

vions sensations, emotions, and experiences, would it be difficult to establish the theory that creative imagination belongs to advanced years rather than to youth? When we consider the work of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Milton, Cervantes, Le Sage, Victor Hugo, Tolstoi, Ibsen, would it be rash to affirm that the force which in youth was fancy more or less lawless, grows among men of true genius into a vitalising imagination with the progress of years? This was the opinion of George Borrow, who well knew that his own *Lavengro*, published when he was close upon fifty, was really his masterpiece, although the critics did not then know it. All readers of that work will recall his splendid tribute to Defoe in the third chapter of the book :

‘Hail to thee, spirit of De Foe ! What does not my own poor self owe to thee ? England has better hards than either Greece or Rome, yet I could spare them easier far than De Foe, “unabashed De Foe,” as the hunchbacked rhymers styled him.’

The truth is that even yet criticism has not done full justice to the power of Defoe’s genius. No one will deny that to produce the delicate bijouterie work of Jane Austen in *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, etc., requires a genius delightful and rare, but how very much rarer is the imagination of the man who can bring before us as vividly as Jane Austen brings her parlour scenes, the entire atmosphere of Juan Fernandez, and without having seen a tropical island in his life. Not that I can go as far as Carlyle when he says, ‘Homer surpasses all men in clearness of sight, but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe.’ This, of course, is as absurd as are Macaulay’s words about Jane Austen and Shakespeare. Notwithstanding all the objectivity of the Homeric poems, it is not to writers like Defoe that we turn for the Homeric clearness of sight. It is to the delineators of character—it is to Shakespeare, to Cervantes,—whose work affords the best parallels to the work of Homer. The difference between the imaginative belief to