This work\textsuperscript{1} has gone through a surprising number of large editions, and in respect to its general merits we believe it to be the universal opinion, that it is one of the most interesting and entertaining books that was ever written: nor is it destitute of important instruction; for it exhibits in a most striking light the power with which the human mind is endued, to relieve the wants of the body; and to suffer the evils of life with fortitude and resignation under the most distressing circumstances. On these accounts the life of Robinson Crusoe, has been employed in the education of boys, for the purpose of shewing\textsuperscript{2} what ingenuity and industry can effect, under the divine blessing. But a question has arisen whether this book should be put into the hands of \textit{all} boys without discrimination. Our opinion is, that it ought not, for children of very lively imaginations, and accustomed to indulge their fancy without control in their infantine amusements, may undoubtedly, be led by it, into an early taste for a rambling life, and a desire of adventures: an instance of this was related to us as a fact. Two little boys in consequence of reading the \textit{History of Robinson Crusoe}, set off together from their parents’ houses, in order to embark in some ship, with the hope of being cast on an uninhabited island; and though they certainly did not succeed in their project, it was productive of fatal effects, for the mother of one of them during the time they were missing, was, in consequence of anxiety of mind, seized with an illness which shortly put a period to her days. Caution, therefore, in respect to the temper and disposition of a child ought to be used, before a work of so fascinating a nature is put into his hands; but where the mind and temper have been properly regulated, it may be safety used as a stimulus to mental and bodily exertion, and patient perseverance.

The author of the book foreseeing that his young readers might from his narrative be diverted from the line of life prescribed for them by their parents, has very properly pointed out, and in very strong colours, the misery which follows the breach of filial duty; but these reflections we apprehend are commonly overlooked, when the curiosity of the mind is strongly excited, and the feelings powerfully engaged, by the circumstances of the story; however, we are glad to find, that the hero of this engaging tale, though careless in respect to religion in his early days, is made a good and pious Christian at last; and that the Bible was the means of his conversion, and the instrument made use of by him for converting his faithful savage, Friday. Some of his opinions, however, are not accurate, for he, in the first volume, is made to declare himself no friend to church government; yet in the second, he is described as leaning to the doctrines of the Roman Catholics, at least a Romish priest is exhibited as the perfection of the ministerial character. This volume did not make a part of the original work, it was added afterwards in consequence of the wonderful sale of the first volume; but it is very inferior to it; and on many accounts totally unfit for the perusal of children.

The following verses by the late Mr Cowper seem to lay claim to insertion in this place. [cites Cowper’s 1782 poem]

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{The History of Robinson Crusoe} was written by Daniel Defoe, and is said to have been founded upon the adventure of Alexander Selkirk, who was left by the captain of a ship, in which he had been mutinous, on the island of Juan Fernandez, where he led a solitary life for a number of years.

\textsuperscript{2} We place the work under this head, as being more properly a System of Education than a child’s book.

The New Robinson Crusoe, an instructive and entertaining History for the Use of Children of both Sexes, by Mr Campe, translated from the French, and embellished with Thirty-two beautiful Cuts. Stockdale. 1789.

Mr Campe, we believe, is a chief person amongst those German literati, who employ their talents in preparing elementary books for the instruction of children upon the principles of natural reason. The work before us, as we learn from the preface, is indebted to Rousseau's Emilius for the form it bears.

“I never read,” says Mr Campe, “the following passage in the second volume of Emilius without the most sensible satisfaction. Nothing upon earth can be so well calculated to inspire one with ardour in the execution of a plan approved by so great a genius.”

“Might there not be found means,” says Rousseau, “to bring together so many lessons of instruction that lie scattered in so many books; to apply them through a single object of a familiar and not uncommon nature, capable of engaging the imitation, as well as rousing and fixing the attention even at so tender an age? If one could imagine a situation in which all the natural wants of man appear in the clearest light to the understanding of a child, and in which the means of satisfying these wants unfold themselves successively in the same clear, easy manner, the lively and natural description of such a state should be the first means that I would use to set his imagination at work.”

“I see thine expand already, thou ardent philosopher. But be not in pain; we have found such a situation. It is described, and, no disparagement to your talents, much better than you would describe it yourself, at least with more truth and simplicity. Since we must have books, there is one that furnishes, in my opinion, the best imagined treatise upon natural education that can possibly be. This book shall be the first that I will put into the hands of my Emilius; this singly shall for a long time compose his whole library, and indeed shall always hold a distinguished place there. It shall be the text to which all our discourses upon natural science shall serve as a commentary. It shall be the criterion of our taste and judgment; and, as long as these remain uncorrupted, the reading of it will always be agreeable to us. Well, then, what is this wonderful book? Is it Aristotle, Pliny, Buffon? No: it is Robinson Crusoe.”

Following up this hint of his precursor, Mr Campe has taken the interesting and diverting history of Robinson Crusoe, and turned it into a Treatise of Natural Education, by making the father of a family the narrator of it who intermixes with the adventures of his hero, occasional lectures of his own on natural science and natural religion. The original work (we mean Defoe's Robinson Crusoe) derives much of its effect from being given as the plain simple narrative of a sea-faring man; but Mr Billingsley, the father of the family, tells it in his own words, making grave reflections all the way, and describing, wherever he can introduce his information, the

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1 We place the work under this head, as being more properly a System of Education than a child's book.
process employed in different arts and manufactures, encouraging his children to ask questions, and make their own observations, in order to fix what he teaches in their memories. But very frequently this philosophical father, in order to exercise the patience of his children, practices the foolish experiment of breaking off in a very interesting part of the story, and suspends the continuation of it for several days. A great deal of religions and moral discourse is indeed introduced, and much is said about a particular Providence; but the Religion inculcated in this work is no other than Deism, notwithstanding poor Robinson Crusoe is here deprived of his Bible, and all the comforts of Christianity, and transformed into a Stoic philosopher! What Mr Billingsley wishes to make his children, or rather what Mr Campe would have all children be, the following passage will shew.

*Mr Billingsley* : My dear children, I mentioned to you last night, that, in the affairs of life, the best-founded hopes frequently vanish and end in disappointment. The adventures of Robinson Crusoe have furnished you with frequent instances of this truth, and you have learned, I hope, from them, and the instructions that I have given you, to bear calmly whatever events may happen contrary to your expectations. But I have something farther to propose to you, while we are upon the subject of self-denial, as proper to accompany the practice of that virtue. It is an exercise of the greatest utility, and, with your consent, I will mention it.

*The Children* : Oh, yes, papa! yes, papa!

*Mr Billingsley* : If, then, you desire in the future part of your lives to labour in strengthening your bodies, and exalting the powers of your minds, to the end that you may become distinguished characters, and capable of contributing effectually to the happiness of your fellow-creatures, and thereby to enhance your own, I offer to you, for that purpose, the following plan.

I will, on my side, read to you, for your instruction, the writings of the ancient philosophers who were preceptors to the illustrious persons whom you so much admired when I went over the ancient history with you. These writings contain the precepts which such philosophers gave to their scholars, and by the observance of which their scholars became great men. Every week I will write down one of these precepts upon a table covered with white paper; I will explain it to you, and shew you how, in the course of the week, you may acquire, in an easy and agreeable manner, the practice of it. Yet, you must not expect that this can be done without sometimes costing you a sacrifice; you must, at one time, resolve to deprive yourselves of a favourite amusement; at another, to bear with things very disagreeable. This is the true way to acquire that masculine courage which is to assist us in conquering our irregular inclinations, and in preserving a prudent equanimity upon all occasions of loss, disappointment, and danger. As to us who are advanced in life, we shall not be contented with merely pointing out the path to you; we will walk in it ourselves, and be your guides: in short, we shall advise you to nothing of which we shall not at the same
time shew you the example. What say you, my dear children, to this proposal?

_The Children_: We agree to it; we agree to it.

The following instructions which Robinson Crusoe gives to his man Friday, are those of a _Deist_, not of a _Christian_.

From that moment he laboured seriously to give him juster notions both of the Supreme Being and of a future state. He taught him that God is an invisible being, almighty, infinitely wise and good; that he created all things, governs and upholds all things; that he himself is without beginning, is everywhere present, knows all our thoughts, hears our words, and sees all our actions; that he delights in good and abhors evil, and that he will make happy in this life, and in that which is to come, those who endeavour, with all their heart, and with all their strength, to become better and better every day.

The following prayer full, as it is, of expressions of fervent devotion, is not the prayer of a _Christian_, for though it speaks of _inward heavenly consolations_, not a word is said of the Redeemer and Sanctifier, through whom, and by whom alone their consolations can come.

“Oh! heavenly Father, how shall I sufficiently thank thee for all that thou hast hitherto done for me! Unable as I am to express in words the whole ardour of my thoughts, suffer me to manifest them also by the lowly posture of adoration. On my knees, or prostrate with my face to the ground, or rolling in the dust, let me, as it were, sink into nothing before thee. But every thing is open to thy eyes; thou readest my heart; thou seest it filled with inexpressible sentiments of the liveliest gratitude. This heart, which thou hast vouchsafed to amend, and which breathes but for thee; this heart, so often filled with sorrow, and so often comforted by thee; this heart, Oh Lord! is all that I can offer thee in return for thy innumerable kindnesses: accept it, therefore, accept it whole, and finish the work which thou hast begun in it. Oh! heavenly Father, receive me in thy arms, to which I commit myself with confidence, and dispose of me according to thy fatherly mercy. May I never forsake the road of virtue in which thy goodness has placed me! Suffer me not, Oh Lord! to abandon it. In this hope I yield myself up to thee; govern me according to thy wise and good pleasure; I will go wherever thou shalt conduct me. I go, with equal tranquillity and confidence in thee; to expose myself, perhaps, to fresh dangers. Vouchsafe still to accompany me, and grant me thy invisible, but effectual safeguard! Watch over my immortal soul, and strengthen it in the trials to which it may be exposed! Preserve my heart from weakness, impatience, and ingratitude towards thee! Oh, heavenly and eternal object of my soul's love, my Creator, my Preserver, my all, my God.”
Here the power of utterance yielded in Robinson to the force of his feelings: with his face to the ground, he had only strength to weep. Encouraged, however, at length, by secret consolations from above, he rose up and cast his eyes once more upon the country which he was going to leave, and which seemed, on that account, to become more dear to him.

Many other passages might be produced to skew, that it is natural, and not revealed Religion, which the author of this book means to inculcate; a circumstance sufficient in itself to give a decided preference to the original work.