

INTRODUCTION

I

DEFOE'S PLACE IN THE RENASCENCE OF WONDER

As I have said in my essay upon 'the Renaissance of Wonder,' although in the poetry of the eighteenth century this renaissance shows but feeble movements until we get to Parrell, it is different with the prose men such as Swift, Defoe, and other writers of voyages imaginaires. *Robinson Crusoe* holds for ever its position among the classics of the world. And as to *Captain Singleton* its influence upon all subsequent voyages imaginaires, from *Gaudenzio di Lucca* down to *Allan Gordon*, *Arthur Gordon Pym*, *Treasure Island*, and *King Solomon's Mines*, has been immense.

Speaking of *Robinson Crusoe*, that admirable critic, the author of *Ir Gypsy Tents* and *Kriegspiel*, says, 'Perhaps no man in the whole history of literature ever devised at fifty-eight a more splendid masterpiece of creative imagination.' And *Captain Singleton*, which followed that famous book within a year, ranks only a little below *Robinson Crusoe* in creative imagination because the subject is not so absolutely fascinating.

As to Defoe's age when he wrote these two masterpieces, Swift was about the same age when he wrote his equally famous voyage imaginaire, *Gulliver's Travels*. Seeing that what we call "creation" is merely the kaleidoscopic analysis and synthesis of the artist's pre-