remains only the dry shell which he proceeds to crumble with an epigram. Yet he never descends to the harshness and bitter accusation of Guzman or Lazarus, who are at odds with all society. Always there is in Gil Blas a philosophic gaiety which lightens the satire-- a hope held out for the morrow: "La belle chose que l'espérance! Elle me console tout- à coup de la perte de mes effets volés, et me rend aussi gai que si j'eusse en sujet de l'être."⁴¹ Also, as our hero's fortunes improve, the satire becomes less bitter, and the comments more kindly until the whole exhales a philosophic atmosphere of amused tolerance.

Not only are the character and comments of the hero in true picaresque tradition, but the form itself is in the manner of the picaresque. The plot consists of a series of incidents and episodes

40. La Revue de Deux Mondes, Mars 15, 1883, pp. 385-419.

41. Gil Blas, vol. II, p. 260.

which are united only by the genial hero. Frequently, too, episodes which bear no relation to the story proper are interpolated. These are for the most part of the romantic order - a reflection of the Seventeenth Century prose romance. They are served up with seduction and intrigue to render them more enlivening, and are, generally speaking, tedious reading. Similar histories are employed in the *Guzman*; in fact, very few tales of this period failed to incorporate several of these harrowing histories within their own relation, despite the evident irrelevance. Lesage at least has learned the art of sprightly narration from Sandras, but he lacks the former writer's condensation.

The incidents in which our hero plays the leading role are for the most part of a higher comedy type than in the Spanish picaresque. This is, perhaps, due to the influence of Scarron's Roman Comique which, as M. Claretie suggests, revived the pure French comedy. The dinner at which the parasite fills his stomach at the expense of the vain Gil Blas can be paralleled by *Guzman's* dinner of bad eggs in the roadside inn, but the *Guzman* incident is decidedly vulgar, while that in Lesage's work is highly amusing. Similarly, Dr. Sangrado's visit to the priest and the repeated bleedings are slightly reminiscent of *Guzman's* treatment by the Italian doctor, who discovers his painted ulcers. The wit in Gil Blas is on the whole in a lighter vein, and yet more brilliant because of the neat phrasings and shrewd comments which serve to set it off.

If Gil Blas is superior to the Spanish picaresque in hero and in incident, it continues superior in the minute detail of setting and interiors by reason of its author's indebtedness to La Bruyère. The Spanish tale is remarkable for its reproduction of reality, but nowhere does it exhibit such a remarkable gift of

portraiture or such a genius for detail. The old monk who engages Gil Blas as his valet is sketched in a few swift strokes: "Nous aperçûmes le vieux podrague enfoncé dans un fauteuil, un oreiller sous la tête, des coussins sous les bras, et les jambes appuyées sur un gros carreau plein de duvet". Or take the apartment which Fabrice, the ambitious court poet, occupies:⁴² "Il consistoit en une seule chambre, de laquelle mon ingénieux ami s'en étoit fait quatre par des cloisins de sapins. La première servait d'antichambre à la seconde où il couchait; il faisoit son cabinet de la troisième et sa cuisine de la dernière. La chambre et l'antichambre étoient tapissées de cartes géographiques, de thèses de philosophes, et les meubles répondoient à la tapisserie. C'étoit un grand lit de brocard tout usé, de vieilles chaises de serge jaune, garnies d'une frange de soie de Grenade de la même couleur, une table à pieds dorés, couverte d'un cuir qui paroissoit avoir été rouge et bordée d'une crépine de faux or devenu noir par le laps de temps, avec une armoire d'ébène, ornée de figures grossièrement sculptées."⁴³

While Gil Blas is undoubtedly a picaresque romance, it is also a "roman de moeurs". The first six books are flagrantly picaresque because Lesage is following the Spanish models closely with a view toward entertaining his public, and yet, even then the book is superior to the Spanish prototype in the character of its hero, in the type of incidents and in the comments on the social orders. In the later development of the story, the picaresque role becomes the hero less and less, until he finally discards it altogether as ill

42. Gil Blas, Vol. I, 1828 edition, p. 109.

43, Ibid., Vol. II, p. 93.

becoming a man of his political genius and capacity for influential friendships. The picaresque activities come to play a minor part, and the tradition finally descends to Scipion, valet to Gil Blas of Santillane. Scipion also reforms, and there remains only the general reflections on their earlier checkered careers with which to enliven an occasional dinner party. From a relation of picaresque activities the book develops into a "roman de mœurs" and finally falls off into a pre-Rousseauistic praise of country life.

Gil Blas is usually conceded to be the first "roman de mœurs" in France. The Seventeenth century realistic tales of Sorel, Furetière and Scarron indicate an approach toward the novel of manners. They attempt to portray reality; Furetière in Le Roman Bourgeois paints a class of society, and Scarron in Le Roman Comique confines himself to a province and a strolling group of actors; but they fail to reproduce reality by reason of their delight in caricature and their attempt to burlesque the contemporary French prose romance. Gil Blas is the first complete study of "les hommes et leur mœurs". All classes and all characters are presented in this first great "comédie humaine". Despite the picaresque adventures which season the work with a romantic flavor, the whole is a realistic study of men and the milieux in which they move. All classes and stations: cooks, poets, philosophers, superannuated courtesans, actresses, doctors, picares, priests, rakes, statesmen, nobles and pedants are here passed in review, decked out in their follies and presented in "les milieux" which best set off their vanities. The characters are presented as in La Bruyère, under the stage direction of Molière, and with the epigrammatic irony of Lesage to comment on their appearance. Take for instance the portrait of the Archbishop of Granada: "Ce prélat était dans sa soixante-neuvième

année, fait à peu près comme mon oncle - c'est à dire gros et court. Il avait par dessus le monde les jambes fort tournées en dedans et il était si chauve qu'il ne lui restait qu'un toupet de cheveux derrière, ce qui l'obligeait d'emboîter sa tête dans un bonnet de laine fine à longues oreilles...Malgré tout cela, je lui trouvais l'air d'un homme de qualité, sans doute parce que je savais qu'il en était un. Nous autres personnes du commun, nous regardons les grands seigneurs avec une prévention qui leur prête souvent un air de grandeur que la nature peut-être a refusé." ⁴⁴

Could any portrait reflect more strikingly the influence of La Bruyère and the gentle cynicism of Lesage!

Present day critics are agreed in crediting to Lesage the first "roman de moeurs". M. Morillot says of Gil Blas: "Il y a un cadre, il y a un semblant d'intrigue, il y a déjà partout, le ton et l'allure d'un récit. C'est le roman de moeurs qui commence." ⁴⁵ Gil Blas is the first novel where there is a conscious attempt at genre. It imitates reality and transfers the unbiased picture of humanity on the canvas without any attempt to conceal its vices, or extol its virtues. Lesage is the creator of the novel of manners by reason of his method of observation, together with his fine art of familiarizing his characters so that they give the impression of a "tout que l'on fait dans la rue". The objective art of Lesage is not weakened by moral preoccupation. His reflections are tranquil, placid and tolerant as are the comments of Gil Blas. Lesage glimpses the complexity of human nature, its mediocrity and its essential smallness; yet he never penetrates the inner workings of his characters' minds. He has no psycholog-

44. Gil Blas, Tome II, p.17.

45. P. Morillot Le Roman en France, p.18

ical analysis, but he has the gift of unifying his observations and animating his characters' actions until they give the impression of complete reality. He transcribes reality as he views it without condoning society's vices or applauding its virtues. He is, in his impersonal detached methods of observation and narration, a precursor of the Nineteenth century realistic school. He offers in his impersonal objective method a complete contrast to Defoe who is constantly assuming the roles of his characters, now protesting against injustices done them, and now attempting to explain away their vices.

But if Lesage is a realist by means of his observation and impersonal comments on the life which he portrays, his tale of Gil Blas is nevertheless lacking in a degree of naturalness. Lesage paints exteriors and presents characters without interpreting their actions. He fails to glimpse the inner workings of his characters' minds, and he cannot understand the moral complexity which controls their actions. Gil Blas is not a real person: he only serves to unite the strings and unify the action - and the other characters are too much after the same pattern. There is no shading or variety in the presentation of characters: each one steps forward with his role in his hand and never surprises by reciting a different part. The author lacks inventive powers, and a truly poetic imagination, but he is the product of an age of classicism and restraint which limits his efforts at the outset, so we can expect no more.

Whatever the obvious faults of Gil Blas, the style of the piece alone places it almost among literary masterpieces. Buffon's neat maxim, "le style c'est l'homme", applies aptly to Lesage, who, instead of coming into the world with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, made his entrance with a neat epigram. The very babes

deal in epigrams, and by the time they have learned to walk they converse only in aphorisms. It is true that the constant display of clever epigrams heaped upon fine aphorisms grows wearisome and we frequently wish for some slight alleviation, but Gil Blas evidently disagrees with us for he launches an epigram at the slightest provocation and then adds: "Je louais dans ma mauvaise humeur des aphorismes que j'avais jus' qu' à là fort négligés".⁴⁶ The style of Gil Blas is not so brilliant and equal as that of Le Diable Boiteux, but there are moments when it approaches the perspicuity and simplicity of the former work: "La cour a la vertu du fleuve Lèthé pour nous faire oublier nos parents";⁴⁷ again, commenting on the transitoriness of fortune, "La fortune ressemble à ces coquettes vives et légères qui échappent aux galants qui ne les brusquent pas".⁴⁸ Perhaps no phrase in the entire book is more illustrative of Lesage's own style than the comment which the Duke of Olivares makes on Santillane's style: "Santillane, ton style est concise et même élégant, il n'est qu'un peu trop naturel."⁴⁹

Despite the excellencies of phrasing in Gil Blas and Le Diable Boiteux, the fine quality of observations and the objective transcription of reality, neither work can be placed among the truly great works of fiction. The very fact that Gil Blas is a satirical piece rates it as secondary, especially as the satire is frequently personal and objectionable. Both tales are "romans à clef", and belong more to their own particular period than to all time. And yet, Gil Blas, because of its survey of "la comédie humaine"

46. Gil Blas, Tome II, p. 35.

47. Ibid., p. 208.

48. Ibid., p. 117

49. Ibid., p. 443.

contains much that is typical of all classes and all ages. Whatever its faults and limitations, Gil Blas continues the inimitable. We may forget its picaresque tendencies and its realistic preoccupations, but the charm of the naive, confiding hero and his deliciously flavored comments still persists.

Chapter III. Defoe; Literary Influences; Captain Singleton; Moll Flanders; Colonel Jack.

While we have little information concerning the literary models of Defoe's rogue stories, it is usually conceded that the popular criminal biographies, which flourished in the Seventeenth century and continued in popularity through Defoe's own time, served as the matter for the narratives of roguery which he later developed. "Defoe cannot be classed with the writers of picaresque romances, for his narratives of roguery were developed from the popular criminal biographies, rather than from the Spanish literary form, and differ from the latter not only in structure and in emphasizing character instead of incident, but in being quite free from the cynical, anti-idealistic spirit."⁵⁰ The unvarying theme of his narratives, treating of a criminal, a rogue or an adventurer, suggests the possible influence of earlier confessions and rogue tales, and the ground-work of fact employed in Captain Avery, Duncan Campbell, and Robinson Crusoe, indicates his use of material similar to that contained in various real and fictitious biographies of the period. To what extent he utilized these biographical accounts of earlier narratives, is a matter for speculation; but his interest in contemporary events and his keen journalistic mind which saw copy in every unusual happening warrant the supposition that the main incidents of his narratives have a basis of fact. Undoubtedly Defoe's reports on the notable criminals, Cartouche, John Sheppard, and Jonathan Wild, which are in the manner

50. Charlotte Morgan - The Novel of Manners, p. 47.

of the journalists of the Restoration, are taken in part from earlier accounts. Similarly, the rogue story of Moll Flanders has an earlier counterpart in The Counterfeit Lady (1673) of Francis Kirkman. Mr. Bernbaum, in his discussion of the Mary Carleton Narratives draws a parallelism "between the careers of Moll Carleton and Moll Flanders with their frequent marriages, their thefts, and their transportation."⁵¹ But the similarity in substance is not so remarkable as the general method and tone of the two works. "The serious moral tone, the minute depiction of occurrences, the coherence of the plot, the tracing of the motives of the characters, and the elaborate creation of verisimilitude,- these qualities, whose combination is usually considered original with Defoe, we have seen to be prevailing traits of The Counterfeit Lady."⁵²

Defoe's employment of the devious methods of earlier journalists and biographers in fabricating plots and inventing incidents, indicates his interest in material close at hand rather than in the more remote Spanish picaresque literature, and the earlier rogue narratives of Thomas Nash. M. Jusserand, who credits Nash, the author of Jack Wilton (1594), with the invention of the novel of real life in England, finds it necessary to "get over the whole of the Seventeenth century and go back to Jack Wilton, the worthy brother of Roxana, Moll Flanders, and Colonel Jack, in order to connect Defoe with the past of English literature."⁵³ But this no longer seems necessary, for with the material of numerous criminal accounts, recent voyages and discoveries close at hand, and his own journalistic activities to convert them into "best sellers", Defoe had little need

51. Mr. Bernbaum, Mary Carleton Narratives, p. 89.

52. Ibid., p. 90.

53. M. J. J. Jusserand, The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare, p. 348.

of earlier picaresque fiction, which had been for some time in a languishing state. While it is frequently considered that Lesage's Gil Blas, a literary descendant of the Spanish picaresque tale, served as a model for Defoe's rogue narratives, the theory cannot be proved with any degree of accuracy. The Gil Blas could have influenced him little more than the Spanish picaresque tales, of which numerous translations already flourished in England.

But whatever the sources of Defoe, and the models on which he constructed his narratives, his romances of roguery are primarily the product of his literary apprenticeship in the journalistic field. Defoe was above all a journalist. He was interested in affairs of the day; in political parties, in international relations, in foreign policies, in trade and commerce. He wrote for the reading public - to please popular taste. Almost all of his writings were "pieces de circonstance". "Whenever any distinguished person died or otherwise engaged public attention, no matter how distinguished, whether as a politician, a criminal, or a divine, Defoe lost no time in bringing out a biography. It was in such emergencies that he produced his Memoirs of Charles XII, Peter the Great, Count Patkul, Captain Avery, the King of Pirates, Dominique Cartouche, Rob Roy, Jonathan Wild, Jack Sheppard, Duncan Campbell."⁵⁴

The crude material of several of Defoe's rogue tales, notably Colonel Jack and Moll Flanders, is to be found in his journalistic activities in connection with Mist's and Applebee's Journals. Applebee's Journal, with which he was connected from 1720 to 1726, is of special importance as it was during this period that he frequently interviewed criminals of Newgate and wrote up their accounts, elaborating on facts to produce a sensational pamphlet which would still

54. W.Minto - Daniel Defoe (English Men of Letters Series) p. 131.

have the appearance of truth, so carefully was it embroidered and authenticated. The aim of these "yellow journals" was to pretend a closely followed reality and consequently effect a big sale. Frequently the actual basis of facts was slight and required all the embellishments of even such a clever workman as Defoe to produce the desired effect of sensation built upon a foundation of reality. His treatment of the thief and jail-breaker, Jack Sheppard, is typical of his method of elaborating on confessions. Jack is first introduced to his readers through the columns of Applebee's in a letter purporting to be by Jack (the original being on display in Applebee's window). The letter is followed by a narrative of Jack's adventures, ascribed to the prisoner himself; and finally, before Jack's execution, while he is standing beneath the gibbet, he authorizes the pamphlet as a faithful record of his dying confessions. From writing biographies with real names and invented incidents, to writing biographies with fictitious names and fabricated incidents was but a short step.

Thus Defoe's rogue tales grew out of his journalistic labors. His biographical histories of the lives of Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton and Moll Flanders are not far removed from his pamphlets on the criminals Rob Roy, Carouche, and Jack Sheppard. He saw a ready market for fabricated accounts of the thievings, piracies and commercial enterprises of harlots, sailors, trades-people and young street Arabs - and he proceeded to furnish the material. With an eye to the main chance he recognized the importance of "forging stories and imposing them on the world for truth", of embellishing and inventing incidents to satisfy the curiosity of the public, of vouching for the truth of his narratives by describing the manner in which the story was first related to him, and then proceeding to

state his own reasons for accepting the evidence which he offers.

Defoe's first rogue romance, containing a fictitious hero and invented episodes, appeared in 1720. "The Life, Adventures and Piracies of the famous Captain Singleton: containing an account of his being first set on shore in the island of Madagascar, his settlement there, with a description of the place and inhabitants; of his passage from thence in a paraguay to the mainland of Africa, with an account of the customs and manners of the people; his great deliverances from the barbarous natives and wild animals; of his meeting with an Englishman, a citizen of London, amongst the Indians. The great riches he acquired, and his voyage home to England. As also Captain Singleton's return to sea, with an account of his many adventures and piracies with the famous Captain Avery, and others." Defoe had already written a pamphlet on Captain Avery's exploits (1719), and it was perhaps during this period that he conceived the idea of inventing another pirate, rival as well as assistant to Captain Avery.

Captain Singleton is a lively tale of adventure, lacking in unity, but entertaining because of its romantic treatment of roguery. The hero, Bob Singleton, has no high moral principles with which to bore the reader as Crusoe had in the Serious Reflections. He is thoroughly bad and enjoys admitting it. His efforts at reform are feeble and never very strongly voiced. Bob Singleton was stolen from a nursemaid while still an infant, sold to a gypsy woman, and cast upon the county parish where he learned the carpenter's trade. When twelve years old he went to sea and was captured by the Portuguese, among whom he learned to swear and steal and lie. "I was exactly fitted for their society indeed; for I had no sense of virtue or religion upon me..... and yet, even in this state of original wickedness, I entertained such a settled abhorrence of the Portuguese,

that I could not but hate them most heartily from the beginning, and all my life afterwards."⁵⁵ While at Madagascar he mutinied with the ship's crew and was left on the island with twenty-seven of the men. They constructed a rude ship out of a wreck which they had discovered, and reached Africa after a voyage of over three weeks. They then decided to cross the "dark continent", traveling by boat and on land for nearly 1800 miles. Then begins a minute account of the famous trip across the desert wastes of Central Africa. After various vicissitudes and much good fortune in the way of treasure, they arrive at the gold coast and engage passage to England. The Captain loses his money in gambling and carousing, and then ships with a vessel which turns pirate ship. The captain, because of his bold daring, is made lieutenant; the pirates form a band which later unites with Captain Avery's privateers, and they proceed to loot the rich merchant vessels of the South Seas. After the Captain has accumulated a fine fortune, his conscience begins to trouble him and he returns to England where he marries the sister of his friend Quaker Williams "(with whom I live much more happy than I deserve)".

The early life of Captain Singleton corresponds to picaresque traditions. His parentage is unknown, not illegitimate as is Guzman's, or low as is Lazarillo's. His office to the beggar woman is similar to Lazarillo's duties while in the service of the blind beggar, and his wandering life with the gypsies is slightly picaresque. But after the Captain is pressed into the service of carpenters and carried to Newfoundland by a master of a ship, he departs from the petty rogueries and thieveries of the true picaro and becomes a King of Adventures. His initiation into piracy and his promotion to a

55. Captain Singleton. G. A. Aitken edition, p. 8.

captaincy equal to the rank of the famous pirate Avery remove him from the class of picaros, who, like Guzman, beg with pointed ulcers, or, like Lazarus, trick their masters out of a few shillings.

The didactic purpose of the author is not intruded sufficiently to destroy the charm of this adventuresome, stirring tale of sea-life, which contains more freedom and picturesque color than any of Defoe's succeeding narratives. The Captain is more sincere than his brothers and sisters. He tells us that he is a liar, a thief and a degenerate; in fact, he almost boasts about his sins. When he is terrified by a fearful storm that threatens the ship, he thinks that God is executing vengeance on him, yet he feels no "softening tokens of a sincere penitent; afflicted at the punishment, but not at the crime; alarmed at the vengeance, but not terrified at the guilt; having the same gust to the crime, though terrified to the last degree at the punishment which I concluded I was just now going to receive."⁵⁶ The Captain enjoys his piratical adventures with a zest, unrestrained by small worryings of his conscience or frequent attempts at righteous living. He waits patiently to reform, and voices his decision bluntly and honestly as a rough sailor would do. "I have no notion what repentance means; indeed, at best I know little of the matter; but the nature of the thing seems to tell me that the first step we have to take is to break off this wretched course; and I'll begin there with you, with all my heart."⁵⁷

But more entertaining than the Captain's decision to reform is the relation of the exploits of the pirate crew; the nets which they lay for unsuspecting trading-vessels, the rich booty (which

56. Captain Singleton, G.A.Aitken Edition, p. 223.

57. Ibid., p. 295.

they divide fairly), the perils, the escapes, the encounters with British men-of-war, the retreats and preparations for defense - these constitute the chief charm of the work. Now they take an Arabian junk, which they gut of pearl, now a ship from Bengal, laden with spices, silks, diamonds, calicoes, pearls, etc. Defoe glimpses the romance of spices, nutmegs, cinnamons, cloves, gold and precious stones. He revels in the spoils of the crew and pours over the collection of rare gems and silken fabrics like another merchant pirate. He is, perhaps, the only prose writer who can make up paragraph after paragraph of mere stock words, which carry an appeal of wonder and romance to the reader. Doubtless, if he lived in the present day of mail-order houses, he could compile a catalogue which would combine all the virtues of the practical with the embroideries of the imaginative.

Defoe's great power, however, lies not so much in description but in his ability to portray characters. In Captain Singleton the two parts of greatest interest to the reader are the account of the journey across Africa, and the part devoted to the character of William Walters, the Quaker.

With the exception of William, the Quaker, and perhaps the hero, the characters in Captain Singleton are not particularly convincing. The "wise and wary" William is perhaps the best drawn of all Defoe's characters. He was, according to Singleton, "a comic fellow indeed, a man of very good solid sense, and an excellent surgeon; but what was worth all, very good-humored and pleasing in his conversation, and a bold, stout fellow, too, as any we had among us."⁵⁸ The astute Quaker's advice is always seemly and delivered

58. Captain Singleton, G. A. Aitken Edition, p. 163.

in a tone of mock solemnity; also, it is practical and usually nets the pirates concrete results. An illustration of his dry humor goes to prove that Defoe does not completely eschew humor, a charge frequently made against his writing. Singleton's pirate ship is being pursued by a Portuguese vessel: "William the Quaker comes to me with a kind of smile. 'Friend,' says he, 'what does yon ship follow us for?' 'Why,' says I, 'to fight us, you may be sure.' 'Well,' says he, 'and will he come up with us, dost thou think?' 'Yes,' says I, 'you see she will.' 'Why then, friend,' says the dry wretch, 'why dost thou run from her still, when thou seest she will overtake thee? Will it be better for us to be taken farther off than here?' 'Much as one for that,' says I. 'Why, what would you have us do?' 'Do?' says he, 'let us not give the poor man more trouble than needs must; let us stay for him and hear what he has to say to us.' 'He will talk to us in powder and ball,' said I. 'Very well, then,' says he, 'if that be his country's language, we must talk to him in the same, must we not? or else how shall he understand us?'"⁵⁹

William is the cause of Singleton's conversion and final repentance. He urges his friend to cease his "wretched course", but prudently manages to preserve his worldly effects by arguing the impossibility of restoring their wealth to the rightful owners, contenting himself by leaving the disposition to Providence. Although all of Defoe's characters exhibit very little sentiment or affection toward each other, William seems to take a friendly concern in the Captain's reform and the Captain, in return, likes him heartily, worries when is absent and is overjoyed on his return. The Quaker keeps the scene animated with his dry, gibing remarks, which relieve the story

59. Captain Singleton, G.A.Aitken, Edition, p. 223.

of a certain prosaic dullness that frequently creeps into Defoe's narratives.

The account of the journey across Africa is usually pointed out as a nice illustration of the author's remarkable power of creating verisimilitude by means of assembling minute details. It has also been said that in Captain Singleton, Defoe anticipated some of the discoveries made in Central Africa during recent years. But Defoe had, undoubtedly, read De Flacourt's Histoire de Madagascar (1661), and Ogilby's Description of Africa (1670), so that much of the topographical information could be based on actual description. The minute details of the trip, the toilsome marches, the incidents en route, and the exact account of the progress made each day, together with compass information as to directions of winds and travel, are Defoe's typical contribution. The description of the flora and fauna is particularly good - "Lions, tigers and leopards abound - sometimes we killed hare, sometimes some fowls, but for my life I cannot give names to any of them except a kind of partidge and another that was like our turtle.....In those twenty days' march, we advanced four degrees to the northward, besides some meridian distance westward, and we met with abundance of elephants, and with a good number of elephants' teeth scattered up and down, here and there, in the woody grounds, especially some of which were very large. We killed some wild feline animals at the foot of these hills; but except two things like to nothing that we ever saw before, we met with nothing that was fit to eat. Those were creatures that seemed to be between the kind of a buffalo and a deer, but indeed resembled neither; for they had no horns, and had great lip like a cow, with a fine head and the neck like a deer."⁶⁰ Later on

60. Captain Singleton, G.A. Aitken Edition, pp. 128-32.

they discover an Englishman who is living in a savage state among the negroes. This white man guides the little band to some low hills where they acquire much wealth in gold and ivory. The dreary desert wastes and frightful forests which they encounter during the march are faithfully reproduced; the attacks on camps by ferocious beasts and native savages are so vividly narrated as to produce the effect of a terrible reality. This over abundance of details becomes dull and wearisome at times, but when it deals with the remote and far-off impossible tropic forests and arid wilds of Central Africa, it carries with it the charm of adventure and unknown peril.

Captain Singleton is one of the early sea-romances - it fails to catch the glamour of the sea, but it retains the charm of daring life and the romance of far-off remote places. It has a reckless gaiety and abandon - a disregard for the morrow and a warm appreciation of the present moment, which help to maintain its perennial interest. Then, too, it is further removed from the Dissenting voice of the author than are the other relations, and in consequence is more piquantly enjoyable.

Defoe's next important rogue romance, Moll Flanders, was published in January, 1722. Just as in many of the other narratives the author pretends a closely followed reality and claims a manuscript source for the tale. Defoe admits "that the original of this story is put into new words, and the style of the famous lady we here speak of is a little altered We cannot say, indeed, that this history is carried on quite to the end of the life of this famous Moll Flanders, for nobody can write their own life to the full end of it, unless they can write it after they are dead."⁶¹ The author ingeniously gives an impression of reality to the story in or-

61. Moll Flanders, Edition De Luxe, Author's Preface.

der to make his book sell well. Perhaps the story was suggested by the life of some real woman - or as Mr. Bernbaum suggests by the earlier Mary Carleton Narratives. It is at any rate the best known of Defoe's criminal narratives and whether it is a real or fictitious biography matters very little.

The full title of the book was, "The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, who was born in Newgate, and during a life of continued Variety, for Threescore Years, besides her childhood, was Twelve Years a Whore, Five Times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Years a Thief, Eight Years a Transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, lived Honest and died a Penitent. Written from her own Memorandums."

The title gives a synopsis of the plot which is very slight, as is usually the case in Defoe's narratives. His interest in characters led him to neglect the story, and his sole interest in the hero and heroine caused him to disregard minor characters. The history of Moll is similar in many details to The Counterfeit Lady, and might be duplicated by any journalistic account of a shop-lifter or a prostitute. Moll's mother is a felon, and Moll is born during her mother's imprisonment in Newgate. The child wanders among gypsies (just as Captain Singleton had done), is later cared for by the parish, put to school where she learns needle-work, and is finally sent out to serve. Moll is a vain young lady, proud of her fine ways and accomplishments which rival those of her mistresses. She loses her virtue readily to the young master, and then, follows, step by step, the story of her degradation. Her history is a continual struggle to arrive at virtuous living against her own inclinations. Her frequent marriages and disappointments, her loss of fortune and children do not break her spirit. She continues gay and confident that

some day she will reform, and, as a reward for her repentance, be given a comfortable living. When she first becomes a thief by virtue of necessity she exhibits all the timidity of a novice." "It is impossible to express the horror of my soul all the while I did it - I crossed the street indeed, and went down the first turning I came to from thence I crossed and turned through so many ways and turnings, that I could never tell which way I went..... In short, I was under such a surprise that I knew not whither I was going, or what to do."⁶² Moll becomes hardened by her success and her conscience ceases to disturb her: "Not with all my sense of its being cruel and inhuman, I could never find it in my heart to make any restitution.....At length yielding to the importunities of my crime, I cast off all remorse."⁶³ Her capture and imprisonment at Newgate follow and later her deportation to Virginia. Her fortunes improve, and she returns to England with one of her husbands and a son, resolved to live virtuously and to repent her wicked career.

The purpose of Moll's history is obviously didactic. The author solemnly announced his worthy aim: "Throughout the infinite variety of this book, this fundamental is most strictly adhered to: there is not a wicked action in any part of it, but is first or last rendered unhappy and unfortunate: there is not a superlative villain brought upon the stage, but, either he is brought to an unhappy end, or brought to be a penitent; there is not an ill thing mentioned, but it is condemned, even in the relation, nor a virtuous, just thing but it carries its praise along with it..... Upon this foundation this book is recommended to the reader, as a work from every part of which something may be learned, and some just and religious inference is

62. *Moll Flanders*, Edition de Luxe, p. 268, Vol. I.

63. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 18.

drawn, by which the reader will have something of instruction if he pleases to make use of it."⁶⁴

Evidently in Moll Flanders the author is attempting a thesis novel, a novel of reform, but he fails somewhat in his undertaking. Moll's repentance is not convincing. Our heroine is too delighted in her conquests and cheatings to develop suddenly into a righteous penitent. She talks about reforming, but delays until she has made her fortune. She recognizes her wickedness and continually apologizes for it, but she is the victim of circumstances and is forced by necessity to become a thief. Thus she avoids the responsibility of her own actions and attempts to claim the reader's sympathy. Mr. Chandler's opinion as to what Defoe accomplishes in this narrative seems, on the whole, slightly exaggerated. "He showed the decline of a soul from innocence to knowledge, temptation and sin, and then its rise, by virtue of repentance, from distress through honesty, to prosperity and calm."⁶⁵ Defoe distributes rewards of merit and issues penalties for crime quite judiciously. Moll steals - she is captured and placed in Newgate - she repents, and is transported - she reforms and a good income is settled on her. Moll's reform is only a superficial conforming to the demands of her author. She is obliged to exemplify the rules of conduct outlined in the preface and she proceeds to do so. Like Roxana and Captain Singleton, she reforms when adventures cease to attract and comfortable allowances are more alluring than pretty necklaces.

Moll Flanders, as well as Captain Singleton, has slight traces of picaresque tradition. Moll is of low parentage, her mother a felon, and her father unknown, she lives with the gypsies and later

64. Moll Flanders, Edition de Luxe, Author's Preface.

65. Chandler, F.W. Literature of Roguery, Vol. II, p. 289.

on is brought up on the bounty of the parish. Her career of petty thieving perhaps more nearly approaches the true picaro activities - she picks a gold watch, robs a child of its finery, gets a parcel from a hare-brained wench at the coaches, makes way with rich booty at a fire. She is a true feminine rogue - a picar^a, who lives by her wits and feminine wiles. Her low intrigues and numerous amours correspond to Guzman's debasing affairs - her fits of repentance and long moralizings to Aleman's wearying sermons.

Moll is perhaps the most real and vital of Defoe's feminine characters. In the delineation of Moll's character Defoe shows more psychological interest and more insight into female understanding and reasoning than in his other works. The fortunes and misfortunes of Moll are followed closely. The author attempts to explain her viciousness by circumstances, and apologizes for her errors because of her poor training during childhood. Her career of vice is traced logically step by step, from the moment she is seduced by her young master to her confinement in the gloomy prison of Newgate. Yet, despite her vice and deceit, Moll still demands our sympathy. Her life is a continued struggle for self-preservation. She is bold and courageous - never depressed and ever on the watch for another opportunity - another marriage - another commercial venture. Moll's character expands in the excitement of living by her wits. She has outbursts of passion and romantic sentiment - she is not entirely selfish and hardened - she exhibits real affection for one husband, Jemmy, over whose loss she grieves an entire day. But Moll's affections are widely distributed; she has no fine sentiments or elevating passions. She is essentially human; capricious and vain, yet with a certain practical good sense and indomitable courage, not entirely unattractive.

Moll is not primarily a creature of passionate emotions and enduring sentiments. She is prudent and cautious; characteristic of all the persons in Defoe's tales. She confesses freely to her readers, but she is more reticent in her dealings with her husbands and children. She is shrewd and practical, with an eye to the main chance. She chooses her course boldly and accepts the consequences of her crimes philosophically. Like Captain Singleton she enjoys the immediate present and makes the most of her opportunities. There is a mixture of shrewd practical understanding and courageous good nature in Moll's character that redeems her viciousness and gives her a tone of sincerity and vital reality which is lacking in many of the authentic criminal biographies of the period. Moll lives because of her vigorous, healthy nature; despite her erring ways and vicious habits, she is generous and charitable, not entirely devoid of human sympathies.

Although Defoe emphasizes character instead of incident, The History of Moll Flanders retains much of its interest and charm because of the abundant incidents which are introduced to furnish the setting for Moll's amours, her crimes, and her business transactions. The story has all the vividness of reality, and the circumstances are so varied as to never become monotonous. The accounts of the Virginian plantations, Moll's journeys through England to capture a new husband who "should look like a gentleman", her various establishments, her criminal occupations and her imprisonment at Newgate are all described with lively interest and great accuracy. The dismal horror of the Newgate scene is reproduced most vividly by Moll upon her entrance into the prison. "t is impossible to describe the terror of my mind, when I was first brought in, and when I looked round upon all the horrors of that dismal place..... the hellish noise,

the roaring and swearing and clamour, the stench and nastiness, and all the dreadful afflicting things that I saw there, joined to make the place seem an emblem of hell itself, and a kind of entrance into it."⁶⁶ The callousness of the prisoners, who seem hardened to their fate, and the coarse brutality with which they greet Moll and flout her over her capture, are graphically set forth by the author. The minute explanation of the prisoners' insensibility to their misfortunes exhibits fine psychology on the part of Defoe: "Time, necessity, and conversing with the wretches that are there familiarizes the place to them; at last they become reconciled to that which at first was the greatest dread upon their spirits in the world, and are as impudently cheerful and merry in their misery as they were when out of it How this hell should become by degrees so natural, and not only tolerable, but even agreeable, is a thing unintelligible but by those who have experienced it as I have."⁶⁷ Moll's days are at first spent in the utmost horror of "gibbets and halters, evil spirits and devils." She is terror-stricken over her past crimes, and yet honestly recognizes the cowardice of her repentance which occurs only when the opportunity of further sinning is removed. She reviews her life of "whoredom, adultery, incest, lying, theft," and has not the heart to ask God's mercy. But gradually she becomes accustomed to the noises and clamours of the prison and becomes a "mere Newgate-bird, as wicked and as outrageous as any." The gloomy horrors of Newgate on the morning of execution days have a note of conviction, which betrays Defoe's intimate knowledge of prison suffering: "The next morning there was a sad scene indeed in the prison. The first thing I was saluted with in the morning was

66. *Moll Flanders*, Edition de Luxe, Vol. II, pp. 117-118.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

the tolling of the great bell at St. Sepulchre's, which ushered in the day. As soon as it began to toll, a dismal groaning and crying was heard from the condemned hole, where there lay six poor souls, who were to be executed that day, some for one crime, some for another, and two for a murder."⁶⁸ Defoe's description of Newgate life gives the impression of vivid and absolute reality. He catches the apathetic attitude of the prisoners, their fits of despondency and hysterical mirth, their brutish stupidity and flickering moods of hope and despair. The scene is powerful and gripping; it moves because of the unemotional, simple methods, which the author employs to produce the desired effect of verisimilitude. The trials of the prisoners, the unjust punishments which they receive, the corrupt practices of the courts of justice are condemned by the Dissenting author, who recognizes the abuse of law and the crying need for prison reforms.

Moll Flanders is in many respects the best novel that Defoe ever wrote. Moll is a more complicated character than the blunt Captain Singleton or the business-like Colonel Jack. She is a peculiar mixture of selfishness, impulse, generosity, hard-heartedness and greed. Moll is the victim of circumstances. "In tracing the vigilant resolution with which she plays upon human weakness, the spasms of compunction which shoot across her wily designs, the selfish afterthoughts which paralyze her generous impulses, her fits of dare-devil courage and uncontrollable panic, and the steady current of good-humored satisfaction with herself which makes her chuckle equally over mishaps and successes, Defoe has gone deeply into the springs of action and sketched a rich page in the natural history of his species."⁶⁹ But Moll Flanders is only a string of entertaining in-

68. Moll Flanders, Edition de Luxe, Vol. II, pp. 142-3.

69. Daniel Defoe, Minto, English Men of Letter Series, p. 138.

cidents with one character to unify the action. It lacks a central idea and purpose, unless it be the gradual corruption of the heroine's virtue, and here, too, the author seems more vitally concerned with the heroine's cheatings and amours than in explaining the direct causes of her downfall. Defoe reproduces a society of harlots, thieves, sailors, and traders, but Moll is the only character that lives and moves. Moll Flanders is not a real novel; it is merely a naturalistic biography, but it shows imaginative powers, creative abilities, and a keen insight into character, which the author rarely exhibits in his other writings.

Defoe's next venture in the field of fictitious biography was The Life of Colonel Jack, which was published in December, 1722. The full rounded out title of the tale serves as an index to the contents: "The History and Remarkable Life of the truly Honourable Colonel Jacque, vulgarly called Col. Jack, who was born a Gentleman; put 'Prentice to a Pickpocket; was six and twenty years a Thief, and then kidnapped to Virginia; came back a merchant; was five times married to four whores; went into the wars, behaved bravely, got Preference, was made Colonel of a Regiment; came over, and fled with the Chevalier, is still abroad Completing a Life of Wonders, and resolves to die a Gentleman."

The story is of the simplest. Like the Captain and Moll, the Colonel is brought up in ignorance of his birth by an old woman, paid to care for illegitimate children. When he is ten years old she dies and Jacque begins his varied career of thieving, picking pockets, snatching handkerchiefs, etc. But the Colonel, like Moll, is not entirely lacking in generosity and good feeling. His conscience troubles him, and he returns some money to a poor woman, a year from the time he had stolen it. Shortly afterwards the Colonel is kid-

napped and transported to a plantation in Virginia where he is sold into bondage. There he becomes a favourite with his master, is released from his bondage, and sets up as a planter. From thence he returns to England where he contracts several unfortunate marriages, and goes back again to Virginia, marrying his first wife whom he had previously divorced.

The author's purpose in writing this book is professedly didactic. In reality the moral teaching does not extend far beyond the preface, in which he states his aim somewhat pompously: "Here is room for just and copious observations on the blessings and advantages of a sober, well-governed education, and the ruin of as many thousands of youth in this nation for want of it; also, how many public schools and charities might be improved to prevent the destruction of so many unhappy children as in their town are every year bred up for the gallows."⁷⁰ He then proceeds to explain his anti-hero's distaste for thieving, which was forced on him by necessity - and how with the advantages of a good education he might have attained respectable success. To the reader he promises a delightful field where "he will see virtue and the ways of wisdom everywhere applauded, honoured, encouraged, rewarded; vice and all kinds of wickedness attended with misery, many kinds of infelicities; and at last, sin and shame going together, the persons meeting with reproof and reproach and their crimes with abhorrence," and then, because he feels so strongly the didactic impulse he adds, "Every wicked reader will here be encouraged to a change, and it will appear that the best and only good end of an impious misspent life is repentance."⁷¹ No writer of a Spanish picaresque tale could state a

70. Colonel Jack, Edition de Luxe, Preface, p. XIX.

71. Ibid., p. XX.

more exemplary moral teaching. Even Aleman, who is continually expostulating with the rogue, Guzman, for his vices, and delivering wearying sermons on the advantages of righteousness, cannot pretend to approach the conscious moral aim of Defoe, who wishes not only to amuse the reader, but to reform him if he is wicked, and incidentally indicate a necessity for improvement in public schools and charities.

Notwithstanding the praiseworthy purpose announced in writing the History of Colonel Jack, Defoe had the business man's viewpoint primarily in mind, for the book finally terminates in an account of the successful commercial enterprises of the Colonel, whom Mr. Maynard calls "the Yankee trader of the Queen Anne writers".

In the earlier part of the tale Defoe is following picaresque tradition. Jack's adventures as a pick-pocket are in the true gusto picarescos. Jack is a worthy brother to Scipion, to Guzman and Lazarillo; he lies, cheats, steals and begs with as good grace as another picaro. But he is not quite hardened in his career of crime. His conscience bothersd him, and, like Guzman, vague thoughts of being a gentleman trouble him, and disturb the serenity of his gamin existence.

The character of Colonel Jack is not so convincing or vivid as that of Moll or the Captain. Jack has no fine feelings or generous affections. He is primarily a trader with an eye to the main chance. He lacks Moll's impulsiveness, while retaining all of her greed - he lacks Singleton's daring, yet has much of the former's commercial cunning. He is a typical business man; hard-hearted and practical, interested in commercial ventures as was his author, with no imaginative qualities to redeem his dullness. The boy Jack is much more lovable than the grown up merchant, proud of his business

successes, who finds leisure to repent only after he has accumulated a fortune. Defoe's treatment of the early life of the neglected and untutored boy is sympathetic; in consequence, the character is more animated and real. The only part of the story which really holds the reader's interest is the first section, treating of Jack's gamin life in London. In Lamb's opinion "The beginning of Colonel Jack is the most affecting, natural picture of a young thief that was ever drawn."⁷² Certainly Defoe becomes less interested in character delineation and more and more carried away by the trading ventures of this "Captain of Industry", for the book degenerates into a trade journal of cargoes of flour, malt, pease, dress goods and the like.

The only merits which the book holds for present day readers are the remarkable powers of verisimilitude and the circumstantial vividness which the author exhibits in his treatment of the commercial ventures of the hero. Even in his description of Virginian plantations, Defoe makes very few blunders; his geography is almost always correct and his ships follow the compass faithfully. Just as Singleton gave memorandum lists of the rich booty which they looted from merchant vessels, so the Colonel repeats the contents of every cargo that is transported, the proceeds of the shipment, and the investment which he proposes to make with the returns. Although the Colonel is an old, penitent man when he relates his life history, he is able to give a list of the thievings at a county fair when he was but a mere child:-

"1. A white handkerchief from a country wench, as she was starting up at a jack-pudding; there was 3 s. 6 d. and a row of pins tied up in one end of it.

72. Memoirs of Defoe, Wilson, Vol. III, p. 429.

2. A coloured handkerchief, out of a young country fellow's pocket as he was buying a china orange.

3. A riband purse with lls. 3d. and a silver thimble in it, out of a young woman's pocket, just as a fellow offered to pick her up.

N.B. She missed her purse presently, but, not seeing the thief, charged the man with it that would have picked her up, and cried out, 'A pickpocket!' and he fell into the hands of the mob, but, being known in the street, he got off with great difficulty,"⁷³ - and so the collection continues; a knife and fork, a little silver box, another silk handkerchief, a jointed baby and little looking-glass. The book is filled with similar tabulated accounts, which serve to reveal the author's interest in concrete, material things, and his naive delight in accumulating articles which, despite their utilitarian purpose, retain a touch of romance to his trader's mind. Pieces of fine English broadcloth, pieces of fine holland, of silk drugget, of broad silks, brocaded silks, damasks, boxes of ribands and lace occupy his imaginative activities. His mind adventures among pieces of eight, Spanish doubloons, silks, coffee, flour, rum, linens and woollens. Defoe vividly reproduces the bustling, anxious trading life of the period. The story moves back and forth with the Colonel's sloops, laden with precious cargoes. It does not develop, nor does the Colonel, until he suddenly decides to reflect and repent, and "to learn, as Job says, to abhor himself in dust and ashes."

The History of Colonel Jack is on the whole the least interesting and the most poorly constructed, from the standpoint of plot development, of Defoe's rogue romances. It lacks the charm of the

73. Colonel Jack, Edition de Luxe, p. 18.

reckless, sea-roving life of the pirate, Singleton, and fails to catch the healthy vividness of Moll Flanders. So long as the hero remains a sly thief in London, the story lives, but when he wanders to Virginia and starts on his career of merchant prince, the relation drags, tending toward prolixity and repetition. The author fails to work out the commendatory purpose which he announces in the preface, and instead of conducting his hero logically through his downfall and repentance, he allows the hero to lead him along the by-paths of industry and trade.

In conclusion a word may be said about Defoe's characters as a whole. They are all taken from the lower class of society. They are possessed of practical common sense,- they are hard hearted and selfish with an eye to the main chance. They exhibit little affection or tender sentiment. Their sins are neither great nor noble, their crimes are for the most part petty - and they blame their guilt on circumstance. They are the victims of Society, they struggle feebly against the inevitable and then succumb to their misfortunes. They are all animated by the calculating spirit of their author. They plunder a ship, snatch a bundle, pick a pocket, trade a cargo with the coolness and daring of a merchant turned thief. The stories live because of the author's interest in his characters and in their petty manoeuverings to accomplish their desires. His thieves, harlots, sailors, and desert-islanders have the charm of eternal freshness; despite the lapse of time we can still enjoy the plundering of a ship, the building of a boat, the theft of a necklace, or the perils of a journey across Africa.

Chapter IV. A Comparison of the Picaresque Methods
of Defoe and Lesage.

The methods of composition employed by Lesage and Defoe in developing their narratives of roguery differ markedly, because of the difference in their literary models, their purpose and their individual genius. Lesage used as his models the Spanish picaresque tale and the earlier realistic tales of Seventeenth century France. In particular, he was influenced by the methods of La Bruyere in Les Caractères, and Molière in his comedies. Defoe's models, as has previously been suggested, were the criminal biographies and confessions, which extended in popularity through the early part of the Eighteenth century. Whether or not Defoe was influenced by Lesage's Gil Blas, a literary descendant of the Spanish picaresque type, is a debatable question. The mere external evidence offered by the publication of the first two volumes of Gil Blas in 1715, several years prior to Defoe's earliest picaresque attempt, Captain Singleton (1720) does not justify a positive conclusion. It is, perhaps, possible that Defoe read Lesage's work, but there is no mention of it in his voluminous writing. However, this fact is of little moment, for Defoe always refrained from disclosing his sources, unless he could convince the public that they were true relations (which he had carefully fabricated). And even assuming that Defoe did read Gil Blas, it could have served his purpose little better than the Spanish picaresque tales, of which numerous translations already flourished in England. But it is generally recognized that Defoe made practically no use of the Spanish type, which did not serve the purpose of

his own histories.

The History of Gil Blas of Santillane was not translated into English until 1732-37, so that Defoe could have had access only to the original French work. But Defoe could read French, as his translation of Du Fresnoy's L'Art de la Peinture, under the title of The Complete Art of Painting in 1720, readily proves. Dryden had already translated Du Fresnoy's poem, and Defoe must have been sorely in need of a few pounds to undertake a task which his journalistic style rendered impractical.

A list⁷⁴ of the books contained in Defoe's library indicates that he was acquainted with the French originals of Seventeenth century prose romances, and numerous accounts of voyages and discoveries by French explorers. La Princesse de Clèves is catalogued along with numerous voyages, essays on commerce and tales of adventures, exploration and discovery. Notable among these are Quevedo's Visions translated by L'Estrange; Cervantes' Six Adventures, Descartes Voyage du Monde, 1691; The Trial of Mary Butler, 1699, The Turkish Spy; Frazier's Voyage to the South Seas; Ludolph's History of Ethiopia, 1682; and Randolph's State of the Islands in the Archipelago, 1681. Defoe's reading seems to have centered on travel and discovery books rather than on the popular fiction of his day. Primarily a man of the world, he was interested in commerce and travel, in matters of state and in the events of the day, rather than in the world of "belles lettres", in which Lesage, after repeated effort, finally won recognition.

A comparison of the texts of Gil Blas with Colonel Jack, or Captain Singleton, offers no parallel in characters, incidents or episodes unless we except Scipion's account of the difficulties he

74. The Athenæum, '89: 1:279-1; 816.

encountered in concealing his ill-gotten wealth, Livre 10, chapitre 10, which compares with Colonel Jack's perplexities in a similar situation. A short quotation from the two books will serve to illustrate this slight parallel: "Je ne voulais pas qu'on sût que j'avais de l'argent et j'étais bien en peine de savoir où je le cacherais..... Que les richesses causent d'embarras! J'étais dans des continuelles alarmes. Je me déterminai pourtant à mettre mon sac dans un coin de notre grenier où il y avait de la paille; et le croyant là, plus en sûreté, qu'ailleurs, je me tranquillisais autant qu'il me fut possible."⁷⁵ In Colonel Jack we read: "And now as I was full of wealth, behold I was full of care, for what to do to secure my money I could not tell; and this held me so long and was so truly vexatious to me the next day that I truly sat down and cried."⁷⁶ Colonel Jack continues disquiet, hiding the money in his shoe, holding it in his hand wrapped in a dirty linen rag until he discovers a hollow tree into which he thrusts the money. But it falls out of his reach, down the trunk: "Then I cried, nay I roared out I was in such a passion. Then, I thrust my hand in again till I scratched my arm and made it bleed"⁷⁷ and so he proceeds for several pages in passionate action, physical distortions and tears of rage, which only a Defoe could conjure up. Scipion, having concealed his treasure, visits it daily and revels in its magnificence: "Je baisais quelquefois mes espèces; je les contemplais avec un ravissement qui ne peut être compris que par les avarés."⁷⁸ But when Scipion loses his money, he suffers the disappointment philosophically after wasting a simile on his

75. Gil Blas, p. 361, Livre X, Ch. X.

76. Colonel Jack, Edition de Luxe, p. 32.

77. Ibid., p. 36.

78. Gil Blas, p. 362, Livre X, Ch. X.

chagrin: "Je pleurai la perte de mon argent, comme on pleure la mort d'un fils unique."⁷⁹ The two incidents do not justify any conclusion beyond the apparent fact that they are handled quite differently by their respective authors. Scipion has all the maxims and excitements of a typical French "gueux"; the boy Jack, the actions and protestations of an amateur pickpocket, and both reflect the differences in method of Lesage and Defoe. The one comments on the manner of action; the other argues the matter and acts out the possibilities. Both incidents have parallels in the Guzman, Bk. II, Chap. IV, which in turn might suggest a possible common source. But the episode of stolen money is more or less a typical incident in picaresque fiction, and in this particular instance is not developed sufficiently to warrant a positive conclusion. The incidents are significant, if at all, only as they serve to illustrate the contrast in methods of the two authors.

Curiously enough this assumption of literary borrowings has never been reversed and Lesage accused of profiting by Defoe's Captain Singleton. In one of Lesage's later romances, Le Chevalier de Beauchêne (1732), he makes use of the journal or diary of a real filibuster, Beauchêne, for the greater part of his narrative; proceeding, in this instance, after the usual manner of Defoe. Also in the special instance of a trip across Brazil, Lesage crudely approaches Defoe's very accurate account in Captain Singleton. The passages are too long to quote in full, but a summary of the incidents of the two journeys may establish a slight relation. The reception of the two parties by the native savages, the discovery of gold, the long continued marches across burning desert sands, the

79. Gil Blas, p. 363, Livre X, Ch. I.

suffering and illness of the little bands, their voyage down the river and frequent encounters with hostile villages, follow step by step in the two books. Defoe, however, elaborates the incidents and keeps a more carefully tabulated account of the daily progress. Defoe also is a more skillful artist in embroidering reality with journalistic expressions, which made the scenes appear natural and vivid. He has an accurate knowledge of the topography of the country which he is describing, while Lesage merely comments on the difficulties which they encounter, a hill, a stream or a sandy waste, seemingly unaware of the strangeness and wonders of the desert land. Several passages from the two books will serve to illustrate this point: Le Chevalier de Beauchêne, Livre VI, Ch. I: "Ayant pris un peu sur la droite pour nous rapprocher de la mer, nous aperçûmes assez loin une colline toute couverte d'arbres. Nous y addressâmes nos pas pour y passer la nuit.....nous couchâmes dans des joncs au bord d'une rivière guéable ou nous eûmes une nuit aussi fraîche que le jour avait été chaud. La rosée était si abondante que le matin nos chemises étaient toutes mouillées."⁸⁰ Captain Singleton: "In our further prospect this way, we marched three days full west, the country on the north side being extraordinary mountainous and more parched and dry than any we had seen yet; whereas, in the part which looks due west, we found a pleasant valley running a great way between two ridges of mountains. The hills looked frightful, being entirely bare of trees or grass, and even white with the dryness of the sand; but in the valley we had trees, grass and some creatures that were fit for food, and some inhabitants."⁸¹ Defoe is a remarkably keen observer; he has the explorer's sense of perception while Lesage serves as the

80. Le Chevalier de Beauchêne, Bk. VI, Ch. I.

81. Captain Singleton, Edited by G. A. Aitkens, p. 134.

Commentator, who remarks on everything new he sees without being especially concerned about the novelty of the adventure. Despite the coincidences of these North African travels which are after all not unusual in any voyage or travel book of the period, the relation is not sufficiently striking to justify a conclusion unless it be a purely negative one. This illustration merely goes to show that the prevalent theory that Defoe was indebted to Lesage, can be reversed and Lesage's indebtedness to Defoe proved with as much authority and accurateness - if at all. The question of their literary relationships is of little importance in the comparison of their works and in the final estimation of their genius. Whether Defoe did or did not read Gil Blas is immaterial, as it is generally recognized that he did not employ the Spanish picaresque tales from which Gil Blas descended.

Both Lesage and Defoe, in keeping with the conventions of the period profess a moral purpose in writing their histories, but frequently they forget the purpose as announced in the preface, and are carried away by their interest in the fable. "Utile et dulci" is the motto of Lesage's agreeable Gil Blas; and, having announced his commendatory aim in the prefatory statement, he blithely forgets the useful and remembers only to play the agreeable, producing, as a result, the book which amiable critics designate as "moral comme l'experience". Defoe, in marked contrast, is frequently not far removed from his didactic intentions. Whenever his characters become enamoured of their own guilt, and the narration becomes piquantly interesting, the author leads his actors aside and exhorts them to repent in the orthodox fashion. They return to the stage with protestations of their sinfulness, fully determined to be saved, but a gold vest or a silk handkerchief captivates their fancy and another

fall from grace results. Notwithstanding the inability of Defoe's characters to point the moral which he presents in the preface, it is evident that he is making a serious attempt to direct public attention to the need of reforms in charities, education, and prison conditions. In the preface to Colonel Jack, which has previously been discussed, he points out the advantages of education and good training for poor neglected children, and how, with the benefits of organized charities, many homeless youths would be saved from a shameful death on the gallows. In Moll Flanders he recommends "virtue and generosity" and exposes "all sorts of vice and corruption of manners." He uses the history of Moll Flanders' degradation and viciousness as a warning to vain young ladies, and attempts to show through her repentance that no matter how low and despicable a human creature may become, there is still room for deliverance. In the preface to Roxana, the Court Mistress, Defoe states his purpose to paint vice in "lowerized colors"; he attempts to prove through Roxana's own confessions and acknowledgments that the pleasure of her wickedness was not worth the satisfaction of her repentance. But he fails to produce the desired result, for the narration of Roxana's amours and intrigues is decidedly more convincing than her belated repentance. In Captain Singleton, Defoe apologizes less for his character's vices and is more carried away by the Captain's rogueries. The Captain confesses that as a lad he had no sense of virtue or religion, nor does he regret the state of his conscience, hardened against all impressions of honesty and humanity. The Captain accepts his fate as inevitable and appropriate, and fails to repent for his wicked career until he finally decides to reform after his hazardous adventures as a pirate cease to attract.

Notwithstanding Defoe's continual apologies for the characters and incidents which he portrays, he never worries greatly over their shocking revelations and obvious immorality, for his primary object is to effect a good sale and secure a few pounds of profit. His writings are all for a practical purpose and the reform which he meditates is not infrequently neglected in the relation. It is true that in Moll Flanders the moral purpose continues in evidence through the larger part of the narrative, but in Captain Singleton and Colonel Jack the prefatory announcements are neglected for the more fascinating accounts of rogueries.

This didactic quality in Defoe's fiction weighs heavily upon its literary merits, and the frequent intrusion of the author into the story by way of the repentant confessor, mars the excellence of the narration of incidents. As M. Taine so nicely puts it, "His whole delight was to think he had a service to perform and that he was performing it."⁸² The curious thing about the reformation of his characters is that they are only superficial conformings to the author's demands - they never really change or develop - they merely repent to ease their author's conscience as well as their own - they wait until adventure ceases to lure them, and they are assured of a good income. As the Colonel says, they "repent at leisure".

We have seen that the didactic element of Le Diable Boiteux hampered Lesage and spoiled the artistic effect of the whole, while in Gil Blas, the apparent neglect of any moral intention rendered the work infinitely more entertaining. But in Defoe's case, it is doubtful that an omission of the didactic quality would have improved the literary excellence of the histories. For Defoe enjoyed hav-

82. Taine, History of English Literature, Trans. by Van Laun, Vol. III, p. 259.

ing the concrete foundation of a moral aim on which he could erect low characters to justify his conclusions that vice should be rewarded with misery and virtue with repentance and happiness. He never delved very far into his purpose, but his practical bent of mind, together with his dissenting middle-class convictions of morality, perhaps persuaded him to conclude that the mere statement of a moral aim would affect the reading public. It is not to be wondered that he reveled in the bourgeois consciousness that his criminal narratives would turn a pretty penny and incidentally work some reform in the corrupt world.

Just as the literary sources and moral purposes of the two authors differ noticeably, so their genius is at marked variance. Lesage's genius is typically French. He has the "élan", the sprightly attack and subtle wit of a Marivaux together with the epigrammatic irony of a La Bruyère or a Saint-Simon. His nimble mind is ever ready to reveal another character - another condition, and set it off with perspicuous neatness of phrasing.

Lesage lived in the realm of letters and yet he mingled with the crowd. He was the first French writer to earn a living by his pen. He tried the Spanish theater and produced numerous translations and adaptations of Spanish plays; he then turned to creative drama and later to the picaresque tale. His imitation of the Seventeenth century literature made him belong more to the classic age than to his own times. Besides being a student of the theater and of the classic writers of France, Lesage was a remarkably keen observer of men and their customs. He frequented the cafés and boulevards of Paris, and studied the "comédie humaine" which thronged the streets and the markets. He was a sensible bourgeois whose shrewd intellect grasped the relative importance of matters. He

saw humanity as essentially mediocre, yet interesting by reason of its complexity. He glimpsed the imaginative possibilities of a situation and developed it with all his facile wit and humor. He was keenly alive to the low and ridiculous in life. Yet this knowledge did not agitate him greatly. He had the calm impersonal understanding of a philosopher who remains undisturbed by moral interests and spiritual conflicts. His impersonal, detached manner of observation, together with his objective methods of composition, are in total contrast to the methods of the English Defoe.

The genius of Defoe is quite opposed to the nimble wit and impersonal observations of Lesage. Defoe was a respectable, middle-class Dissenter, with a large fund of practical good sense and a capacity for detailed information. Primarily, a business man and a politician he was naturally keen and far-sighted with little inclination for the purely pleasurable affairs of life. He was earnest and sincere in his dissenting convictions; he believed in religious toleration and hated the abuse of power. M. Taine calls attention to his "business man's type of imagination". It is, perhaps, rather the imagination of a sturdy child who demands concrete evidence to satisfy his curiosity. Defoe was interested in politics, in trade and in journalism; quite naturally, he turned his imagination on historical subjects, on commercial projects and on contemporary sensations. Piracies, remote countries, cargoes, thefts, plantations, and long journeys occupy his imaginative activities. Robinson Crusoe travels across the Siberian plains, Captain Singleton crosses Africa, Colonel Jack goes back and forth to his American plantation and Roxana alternates between Paris and London.

Of Defoe's literary tastes we know very little beyond the contents of his library, which consisted for the most part of polit-

ical tracts, commercial projects, and books of travel. Defoe was essentially an active man and it is safe to assume that he drew largely on the material which he collected as a journalist for his fictitious narratives, rather than on literary sources. He mingled with the bustling, active crowd of traders and the lower class of sailors; from his imprisonment in Newgate he became acquainted with the criminal class of thieves and prostitutes and observed all the darker aspects of humanity. But he failed to grasp the complexity of human nature or the inner workings of his characters' minds. He observed humanity with little sympathy and understanding; hence it is that he never penetrates beyond mere external conditions. He is interested in his characters' actions, but not in the state of mind which causes them to act. "Defoe's characters," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "are so many repetitions of himself, placed under different circumstances and committing crimes in the way of business as Defoe might himself have carried on transactions."⁸³

Both Defoe and Lesage lived in a particularly stirring period, but Lesage, primarily a man of letters, held aloof from the political agitation of his day, while Defoe, the man of the world, plunged recklessly into affairs of state and international relations. Lesage, too, lived as much in the preceding century as in his own time; Defoe was in many respects in advance of his own age. He advocated religious toleration, education of women, reforms in schools, in charities and in prisons. He hated the abuse of power and directed numerous of his pamphlets against tyrannical oppression. His poem, Jure Divino (1706) is a satire against tyranny and the submissive obedience of the public. Defoe was an intense party man, and although his political career cannot bear close investigation by reason of

83. Sir Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, p. 23.

his varied relations with the Whig and Tory parties, it is nevertheless evident that he was a loyal citizen, anxious for the glory of England abroad and her justice at home.

In their choice of subjects both writers show a marked predilection for low characters. They are interested in the seamy, more degraded side of life. In Defoe, low characters predominate almost to the exclusion of any finer types; thieves, prostitutes, pirates and sailors mingle freely, content with their own virtues and attractions. In Roxana, The Court Mistress, there are glimpses of high life, but the characters, if anything, are more repulsive than in the former histories; perhaps because Defoe was quite unfamiliar with the scenes and characters he was depicting. Defoe's field was comparatively limited by his choice of subject; he chose only to represent conditions and characters in low life. Lesage, on the other hand, continued the vast perspectives of the Seventeenth century. He mingles all classes and all conditions; picares and servants form only a small part of his narrative; it is crowded with soldiers, actors, poets, ministers of state, bishops, doctors, courtesans and bourgeois. Both men took their characters and incidents largely from direct observation. - Lesage is, perhaps, more of an impersonal onlooker, who transcribes his observations faithfully without allowing moral interests to intrude. It is true that his psychological analysis is not profound, but, despite this failing, his observations live by reason of his ability to vivify them and create them anew. He understood the variety in human nature, its selfishness and its romance; he was keenly alive to new impressions as is his character, Gil Blas, whose comments on the various masters he serves, are shrewd, impersonal and detached, yet essentially human. Defoe observed, but never grasped the significance of what he saw. There is a variety of form, but no

color in his pictures of life - he lacks the finer imaginative sensibilities of a poet and a philosopher. He cannot understand the varying moods of his characters; consequently, they are all after the same pattern. Like their creator, they possess no fine sentiments or elevating passions. They discourse on virtue with great readiness and yet they never live up to the moral standard which their author has determined for them. Their moral antennae are as blunt and as little sensitive as any of Smollett's rogues. The characters, Moll and Roxana, especially, exhibit the pachydermatous conscience of hardened criminals. The boy Jack is more human and lovable than the prosperous merchant into which he later develops, who discourses on his mercantile success and military prowess with all the afflatus of a Member of the Board of Trade.

Defoe is usually commended for his remarkable character drawing, his understanding of the emotions, jealousies and aspirations of low characters - a young Street Arab, a common prostitute, or a daring pirate. He is, in fact, superior to Lesage in his ability to draw a character without giving an introductory full length portrait; but his characters never develop or change essentially, even though they outwardly reform. Gil Blas develops into a mellow philosopher, although he still retains a bit of his early cynicism and picaresque training. Defoe's Moll and Roxana are much the same throughout the entire relation;- despite their continued strivings after virtue, they never succeed in arousing their moral sluggishness to a consciousness of their degradation. They are in the end much as they were in the beginning - it is true, Roxana dies in prison and Moll retires with her husband and a comfortable income to repent at leisure, but Moll is still vain and Roxana, greedy. Their repentance is merely an outward conformance to the demands of their dissenting author.

Although Defoe was interested primarily in characters, he had no perception of "fine shades of character or of character development; the feelings he represents are the simplest, and emotion with him is the exception rather than the rule."⁸⁴ Defoe is interested primarily in his characters' actions, not in commenting on them and drawing a conclusion. Herein, it seems, lies the essential difference between Lesage and Defoe. Lesage watches the procession of characters and points out their foibles; Defoe mingles with the crowd and assists in its actions like the directors of a puppet show. When the boy Jack loses his gold in the hollow tree, he cries out in a rage, runs back and forth, and wrings his hands; when he regains it, he shouts and laughs. The emotions of Defoe's characters are never interpreted or analyzed. They usually are manifested in a primitive fashion and acted out in the manner of charades. When Robinson Crusoe discovers the foot-prints of savages, he is terrified and vociferously announces his fright to the silent island. The people of Defoe's narratives never reflect: they never conceal their emotions - on the contrary, they discourse extensively on the slightest provocation. The author intrudes himself into his characters' actions, perhaps because they are all after the same piece, and that Mr. Daniel Defoe. He does not interpret their actions, he merely exhibits them in all their familiar confidences. Lesage, by his comments, serves to partially reveal his characters' motives and feelings, but he fails to produce the illusion of reality; perhaps because he is so fond of caricature.

Defoe's characters are on the whole more human and convincing than those of Lesage, either because they are fewer and more simple,

84. Chandler, Literature of Roguery, Vol. II, p. 293.

or because they are more discursive and confiding. We feel that they are faulty and often vicious, but robust, vigorous, hardy, and possessed of a good understanding which reflects the practical good sense of their creator. Defoe's interest is primarily in character delineation rather than in incidents, so it is not surprising that he surpasses his French contemporary in adhering to the unity of character. With him the plot is secondary and serves only as a stage on which the hero and heroine recite the role which the author has prepared in accordance with his dissenting convictions. Lesage's aim is to recount tricks and satirize manners, so that with him the plot is of equal importance with the characters, especially as it serves to throw a new light on contemporary manners.

The narrative methods of the two writers are indicative of their own particular temperaments. Defoe's factual imagination and his practical good sense serve him well. He narrates simply and forcefully each minute detail of his observation, but he never distinguishes between the really important and the trivial. He never pauses by the way or gets entangled in varied and numerous threads of narrative, because the plot is simple, the subjects elementary, and his primary concern is to draw character rather than to develop incidents. Lesage, on the other hand, has numerous threads of narrative which cross and recross throughout the adventurous career of Gil Blas. These are constantly dropped and gathered up again after they are apparently forgotten, and finally in the conclusion are assembled and loosely knotted. Defoe employs the picaresque device of leaving a few stray ends as in the story of Roxana:— her maid, Amy, never really confesses to the murder of Roxana's daughter, and yet it is understood by both Roxana and the reader.

Defoe also uses literary devices to produce the illusion of

reality. He is usually recommended for his remarkable power of creating verisimilitude, which is, after all, rather simple and obvious. It requires an inexhaustible patience, an ability for close detail, and a total lack of perspective which makes possible the magnifying of minor incidents. This quality Defoe had, together with a concrete imagination and a journalistic skill in lying like the truth. He employs all the little devices for gaining reality; insignificant detail and pretended disinterestedness of the narrator, as well as various hints as to the impossibility of the story, which only serve to convince the reader of its probability. In the preface to Roxana, he states that perhaps all these relations may not prove true, but "the writer knows the first part of the story to be the truth, although he cannot vouch for the last part, because it lay abroad.....yet as she has told it herself we have the less reason to question the truth of that part also."⁸⁵ Similarly, in the preface to Moll Flanders, he asserts that the history is genuine, "although the original of this story is put into new words, and the style of the famous lady we speak of is here a little altered."⁸⁶ Defoe seemed to think that a novel had to pretend to tell a true history and indicate a worthy moral in order to justify its creation.

Defoe employs his narrative methods primarily to reveal character. Hence, it follows that the plot is comparatively slight and the incidents secondary. In Moll Flanders, the narrator follows his heroine through her successive lapses from virtue, her marriages and her widowhoods - her commercial ventures, her thefts and imprisonment at Newgate, her transportation to Virginia, and her final re-

85. Roxana, G. A. Aitken edition, Preface.

86. Moll Flanders, Preface.

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penance upon her return to England with her husband and one of her numerous sons. Similarly Colonel Jack is concerned with his early thefts, his commercial enterprises and his military prowess; Captain Singleton with piracies, and Roxana with intrigue and low relations. In Roxana, Defoe approaches the novel of manners; he attempts the "circular" plot, but the whole lacks unity and interest. The characters are for the most part unnatural, perhaps because Defoe is going outside of his own sphere in dealing with court ladies and gentlemen rather than inmates of Newgate and tradespeople. The plot in any one of his narratives is slight and easy to follow. In Lesage, incidents are equally important with character and the plot is more complex and elaborate by reason of the numerous classes which are passed in review.

We have seen that Defoe is superior to his contemporary, Lesage, in character portrayal and in creating verisimilitude by enumerative detail; that Lesage is more capable of developing incidents and episodes and in creating a little world in which all classes and conditions move, and that both are equally skillful in methods of narration.

The style of the two writers is peculiarly adapted to the narrations which they propose to relate. Lesage, in writing a satire directed partly against preciosité, uses a simple, natural language, clear and perspicuous, with plenty of neat epigrams and fine aphorisms to lend it color. Defoe is telling a simple story; consequently his style is plain and homely, yet at the same time, forceful, simple and direct. His novels are a development from his journalistic writings; in them are exhibited all the vigor, clearness and accuracy of his earlier career as a pamphleteer. His aim to make his story appear authentic obliged him to indulge in unnecessary detail,

so that frequently the force and expressiveness of his style are wasted on dull and trivial relations. In the case of Lesage the language is perhaps too continually clever - the brilliancy never ceases. Defoe's manner, although for the most part familiar and direct, inclines frequently toward the oratorical: "How strange a chequer-work of Providence is the life of man! and by what secret differing springs are the affections hurried about as different circumstances present! To-day we love what tomorrow we hate; today we seek what tomorrow we shun; today we desire what tomorrow we fear; nay, even tremble at the apprehensions of."⁸⁷ Or, take an example of his more familiar conversational manner. "I was not averse to a tradesman; but then I would have a tradesman, forsooth, that was something of a gentleman too; that when my husband had a mind to carry me to court or to the play, he might become a sword, and look as like a gentleman as another man; and not like one that had the neck of his apron-strings upon his coat, or the mark of his hat upon his periwig; that should look as if he was set to his sword, when his sword was put on him, and that carried his trade in his countenance."⁸⁸ Defoe is master of a clear, forceful narrative prose which compensates for its lack of charm by its naturalness and simplicity. He has nothing of the elegancies and neat phrasings of Lesage, but he has his art of easy narrative which is supplemented by a multiplicity of detail and minute observations.

A brief summary of the points made in the foregoing comparison may serve to indicate more clearly the exact differences and likenesses of these two writers of rogue romances. Lesage used the Spanish picaresque type as his literary model in developing Le Diable

87. Robinson Crusoe: The Works of Daniel Defoe, Boston, p. 80.

88. Moll Flanders: Lee & Shepard Co., Edition de Luxe, p. 77.

Boiteux and Gil Blas; Defoe used the matter of criminal biographies in forming his tales of rogueries. Whether or not Defoe was influenced by Lesage's Gil Blas remains a debatable question. Both authors profess a didactic purpose in writing their narratives; but in reality they frequently neglect this stated moral aim for the more fascinating account of rogueries. Lesage as well as Defoe chooses his characters from low life, but in Lesage's "histories" a variety of characters and classes is introduced in keeping with his purpose of depicting a "comédie humaine". Defoe is interested chiefly in character delineation and Lesage in inventing episodes; hence it follows that Defoe is superior in character drawing, and Lesage, in developing incidents. The style of the two writers reflects their training and their period; Lesage uses the epigrammatic irony of the Seventeenth century classical school and the brilliant aphoristic phrasings of his own early comedies - Defoe continues the repertorial manner of his earlier labours in the journalistic field and develops a vigorous prose style, not entirely unlike that of Seventeenth century writers of criminal biographies.

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