

absence of decency. His object, like that of the Realists before him, was to be true to life, and his ambition was to make his description of society so accurate that philosophical laws could be immediately deduced from it. Balzac, who towered above him as an artist, had cherished the same hope, and we do not feel that he succeeded. The laws of the moral world have been obscured rather than emphasized by dramatists and novelists; and it was not until the nineteenth century that people went to them for the ethical guidance which they sadly need themselves. As a matter of fact, Zola, in spite of his philosophical pretensions, only produced a one-sided picture of the lowest society; if one went by his thirty volumes it would seem as if there were only one class in France, and all the representatives of that class were vicious. But he was unequalled in his particular *genre*, and Anatole France could say with mock admiration that nobody had been able to heap up such a dunghill. The result of Zola's success was double: it confirmed the French in the outspokenness they frequently affect, and it convinced foreigners that a nation which they supposed to be represented by such a writer was in a very bad way.

Anatole France, whose success pushed Zola into the shade, is apparently very different from the latter. He is supremely exquisite, dainty, and light-handed, with dashes of cynicism which lend to his elegance something akin to force; he has knowledge and intelligence, he is merciful to human weaknesses and full of pity for sorrow. But all these fascinating appearances do not prevent him from being fundamentally only another Zola. The brutes whom Zola depicted were automata submitted to the laws of a world in which physical instincts reign supreme; but so are the flitting