

as a mere tale-teller; but from the beginning, he took his calling seriously. Mr. Howell's Americanism is beyond doubt and above reproach. His view of life is profoundly in harmony with views expressed in the Declaration of Independence and reiterated in thousands of less renowned political documents issued annually in the United States, very useful to the people for recalling higher things, just as family prayers are, even if nobody listens. His thought about literature, and art, and the strange ways of foreign peoples are impregnated with his political convictions. His literary qualities strike one most by their energy and brilliancy, like his native air and sunshine. His language—a tender subject—is American, and his deliberate avoidance of sensuality, one may almost say, studied slight to the senses, links him closely to the good folk of the pastoral epoch before the War. He is as American, as Aeschylus is Greek, or Balzac French, or Shakespeare Elizabethan English, but I do not mean to say that he is also universal as they are, or as Hawthorne is.

Thirty years ago the French, who cannot really enjoy any form of art until specimens are compared, and classified, and bunched together in a school, agreed to call the fiction of the moment "realistic." To persons of inferior intelligence, it had always seemed realistic enough. The preceding school, labelled "romantic" had not devoted much attention to any subject but the passion of love, which was portrayed with enough sensuous ardour to make its enjoyment appear the only object of life. The realists and after them the naturalists and impressionists used the same theme, adding to description and drama, minute psychological analysis. They left nothing unsaid. That detached impersonal manner which is the husk of their realism and that psychological analysis which is the intellectual decoration fascinated some persons concerned to establish an American school of fiction. Few of them seemed to perceive that a manner and a decoration which could complete the literary exposition of one subject might utterly fail to give value to others. American novelists proposed to themselves for obvious reasons to ignore the core,