

common on paper; they seek to embellish their narratives, as they think, by philosophic speculations and reflections; they are anxious to shine, and people who are anxious to shine can never tell a plain story.'

He really seemed to consider Defoe the greatest of all English writers. A passage from *Moll Flanders* upon conscience which he was fond of quoting was his chief solace in those troubles which he, like all men, vexed with a morbid conscientiousness, sometimes knew.

It is a curious subject of speculation whether the recent revival of interest in Borrow's writings will bring about a revival of interest in the writings of the master himself. And should such a revival take place another interesting subject of speculation will arise—What will be the effect of Defoe's simple, lucid, direct style of narrative upon the style of the prose fiction of the twentieth century?

But suppose that a radical change in the public taste should take place in regard to the style of prose fiction, what then will become of the clever group of story-tellers whom a critic has lately been making the subject of his good-natured *badinage* under the name of "the mock-Meredithians"? Speaking of the revered novelist whom these writers are supposed to be mimicking, this critic says:

Great as he is, he would be greater still if, when he is delivering his priceless gifts to us, he would bear in mind that immortal injunction in *King Henry the Fourth*—'I prithee now, deliver them like a man of this world.' . . . To be a classic—to be immortal—it is necessary for an imaginative writer to deliver his message like 'a man of this world.' Dr. Johnson said that all work which lives is without eccentricity. . . . I long to set my imagination free of the author and fly away with his characters, as I can fly away with the characters of the classic imaginative writers from Homer down to Sir Walter Scott.

Down to the time of Godwin and Brockden Brown the influence was immense of Defoe's method, so