Setting in the novels of William Dean Howells

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SETTING IN THE NOVELS
of
WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

BY
SARA McBRIDE

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Setting in the Novels of William Dean Howells.

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1. General consideration of setting in the novel
   
   A. Setting defined
   
   "What did the place look like?", "Where could such a thing happen?", "What kind of home surroundings did they have?", "How could he do otherwise in such a community?"—expressions like these are commonplaces in conversation; and just this same element—the setting of the story—the novelist is bound to develop. Formally analyzed, the setting or background of a novel may be defined as the presentation of such definite details of time, place, and general pictorial background as will make the place visible to the reader, the characters real, and the action plausible. It is all that stage setting is in presenting a drama, and more, because the novelist is not limited to such means of description as is the producer of plays. Play-goers must see the background, they grow impatient over much spoken suggestion of it; but the reader of the novel may receive his impression of the setting through many channels closed to the play-goers who must see and hear all within a two or three hours' presentation. Whether the novelist presents the setting merely to show what the place looked like, or to build up an atmosphere harmonizing with the general theme of the story, or to explain why such surroundings produced the type of character and action presented, he has, in the more leisurely development of the story, many more means than has the dramatist of transferring to
the reader his own conception of the setting. He may use objective
description, or he may build up a background through presenting
character reaction to it, or he may, as in many novels of adventure,
by explanation of the reasonableness of plot details, suggest clearly
the setting. Whatever the object or the method, setting is so
vital an element of the novel that often we can scarcely disassociate it from character and from action; in fact the more skilfully
the novel is developed, the more closely are the three elements
fused.

B. Importance now attached to setting

Although this paper is not concerned with the history of the
development of setting or background as an element in the story,
it is interesting to note that necessary as this element seems to
us now, it was not until the latter part of the 18th century at
the time when Rousseau's depicting of nature as influencing charac-
ter and action found many imitators, that even landscape setting
came to be considered an "integral part of the prose itself".

It is an old and established element of poetry, as witness the
poetry of Chaucer, Spenser and Shakespeare, all of whom often made
it serve frequently as an "integral part" of their stories. Mr.
Clayton Hamilton has traced an interesting analogy between the
development of background in figure painting and in story telling,
and he has shown the gradual evolution of that element in both
parts from the crude beginnings through the decorative stage up to
the present time when background is in essentially intimate
relationship with character and action. In our time every reader
demands in a novel a well defined setting which must give artistic pleasure, (2) add its weight of evidence to the probability of the plot, (3) aid in the understanding of character. The "somewhere" in which the story takes place must be convincingly presented whether the story be a romantic tale or a sociological novel; whatever method the novelist may choose in presenting the setting, he builds up, by objective descriptions, by explanations, by suggestions so skilfully introduced as almost to defy analysis, a background acceptable to his readers' experience and imagination. A statement from Clayton Hamilton is worth quoting here:

"Novelists have come to consider that any given story can happen only in a given set of circumstances, and if the setting be changed, the action must be altered and the characters differently drawn. It is, therefore, impossible in the best fiction of the present day to consider the setting as divorced from the other elements of the narrative. There was a time, to be sure, when description for its own sake existed in novels, and the action was halted to permit the introduction of pictorial passages bearing no necessary relation to the business of the story,—"blocks" of setting, as it were, which might be removed without detriment to the progression of the narrative. But the practice of the best contemporary novelists is summed up and expressed by Mr. Henry James in the emphatic sentence from his essay in The Art of Fiction: "I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive,
in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative."

C. Place of setting in the novel.

1. What the setting accomplishes

Sheldon L. Whitcomb has discussed the service of the setting to the novel as follows:

"Every action as a whole and the incidents which compose it must occur in some definite environment of time, place and circumstances.--------
The imagination in general takes relatively little delight in the mere outline of an action, and a primary value of the settings is to increase interest—to give warmth, concreteness and individuality to events. The settings of a novel are often of special service in aiding the illusion as well as in deepening the unity, beauty, and human significance of the fictitious action."

In The Technique of a Novel, Chas. F. Horne sums up the effect of eliminating background from a novel:

"The result would be a mere scenario, a list of events, a series of notes waiting to be expanded.------ The man can only move as he is swayed by his emotions; and the movement can only be seen externally in its effect on his surroundings, his background."
The same idea has been expressed in a more definite way by Prof. E. A. Cross:

"The background of a story is made up of all the elements which the author combines to prevent the action from seeming to take place in some vague blank locality. In other words, the setting gives to the characters and incidents "local habitation and a name." Again, he has remarked, "Background for a story serves the same purpose as background in a picture or the setting of a drama--painted scenery, costumes, properties, comment of secondary characters, movements of supernumeraries."

Necessary as background is, it is of course subsidiary to plot and character and unless it is thus handled it becomes a drawback instead of an aid to the story. In discussing the function of setting, Chas. F. Horne remarks, "I know of no critic who has yet come forward to assert flatly that the background is the chief essential of a work. Attention, however, has been called by Prof. Perry to the fact that two authors as widely differing as Stevenson and Eliot both record that their stories sometimes had origin in the conception of a background of setting. Into the scene they would afterwards insert characters and around them build up a story to express the mood."
the mood or picture that had first impressed them."
In general the method seems to be the reverse; the author works from character and action to appropriate setting.

2. Setting not an end in itself in the novel.

The setting of a novel is not then an end in itself: "mere novelty of setting or even mere scholarly fulness of reproduction is not an important end in itself, that is, for the novel. A skilful harmony between the simplest folk and the simplest environment will communicate more and endure longer than the greatest elaboration without that harmony." The writer must, however, make the reader feel the reality of the setting; he must make that setting appropriate for the incidents and the characters involved. Such simple matters as seasons, type of weather, style in house-furnishings, if rightly handled, will aid in carrying conviction for the whole story; the harmony or the contrast between mood and surroundings is always an element of interest in real life and therefore likewise in the story. A reasonable amount of interest in background for the sake of its intrinsic beauty or unusualness or for the accuracy of its description may be counted upon; yet, worthwhile in itself and striking as any description of background may be, one may safely say that if it does not serve a definite function in the novel in relation to character or action or in the giving of the atmosphere of the story, it is merely decoration which the author should have elic-
minated or have introduced in some other form.

D. Summary of ends served by setting in the novel.

After analyzing the various statements made in regard to setting in the novel and after considering setting as presented in various good novels, it is possible to summarize the ends which setting serves in some such list as this:

1. To give pure pleasure.
2. To accentuate local color; to build up "social background."
3. To explain character.
4. To make action plausible.
5. To harmonize or contrast with mood.
6. To give unity of impression to the whole story.

Now it is scarcely probable that a particular setting will attain to one of these ends only; for instance, the accentuation of local color will probably be an element in the explanation of character, or the giving of pure pleasure may well be an element of mood harmony or contrast. Necessarily these ends shade into the other, but it is one or more of these effects which the novelist aims for in his presentation of setting.
II. Aim of this paper.

The aim of this paper is the tracing of Mr. Howells's theory and practice in regard to setting. From scattered statements of his we gather something of his theory—a possessing which he disclaims having—and from selected novels, representative of the various periods of his long activity, we find his practice.

It is not the intention of this paper to regard the technique of the description of setting except in an incidental way. The purpose of the paper is merely the consideration of the effects sought and gained through setting; and an analysis of the artistic devices by which Mr. Howells has worked is not within the scope of this paper.

After considering what Mr. Howells has said on the matter of setting, the paper will take up briefly his practice in his three earliest works, showing his insistence upon the use of setting for its own sake, and it will then discuss somewhat in detail his practice in three later and widely separated novels, *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Kentons* (1902), and *The Leatherwood God* (1916) with the intention of noting advance in skill and change in emphasis. Because they are particularly well known, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, although they represent the same practice in setting as *A Modern Instance*, will be treated in a general way, following the discussion of *A Modern Instance*. 
III. Mr. Howells's statements concerning setting

A. His insistence upon truth.

In Mr. Howells's various discussions of literature and literary methods, we find no discussion of setting as such; he does incidentally comment upon this element of the novel, however, and from these comments, from his sturdy advocacy of realism, and from his practice, we can arrive at his general idea of the value of setting. He has nowhere suggested such a division of the ends served by setting as has been indicated in this paper in I. D., on page seven, but he has recognized in comment upon the work of others, and in his own practice, that setting accomplishes just such results.

As in the other elements of the story,—character, plot, and general effect,—Mr. Howells has insisted upon the importance of being "true", so too we find his insistence upon truthfulness of setting. When he suggests that certain faults of Balzac can be forgiven because "Balzac wrote at a time when fiction was just beginning to verify its externals of life, to portray carefully the outside of man and things," he instances as proof of Balzac's great art, in Le Pere Goriot the exquisitely careful and truthful setting of Balzac's story in the shabby boarding house. "Realism," he tells us, "is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material," and this belief would carry as much force in description of setting as in interpretation of character. In a recent letter Mr. Howells said, "I have not thought about the setting of my
stories except to get it true, as I have thought only to get the charac-

ters in them true." To introduce no element of background which should
not have been verified by his own observation was a definite rule in
his own practice. He recognized, to be sure, that the true was not
only the reproduction of the real but the presentation of that which,
selected and recombined, was imaginatively true. This same idea of
truth he expressed in *Criticism and Fiction* when he proposed the test
question concerning a novel's worth, "Is it true? True to the motives,
the impulses, the principles that shape the life of actual men and
woman?" Just as characters must be imaginatively true, but not nec-
essarily photographically true, so too must setting be. This attri-
but of truth in setting we find one of the most convincing qualities
of Mr. Howells's stories.

B. His regard for pleasure from artistic setting.

From anyone of Mr. Howells's novels, the reader may infer that
the novelist fully appreciates the charm which setting adds to the
story. In his novel, *The Story of a Play*, we find the following lines
which state effectively his own regard for the artistic value of set-
ting, Maxwell, a playwright, is discussing the limitations of the
drama:

"You have to lose a lot of things in writing a play. Now, for
instance, that beautiful green light there in the woods." He point-
ed to the depths of the boscage where it had an almost emerald qual-
ity, it was so vivid, so intense, "If I were writing a story about two
lovers in such a light, and how it bathed their figures and illuminat-
ed their faces, I could make the readers feel it just as I did, I
could make them see it. But if I were putting them in a play, I
should have to trust the carpenter and the scene-painter for the
effect; and you know what broken reeds they are."

And again, following a description of the sea in the deepening twilight with a sympathetic allusion to the mood produced by the time and place on the dramatist and his wife, Mr. Howells has made Maxwell say, "This is the kind of thing you can get only in a novel. You couldn't possibly give the feeling in a play."

C. Mr. Howells's attitude toward local color setting.

Clear presentation of a fresh setting he has found greatly attractive. He praises highly Valera's *Pepita Ximenez* because of the portrayal of the action "in the gay light of an Andalusian sky, for the charm with which a fresh and un hackneyed life is presented, and the fidelity with which novel conditions are sketched."

In discussing the necessity that a book be a true picture of life he says, "It may have no hint of this special civilization or of that: it had better have this local color as well ascertained."

In his own practice this local color is well ascertained and presented, and he has frequently praised such a method in the stories of Mary Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Alice Brown. Time and time again, Mr. Howells has insisted upon the essential difference between the world of the Englishman and that of the American, pointing out the difference in general setting as well as in social conditions. In regard to Matthew Arnold's complaint that he found no distinction in our American life, Howells says:- "Such beauty and such grandeur as we have is common beauty, common grandeur, or the beauty and grandeur in which the quality of solidarity so prevails that neither distinguishes itself to the disadvantage of anything else."
While this applies primarily to the portrayal of characters and social conditions, it gives point to Howells's use of the familiar American background in his novels.

D. Setting and character.

Mr. Howells does not seek to establish in his novels the definite causation of character by environment; he realizes that a person is the result of something more than mere environment, as he shows in *The Kentons* when the author reflects: "Mrs. Kenton could have answered his censure, if she had known it, that daughters, like sons, were not what their mothers but what their environment made them, and that the same environment sometimes made them different, as he saw."

That proper environment may have much to do with our acceptance of character Howells points out incidentally in *The Landlord at Linn’s Head* when he says of Whitwell in Boston, "Westover found him less amusing than he had on his own ground at Lion’s Head, and tasted a quality of commonplace in his deliverances which made him question whether he had not, perhaps, always owed more to this environment than he had suspected."

We expect Mr. Howells to employ setting in such a way as to make his characters stand out vividly in their environment, that environment being either entirely in harmony with the characters as in the case of the quiet, repressed home of Mrs. Langbrith in *The Son* of Royal Langbrith and the ill-furnished, garish Dryfoos parlors in the *Hazard of New Fortunes*, or in marked contrast, as in the presentation of Silas Lapham's character against the background of the Corey home, or explanatory of new aspects of charac-
ter as in Indian Summer when the editor, Calville, removed from Indiana to Florence.

E. His responsiveness to mood appeal in setting.

Again and again both in practice and in criticism Howells has expressed his admiration for the art of Tolstoi and Tourgenief. In My Literary Passions he records the effect upon himself of the reading of the latter author: "My gay American horizons were bathed in the vast melancholy of the Slav, patient, agnostic, trustful. At the same time nature revealed itself to me with an intimacy she had not hitherto shown me-------------. Who else but Tourgenief and one's own most secret self ever felt all the rich sad meaning of the night air drawing in at the window, of the fires burning in the darkness on the distant fields? I try in vain to give some emotion of the subtle sympathy with nature which scarcely put itself into words with him."

Here Howells has stated his regard for the art which makes setting inseparable from character and action; with such a feeling as this he would naturally seek to fuse growing practice after he had fully advanced into effective story writing.

F. Summary of Mr. Howells’s suggestions concerning setting.

(1) Mr. Howells’s general requirement for setting would be then, first, that it should be true and that "true" means not only true to observation but also imaginatively true. Thus his description in The Kentons of Scheveningen Beach, which is very similar to his description of the same place in an essay in Literature and Life is
not more true than is his description of the various rooms of the Gaylord home in *A Modern Instance* or of the parlor of Lydia Bloom's New England home in the *Lady of the Aroostook*, which are imaginatively true. The same use of realistic details marks all.

(2) It follows then that we should expect no background description to carry us beyond the limits of Mr. Howells's personal experiences and we find that to be the case. *New England Villages*, Ohio and Indiana country and town life, Boston, New York City, Venice, Holland, places known intimately and tolerantly if not lovingly, furnish familiar backgrounds.

(3) Last, we should expect that with his love for exactness and accuracy we should find setting a rather obvious element of the story; and this is the case in the earlier stories. It is not until he had been in the craft for many years that Mr. Howells made setting indispensable but subsidiary to character and action.
IV. Mr. Howells's practice in his earliest novels.

In considering the part setting plays in the novels of Mr. Howells, it is necessary first to consider setting in his earliest novels, to discover what he attempted to accomplish there through setting, and then to observe his practice in his later novels. As Mr. Howells has had many years of work as a novelist and as his first books were largely a promise of the marked ability which he later showed, the earliest novels are given a more hasty treatment than the ones selected as examples of his mature work. We expect truth to be as much the guiding principle in the settings of his first novel as in his latest one; we should like to see whether an eagerness for the truthfulness of setting resulted in a disproportionate attention to setting as over against the other elements of the novel.

Any reader who follows Mr. Howells's work in chronological order is conscious that the treatment of background in the three earliest novels differs from that in the novels following. It is not that the author is a less sympathetic and clear-sighted observer in the earlier books than in the later ones or that his skill in transferring his own impressions of setting deserted him as he grew more interested in character; the main difference lies in the finer recognition of the service of setting in the novel and in the greater skill in subordinating the time, place and conditions elements to the character and action elements in the later novels.

Having begun his work as an author with sketches of foreign
life, Mr. Howells passed through a short period in which he presented setting for its own sake. In his first two novels he frankly made a slender bit of plot hold together descriptions of American and Canadian life and scenery, which he had observed in his recent travels; in his third novel he succeeded in large measure in making setting subordinate to character and plot, but he still introduced descriptions of setting for their own interest aside from their relation to the story.

A. Presentation of setting for its own sake.

1. Their Wedding Journey

The evident purpose of The Wedding Journey is the presentation of outstanding points of interest,—cities, modes of travel by boat and by rail, types of fellow-passengers and peculiarities of customs,—which passed in review before the eyes of the wedding-journeyers. As a result, the characters become soon rather pleasant but vague memories, but certain descriptions of life and scenery remain in the reader's mind.

As vivid bits of description of setting one might instance the waiting room of the station with its clearly pictured types of travelers, the night on the train with all its sights and sounds, the day coach in the dreadful heat which Howells makes live before us in many details as vivid as these following: "Now and then a sweltering young mother shifted her hot baby from one arm to another," "A suffering child hung about the empty tank which could only gasp out a cindery drop or two of ice-water," "When the door was opened,
the clatter of the rails struck through and through the car like a
demonic yell." No author can give better than can Howells the im-
pression of the hopeless oppressiveness of summer heat; in story
after story he uses this background of sultry, maddening weather,
but nowhere does he make the reader more conscious of the unescap-
able midsummer torture than in the description of the wedding-jour-
neyer's day in New York City. Kipling has several times very strik-
ingly used the dread Indian heat as a telling element of background,
but whereas he uses it to convey foreboding of dreadful happenings,
Howells presents the torturing heat as all in the day of the average
men, when not even dreadful deeds may lift the torture into the
fields of the heroic. The truthfulness of this type of background
to his own experience may be gained from The Years of My Youth.
In this first novel, from heat-tortured New York the reader wanders
as in a travel sketch to Buffalo, Montreal, Quebec, and Niagara Falls;
but he looks in vain for much action or character interpretation,
for background presented for its own sake dominates the book.


The second novel, A Chance Acquaintance, runs in much the same
way as Their Wedding Journey. The characters are rather more force-
fully drawn than those in the earlier book, in part because of the
use of two main characters in both, but this book is concerned largely
too, with description of scenery for its own sake. Again, steam-boat
travel, bits of picturesque Canadian village-life, the foreign ways
of life and the interesting churches and convents of Quebec and
Montreal live before us. Now and then description of scenery
serves to explain the sympathies and moods of the characters, and setting is used for the purpose of contrast, as in the reaction of the travelers to scenes in the Irish church and in the effect upon the heroine's mood of her observing the peaceful life in the yard of the Ursuline Convent. Mr. Howells spared no pains in making the setting of these stories real; he chose realistic details which fitted well into the general impression which he wished to give, and the result is that the reader becomes more enthusiastically fond of the old places pictured than the author would ever let any reader suspect him of being. Setting, very largely for its own sake, remains the predominant element, then, in the second novel.

B. Growing subordination of setting to character and plot.

1. A Foregone Conclusion

When we reach the third of Howells's novels, *A Foregone Conclusion*, we find him making use of his first hand knowledge of Italian life. The descriptions of Venice are a very vital part of the book, and although they are unnecessarily long and frequent, they are definitely subordinated to the study of character which is the aim of this novel. In this connection, a bit taken from *My Literary Passions* is worth noting. In speaking of the Italian Carlo Goldoni as the first of the realists in spite of his having been born early in the 18th century, Mr. Howells says:

"In the early sixties of our own century I was no more conscious of his realism than he was himself a hundred years before,"
but I had eyes in my head, and I saw that what he had seen in Venice so long before was so true that it was the very life of Venice in my own day—-. But at any rate both [his plays and his autobiography] are associated with the forms and languors of that first summer in Venice, so that I cannot take up a book of Goldoni's without a renewed sense of that sunlight and moonlight, and of the sounds and silences of a city that is at once the stillest and shrillest in the world." We should expect that Howells's own knowledge of Venice added to earlier interest would have resulted in many descriptions, and this was the case.

Some descriptions might be eliminated without the reader's loss of understanding of characters and their relation to one another; we should lose much delightful local color in such case, however. As an instance of this we might cite the excursion on the Canal of the Bretna with the remarkably suggestive descriptions of the spring air "full of vague sweetness," of the "sunset of melancholy red," of the twilight "when the rich sweet breath of the vernal land mingled its odors with the sultry air of the neighboring lagoon," and of the suddenly seen figure of the challenging guard "revealed by a gleam of the moon through the pale, watery clouds." The book abounds in definite pictures of Venetian setting from our first sight of Venice as we follow Don Ippolito's survey of the footway leading from the Campo San Steffano to the Grand Canal, until after many weeks we wave Mr. Ferris early in the dawn at Don Ippolito's door. We see the American Consulate through Don Ippolito's eyes; we feel Venice with its spring sounds
and smells and sights through Mr. Ferris's impressions; through the eyes of the Venetians we see the Armenian convent with its cool parlor and warmgardened court," where the bees murmured among the crocuses and the hyacinths under the noon day sun." Mr. Howells's concreteness is as marked here as in pictures of direct concern with the story, and the reader adds another clearcut, charming description to his impression of Venice.

As concrete as this, and much more justifiable in the building of the story is the description of Don Ippolito's strange abode, "his history as well as his character," the setting explanatory of the unsatisfied interests of the man. Even here, Mr. Howells piles detail upon detail at the imminent risk of tediousness. The garden setting in which Don Ippolito wakes to the impossibility of his hopes is a really effective and vital element of the story. The summer night with the wonderful Venetian moonlight, the lovely garden pervaded by the rich odors of the flowers appearing blanched under the moon, the awakened fountain stream leaping into the moonlight and hanging there "like a tangled skein of silver," and a little later the sudden ceasing of that same "foolish fountain,"--these details furnish background in direct harmony with the mood of the principal characters, the first ecstasy and the quick collapse of hope. Mr. Howells could certainly be easily taken for a romantic novelist here. Another effective bit of description is that of Don Ippolito's sick-room; the contrast between its first appearance and this last appearance marks the change in Don
Ippolito's spirit and plans.

No one element of the setting is more skilfully treated than the creation of the atmosphere of Austrian domination. Mr. Howells does not insist upon the fact as such, but again and again at points of high interest in the story he introduces the Austrian military power in pictorial form, as the Austrian cannon under the gallery of the Ducal Palace, the Austrian troops in the Corpus Christi celebration, and the Austrian patrol seen by Perris the night of Don Ippolito's death; and he succeeds in making us feel the choking atmosphere of foreign domination. This atmosphere and the opposing Italian resistance of spirit tend to give a unity of impression to the whole story.

Summary of foregoing discussions

In reviewing Mr. Howells's earliest novels we conclude that though he starts with description of setting as the primary aim of the novel, by the time he wrote his third novel, he was working away from the practice of description for its own sake to the use of it to suggest cause of character or of actions, and to emphasize contrast or harmony with mood. He still showed, however, a marked tendency to present pictures attractive in themselves but of no close connection with the main purpose of the story. It is not possible to close the consideration of the earlier novels without noting again, that the descriptions are remarkably clear-cut and suggestive.
V. Mr. Howells's practice in his later novels.

A. A Modern Instance

A Modern Instance has been generally accepted as the first of Mr. Howells's novels deserving to be considered among his best works. In this story, character definitely determines action, and it is in the portrayal of the character of Marcia, of Bartley Hubbard, of Squire Gaylord, of Halleck, and of eight or nine governed by what they are; what they are is pictured clearly against their environment. The setting is presented with remarkable fidelity to observation and with a patient care which makes one wonder if the author never chafed under the self-imposed rules of accurate presentation. The background is so skilfully built up that one cannot think of it except in relation to character and action.

The main action of the story is laid in Equity, a small Maine village, and in Boston, although we are given other scenes, notably a logging camp near Equity and a straggling Indiana town and its court-house. Mr. Howells here, as in all his other stories, knew fully the scenery and conditions which he was describing, and if in the retrospect description seems to take up a larger part of the novel than the author's latest practice would tolerate, the various scenes do not seem so insistently detailed as to appear inartistic or tiresome. One author, however, has the following to say about the description of portions of A Modern Instance:

"It is a dull imagination which needs all the details which Mr. Howells has given of cheap-boarding houses and restaurants and of the internal economy of a newspaper establishment. The details
are clever, and there are touches which make it unnecessary for the writers on such subjects hereafter to do anything but quote parts of this book; yet one becomes impatient of an art which employs so fine a pencil upon that which is ignoble and that which has inherent dignity.

In the case of this criticism, it has been suggested that while one may not need all these details, he may yet enjoy them very much and find in them not mere reproduction but a spur to his own imagination. It might be suggested, too, that since our nearest neighbors may have manners and customs very different from ours, and since training and social position differ widely, many apparently trivial details are illuminating to us in presenting the relation of character to background. Mr. Howells's description of the restaurants may not be any more pleasing to us in suggestion than the places described were in reality; but those were the places which Marcia and Bartley first knew in Boston and they were not repulsive to them in their early Boston days.

Plan of discussing setting in A Modern Instance

In studying the effects secured by setting in this story, we shall present the discussion under the points considered on page 7; we shall, that is, take from the story illustrations of the use of setting for the following effects, pure pleasure, local color, character understanding, plot probability, mood, and unity of general impression. We shall note the varying emphasis which Mr. Howells
places upon these effects and compare his practice here with his earlier books.

1. **Setting for pure pleasure.**

In *A Modern Instance*, full though as it is of description, to find much setting presented for its own sake is a difficult matter; many descriptions in the book give pleasure to the reader, but that pleasure is not their primary effect.

In the beautiful description of the "Long Drive", Mr. Howells has certainly indulged in description partly for its own sake; though to be sure, the existence of the single track road makes possible the accident which Hannah Morrison and her mother meet with, and the consequent light thrown upon Marcia's jealousy. The scene is so well placed before us that it becomes one of the most easily-remembered portions of the story; very admirably the author makes us feel the wildness and lonesomeness of this solitude in which Marcia was so content that she did not wish to speak even to Bartley. The bright, hard coldness of a February Sunday afternoon in Maine and the shut-in aspect of a snow-covered country landscape come to us through vivid details expressed by vigorous words. "The road plunged into the darkly wooded gulch and then struck away eastward," the country houses had windows that looked out "blind with frost", and the houses themselves "seemed to founder in a white sea blotched with strange bluish shadows under the slanting sun." The definite observation shown in the word "bluish" is characteristic of
Howells's spirit. Equally vigorous are the words a little farther on in the description, "one of the naked stretches of the plain, a white waste swept by the blasts that sucked down through a gorge of the mountain and flattened the snow-drifts as the tornado flattens the waves. Across this expanse ran the road, its stiff lines obliterated here and there in the slight depressions, and showing dark along the rest of the track." This description of setting without doubt, brings chiefly a sense of pleasure to the reader, for Mr. Howells has given to the February scene a vigorous reality and a freshness which is delightful.

The only other illustration of setting which might be considered as having largely for its effect the giving of pure pleasure is the passage found late in the story describing the sight of the Ohio plains: "They had now left the river hills and the rolling country beyond, and had entered the great plain which stretches from the Ohio to the Mississippi; and mile by mile as they ran southward the spring unfolded in the mellow air under the dull warm sun. The willows were in perfect leaf, and wore their delicate green like veils caught upon their boughs; the may-apples had already pitched their tents in the woods, beginning to thicken and darken with the young foliage of the oaks and hickories; suddenly as the train dashed from a stretch of forest, the peach orchards flushed pink beside the brick farmsteads." This bit surely does give pleasure; it also serves another purpose which will be touched upon later.
The small amount of description of setting for its own sake over against the large amount in the earlier novels tells its own story of Mr. Howells's increasing practice of subordinating setting.

1. Setting for local color

In a discussion of the use of setting to accentuate local color, we recognize that setting seldom exists for itself alone; it is an aid to character understanding, usually, or to plot probability. We find, now and then, in stories, bits of setting-descriptions which have for their purpose the portraying of life or landscape which is peculiar to a certain locality and which marks off the aspect and customs of that locality from all others. We find some of this description in *A Modern Instance*, but much local color description here and in Mr. Howells's other novels serves to make character more vivid.

The opening of this story places before our eyes the village, Equity, in February. Contrary to his later practice, Mr. Howells gives the opening picture not as seen through the eyes of one of his characters but as a definitely set picture; he fuses it less with the chief elements of the story. The scene reminds one of a Redfield New England village landscape in winter. We see the place clearly and we feel the coldness of the day in spite of the sun's glister. The "black holes of the elms," the square white houses "deep sunken in the accumulated drifts through which each householder kept a path cut from his own doorway to the road, white and clean as if hewn out of marble," the fences here and there out of plumb and threatening "the poise of the monumental urns of painted
pine on the gate-posts," "the funeral evergreens in the dooryards," the Academy "with its classic facade and its belfry"—all these set before us the little town where late one Saturday afternoon in February the action of the story opens when "a cutter gay with red-lined robes dashed away from one of the square houses and came musically clashing down the street under the naked elms." Color, color-contrast, lines, sounds, suggestive adjectives—all these are employed in building up the impression of that village where the "arctic quiet" was broken four times a day when the blasts of the saw-mill whistles "shatter themselves against the thin air.

In the second chapters, Mr. Howells shows equal care in depicting the hotel stable at night, just such a place as must have existed in an Equity in those days, where the hostler slept behind the counter on a bunk covered with buffalo robes and where the lamp, turned low and smelling rankly, scarcely gave one sight of the place. A Franklin stove and a table in the middle of the floor with some chairs huddled around it, completed the furnishings.

Mr. Howells suggests the fields of church activity in Equity as confined to the social interests,—dancing, oyster-suppers, concerts and literary entertainments, and here as in the definite descriptions mentioned above the end he sought was to present Equity, the Maine village in the aspects in which it differed from the world outside. These details make the reader accept more completely the reasonableness of the whole story.

The entire incident of the logging camp has frequently been
criticised adversely because of its length which is disproportionate to its importance in the story. The incident itself serves to make clear the character of Kinney and of Hubbard, and it serves as a link between Equity and Boston in Hubbard's newspaper work. The description of the logging camp itself gives a strong dash of local color to the story; it is marked by the same suggestive vigor of words and the fidelity to observation found in the Long Drive description. "Here on a level of the hillside stretched the camp, a long low structure of logs with the roof broken at one point by a stove-pipe, and the walls irregularly pierced by small windows: around it crouched and burrowed in the drifts the sheds that served as stables and storehouses." The afternoon dark and quiet of the interior of the camp are well suggested by contrast when Kinney opened the door of the cabin "letting in a clear block of the afternoon sunshine, and a gush of sleigh-bell music, shot with men's voices and the cries and laughter of women." The details of setting in the logging camp scene we get in part through Hubbard's eyes and in part through our following Kinney's round of labors. The crevices of the wall choked with moss, the men's bunks, the table with steel knives and forks and the heavy dishes, the French loggers' music—all these give glimpses of surroundings unusual and worth hearing about.

In incidental descriptions, Mr. Howells presents bits of local color which make Boston of the eighteen seventies more vivid to us. The horse-car excursions which the Hubbards took into the suburbs of Mount Auburn cemetery with its "marble lambs and the emblematic hands pointing upwards, "the Public Garden, and the Museum of Fine Arts, --all these and other suggestions of
Boston scenes make more real our sense of intimacy with the daily experiences of the Hubbards.

No doubt the amount of descriptive matter concerning Boston could have been materially reduced; Mr. Howells had not yet come to the place of entirely subordinating background. He desired to give the reader just what appeared to Marcia's village eyes when she entered upon her Boston life. Her reaction to the new life in a temporary astonishment but in no real response of growth or change of viewpoint is a vital part of the story. The newness of Boston did not succeed in driving her out of her narrow interest in Bartley alone. Mr. Howells gives concrete instances of one thing after another before which Marcia grew silent, first at the hotel and then at the theatre,—"the vastness of hotel mirrors and chandeliers, the glassy paint, the frescoing, the fluted pillars, the tessellated marble pavements" of theatre vestibule which were to Marcia "dim phantasmagoria amid which she and Bartley moved scarcely real."

By piling up concrete detail upon detail Mr. Howells emphasizes the effect of the unfamiliar. In the same way he presents the restaurant with a solicitude for realistic details to which objection has already been noted. "The table had a marble top and a silver-plated castor in the center. The plates were laid with a coarse red doily in a cocked hat on each and a thinly plated knife and fork crossed beneath it; the plates were thick and heavy; the handle as well as the blade of the knife was metal and silvered." The Hubbards were
not critical; Mr. Howells merely reports what they saw.

Some day a student of the manners and customs of Americans in the eighteen seventies will find these descriptions veritable treasure houses of information, and no doubt he knows all about the customs of Americans of the period as we are that we know the London of Pepys’s time. Nothing in the restaurant escapes Howells’s eyes, least of all the course of the cleansing napkins shown on the smeared surface of the table’s top.

In spite of Mr. Howells’s determined realism he does not admit ordinarily really offensive details to his descriptions; even the barroom, "a gayly lighted basement" one, is made to look attractively clean and cheerful to us as it did to Bartley’s sore spirits. The brightness of the room "with the light glittering on the rows of decanters behind the bar-keeper," the cleanliness of the bar-keeper, the air of tolerant comradship are very convincingly presented so that we understand how Bartley’s nature was easily attracted here.


As has been suggested before, it is altogether wrong to say that one effect merely is sought from the presentation of a definite setting, and in the following examples, not only is character interpreted through setting, but local color is accentuated and the plot made plausible. It seems true, however, that the vivifying of character is the indispensable service rendered here.

The Gaylord house at the end of the village street is presented to us clearly and vividly as that singularly soulless dwelling of a
family of three who though loving each other had so little apparent joy in being together. It is very unlike that home pictured in *A Boy's Town*, "large with vistas that stretched to the ends of the earth" and "serenely bright with a father's reason and warm with a mother's love"; it is very unlike the hospitable Kenton home which Howells pictures in another novel. The novelist wishes us to see the home in which such an intense, head-strong, one-idealized girl as Marcia grew up; it is not that he suggests that a Marcia might not grow up under another environment, but here he places her, and her background serves to make her character understandable.

Carefully chosen concrete details give us our general impressions of a house, comfortable in all that would make for comfort in Equity but lacking in many things making for the charm of home. Largely as matters of the author's direct telling we learn of the various rooms of the house. The parlor proclaimed the family's easy financial condition by the Brussels carpet, the heavy chairs of mahogany and hair, and the square piano upon which the lamp was often placed. The high hung mezzotints and family photographs which adorned the wall we saw casually when Marcia, to cover her feelings, gazed at them instead of at Bartley during part of their Saturday night talk. Then, too, the wood fire roared and snapped when the draft in the stove was opened. No self-respecting village parlor would be without a center table with books upon it, and true enough, Bartley Hubbard called out attention to this when he picked up one book after another, and disposed of its worth in a few words.
At the end of the narrow hall was the large square sitting room used likewise as the dining-room when the drop-leaf table was set, and probably for this reason not considered suitable by Marcia for her company. This room, rather clearly depicted, and the kitchen, merely suggested, seem to speak of Mrs. Gaylord's personality. On the Sunday morning of Bartley's visit "a slumberous heat from a sheet iron woodstove pervaded the place, and a clock ticked monotonously on a shelf in the corner." No other two details could give as well the impression of Mrs. Gaylord's acceptance of a life of monotonous, dulling comfort. We feel Mrs. Gaylord's appreciation of physical comfort, too, in the description given of her favorite rocker with the deep feather cushion in the seat and a thinner cushion tied half way up the back; we feel her housewifely care in the braided rug in front of her chair, in the clean oil cloth around the stove, and in the pots of bright geraniums in the window. Bartley Hubbard's comment on the kitchen, "I declare, Mrs. Gaylord, I should love to live in a kitchen like that," and Mrs. Gaylord's statement that Marcia preferred that room to all other rooms in the house, and that Squire Gaylord liked to read there, gives us an impression rather than a picture of Mrs. Gaylord's housewifely care, and the impression is a pleasant one.

Entirely characteristic of Squire Gaylord was his marked preference for the office,"a little white building that stood from the dwelling on the left of the gate," in which he spent most of his time. A few chairs, the wood stove in front of which he tilted back in his chair to read, the shelves with his law books, and the writ-
ing table are the only articles of furniture mentioned, but we know that the bareness of the place appealed to the old lawyer. In this retreat from all family concern he grew less and less able to understand Marcia, just as the care for housekeeping duties made Mrs. Gaylord a recluse from village society and rendered her less able to comprehend Marcia and to help her grow out of her selfish intensity; the whole house, comfortable enough but lacking in the expression of solicitude for anything higher than the material, furnished a reasonable environment for a character like Marcia's, self-centered, impulsive, and unaccustomed to considering its own shortcomings.

These details have been given so fully—and many more might be added—to show Mr. Howells's painstaking presentation of the Gaylord home setting. Perhaps the imagination could have furnished a sufficiently clear picture from fewer details; it is, however, with a certain feeling of satisfaction similar to that of finding new interests in a real house that we pick up bits of information about this Equity house, such as our reading late in the story of the "smell from the petunia bed coming in through the window with its mosquito netting." Mr. Howells evidently has added detail to detail, not for the sake of giving those details but for the sake of being correct in his picture. Whether or not the completed picture explains the characters, it is at least clear enough as a background for their emotions and their actions.

Two Boston homes are shown to us rather intimately in this story, the little Hubbard home and the Halleck home. They bring to mind two other Boston homes, those of the Coreys and the Laphams,
and all four differ as much as would four such families.

The Halleck house built thirty years before the opening of
the story had been left "high and dry", as Mrs. Halleck put it, when
fashion drifted away from Rumford street. Mr. Howells presents a
very pleasing picture of the exterior of this home and others like it.
One detail is worth quoting: "Over the door there is sometimes the
bow of a fine transom, and the parlor windows on the first floor of
the swell front have the same azure gleam as those of the beautiful
old houses which front the Common on Beacon Street." The house which
at first sight awed Marcia with "the ugly magnificence of the inter-
ior" and which had a drawing room admittedly "a perfect chamber of
horrors" is not insisted upon as distressingly bad in taste after
the first brief explanation, for the kindliness of spirit of the elder
Hallecks dominates the house and makes it a hospitable home. The
beautiful garden, reminding one of the garden in *A Boy's Town* and of
the Kenton and Langbrith gardens, Mr. Howells describes in concrete
terms. He names the flowers, the shrubs and the trees, and we love
the place through Mrs. Halleck's delight in it. Her delight in it
and her loving labor for it would sufficiently characterize Mrs. Hal-
leck if other points had been omitted.

The location of the house, the type of furnishings, the quiet
atmosphere of the house in spite of the "rich and terrible discord"
of its carpets, chandeliers and chairs tend to make clearer the pec-
culiar combination of worldliness and humility of Olive Halleck and
the retiring and self-destructful nature of Ben Halleck.
comfort, though expressed in terms of unlovely furnishings, did not occupy the attention of the family to the exclusion of interest in others.

The little Hubbard house we see first through the eyes of Ben Halleck and Mr. Atherton and with them we admire Marcia's good taste in carpets and draperies and general arrangement just as we later admire it in Clara Kingsbury's wordy praise and Kinney's silent wonder. Howells tells us much less directly about it than he does about the Gaylord house but we learn enough to know of Marcia's interest in her home and Bartley's early satisfaction with it.

In this connection it is interesting to note the suggested luxury of the Atherton home observed by Ben Halleck after Bartley had disappeared. "Bartley might haver have gone wrong if he had had all this luxury; and why should he not have had it, as well as Atherton?"

4. Setting to make plot reasonable.

Such time, place and circumstance details were needed for this story as would be consistent with action setting forth both the complete deterioration of moral fiber in a man, clever but lacking in any recognition of fixed moral values, and the failure of his wife to grow out of the jealous intensity of her love for him into more helpful companionship. As was said earlier in this paper, *A Modern Instance* presents character as determining action, and a setting convincing for character would furnish the proper background for the action.

The time of the story is the eighteen seventies, six years in all
being covered. Less than three years from the time of the beginning of the story we reach the date of Bartley's flight, right after President Fillmore's election. Three years was a sufficiently reasonable time in which Bartley's unfixed moral principles would show themselves for what they were, and bring him to the pass where he would not only lie, but risk Halleck's money on election bets. The same length of time is sufficient to present Marcia's nature as unable to grow in breadth of understanding. The novelist allows two more years to pass before the divorce trial. That interval has done for Bartley what would be expected, left him fatter in body and more flabby in principle; for Marcia, it has resulted in an intensifying of her one devotion.

Two more years pass before the story closes and those, hastily passed over by the author, suggest the struggle in Halleck's soul and the hard passivity of Marcia. Special time details are well chosen, the winter opening of the story, the spring days in Mrs. Halleck's garden, the summer vacation at the Gaylord home, the fall rain the night Bartley deserted his wife. There is no reference to time in the novel, which is not helpful to the illusion of reality of action.

The same statement holds true for place details. The shut-in aspect of Equity prepares the way for our understanding of Marcia's limited interests and the intensity of her devotion to Bartley; the little newspaper office with its helpers is a reasonable place for the altercations which drove Hubbard from the village; the Junction railway station is a fit place for the chance meeting of Bartley and Marcia and for the reconciliation which ended in their hasty marriage; the Boston settings, --the common restaurants, the newspaper club,
the newspaper offices, the Halleck home and garden, the Hubbard
cottage,—all serve definitely to keep the action in a plausible
setting. The scarcely glimpsed railway station at Cleveland where
Bartley long waited his turn at the ticket window seems inevitably
the place where he should discover his loss of Halleck's money. The
Indiana court room is offensively real, and in keeping with the sordid
tragedy of the lives of the Hubbards.

Mr. Howells has been equally careful in presenting the conditions
under which the action took place,—the petty round of life at Equity,
the newspaper business and ethics of Boston, the suggested larger
social life of Boston, the pleasure of life in a large city, the in­
sistence of tradesmen for unpaid bills,—all good and bad aspects of
life he presents, not insistently but in sufficient detail to let us
know under what circumstances the action occurred.

5. Setting to Emphasize Mood.

Setting may be used to emphasize mood in either of two ways,—
to make more intense the mood of the character by comparison or con­
trast with setting or to affect the mood of the reader, Mr. Howells
strives chiefly after the former effect.

A very good suggestive touch of harmony between weather and mood
presents itself in the following passage dealing with Bartley's re­
turn from his unsuccessful attempt to sell his colt; it reminds one
of the night when Dunstan Cass approached his fate. "The weather had
softened and was threatening rain or show; the dark was closing in
spiritlessly; the colt shortening from a trot into a short springy jolt dropped into a walk at last as if he were tired, and gave Bartley time enough on his way back to the Junction for reflection upon the disaster into which his life had fallen." A similar harmony between ugliness of place and depression of mood meets us on the next page: "Bartley went into the great ugly barn of a station, trembling, and sat down in one of the gouged and whittled arm-chairs near the stove. A group of time-tables and luminous advertisements of Western railroads and their land grants decorated the wooden walls of the gentlemen's waiting room."

Mr. Howells introduces a suggestive bit of setting in harmony with mood in telling of the Halleck garden. There one day while Ben Halleck talked with Marcia, he realized more keenly than before her wonderful charm. The quiet beauty of the garden heightens the effect of Marcia's beauty. "Marcia sat down on a bench under a pear tree beside the walk. Its narrow young leaves and blossoms sprinkled her with shade shot with vivid sunshine, and in her light dress she looked like a bright, fresh picture from some painter's study of spring."

A little later comes the following: "He [Ben Halleck] stood looking at her beauty as he had never seen it before. The bees hummed in the blossoms which gave out a dull, sweet smell; the sunshine had the luxurious, enervating warmth of spring." In this latter, background and mood harmonize entirely.

The discussion of background used to contrast with mood recalls the contrast of the charm of the early spring when Marcia was on her way to Indiana over against the wretched errand upon which she was
character or action. The Equity and Boston settings do, however, through their leisurely, orderly presentation, help to maintain a unity of impression for a whole story in that the scene is always definitely located, that there are no gaps where action takes place in impossible situations, and that there is no inconsistency in the portraying of relation of characters to background. Mr. Howells's practice here is his usual one in his method of picturing life objectively.
Summary

The survey of setting in a Modern Instance would tend to show:

(1) That while Howells definitely made setting the hand-maiden of character and plot, he still failed to reduce it to its proper proportion of space.

(2) That he did not always succeed in fusing the setting with the other elements of the novel in such a way as to reduce all long independent description.

(3) That he followed his principle of truth, stressing truth to reality more than truth to imagination and that consequently he introduced only such scenes as he knew accurately.

(4) That for such scenes he selected vital details which gave a sense of reality and secured the atmosphere desired.

(5) That he used setting in a straight-forward, matter-of-fact way, never sentimentalizing over landscape, or falling into the "pathetic fallacy."

(6) That he sought from setting most largely the effect of clearer character interpretation, and next, accentuation of local color and of mood.

(7) That he advanced over his practice in his earlier novels in respect to subordination and to definite usefulness of setting.
Brief consideration of the Rise of Silas Lapham and A Hazard of New Fortunes

Two of Mr. Howells's best novels appeared in the period between the publication of The Modern Instance and of The Kentons—The Rise of Silas Lapham in 1885 and A Hazard of New Fortunes in 1889. Because these stories are very well known, it has seemed advisable to include a brief general consideration of them in this paper. In the main, in the matter of background they represent the same type as The Modern Instance and consequently they will not be discussed under the points set forth on page 7.

In The Rise of Silas Lapham a sureness of purpose in the use of setting is particularly evident, the intensifying of character vividness. The Boston of Silas Lapham overlaps in part the Boston of Bartley Hubbard, but the business world and the social world of the two stories are two different phases of the life of the city which Mr. Howells knew very well. In A Hazard of New Fortunes, setting enters very largely into Volume I as a part of the main purpose of the story, the portrayal of economic conditions in New York City. The author can scarcely be defended against the criticism of those who find the long descriptions of house-hunting and housing conditions in New York City very tiring.

The Rise of Silas Lapham

In The Rise of Silas Lapham, there is little description of background for pure pleasure, but descriptive details introduced to give the proper local color frequently offer a pleasant bit of scenery, as
in the following picture of the streets near Silas Lapham’s office, "The streets were all narrow and most of them crooked, in that quarter of the town; but at the end of one, the spars of a vessel pencilled themselves delicately against the cool blue of the afternoon sky." There is little description of background for pure local color effect though there is sufficient definiteness in reference to Boston streets and neighborhoods, to office buildings, to the wharves and the steamboats, and to the near-by summer colonies to make Boston and its envious very real to us. No such detailed descriptions occurs here as in *A Modern Instance*, and there is evident a more conscious rejection of descriptive matter which might be attractive but not closely related. Though descriptions of homes as background we gain a distinct knowledge of the characters of the Coreys and the Laphams. Mr. Howells uses such setting as this over and over again to make clear his characters. One detail in a brief reference to the Lapham house gives well Silas Lapham’s idea of superfluity as synonymous with comfort, "The house flared with gas." Again, the Lapham crudeness showed itself in the following lines, "They decorated the house with the costliest and most abominable frescoes." Tom Corey’s description of the Lapham summer cottage is good in its suggestiveness of detail and in the characterization of the owners who would naturally have the "usual cottage": "It has the usual allowance of red roof and veranda. There are the regulation rocks by the sea; and the big hotels on the beach about a mile off, flaring away with electric lights and roman candles at night." Before we leave a discussion of the Laphams, we should not fail to note that Mr. Howells makes excellent use of the background of Silas’s office as the place where the man exhibits his real hopes
and desires and ideals.

The instinctive good taste and refinement of the Corey family shows out in the classic simplicity of the exterior of their home, and in the fine restraint in furnishings. We feel this family to be of another training entirely from the Laphams with their atrocious statues and landscapes and startling combinations of parti-colored paint decorations. Chapters XIV and XVI present well the contrast in the homes and in owners. Mr. Howells does not dwell so insistently upon these details as he did upon similar ones in his early stories.

In generalizing about setting in The Rise of Silas Lapham we might say that less variety of effect is sought than in A Modern Instance and that more restraint is evident in the introduction of descriptive matter.

**A Hazard of New Fortunes**

As has been said before, setting enters into A Hazard of New Fortunes as an element which explains character and action through presentation of economic conditions. The deaths of Conrad Dreyfoos and Linda came about because of a labor strike disorder, and the New York conditions which would foster such a strike are pictured throughout the story in the description of the various tenement districts and of the contrasting rich neighborhoods. Mr. Howells, particularly in the first volume of the story, was caught up so entirely by his desire to show New York housing and economic conditions as they would impress new comers like the Marches that he indulged in needlessly long and minute descriptions.
Here and there throughout the story are bits of description which remind one of similar passages in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* where the presenting of local color passes into description for pure pleasure. Such a passage is the one telling of the outlook from the Battery:

"The trees and shrubs, all in their young spring green, blew briskly over the guarded turf in the south wind that came up over the water; and in the well paved alleys the ghosts of eighteenth-century fashion might have met each other in their old haunts and exchanged stately congratulations upon its vastly bettered condition, and perhaps puzzled a little over the colossal lady in Bedloe's Island, with her lifted torch, and still more over the curving tracks and chalet stations of the Elevated Road. It is an outlook of unrivalled beauty across the bay, that smokes and flashes with the innumerable stacks and sails of commerce, to the hills beyond, where the moving forests of masts halts at the shore, and roots itself in the groves of the many-villaged uplands."

Setting to establish clearly local color predominates throughout the book, if we include under local color the broader aspects of economic conditions. Mr. Howells, if too diffuse in Volume I in picturing the apartment house conditions which people of moderate means must face, did not make a similar mistake in presenting the conditions of the poor neighborhoods. Briefly but repeatedly, we see streets "where ash-barrels lined the sidewalks and garbage-heaps filled the gutters," localities which are the abode "of a poverty as hopeless as any in the world." We become familiar with the noise of the Elevated, with the garish electric advertisements, with the foreign
restaurant where "one got a pretty good slice of New York here, all except the frosting on top." Volume II gives a good picture of the various aspects of street life in New York and while we recognize in the descriptions certain touches reminiscent of Their Wedding Journey we find a much more definite purpose in presentation and a greater economy of details.

This use of local color setting passes over through its economic import into the making plausible the action of the story. Such a use of setting is accomplished by the description of the streets during the car-men's strike. This section of the story is particularly clear, restrained, and effective.

**Summary**

In *A Hazzard of New Fortunes* we find Mr. Howells's practice very much closer to *A Modern Instance* than to *The Kentons*, which is to be next considered; there is the familiar piling up of detail upon detail to secure the general effect of verisimilitude. He has made no advance in the matter of fusing setting with character and action, although after Volume I, the setting is less obtrusively presented. The main interest of the setting rests upon the sociological background of New York City life, and this we have included under local color. In this story, Mr. Howells has presented his material so effectively that he has secured what direct author's comments might not obtain, a sympathy with those who are the sufferers in the existing economic system. He was himself keenly aware
of the unfair economic inequalities and he sought through an objective portrayal of these as local color material to interest the readers to seek a possible solution of the situation. More personal feeling is evident here in description than in almost any other one of his stories.
The Kentons

The Kentons may be considered a fair representative of the works of Mr. Howells when he returned from his interest in broader social or economic conditions as in a *Hazard of New Fortunes* to a portrayal of simpler social or domestic conditions. Had he chosen to continue definitely in the other interests, we should no doubt have had in him a real interpreter of class conditions in our own country rather than a delightful observer of interesting but not vital social aspects.

Like the *Lady of the Aroostook*, *The Kentons* presents during a large part of the story a trans-Atlantic boat as the scent of its action. It is there that the action of the story largely occurs, but Mr. Howells has introduced a greater variety of settings than common and has succeeded in making them absolutely a part of the whole effect. An Ohio town, Tuskingum, not definitely presented to us as was Equity, dominated the whole story, for here is the well-loved home of the Kentons. Mr. Howells through many suggestions very early in the story conveys to us a distinct sense of acquaintance with this midwestern town where the Kentons lived in their comfortable, big, square, brick house; he makes us feel as stifled as Judge Kenton
in the old-fashioned New York hotel; he makes us feel the commercial indifference of spirit in the hotel office where Bittredge attacked the Judge just as he makes us conscious of the open forum spirit dominating the station where Bittredge received his humiliating punishment. The Amstel, its decks, its dining salon, are real to us, and the Holland background of the concluding portion of the book is presented to us without any long descriptions, but through suggestive touches in such a manner as to seem entirely real.

This story furnishes an excellent sample of the fusing of the three elements, character, plot, and setting. In practically every case its setting is presented to us either through its reaction of the character to surroundings or through the inevitableness of certain surroundings given the type of character presented. The author has completely passed from the practice in Their Wedding Journey which is in one respect similar to The Kentons in that travel is a vital part of action; he has not presented as he did in A Foregone Conclusion, charming foreign settings when not an indispensable part of the story; he has not loaded detail upon detail as in A Modern Instance to show the effect of the unfamiliar upon his character. He has made setting in the novel what is in real life, a necessary medium of living, but not often an obtrusive, over-emphatic element.

1. Setting for pure pleasure.

Mr. Howells has subordinated setting so successfully that it is impossible to find one bit of description which may definitely
be put down as for pure pleasure. The description of the Kenton grounds as they appeared to the returned Judge verges upon the pure pleasure effect, but its larger purpose is to define character. The novelist might have yielded to the desire to paint the ocean or the picturesqueness of Holland life for their inherent attractiveness, but he kept to the straight line of the business of the story.

2. Setting for local color.

The use of setting to fix local color as such is comparatively small. Four different types of places are prominent in the story, Tusk ingum, New York City as it appears to midwestern sojourners, an ocean boat, and Holland, particularly Scheveningen Beach. The first ninety-seven pages have their setting in Tusk ingum, centering chiefly in the Kenton home, and in New York, centering chiefly in the hotel where the Kentons lived. The next one hundred thirty pages have all their action on the boat, the Amstel; the following thirty pages give Holland as the scene of action, and the concluding ten pages return to Tusk ingum and New York.

Mr. Howells does not strive to emphasize the differences of manners and modes of life here, but he makes us conscious of the simplicity of Tusk ingum in its social customs in a sentence concerning Lottie: "She had use for parties and picnics, for gubby rides and sleigh-rides, for calls from young men and visits to and from other girls, for concerts, for plays, for circuses and church sociables, for everything but lectures; and she devoted herself to her pleasures
without the shadow of chaperonage, which was; indeed, a thing still unheard of in Tuskingum." Of this spirit of freedom we are conscious throughout the story by outbreaks now and then from Boyne in regard to his sisters' customs and from the solicitude of Mrs. Kenton lest Ellen be misunderstood at Scheveningen.

Through three or four sentences telling of Boyne's acquaintance with them we catch glimpses of New York dime museums and vaudeville theatres. We get the metropolitan flavor which appealed to Mrs. Kenton, who was "as constant at matinees of one kind as Bryne at another sort; she went to the exhibitions of pictures and got herself up in school of painting; she frequented galleries, public and private, and got asked to studio teas; she went to meetings and conferences of aesthetic interest and she paid an easy way to parlor lectures."

We see the hotel office unattractive in Judge Kenton's eyes "where other old fellows passed the time over their papers and cigars in the heat of the glowing grates." The Saturday teas which delighted Lottie, the gauntlet of welcome for Kenton "from the black elevator boys and bell-boys and the head waiter, who went before him to pull out the judge's chair," such touches as these might be said to betray a desire to establish local color, but they are equally effective for characterization.

A few bits of local color setting come to us concerning the boat. On a fair day after several days of storm, we see "a good many people strung convalescently along the promenade in their steamer-chairs." We learn casually of the deck-passengers' dancing, from
Ellen and Breckdon, who "were forward, looking over at the prow;" — so too, we learn of many returning laborers unable to find a living in America; we sense the apparently continuous round of activity of boat stewards when we hear of Judge Kenton's preference for reading in a distant corner of the dining saloon "in such intervals as the stewards laying and clearing the table left him unmolested in it." Such bits tend to give interest to the setting.

In a more definite way the Holland sea-side is presented as a bit of local color:" As a matter of fact, Ellen was at that minute sitting in one of the hooded wicker arm-chairs which were scattered over the whole vast beach like a growth of monstrous mushrooms, and, confronting her in cosey proximity Brecken sat equally hidden in another windstuhl. Her father and her mother were able to keep them placed, among the multitude of wind-stuhls, by the presence of Lottie who hovered near them and, with Boyne, fended off the demure, wicked-looking little Scheveningen girls. On a smaller scale these were exactly like their demure wicked looking Schevengen sisters, and they approached with knitting in their hands, and with large stones folded in their aprons, which they had pilfered from the moles, and were trying to sell for footstools."

The descriptions of the setting for the Queen's concert and her various other public appearances heightened the effect of local color, but are useful chiefly for the light thrown upon the characters of Boyne and Trannel. In the same way a bit of description of the Dutch landscape is used quite as much for characterization as for
local color: "Boyne was occupied with improvements for the wind-mills and canal-boats which did not seem to him of the quality of the Michigan aerometers, or the craft with which he was familiar on the Hudson River and on the canal that passed through Tuskingum. Lottie, with respect to the canals, offered the frank observation that they smelt and in recognizing a fact which travel almost universally proves in Holland, she watched her chance of popping up the window between herself and Boyne."

These various examples, too, are worthy of consideration on the side of the art with which Mr. Howells presents the background from the point of view of characters' reaction to surroundings.

3. Setting to explain character.

For the purpose of making characterization clear, description of setting is introduced carefully into the story. To begin with, we are taken at once into the atmosphere of the Ohio home through the author's statement of the love of Judge and Mrs. Kenton for it. Mr. Howells avoids giving long formal descriptions here, as of the Gaylord house, and his practice recalls a statement of Chas. F. Horne, "that a description which stands by itself and ignores any human presence is ineffective. To be strong a description must attach itself to a human being and give his impressions." We see the home, as we see all the other scenes, through the eyes, the feelings, the conversations of the actors and we build up our picture bit by bit. Our first impressions come from a consideration of the great fondness...
of the Judge and his wife for this home place. The novelist says:

"As their circumstances had grown easier, they had mellowed more and more in the keeping of their comfortable home, until they hated to leave it even for the short outing which their children made them take to Niagara or the Upper Lakes in hot weather. They believed that they could not be so well anywhere as in the great square brick house which still kept its four acres about it in the heart of the growing town, where the trees they had planted with their own hands topped it on three sides and a spacious garden opened southward behind it to the summer wind. Kenton had his library where he transacted by day such law business as he had retained in his own hands; but at night he liked to go to his wife's room and sit with her there. They left the parlors and piazzas to their girls where they could hear them laughing with the young fellows who came to make the morning calls, long since disused in the centers of fashion, or the evening calls, scarcely more authorized by the great world."

By brief references to Judge Kenton's brooding love for his old home, we enter into a sense of its charm, and the Judge himself becomes a real person to us. While he is exiled in New York we learn that his heart reverts to his home: "At the play and the opera he sat thinking of the silent, lonely house at Tuskingum, dark among the treeless maples, and the life that was no more in it than if they had all died out of it. After such references as this we feel
the hotel apartment more cramping than ever.

A more heart-felt appreciation for a dearly loved home is hard to imagine than the one suggested by the description at the opening of Chapters IV of the Tuskingum home as seen in June by Judge Kenton.

"The piety of his son Richard had maintained the place at Tuskingum in perfect order outwardly, and Kenton's heart ached with tender pain as he passed up the neatly kept walk from the gate, between the blooming ranks of syringas and snow-balls, to his door, and witnessed the faithful care that Richard's hired man had bestowed upon every detail. The grass between the banks of roses and rhododendrons had been as scrupulously lawn-mowed and garden-hosed as if Kenton himself had been there to look after its welfare, or had tended the shrubbery as he used to do in earlier days with his own hand. The oaks which he had planted shook out their glossy green in the morning gale, and in the tulip-trees which had snowed their petals on the ground in wide circles defined by the reach of their branches, he heard the squirrels barking; a red bird from the woody depths behind the house mocked the cat-birds in the quince trees. The June rose was red along the trellis of the veranda, where Lottie ought to be sitting to receive the morning calls of the young men who were sometimes quite as early as Kenton's present visit in their devotions, and the sound of Ellen's piano played fitfully and absently in her fashion ought to be coming out irrespective of the hour. It seemed to him that his wife must open the door as his steps and his son's made themselves heard on the walk between the box borders in their upper orchard."

So moved was Kenton by the dearly loved scene that he sank "into one
of the wooden seats that flanked the door-way."

We cannot note the effect of this passage as making clear the fine, home-loving tastes of the Judge and showing the depth of his un-selfish love for Ellen since he is, for her sake, voluntarily foregoing the enjoyment of life at home without noting also the definiteness and concreteness of the description. We are not told that the beautiful flowers and trees touched the Judge's heart and the place was alive with June life; we are told of "blooming ranks of syringas and snowballs" and it is the sight and the fragrance of these white flowers which we call to mind. Particularly clear observation speaks out in such phrases as "the tulip trees which had snowed their white petals on the ground in wide circles defined by the reach of their branches," in "the glossy green leaves of the oak" and in the distinguishing between the notes of the cat-bird and the red bird. This method is typical of Howell's descriptions; he picks his details to build up his picture as carefully as a painter, and his details, the result of accurate observation, always ring true.

In this passage the effective suggestion of what should have been the life about the house,—Lottie's friends, Ellen's playing, Mrs. Kenton's presence at the door—is particularly good. The house empty of its family is vivid before us as it was to the Judge, although Howells presents the whole effect through few words, such as, "the different rooms which seemed to be lying stealthily in wait for him, with their emptiness and silence." The library, where Kenton "sank listlessly into his leather-covered swivel-chair which stood in its place before the wide writing table," where his beloved
books and his historical documents spoke to him of the happiness and content of his family life now deserted by them all because of Ellen's infatuation for Bittridge, made a good setting for the interview which Bittridge impertinently pushed upon the Judge. The quiet room with its air of good breeding and friendliness offers us good contrast as might be desired for the boldness and impudent self-assertiveness of Bittridge.

4. Setting for Plot.

The action of this story requires a setting which will make reasonable the complete loss of Ellen's interest in Bittridge and the growth of her love for another man. The winter and spring in New York and the several months abroad give sufficient time for the effect of reality. In no place more than in New York could the bold, self-satisfied, countrified Bittridge show himself the "jay" that Lottie called him; in no place better than on board boat could an acquaintance grow up so quickly between a shy girl like Ellen and Mr. Breckon; the Holland sea-resort is sufficiently convincing as the setting for the rest of the story.

In presenting the boat as setting for the larger part of the novel, Mr. Howells depends upon suggestions scattered here and there, not upon any direct descriptions. He lets us know eventually that the Amstel is an old-fashioned single screw boat forced by bad weather to make a ten-days' trip stretch into a two weeks' one. He assumes sufficient acquaintance with a boat to make descriptions unnecessary; he does not present to us pictures of the sea in the storm because
he is concerned with the storm at sea only as it furthers the inti-
macy of Ellen and Breckon. When Ellen, one of the very few not sea-
sick, sat on the deck with Breckon we see the ocean as the conversat-
ion presents it:

"Are they never higher than that?" she inquired of him with her
wan eyes critically on the infinite procession of the surges.

"There," the young man broke out, pointing seaward, "That's
rather a fine one. Doesn't that realize your idea of something moun-
tain high?"

"It is grand. And the gulf between. But we haven't any in our
part. It's all level. Do you believe the tenth wave is larger than
the rest?"

This foregoing bit of description is much more subdued than any
which would have marked Mr. Howells's practice in early years, but it
is remarkably effective in its appeal to the imagination and it is
just the right sort of thing to make reasonable the growth of acquain-
tance between the two travelers.

We learn how heavy the sea is by her experience in trying to walk
unaided: "She had slid down the reeling promenade half to the guard
over which she seemed about to plunge."

The references to the bad voyage and to the immunity of Ellen
and Breckon from sea-sickness explain the many opportunities which
they had for the growth of their friendship. On the evening that Breck-
on realized how deeply he cared for Ellen we have again the deserted
deck as the setting for their conversation, very little is given of a descriptive nature about sea and sky but that little is very suggestive, as:

"She went and leaned upon the rail, and looked out over the sorrowful North Sea which was washing darkly away towards where the gloomy sunset had been."

"They walked up and down the promenade of the Amstel in the watery North Sea moon, while bells after bells noted the hour unheeded."

Here we have a good example of mood induced in the reader, as well as a use of setting to advance plot.

The Holland setting is admirably presented with Ellen's love affair for the main interest and Boyne's romantic nonsense for the secondary interest. The whole description of the concert at the hotel makes reasonable Boyne's increasing infatuation for the young queen; the gay day in Leyden, where Trammel playing upon Boyne's folly led him into his experience with Dutch law, is just such a festive day as would stir up a romantic youngster's spirits. The seashore, the scene of Ellen's walks and talks with Breckon, is all one would ask for setting to promote the love interest.

5. Setting for Mood

Perhaps because the story is woven together so artistically that setting does not obtrude at any point, we are scarcely conscious of the use of setting in connection with mood. We have already noted two instances under other main heads.---Judge Kenton's view of his
home place in June and the deck of the steamer at night. A rather
good example of this use of setting is found in the visit of the
troubled Boyne to Ellen's room at night to give her the Queen's
miniature. "He came and sat down by her bed and stole his hand into
hers, which she put out to him. The watery moonlight dripped into
the room at the edges of the shades, and the long wash of the sea made
itself regularly heard on the sands." This is just the right setting
to harmonize with Boyne's anxieties and Ellen's sympathy. So, too,
the suggested noises and monotony of the night trip of Judge Kenton
back to New York before he left for Europe emphasized our understand-
ing of his mood. "From time to time he groaned softly, and turned
from one cheek to the other. Every half-hour or so he let his window
curtain fly up, and lay watching the landscape fleeting past; and then
he pulled the curtain down again softly and tried to sleep."

Little bits, such as these, occur here and there in the story, but
not in great number; the story is too straightforward to depend upon
such a device.

6. Setting for unity of impression

Practically the same statement may be made here about setting for
unity of impression as was made in regard to A Modern Instance. Mr.
Howells, however, throughout this story has used many devices to keep
the reader's mind conscious of Tuskingum. It is the atmosphere of that
unconventional, kindly Ohio Town which follows the Kentons in their
wanderings and which explains their characters. The liking which the
author instils into the reader for Tuskingum is strong enough of itself to help secure a unity of impression for the account of the Tuskingum exiles.

Summary

In summing up the function of setting in this novel, we would say:

1. Mr. Howells has made setting a part of the very tissue of the story and has practically eliminated extended description of background.

2. The setting is true, but it is presented rather more suggestively than the setting in *A Modern Instance*; the author still stresses truth to actuality, but by no means so insistently as in *A Modern Instance*.

3. Setting is presented here largely for character interpretation, and next for plot probability.

4. The setting has succeeded through its very unobtrusiveness in this story in giving a remarkable illusion of reality to the incidents.
The Leatherwood God

The Leatherwood God (1916) shows a complete fusing of setting with character and plot. In no part of the story is there any insistence upon setting as such, yet a delightful sense of familiarity with Ohio woods and fields stays with the reader. Mr. Howells has given no detailed explanations of life in pioneer Ohio; our acquaintance with such habits must be gained through casual references to them in the course of the story. Instead of presenting the ugly details of that pioneer life as he would certainly have done in his earlier period, he has thrown a fairly romantic glow upon the Ohio village and country setting. He spared the reader the sight of the Reverdy shack; he made the poor cabin of Nancy and Caban vaguely pleasant; he brought out vividly the clean, hospitable home of the Brailes. Very surely, but as if incidentally, he created a friendly interest in the surroundings through suggestive references to the sweet smell of the corn, to the faint odor of the fallen leaves, to the trickle of water from the spring, to the whirring note of the whip-poor-will, and to the glory of the stars in the late summer nights. The sparingly described setting appeals to the reader's imagination as being essentially true and the absence of photographic accuracy is a charm.

I. Setting for pure pleasure.

In this story there is no description for its own sake, although there are several bits of description which have real pleasure appeal considered apart from their service where they stand. One of these
is a night description which has for its main purpose the intensifying of mood and which will be considered under that heading; another is a glimpse under the starlight of the home of the Gillespies "where the cornfields and tobacco patches opened to the sky," beyond the wide stretch of trees and meadow-lands.

2. Setting for local color.

As has been said before, Mr. Howells has not given descriptions of pioneer conditions in any detailed way; he has not sought to intensify local color. The description of the camp-meeting as Abe presents it to Squire Braile is a local color effect, but Mr. Howells' restraint shows here as in all the description in the story. At the period when he wrote *A Modern Instance*, he would no doubt have given several pages to this meeting; here a few suggestions from Abe suffice to make the scene real to the imagination, "They had eight camp-fires goin' instead o' four, on top of the highest stageun's yit, so the whole place was lit up as bright as day." "The blaze from all them stageun's seemed to turn itself right onto him, and the smoke and the leaves hung like a big red cloud on him." All the time the reader is conscious of the presence of the unregenerate "Hounds" in the shadows of the woods.

The description of the Gillespie cabin suggested by Jane's work the morning when Nancy stayed at the Gillespie house gives another bit of local color and with the description of the mill, the setting chosen for the "miracle," furnishes the main examples which may be classified as local color.
3. Setting to explain character.

In a way, the suggested pioneer background helps to explain all the main characters; the simplicity and monotony of life would prepare the way for acceptance of such an exciting impostor as Dylks and for his growing claims for his power. Mr. Howells has given a few specific bits of characterization through setting, as witness Abe Reverdy's comment upon the Braile cabin interior when we gain knowledge not only of the Braile home but also of the character of the Squire and his wife, and of course of Abe himself.

"My!" he said, as he followed his hostess indoors, "you do have things nice. I never come here without wantun' to have my old shanty whitewashed inside like yourn is, and the logs plastered outside; the mud and moss of that chinkin' and daubun' keeps fallun' out, and lettun' all the kinds of weather there is in on us, and Sally she's at me about it too; she's wuss'n' I am, if anything. I reckon if she had her say we'd have a two room cabin too, and a loft over both ports, like you have, Mis' Braile, or a frame house, even. But I don't believe anybody but you could keep this floor so clean. Them knots in the punchcouns just shine! And that chimbelly-piece with that plaster of Paris Samuel prayin' in it; well, if Sally's as't me for a Samuel once I reckon she has a hundred times; and that clock! It's a pictur!"

Mr. Howells has made his characters in this story as real as those in any other one of his stories; they stand out as vividly, but they are fitted so well into their background that it is difficult
to attempt to disassociate character from its setting. This fact alone is proof of the advance in skill over the early novels.

4. Setting to make action plausible.

The very conditions of pioneer life which would make the characters reasonable serve to make the action plausible. If we note the action in detail, we find that Mr. Howells has made skilful use of setting in relation to action from the very beginning. The camp-meeting is just the place where Dylks as Prophet could make the most effective entrance; in some isolated cabin like the Gillespie's he might reasonably show himself for what he really was: the big mill might be the natural gathering place to which believers and disbelievers would come to see the "Miracle"; the turnpike in front of Squire Braile's cabin might easily have been the scene of the passing of judgment upon the impostor. There is no elaborate working out of setting in relation to action; the place and the time are merely so represented that the action is accepted as natural and reasonable.

5. Setting for mood harmony or contrast

Mr. Howells has set mid-summer as the season in which the strange happenings of The Leatherwood God occur, and the weather fits well into the mid-summer madness which possessed the hitherto quiet folk. All through the story we are conscious of the background of the weather. We hear first of the heat of mid-August through direct statement about
"the hot long August Sabbath day", then through Nancy Gillespie's mood feeling in the early morning, "the thick August heat of the sun already smiting the honeyed odors from the corn." The tenseness of the crowd at the mill where the miracle was to be performed is height-ened by the reference to the heat: "The air of the hot night was close within; a damp odor from the water flowing under the motionless mill wheels seemed to cool it, but did not; the perspiration shone on the faces where the light fell on them." The mild September weather is a fit time for the departure of the Flock for the new Jerusalem. When some of the Flock returned October had come: "The late October weather was sometimes hot at noon, but the evenings were cool and the evening air was sweet with the scent of the ripened corn, and the faint odor of the fallen leaves. The grasshoppers still hissed; at moments the crickets within and without the cabin creaded plaintively". In such a quiet, restful atmosphere Nancy waited resignedly until Joey and Yaban should return.

The following passage gives an excellent contrast between nature's quiet and Dylks's sufferings and self-pityings in his forest hiding place. "He had slept so long that now he could not sleep, and when his tears would come no more he sat up and watched the night through till the dawn greyed the blue-black sky. The noises of the noiseless woods made themselves heard; the cry of a night hawk, the hooting of an owl, the whirring note of the whip-poor-will; the long, plunging of a dead branch breaking the boughs below it; even the snapping of twigs as if under the pressure of stealthy feet. These sounds, the most delicate of the sounds he heard shook him most with fear and
hope, and then with despair. The feet could be the feet of his en-
emies seeking him out, or of his friends coming to succor and save
him; then they resolved themselves into the light pressure from little
paws, the paws of the wild cat, or the coon, and there was nothing to
be feared or hoped from them. The constellations wheeled over him in
the clear sky, and the planets blazed. He made out the North Star
from the lower lines of the Dipper; the glowing and fading of the
August meteors that flitted across the heavens seemed to leave a black
trace on his straining eyes."

As equally good might setting in which the night sounds reflect
the spirit of the occasion is the following: "The noise of the talk-
ing and laughing and the formless progress of the mob hushed the
nearer night voices of the fields and woods; but from a distance the
shuddering cry of a screech-owl could be heard; and the melancholy
call of a kill-dee in a pasture beside the creek. The people, friends
and foes together, made their way unlighted except by the tin lanterns
which some one had caught from where it stood on Euraghty's gate-
post." "The shuddering cry of a screech-owl" and "the melancholy call
of a kill-dee" bring no good promises for Dylks.

6. Setting for unity of impression

Unity of impression is secured for the story by the maintaining
of the one locality setting in which Matthew Braile's house, repre-
senting the power of the law, and the Tabernach, representing the
spirit of religious fervor, are the dominating buildings. The only
time Mr. Howells passes from the Leatherwood Creek district is in the
account which he gives in Joey's words of the pilgrimage toward the new Jerusalem.

Summary of The Leatherwood God

Concerning setting in The Leatherwood God we may summarize as follows:

1. Mr. Howells has made setting in this story true to imagination rather than to actuality.

2. He has here succeeded in fusing setting with character and action to such an extent as to create the very atmosphere of the country district.

3. Through the very unobtrusiveness of the setting he has made it so intimate a part of the whole story as to make it what setting is in real life.

4. He has through sense appeals touched the imagination in such a way as to create the very atmosphere of the country district.
VI. Summary of foregoing discussion

In following Mr. Howells's practice in the use of setting in these representative stories, we find that at no time has he failed to live up to his standard of "the true." In every story, the setting impresses one with its essential truthfulness; there is no violent distorting of fact to secure greater interest for the background itself, or for character or action against the background. The setting pictured is true because it is in every case the result of first-hand knowledge of the scenes described. Mr. Howells's insistence upon this first-hand knowledge has limited the setting possibilities of his stories, just as a similar insistence on the part of Jane Austen, whose works Mr. Howells praises very highly, limited her field.

In his early stories, Mr. Howells places emphasis upon the photographically true, and consequently he has loaded detail upon detail to secure the effect of actuality. From the beginning, however, he has selected his details with a keen sense of their relevancy, and he has avoided the errors of many realists who have presented their material helter-skelter. This quality of sureness in selection of details has increased in Mr. Howells's latest practice, along with his cutting down in amount of descriptive matter.

In the matter of relation of setting to character and plot, the growth has constantly been toward subordination of setting, and its fusion with the other two elements named. Mr. Howells's first novels frankly made setting as important as character and action; his latest novels are excellent examples of the use of setting as background.
literally. The same statement may be made as to the presence of independent descriptions in the early novels, and the eliminations of long independent descriptions in the later novels.

Mr. Howells has been always a "local color" writer, but he has not made local color the first consideration in his settings; his first consideration has been the presenting of character through reaction to setting. In pictures of Boston, of rural Maine and Vermont, and of Ohio and Indiana communities, Mr. Howells has given descriptions so vivid and interesting that he may be forgiven if he has at times unduly prolonged them.

The main use for setting in his stories has been the clearer portrayal of character, and in this he is entirely consistent with his own creed as to the purpose of the novel. He has shown character merely objectively, and he has had to present more faithfully than might otherwise have been necessary the relation between environment and character.

To Mr. Howells we owe the faithful recording of many interesting phases of American scenery and social conditions, and for that service alone he would deserve praise; in addition, the faithful recording has, on the whole, been delightfully done with sympathy, clearness, and literary charm. Perhaps the same sort of statement may be made about Mr. Howells as was made about Trollope, that when the next century would choose to disinter the social aspects of the preceding century, it would turn to the works of this accurate observer; if the next generation turns to the works of Mr. Howells to see American life in the middle and late decades of the eighteen-hundreds it will find not the least part of its interest in his descriptions of background.
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