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REPORT

of

COMMITTEE ON THESIS

THE undersigned, acting as a committee of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Alta Pomeroy Churchill for the degree of Master of Arts. They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ARNOLD BENNETT: A STUDY IN MODERN TECHNIQUE

A Thesis (Study) submitted by Alta Pomeroy Churchill, B. A., in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Minnesota, May 1, 1915.

C O N T E N T S .

Arnold Bennett: A Study in Modern Technique.

Introduction.

When speaking of contemporary fiction, in these early days of the second decade of the twentieth century, perhaps no name is more frequently on our lips than that of Arnold Bennett. It is probably true that his name is known to large numbers of people who have no relish for his wares; also that he has achieved that degree of glory (of doubtful satisfaction to an author) of being lauded by people whose admiration for him is an affectation. He is, to a certain extent, a fad. But he is not without praise, either, from the most reputable critics of the moment;[1] indeed he has won golden opinions from some of those men whose literary judgments we have come most to trust, among them, Mr. William Dean Howells, who has, on more than one occasion,[2] given to Mr. Bennett very warm commendation.

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1. See bibliography.
2. Speaking of Mr. Bennett, Harper's Mag. Mar. 1911.
   Fiction of Arnold Bennett, " " " 1912.
   Tribute fo Arnold Bennett, " Weekly, Dec. 16, 1912.

Aside from the fact that in admiring Mr. Bennett it is possible to find one's self in very good company, it is not difficult to find justification for a serious study of a dozen or more titles from his pen.[1] Unhappily, the list cannot be made more inclusive for Mr. Bennett has a habit of writing books of no consequence which was somewhat perplexing until Mr. Howells discovered for us the fact that Mr. Bennett wrote certain of his books for the purpose of paying income tax.[3] Yet even these cannot be dismissed altogether; however trivial his subject, Mr. Bennett never writes below his best, and he is an accomplished word-craftsman.

The children of his fancy, whether conceived in frolicsome or in thoughtful mood, are acquaintances one would keep. Edward Henry Machin, the "card" of the Five Towns, is as vivid a personality as is Darius Clayhanger, albeit the world in which Edward Henry has his being is as chimerical as Darius's is actual. And all the goodly company of people in or of the Five Towns - for some of them have wandered far from the Potteries, even as their creator himself has done - are unmistakably living fellow-creatures.

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1. A Man from the North.
   Anna of the Five Towns.
   Leonora.
   Whom God Hath Joined.
   The Grim Smile of the Five Towns.
   The Book of Carlotta.
   The Old Wives' Tale.
   The Glimpse.
   Clayhanger.
   Hilda Lessways.
   The Matador of the Five Towns.

2. Grand Babylon Hotel.
   The Card.
   Teresa of Watling Street, etc.

3. Harper's Weekly, Dec. 16, 1912.

But in the work that might be called characteristic, Mr. Bennett has claims to recognition other than his ability in the delineation of character. Stafford-shire, one of the two great pottery districts of England, finds literary expression in his work,[1] and we are the richer by knowledge of an important and extensive community evolved through industrial and social conditions showing distinct characteristics. This knowledge is never given as economics or as sociology, but always as a dynamic factor in the development of men and women who reveal shades of character wanting in people not of the District. This aspect of his work places him with Austin, Trollope and George Eliot, and even with Hardy, both as to purpose and excellence of execution. Indeed he may be said to have gone a step farther than Hardy has done in The Return of the Native, even, in his study of environment in the novels of the Five Towns. He brings you to discern the sentient Spirit of the Five Towns brooding over its children; it is as tangible and quite as inevitable as the gold angel that tops the Town Hall spire of Bursley.[2] Every child born under the influence of that gold angel - or even as far off as Longshaw - as a man, finds that spirit merged in his idiosyncrasy. This is one of the significant features of Mr. Bennett's accomplishment.

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1. See any of the novels, eg. The Old Wives' Tale.
2. Whom God Hath Joined p 6, (1911)
   Helen With the High Hand, pp3-4, 6 (1911)

Of his technique, it may be said that it is his own - whatever its merits or its lack of them. He has not openly followed models, although perhaps he assumes a greater freedom from literary influences than any writer can safely lay claim to. He affects to despise the art of most of his masters of English fiction; he thinks perhaps George Moore, whom he admires, may have influenced him; declares that Balzac and Flaubert have taught him nothing; however, he owns to careful study of the brothers de Goncourt, and Turgenev whom he read in French translation.[1] This brings me as close as I care to get to the personality of Mr. Enoch Arnold Bennett, as shown in his autobiographical sketches. Upon the man thus revealed, I prefer to make no comment except that I hope and believe he gives a truer account of himself in his novels and essays than in his interviews. Henry James says :

> "--The deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer, In proportion as that intelligence is fine, will the novel .. partake of the substance of beauty and truth." [2]

In Mr. Bennett's studies in human life and society, his method gives the illusion of a lack of that selection necessary to art; as though he gave you life in unsorted chunks, just as you find it while living it - with its wanderings from

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1. Literary Taste and How to Form it.
2. The Art of Fiction, London, 1884.

the main road along by-paths that lead to nowhere; its false leads; its acquaintances that begin in promise and are dropped through irrelevant circumstances; its lack of logic and its melodrama - all these seemingly are included, to a degree quite at variance with the advice of our departments of rhetoric. Of course, this lack of selection is an illusion, only. It is selection with a different aim. This exposes him to the charge of being a cataloguer; of piling up details, in an aimless, tiresome manner; of "leaving his scaffolding up".[1] But it is quite evident that this characteristic of Mr. Bennett's is the result of deliberate intention; and if "the spread of his canvas is epic"[2] and his aim to give a view of life from the cradle to the grave with somewhat before and after, it would seem that his method served his purpose. It has been pointed out, even before Mr. Bennett's time, that life is made up of little things. Although now and then one of them, seen in perspective, looms large- chiefly owing to its position in relation to the "little things" that followed or preceded it more or less immediately. The "turning point in one's life" is not recognized as that when one is at it. Could it be so, how many of them would be turned differently!

Mr. Bennett is far more than a chronicler; his opinions challenge you from every page. He has decided ideas about the relation of man and woman, husband and wife, of parents and

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1. F. G. Bettany: Bennett: An appreciation. Liv. age. Apr. 15, 1912.
2. Bennett: Monumental Realism. Nation Dec. 1911.

children - particularly about parents and children. He has ideas about child labor and the rights of childhood and the tragedies of childhood. In a word he has ideas about a great many things; they are good and wholesome ideas, and you like him for them.

Yet his manner is studiously detached. Rarely does he give you his philosophy in comment. The sense of his power comes quietly. From unsuspecting indifference we find ourselves moved tremendously. We lay by The Old Wives' Tale, if we have fallen under its spell, with the thought that life is a more puzzling thing even than poor Mr. Tulliver found it; that it is more beautiful and more terrible; more absurd and more pitiful than we sometimes realize in the closeness of our contact with it. Two blooming girls full of joy and eagerness, with change so subtle as to escape our perception as we turn the pages, become unresponsive, satiated women, dull with years; gradually they become detached from life, and in the course of nature, cease to be living creatures at all. The thought follows that this invidious force is working a like change in us at the moment. We feel ourselves

> "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
> With rocks, and stones, and trees".

If this magnificent objectivity leads us to question the meaning and the good of life, shall we find an answer pointed by Mr. Bennett? Perhaps not. Surely not in the sense that George Eliot answers the eternal questions she raises in the history of Tom and Maggie Tulliver. Yet -- has he not served the purpose of the artist in having raised the question; in having induced us for a few hours, at least, to look at life dispassionately,

without the mental blinders which are usually deemed an indispensible part of the harness in which we work at life? Perhaps the answers to the questions the soul raises as to wherefore and whether can be given only by itself. Whether or not Arnold Bennett reveals a philosophy of life in books like The Old Wives' Tale and the Clayhanger trilogy, of a surety he stimulates us to contemplate our own.

Concerning those old catch words, realism and romance, it is confusion worse confounded in the output of Mr. Bennett. A column of characteristic criticism in the Nation is headed "Monumental Realism"[1]; and this man of whom an early reviewer[2] said, "Some writers give you the romance of the commonplace; here is the very commonplace of the commonplace; has this to say for his profession:[3] "The makers of literature are those who have seen and felt the miraculous interestingness of the Universe,....Their lives are one long ecstasy of denying that the world is a dull place". This disparity of opinions between the reviewer and the man reviewed is not unlike the case of Henry James, universally accused of being plotless and yet declaring in a serious study of his art[4] that the first requisite in a novelist is a story to tell! It all comes back of course, as all controversies do to a matter of terminology. What is a story?

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1. Nation, Dec. 7, 1911, p541
2. Athenaenum Mar. 19, 1898.
3. How to Become an Author.
4. The Art of Fiction.

Whatis interesting? and that in turn depends upon temperament - or personality - one of the basic elements of art.[1] Whatever the restof the world may think about "Leonora", the fortunes of this middleaged woman who refused to become old, is throbbing with interest to Arnold Bennett. Leaving out of account for the moment the "income tax" books, no man ever sought self expression in his art with more singleness of purpose than Mr. Bennett has done. His very sincerity is admirable. His nature being varied and complex, the attempt to pigeon-hole him is correspondingly difficult. For instance, this "arch-realist", is more or less of a mystic; one novel is avowedly mystic[2], and the most of his other books are touched with mysticism.[3] When Mr. Bennett deals as he does with supernatural subjects in the studiously simple and direct manner of his every-day life stories, the result is no less than startling.

Mr. Bennett's major interests are personality and environment. It follows that his plots are biographical rather than episodic. The plot story in the sense of being a series of absorbing events leading up to a thrilling climax, does not exist in his work. He is absorbed with the motives behind conduct to an extent which places him with a psychological novelist like Henry James.

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1. Richard Burton Lecture Feb. 1910.
2. The Glimpse.
3. Book of Carlotta, pp20,21,28,47, 48.

To show the "miraculous interestingness" of the diurnal course of life of the "average man" a myth Arnold Bennett is too wise to believe in, but which is useful to the critics - this is Mr. Bennett's purpose. To this end, he conceives his characters, and develops his technique. And the number of people who will share Arnold Bennett's absorption in such a subject, plus the number of people, who regardless of matter, will take delight in a technique marvelously adapted to the author's purpose, it is safe to say, will give Mr. Bennett an enduring audience, and a place with the novel-makers of all time.

I: SETTING.

Mr. Charles F. Horne, in his admirable work on the Technique of the Novel,[1] declares that he knows of no critic who contends that background is the chief essential of a novel.[2] But it is quite evident that background in its widest meaning is a chief essential of Mr. Arnold Bennett's novels.[3] I know of no other study of the interaction of environment and character which pretends to such completeness. Moreover, his particular background, that of a group of towns bound together as the product of a common industry, pottery-making, is presented with a unity of treatment which makes it as vivid and as definite as the presentation of a personality. Indeed, the collective life of the Five Towns may be regarded as the most real impression Mr. Bennett achieves; and it is probably this accomplishment ~~it is probably~~, which has caused him to be called by one critic "the British Balzac".[4]

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1. The Technique of the Novel, by Dr. Charles F. Horne, Harper and Brothers, 1908.
2. Ibid p208
3. See the Death of Simon Fuge in the Matador of the Five Towns for a complete picture of the District; its atmosphere; its spirit. The Story is merely an excuse for the Setting.
4. Living Age, 269-131-6.

The truth is that in many of the Five Towns tales there is no background as such; the interest is so focused upon the places the people live in, the things they do, the other people they meet and talk to, that the setting is foreground as properly as background. In the Matador of the Five Towns the sporting passion of a municipality is triumphant; it is rampant. Poor Jos. Myatt is cheerfully considerate regarding the approaching confinement of"the misses"; the doctor, his judgment conceivably biased by his interest in foot ball, has declared that there is no prospect of Jos being needed at home for several hours and Jos assures an inquirer that he should not be playing if it were not so. [1] And yet he would. Jos Myatt was the most proficient foot ball man in the Five Towns; Bursley could not hope to win from Knype without him; and his puny individual will, all unknowing, is swallowed up in the collective will of the town.

The domestic tragedy is shown to be of little consequence compared to the comodie humaine of Bursley. The life of the town continues to work its will to unrelentless fulfillment, though a thousand mothers should die in child bed and ten thousand husbands, remorseful and disconsolate should foreswear foot-ball forever. [2] In still another characteristic treatment, such as that in The Old Wives' Tale, the environments of time and space are as important as are the people because they are whown

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1. The Matador of the Five Towns, (1912) p 165
2. The Matador of the Five Towns, p

as factors in human development - not as a background against which to show humanity. In this Mr. Bennett has builded upon the work of so late a writer as Thomas Hardy. Mr. Bennett has not so much insisted upon the power of landscape to mould character; in fact the sweep, the breadth, the outdoor beauty of Hardy are quite lacking in the younger artist; not nature and landscape, but halls and steps and windows, furniture and carpets are revealed as affecting action and temperament and in turn reflecting it;[1] it is the dynamic quality of the fittings of the stage whereon his players strut their little hour that the genius of Bennett often shows with an emphasis new in fiction.

There is no still life in his picture; things are shown always in relation to the people who have produced them or who use them and places and people have an organic relation to each other. Bursley is not locality in general; it is Bursley just as Clayhanger, is Clayhanger, and not another. Nor would Clayhanger, or Brindley, or Constance and Sophia, be as they are except for Bursley. Moreover it holds the other way round; Bursley would not be as it is except for generations of men like Ephraim Tellwright[2] and James Ollerenshaw;[3] the uppishness of the Tory borough of Old Castle has also had a hand in shaping Bursley's individuality, and none of them - people or towns - would have been what they are had the earth's crust faulted

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1. Leonora: p11
2. Anna of the Five Towns.
3. Helen with the High Hand.

along a different line in the region now known as England subsequent to the Ordovician period of geologic time.[1] It follows that the method by means of which Mr. Bennett has achieved this splendid universality is of great import to the student of technique. It is by no means certain that an analysis will show it. Technique is so little mechanical, and so greatly conditioned by the genius of the artist, in spite of its goodly number of discoverable laws, that the observer hesitates to exclaim "Voila! the method". The most we may hope to do is to say - these things Mr. Bennett has done - This effect he has achieved.

Your Baedecker is not more explicit than is Arnold Bennett when describing the Five Towns. Your impulse to map the District is irresistible.[2] Trafalgar Rood runs the length of it with far-distant Longshaw at the south and little Turnhill at the north end of it.[3] Ephriam Tellwright[4] could remember when it was a country lane, flanked by meadows and market gardens,[5] although the district is unlearned in agriculture,[6] and has an atmosphere made as black as its mud, by thousands of smoking ovens and chimneys; it has a railroad system of its own, because the fine Old Tory borough of Old Castle[7] - where Edwin Clayhanger went to school - objected to a railroad upon esthetic grounds and the greatest

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1. Old Wives' Tale: pp1-4
2. Clayhanger p6
2. See Map.
3. Anna of the Five Towns: p14 (1910)
4. Ibid p20
5. " "
6. Old Wives' Tale: p3.
7. Clayhanger: pp 1-2

the greatest railway system in England went five miles to the west, which made all the difference in the world to Edwin Clayhanger and to every other soul in the forever-provincialized Five Towns.[1] Old Castle, of course is not of the District, but is just beyond the canal which marks the western boundry of the industrialism peculiar to the Five Towns. Between Old Castle and Bursley lies Hillport,[2] where the more fashionable householders of Bursley elect to reside; here in the dignified eighteenth-century house she loved so much and graced so well,[3] lived Leonora Stamway; here, on the supreme ridge of Hillport, Wilbraham Hall,[4] concerning which Helen Rathbone was most successfully high-handed with great-step uncle James Ollerenshaw, presented its back to the Five Towns. To go from Hillport to Bursley, you go down a hill to the railroad bridge at Shawport, and up and over the crest of Old Castle Street down into Bursley, Mother of the Five Towns. There, in St. Luke's Square, at the elegant shop of Baines, might have been seen on a long ago Thursday afternoon, Constance and Sophia, pressing their noses against the window of the show room, as Maggie,[5] domestic servantof the Baines's emerged from her cavern-home in search of romance.

The maze of old roads and new streets surrounding Duck Bank, where were the business premises of D. Clayhanger, Printer and Stationer[6] is much more complicated, still it is quite possible

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1. Clayhanger: p2
2. Leonora: p 6
3. Leonora: p 9,11
4. Helen with the High Hand.
5. Old Wives' Tale: p 6 (1909)
6. Clayhanger : p22 (1911)

to find your way about Woodison Bank and Wedgewood Street, or to follow Edwin Clayhanger through the neglected pasture on the day he left school.[1] If you went from Bursley along Trafalgar road, Hanbridge way, which is south, you would again have to cross a billow of land as you did along Old Castle Street - which runs at right angles to Trafalgar road - (as you did also when going to Hillport) And the first terrace of this hill is Bleakridge,[2] the second most fashionable suburb of Bursley. Here did little Darius of the Bastile top the prosperity of his manhood by building the house so wonderful to Edwin because it had a bathroom on the first floor (English style). Still further above the soot and stench of the Banks of Bursley was Tofts End where the Ridgways lived[4] and yet a little farther on, before you begin the descent into Hanbridge, the commercial center of the Five Towns but the home of very few of our Five Towns acquaintances,[5] was the highest public house in the realm. Bursley people seemed seldom to find occasion to go to Longshaw, but Helen of the High Hand came from there.[6] You feel it to be an opinionated town offering no inducement for you to take the journey to the end of Trafalgar Road. It was a nice little spin, however, for a 20 h.p. Panhard[7] up to little Turnhill, although Clough Bank, the last descent is three miles long, and of a steepness resembling the steepness of the side of a house.[8]

1. Clayhanger: p20 (1911)
2. Ibid p200
3. Leonora: p91 (1903)
4. Whom God Hath Joined.
5. The Dog. A Feud.(The Matador of the Five Towns) p19 (1912)
6. Helen with the High Hand p 15 (1910)
7. Matador of the Five Towns p 391 (1912)
8. Ibid

The only Turnhill people we know are Tobias Hall and his wife, who reminded him once too often that she owned the house they lived in.[1]

The Point of Contact between the Five Towns and the rest of the world was Knype, on the main line of the railway to London.

Perhaps people do not quite outgrow their childish turn of mind for the story that is really - true, and it strengthens our sense of truth, beyond a doubt, to know that the setting of these tales of un-adventure is not the "coast of Bohemia". The Five Towns transferred to a modern map of England are obviously Tunstall, Burslem, Stoke on Trent (Knype), Hanley and Longton. And the sensation of reality isstrengthened to a certainty, should you chance to turn over your breakfast plate some morning and behold the legend "Borslem, Staffordshire" emblazoned thereon. It is an experience that makes you feel Mr. Bennett to be well within the limits of probability when he says that "whenever and wherever, in all England, a woman washes up, she washes up the product of the district."[2]

Its relation to actuality, however, is not the only way in which Mr. Bennett has secured the illusion of truth in his setting. He has a trick of piling up details at variance with the behests of our rhetoricians. His proclivity for fullness of enumeration has been a favorite point of attack with his critics[3]

1. Matador of the Five Towns: p290
2. Old Wives' Tale pp3,4 (1909)
3. Nation Dec. 7, 1911, p 541; Living Age Apr. 15, 1911.

The tendency is undeniable; it appears on every page. The vividness of his imagining may be seen in the Baby's Bath.[1]

> "A large bath towel was spread in a convenient place on the floor, and on the towel were two chairs facing each other, and a table. On one chair was the Bath, and on the other was Mrs. Blackshaw, with her sleeves rolled up and on Mrs. Blackshaw was another towel, and on that towel was Roger (the baby) On the table were zinc ointment, vaseline, scentless eau de cologne, Castile Soap and a powder puff".

Another instance of fullness is the discription of Anna Tellwright's kitchen.[2]

> "Anna's kitchen was the only satisfactory apartment in the house. Its furniture included a dresser of the simple and dignified kind which is now assiduously collected by amateurs of old oak. It had four long narrow shelves holding plates and saucers; the cups were hung in a row on small brass hooks screwed into the fronts of the shelves. Below the shelves were three drawers in a line, with brass handles, and below the drawers was a large recess which held stone jars a copper preserving saucepan, and other receptacles. Seventy years of continuous polishing by a dynasty of priestesses of cleanliness had given to this dresser a rich ripe tone which the cleverest trade-trickster could not have imitated. In it was reflected the conscientious labor of generations. It had a soft and assuaged appearance, as though it had never been new and could never have been new. All its corners and edges had long lost the asperities of manufacture, and its smooth surfaces were marked by slight hollows similar in spirit to those worn by the naked feet of pilgrims into the marble steps of a shrine. The flat portion over the drawers was scarred with hundreds of scratches, and yet even all these seemed to be incredibly ancient, and in some distant post to have partaken of the mellowness of the whole. The dark woodwork formed an admirable background for the crockery on the shelves, and a few of the old plates, hand painted according to some vanished secret in pigments which time could only improve, had the look of relationship by birth to the dresser. There must still be thousands of exactly similar dressers in the kitchens of the people, but they are gradually being transferred to the dining rooms of curiosity-hunters.

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1. Matador of the Five Towns: pp40-41
2. Anna of the Five Towns: p123 (1911)

To Anna, this piece of furniture which would have made the most taciturn collector vocal with joy, was merely, "the dresser". She had always lamented that it contained no cupboard. In front of the fireless range was an old steel kitchen fender with heavy fire-irons. It had in the middle of its flat top a circular ledgment for saucepans, but on this polished disc no saucepan was ever placed. The fender was perhaps as old as the dresser, and the profound depths of its polish served to mitigate somewhat the newness of the patent coal-economising range which Tellwright had had put in when he took the house. On the high mantelpiece were four tall brass candlesticks which, like the dresser, were silently awaiting their apotheosis at the hands of some collector. Beside these were two or three common mustard tins, polished to counterfeit silver, containing spices; also an abandoned coffee-mill and two flat-irons. A grandfather's clock, of oak to match the dresser, stood to the left of the fireplace; it had a very large white dial with a grinning face in the centre. Though it would only run for twenty-four hours, its leisured movement seemed to have the certainty of a natural law, especially to Agnes, for Mr. Tellwright never forgot to wind it before going to bed. Under the window was a plain deal table, with white top and stained legs. Two windsor chairs completed the catalogue of furniture. The glistening floor was of red and black tiles, and in front of the fender lay a list hearthrug, made by attaching innumerable bits of black cloth to a canvas base. On the painted walls were several grocers' almanacs, depicting sailors in the arms of lovers, children crossing brooks, or monks swelling themselves with Gargantaun repasts. Everything in this kitchen was absolutely bright and spotless, as clean as a cat in pattens, except the ceiling darkened by fumes of gas. Everything was in perfect order, and had the humanised air of use and occupation which nothing but use and occupation can impart to senseless objects."

Although the dresser and the fender and the candlesticks awaiting apotheosis in Anna's kitchen are welded into the fabric of the story with that finish which sets Mr. Bennett's treatment of background apart from the usual, here is, nevertheless, rather more Barefaced enumeration than Mr. Bennett uses in his later work. More and more he makes his details not clipped at all as to profuseness, set forth his whimsical satire, his pungent psychology; or achieve the sensuous, the intellectual or the spiritual atmosphere for which he is striving.

Perhaps a fair example of Mr. Bennett at his descriptive

best is the Bond Street Chapter of the Glympse.

"Flags were waving in Bond Street, from staffs perpendicular on the roofs, and from staffs horizontal on the facades. They waved continually in the sunlit breeze as though they were a natural and necessary expression of the triumphant glory of Bond Street, demonstrating that there was nothing like Bond Street, in the world. And probably there was not. Next door to the Rutland Galleries was exposed a collection of leather goods to which had contributed every known quadruped with a hide to his back. Gazing into those large and crowded windows one was convinced that no activity of human existence could be correctly carried on without leather mounted in silver or gold. One could not mark the hour nor the day of the month, nor the year, without leather; nor strike a match, nor eat a sandwich on the moor, nor write a letter, nor pray to God, nor use a mirror, nor gird one's loins, nor identify one's dog nor one's cat nor even one's self, nor smoke a cigarette, nor give a fiver to a lady, without this indispensable leather. It was less an adaptation of leather to life than an adaptation of life to leather. An astounding relentless ingenuity had expended itself in forcing life into a mold of leather, and fitting it there exactly. And through the glassy portal one glimpsed vistas of more leather gleaming with silver and gold, of leather put to odder and still more odd uses, receding inward far into the entrails of London. Boots alone were missing from the menagerie; doubtless an oversight, a temporary failure of the creative ingenuity. A gilded legend on the window showed that this remarkable house had existed since 1727, and that the crowned heads of Europe availed themselves of its cleverness in order to reign in leather.

The next house contradicted this one, and proved that precious stones were the basis of a proper conception of life, that life was impossible from morn to eve without precious stones. Behind the windows cave succeeded cave of precious stones into the entrails of London. The second house, too, had been established in the eighteenth century, and it was written that the princes of the earth furnished their diadems there. And these two houses were squeezed close together, so that only a brick separated lapizalazuli from alligators. For in Bond Street the wealth exceeds the space. After precious stones came orchestras and seats for theaters and operas, packed close against the stones. And then cigars and cigarettes, nothing but cigars and cigarettes, the largest cigars and the smallest cigarettes, the largest cigarettes and smallest cigars that fancy ever fashioned. And then suddenly, without the waste of an inch, life became a range of necktles, and naught in this world or the next matters except the color and knotting of a necktie. And then, in a great building, with a mosaic pavement in front of it, and a name over it illustrious beyond the names of kings

> the frock of the odalisque, sacred, mysterious, awful, consummate, ineffable; a shrine guarded by heroes wearing medals! And to placate the high ministrants of the shrine seemed now to be the supreme privilege of the male. And then whips and spurs! And then heads of hair! And then little cakes and sweets, a rood of them vanishing dimly into the entrails of London. And then engravings after Leonardo da Vinci and after Mr. Arthur Hassall! And then leather again! Three quarters of a serried mile up, and three quarters of a serried mile down: all the houses depending on each other for support, and waving to each other messages of the luxury and splendor of an unrivaled civilization! And equipages comprising with equipages in the narrow defile ; and moguls, incas, pro-consuls, eunuchs, usurers, sultans, houris, mandarinesses, and serious ladies getting in and out of theequipages and in and out of the shops, serene in the consciousness that there was nothing more correct than this, and that in the whole street not a single necessary of life could be discovered!"1

Mr. Bennett's method of describing a room, at first blush, resembles an invoice, a catalogue as he himself calls it. But in all this enumeration of particulars is discernible a purpose quite above cataloguing ; the adroit satire of the Bond Street passage is matched by the amicable familiarity of the picture of the Clayhanger sitting-room. You know that room above the shop not as a stranger would remember it after a chance visit; but rather as Maggie and Clara and Edwin knew it, even as Mrs. Nixon knew it who dusted every article in it, presumably, at least three times a week. You know the advantages of the situation of Dairus's chair: When he was seated " the piano could not be played because there was not sufficient space for the stool between the piano and his chair; nor could the fire be made up without disturbing him because the japanned coal-box was on the same side of the hearth rug as the chair". 2

> "The position of Mr. Clayhanger's easy chair - a detail apparently trifling - was in reality a strongly influencing factor in the family life, for it meant that the father's presence obsessed the room. And it could not be altered, for it depended on the window; the window was too

1. The Glimpse: pp15-18 (1909)
2. Clayhanger: p49 (1911)

> small to be quite efficient. When the children reflected upon the history of their childhood they saw one important aspect of it as a long series of detached hours spent in the sittingroom, in a state of desire to do something that could not be done without disturbing father, and in state of indicision whether or not to disturb him".

The recurrence of the Five Towns setting in tale after tale, from the second novel, Anna of the Five Towns, 1902, to the latest appearing serially, 1913-1914 in Harper's Magazine, "The Price of Love", definitely places Bennett with Blackmore and Hardy as a novelist of locality; even with Barrie as a novelist of a single town, for, with two exceptions, all the stories are of Bursley. We see "Old Bosley" from widely varying angles; we know it as Meshack Myatt knew it who was blood, bone and sinew of Bursley since the mind of man ran not to the contrary;[1] we know it as Arthur Twemlow saw it after he had been twenty-five years a New York merchant;[2] we know it as it seemed to Constance Baines and Edwin Clayhanger[4] who had never known anything beyond it and as it thrust itself upon the astonished apprehension of the self-donfident ceremac expert from the British Museum.[5] We view it with the eyes of man and maid, saint and sinner, youth and age, the humble and the mighty; and Bursley is the least changing element; it changes slowly, imperceptibly in response to the collective human will, yet unmistakably every man, woman and child bears marks of his impact with the town in his soul.

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1. Leonora: p 34 - seq. (1911)
2. Ibid: p 46
3. Old Wives' Tale: p 496 (1909)
4. Clayhanger: p 331 (1910)
5. Matador of the Five Towns: pp88 - seq. (1912)

It is this accomplishment which marks Bennett as a novelist of locality in a careful sense. He fronts the task fairly, and tells you of his purpose to show a character not to be found outside the Five Towns, - impossible that it should be found any where else in the whole world except in the Five Towns. He even shows you why. That is the way we think and act and feel in the Five Towns, he says in effect over and over again. And you see a casual relation between the hard, monotonous conditions of labor in the pottery banks and the coal pits, the beauty of grass and flowers everlastingly crushed out by soot and cinders, and the downright, relentless untender case of the Five Towns mind; between the separateness from the main railway system of the country and the narrowness and egotism of its opinions; between the proximity of death in pit and furnace and the grim Bursley humor; between the hardness of wresting livelihood and wealth from clay and coal, and the genuine quality of the Five Towns virtues. It is a genetic treatment of setting : Mr. Bennett's use of detail is conspicuous for beauty as well as clearness. Nothing remains commonplace when touched with his imagination. He looks upon the world and finds it all good; in his own words "the life of the literary man is one long ecstacy of denying that the world is a dull place", and from his accomplishment one can generalize as well in terms of beauty.

On the evening of Edwin Clayhanger's first visit to the Orgreaves, he is seized with the idea of gazing again on his father's new house as he is about to return home:

> "Behind him was the lighted house, in front the gloom of the lawn ending in shruberies and gates, with a street

lamp beyond. And there was silence, save for the fast furnace breathings, coming over undulating miles, which the people of the Five Towns hearing them always, never hear. A great deal of diffused light filtered through the cloudy sky. The warm wandering airs were humid on the cheek. He must return home. He could not stand dreaming all night in the garden of the Orgreaves." 1

The minuteness of his observation is illustrated by a characteristic discription of a Sunday evening in early Spring:

"He was now sure of it (that the frost was breaking) The mud, no longer brittle, yielded to pressure, and there was a trace of dampness in the interstices of the pavement-bricks. A thin raw mist was visible in huge spheres round the street lamps. The sky was dark. The few people whom he encountered seemed to be out upon mysterious errands, seemed to emerge strangely from one gloom and strangely to vanish into another. 2

More rarely he draws a picture for its own sake, as in this vivid bit:

"He crossed the damp grass and felt the breeze and the sun. The sky was a moving medley of Chinese white and Prussian blue, that harmonised admirably with the Indian red architecture which framed it on all sides. The high trees in the garden of the Orgreaves were turning to rich yellow and browns, and dead leaves slanted slowly down from their summits, a few reaching even the Clayhanger garden, specking its evergreen with ochre". 3

A more characteristic manipulation of setting is this from Leonora:

"The long garden front of the dignified eighteenth century house, nearly the last villa in Hillport on the road to Old Castle was extended before her. She had played in that house as a child, and as a woman had watched from its windows, the years go by like a procession. That house was her domain. Here was the supreme intelligence brooding creatively over it.

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1. Clayhanger : p 256 (1910)
2. " p 164
3. " p 571

> Out of walls and floors and ceilings, out of stairs and passages, out of furniture and woven stuffs, out of metal and earthenware, she had made a home. From the lawn, in the beautiful sadness of the autumn evening, [1] anyone might have seen and enjoyed the sight of its high French windows, its glowing sun-blinds, its faintly-tinted and beribboned curtains, its creepers, its glimpses of occasional tables, tall vases, and dressing-mirrors. But Leonora, as she sat holding the letter in her long white hand, could call up and see the interior of every room to the most minute details. She, the housemistress, knew her home by heart. She had thought it into existence; and there was not a cabinet against a wall, not a rug on a floor, not a cushion on a chair, not a knicknack on a mantelpiece, not a plate on a rack, but had come there by the design of her brain.....And now this creation of hers, this complex structure of mellow brick-mortar, and fine chattels and nice and luxurious habits, seemed to Leonora to tremble at the whisper of an enigmatic message from Uncle Meshach."[2]

This aspect of inanimate things, at once winsome and truthful is a characteristic of Mr. Bennett's.

In Arnold Bennett there is the modern spirit of precise observation and truthful reporting carried to the n-th power. He sees so clearly and reports so accurately that each thing from the least to the greatest stands out sheer in its idiosyncracy. We use it from that view where in the scheme of things, it is all important. The complication of his task is that Mr. Bennett knows everything to be important; hence his fullness; hence his effectiveness with his fullness. The discription of the Baines' kitchen offers an illustrative study:

> "....Mrs. Baines was making pastry in the underground kitchen. This kitchen ..... had the mystery of a crypt. The stone steps leading down to it from the level of earth were quite unlighted. You felt for them with the feet of faith, and when you arrived in the kitchen, the kitchen, by contrast, seemed luminous

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1. "The beautiful sadness of the autumn evening", is a touch of the pathetic fallacy unusual with Bennett.
2. Leonora: pp 11-13 (1903)

and gay; the architect may have considered and intended this effect of the staircase. The kitchen saw day through a wide, shallow window whose top touched the ceiling and whose bottom had been out of the girls' reach until long after they had begun to go to school. Its panes were small and about half of them were of the 'knot' kind through which no object could be distinguished; the other half were of a later date, and stood for the march of civilization. The view from the window consisted of the vast plate-glass windows of the newly built Sun vaults, and of passing legs and skirts. A strong wire grating prevented any excess of illumination, and also protected the glass from the caprices of wayfarers in King Street. Boys had a habit of stopping to kick with their full strength at the grating.

For-get-me-nots on a brown field ornamented the walls of the kitchen. Its ceiling was irregular and grimy, and a beam ran across it; in this beam were two hooks; from these two hooks had once depended the ropes of a swing, much used by Constance and Sophia in the old days before they were grown up. A large range stood out from the wall between the stairs and the window. The rest of the furniture comprised a table - against the wall opposite the range - a cupboard, and two Windsor chairs. Opposite the foot of the steps was a doorway, without a door, leading to two larders, dimmer even than the kitchen, vague retreats made visible by whitewash, where bowls of milk, dishes of cold bones, and remainders of fruit-pies, reposed on stillages; in the corner nearest the kitchen was a great steen in which the bread was kept. Another doorway on the other side of the kitchen led to the first coal cellar, where was also the slopstone and tap, and thence a tunnel took you to the second coal cellar, where coke and ashes were stored; the tunnel proceeded to a distant infinitesimal yard, and from the yard, by ways behind Mr. Critchlow's shop, you could finally emerge, astonished, upon Brougham Street. The sense of the vast-obscure of those regions which began at the top of the kitchen steps and ended in black corners of larders or abruptly in the common dailiness of Brougham Street, a sense which Constance and Sophia had acquired in infancy, remained with them almost unimpaired as they grew old." 1

To give the whole setting is obviously impossible however willing an author might be to do so. It does not pass belief that Mr. Bennett's art creed could find use for the pattern of the wall paper or the number of the dog tax; nothing is inconsequential to his meticulous scrutiny. Selection being a necessity

1. Old Wives' Tale: p 34 (1909)

of practice, however, the crux of the question becomes the principle of selection - the aim conserved by selection. Mr. Bennett's aim is to produce the illusion of no selection at all- of reproducing the complete environment. Whatever is, is important. And it is simple justice to say that his art is equal to his theory. None of the foolish things that have been said of Mr. Bennett's method, and there have been a great many, has been less discerning than the criticism of his handling of the setting. Perhaps it is not too much to say that his genetic method amounts to a new genre in fictive writing, for it is quite another thing from that use of landscape made familiar to us by Eliot, Dickens, or Meredith. It is however, akin to Hardy's use of Nature in the Return of the Native, or in this passage from Tess of the D'Urbervilles:

> "Amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of Froom Vale, at a season when the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization, it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate. The ready hearts existing there were impregnated by their surroundings".1

Mr. Bennett is less direct. The evolution of the human and non-human elements of life, and their inter-relations is implicit, not expressed in the story. And it is not so often Nature, as <u>man</u>, projected into the environment he has created or at least helped to shape, that is emphasized: It is a way of showing the consequence of human action fastened upon the children's children. In this from the Glimpse, one is reminded of Thoreau's satiric picture of humanity at a dead set because of the furniture it

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1. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, by Thomas Hardy.

must carry about:

> "That which had always impressed me most about them..... was the enormity of the physical apparatus with which they had encumbered mere existence, the complexity of it and the costliness. They were helpless without slaves, yet they had abolished slavery. There were ten thousand wheels in my sight, and they all had to be washed every day. And that was nothing. There were hordes of women in my sight who must stand limp every six hours while other woman hooked clothes round their bodies....."

In no phase of his work is he more characteristic than in his setting. It gives a unity to the ten or twelve novels his fifteen novel-writing years have produced, which causes you to think of them as <u>one</u>, not as several. That absorbing little world of the Five Towns - little, yet large enough to mirror human nature - is the unit he has made.

II: AS AN INTERPRETER OF CHARACTER.

In the modern novel, born as it was of humanism carried a mighty leap beyond where the Thirteenth Century Renaissance, had taken it, characterization is and always must remain the pivotal quality. Whatever else it may have to a distinctive degree, characterization the novel must have to be a novel at all. The keystone of the structure is that any human being is absorbingly interesting if you can see him and know him as he is. The disadvantage of experience is that we all go about, masked figures, jostling each other at every turn, familiar but unrevealed - even the sense of mystery usually unawakened. In society, men try to conform; to touch only at points of likeness, and the wonderful thing of all creation, individually, personality is at best but dimly apprehended. In one sense it might almost be said that the novel exists to obviate this flaw in experience. For the novel searches out idiosyncracy; it reveals, not conceals, the inner twists of personality. And its power lies in the dual aspect of personality; the theosophists have a figure which represents this most forcibly. They liken the soul, whose separate existence they strive to lose in the blessed state of Nirvana, to the central sun and its effulgent beams.[1] At the circumference the eternal variety; at the center the eternal unity. While

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1. Swawmi Abenywanda: The Universal Mind, p 47 (1899)

it is not given to the occidental mind to desire to make the hard and painful journey from his position of consciousness at the circumference to consciousness at the center, still the figure serves admirably to vivify the dual aspect of our mental life- our personality and our common humanity. It is the province of great literature to make us see ourselves in the brain children of the creative mind. Iago, Lady MacBeth and Lear; Joseph, David and the Magdalene live for us because they live in us; like answers to like out of the great deep of our common humanity. Forever like and forever unlike, the great mystery of existence. Personality is precious, and it is the novelist's function above all else to reveal personality. As his men and women rouse our sympathies and stimulate our realization of life, must the success of the novelist be gauged. His use of background, his ability to construct a plot; his revelation of a philosophy of life- all exist but in complement to his power of creating character. They must serve his characterization or they can scarcely serve him.

Mr. Bennett's power of characterization is so unusual that its somewhat irregular manifestation is a little puzzling. In his first novel, "A Man From the North",[1] the central figure is somewhat unconvincing as a personality. Whether Mr. Bennett was attempting to picture himself or not, can hardly be conjectured; that the material is largely autobiographical is evident enough to anyone who reads the book in connection with "The Truth About an Author." [2]

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1. A Man From the North: London 1898.
2. The Truth About an Author: London 1900

Whatever of virility he may lack, however, the "Young Man", Richard Larch, shows the promise of that power Mr. Bennett has so richly divulged in the whole galaxy of the Five Towns books - that of showing a phase of personality having qualities due in a measure to locality. The "downrightness" of the Five Towns is unmistakeably evident in Richard Larch. Why the Five Towns personality should be so downright, Mr. Bennett doesn't attempt to say in this book. That is one of the most notable accomplishments of "The Old Wives' Tale", "Clayhanger", and "Hilda Lessways".

Mr. Bennett was too much afraid of feeling in these early days to create men and women who grip you and live with you. In an amazingly short time, he was to handle the throbbing elements of life with a sure touch. The second novel, Anna of the Five Towns, is marred by none of the dilettantism of the first one. There is, in Anna Tellwright, the most convincing, as well as the most winsome of his women, that fine restraint which is always to distinguish him, but nevertheless, there is genuine passion in little Agnes, in Ephraim Tellwright, in Willie Price, - and above all, - in Anna, herself.

In Anna Tellwright is the delineation of a nature markedly strong and reserved,[1] yet so blended with mildness, sweetness[2] of temper and a modesty which still had in it no touch of self-depreciation,[3] that it was largely dominated through life, by

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1. Anna of the Five Towns: p12, p253 (1910)
2. Ibid p30
3. " p18

natures essentially inferior to itself.[1] Her father, the miser, Ephraim Tellwright,[2] dominated everything and everybody with whom he came into contact - except the complacent Wesleyan Matron, Mrs. Sutton - who annually inveigled a gracious smile and a twenty pound note out of him - an accomplishment not to be matched by another.[3] Therefore while it did not indicate weakness in Anna that she became subject to him, a life-long subjection to a father undoubtedly prepared the way for subjection to the husband[4] and to the conventional bonds of society. Then too, Anna was singularly loyal,[5] singularly unafraid of pain,[6] singularly faithful to duty.[7] She was all these quite naturally, with no notion she was doing anything out of the ordinary line of conduct. She was never consciously noble, as was Mrs. Lessways,[8] or Mrs. John Baines[9] and Aunt Harriet.[10]

The materials for a tragedy are at once recognisable, here, which indeed is what Mr. Bennett has effected. Anna travels unwaveringly in the path of duty with the casualness of going to market, and the thorns that tore her heart were regarded no more than as cinders in the road. Such natures have not the faculties for choosing the easyway. They run full on to life's mischances. They love, and loving in despite of duty - they part without giving

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1. Anna of the Five Towns : p22,p215 (1910)
2. Ibid p27
3. " p163
4. " p297
5. " p288
6. " p
7. " p29
8. Hilda Lessways: p119 (1911)

9 & 10 Old Wives' Tale, Book I, Chap. VII.

recognition or regret to that love - even though one should go to the abandoned pitshaft which does not deliver up its secret and the other to the marriage altar, taking oath to be a good wife to the man whom she had never loved.

Constance (Baines) Povey,[1] the apotheosis of the Conventional, is as winsomely human as a woman can be. In drawing her, Mr. Bennett has shown recognition of the psychological fact that feeling depends not upon the absolute, but upon the relative, intensity of the stimulus. "Give me but a lump of clay, and a sense of values" - the artist says, "and I will make it as beautiful as an angel's wing". The conventional person is not typically one who lacks feeling: more probably he is one whose susceptibility to feeling is so intense,[2] that he instictively protects himself from the crude untempered emotions of the world. In secure trim gardens he lives content and happy, safe from the ruder shocks of existence. So it was with Constance Povey. She was the obedient child, walking circumspectly in the paths her elders laid out for her - and not knowing that she did so. In fact at times she thought of herself as recklessly independent.[3]

Life to her was quite as full of adventures as it was to poor Sophia out in Paris during the Siege. (Constance, in Paris during the Siege, is unthinkable) While her "unalterable, benignant calm" caused her husband at times to grow cold with wonder

1. Old Wives' Tale: Esp. Chap. II
2. "The men who give their lives to roots and co-signs are not the men who can dispense with feeling, but men who can find feeling in these researches". Oscar A. Ferkins: Lecture, Mar. 19, 1910.
3. Old Wives' Tale : p161

her charming, childlike trick of dressing the mantle with nosegays and then inquiring of him "how he liked her garden", entranced him!

And what woman could have found life more thrilling than did Constance upon that first day after the honeymoon, in the Shop-house in St. Luke's Square. Maggie, time-tried domestic servant of her mother's, gave notice, and Constance had to take it with the non-chalance of the married woman and housemistress! And then she must "keep her countenance" during the initial occupancy of her father's and mother's bedroom! And what a winsome blending of girl and woman here: "You could see the timid thing peeping wistfully out of the eyes of the married woman".[1]

> "'Sam'! she cried from the top of the crooked stairs
> No.answer. The door at the foot was closed.
> 'Sam'!
> 'Hello?' Distantly, faintly.
> 'I've done all I'm going to do tonight'.
> And she ran back along the corridor, a white figure in the deep gloom, and hurried into bed, and drew the clothes up to her chin.
> In the life of a bride there are some dramatic moments. If she has married the industrious apprentice, one of those moments occurs when she first occupies the sacred bed-chamber of her ancestors, and the bed on which she was born. Her parents' room had always been to Constance, if not sacred, at least invested with a certain moral solemnity. She could not enter it as she would enter another room. The course of nature, with its succession of death, conceptions, and births, slowly makes such a room august with a mysterious quality which interprets the grandeur of mere existence and imposes itself on all. Constance had the strangest sensations in that bed, whose heavy dignity of ornament symbolized a past age; sensations of sacrilege and trespass, of being a naughty girl to whom punishment would accrue for this shocking freak. Not since she was quite tiny had she slept in that bed - one night with her mother, before her father's seizure, when he had been away. What a limitless, unfathomable bed it was then! Now it was

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1. Old Wives' Tale: p 135.

> just a bed - so she had to tell herself- like any other bed. The tiny child that, safely touching its mother, had slept in its vast expanse, seemed to her now a pathetic little thing; its image made her feel melancholy. And her mind dwelt on sad events: the death of her father, the flight of darling Sophia; the immense grief, and the exile, of her mother. She esteemed that she knew what life was, and that it was grim. And she sighed. But the sigh was an affectation, meant partly to convince herself that she was grown-up, and partly to keep her in countenance in the intimidating bed. This melancholy was factitious, was less than transient foam on the deep sea of her joy. Death and sorrow and sin were dim shapes to her; the ruthless egotism of happiness blew them away with a puff, and their wistful faces vanished. To see her there in the bed, framed in mahogany and tassels, lying on her side, with her young glowing cheeks, and honest but not artless gaze, and the rich curve of her hip lifting the counterpane, one would have said that she had never heard of aught but love".

And then had come that tragic moment when she had impulsively remonstrated against her husband's return tonpaper collars, after the linen ones of the honeymoon period. They had found themselves on the brink of a chasm but Sam had conquered the angry resentment which surprised him at the implied criticism, and fetched the linen. And then Sam had ordered a sign for the Shop - in face of the Baines tradition against "puffing"[1]

> "What with servants, chasms and signboards, Constance considered that her life as a married woman would not be deficient in excitement. Long afterwards, she fell asleep thinking of Sophia". [2]

But in the end, the zip and zest of youth having departed, which gave feeling and exhilaration to matters not moving in themselves, we find Constance entirely given up to the hopeless task of keeping up the protective machinery of her life; to keep-

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1. Old Wives' Tale: p 5
2. Ibid: p 142

ing her fences in repair, and her compartments in order - compartments, which, alas, she had little enough now to fill with. The house, with the servant problem what it was in the late '90's(!) became a burden under which she tried unsuccessfully enough to struggle. And yet the idea of leaving it was beyond her comprehension. That there was no household any longer (Sam being long since dead and son Cyril residing in London) to furnish an adequate motive for keeping up the house, did not enter into her considerations on the subject. She had always lived there and her mother and father had always lived there. Nor was the circumstances that it was dark and inconvenient and a makeshift of a home at best - endured in the past only because it was connected with the Shop, an argument in favor of leaving it. She had always lived there. It always came back to that. "Constance had never been able to advance a single argument for remaining in the Square, And yet she would not budge".[1]

It is rather a desolating picture of the futility of life; the coming to an end, absolutely; of senility and decay, with no promise of a greater dawn, that Bennett gives in "The End of Constance". Psychology has no soul, to Mr. Bennett; and character without a soul is as unlovely and as unconvincing in Mr. Bennett's novels, great as they are, as psychology without a soul is illogical and unintelligible in the treatises of William James[2] or Wilhelm Wundt.[3]

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1. Old Wives' Tale: p 523
2. William James, Pr. Psychology, New York, 1907.
3. Wilhelm Wundt, Principles of Physiological Psychology transl. from the fiftieth German ed. by Edward Bradford Tichener(Vol.3) New York, 1904.

It isadisheartening picture of decay - the end of Constance; but it can hardly be included in the characterization. Mr. Bennett's defense to this criticism (?) would undoubtedly be mild astonishment, or possibly pity, that one should expect characterization, when character - personality - was ceasing or had ceased to be. It is, of course, a matter of philosophy, of view of life, - even of faith. That it is true to life, may be admitted without accepting it as universally or inevitably so; for the soul is immortal observes the Poet, where a soul can be discerned. And rarely can a soul be discerned in Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett's men and women are revealed with a completeness and richness of personality that makes them at once and forever living creatures. His major character always - and most of the others - are at the farthest possible remove from types. Their idiosyncracies leap out at us; they work, or feel, or chance upon their way through the tangled mesh of happenings, according to their various kinks and twists of temperament; and each case is an individual case; each man stands for himself. And yet you feel each to be a so far as there is such a thing - an average person. His careful psychology makes them all true sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

He never idealizes characters but it is not so certain that he does not at times select or mass evil characteristics in violation of strictist truth. Is the sensualist Charlie Fearns quite true? He has no redeeming features, but is an appalling picture of lust. But this is not typical. Characteristically, his people are entirely human, - Dairus and Edwin Clayhanger,

and Samuel Povey, more fairly represent Mr. Bennett's art.

Two portraits Mr. Bennett has drawn unmistakeably with the pen of love. They are the children Agnes Tellwright and Edith Dean.

Agnes infuses herself through every page of this grim, hard story[1] of mischances, softening and sweetening it, even as childhood softens and sweetens life. And there is so far as I know, no other child passage in the pages of English fiction to place beside the "Edith" chapter of the Glimpse, in loving understanding of a child's heart.[2]

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1. Anna of the Five Towns: eg. p 219
2. The Glimpse: Chap. XXXVII.

III: AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELIST.

Mr. Bennett's absorption with the "souls" of men; with the motives that lie behind action, make him a psychological novelist to be placed with such names as George Eliot, Hawthorne, Bourget, Balzac and Henry James. His fidelity to the genetic method in the narration of events, makes it inevitable that he should use the psychologic method in the revelation of character. His manner is throughout, psychological; and by psychological, I mean nothing else than that he is continually analysing the mental states of his characters - how they think, and why they think as they do, and why they act as they do thinkimg as they do. Where another writer might have observed that Hilda blushed, Mr. Bennett says:

> "So over set was she by the dramatic surprise of his challenging remark (1) and so enlightened by the sudden perception of its being perfectly characterist of him, that her manner changed in an instant to a delicate, startled timidity. All the complex sensitiveness of her nature was expressed simultaneously in the changing tints of her face, the confusion of her eyes and her gestures, and the exquisite hesitations of her voise, as she told him about the coincidence which had brought back to her in his office the poem of her schooldays." (2)

Mr. Bennett has no interest in conduct, it would seem, apart from the motives that lie back of conduct. In this he differs widely from M. de Maupassant, who affirms in the preface to Pierre et Jeanne that the motives of conduct should be hidden in literature as they are in life. From whom are they hidden, then? asks Mr. Henry James, in comment; and we may answer, surely not from Arnold Bennett.

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1. He had said merely, "So you've been looking at my Victor Hugo"
2. Hilda Lessways : p 76 (1911)

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him about the coincidence which had brought back to her in his office the poem of her schooldays".[1]

Indeed, for an illustration of the psychologic method one may select a book at random and open to any page. It is never wanting. In his intensive studies of various aspects of psychology - mob psychology,[2] sex psychology,[3] the psychology of love,[4] of fatherhood,[5] of motherhood,[6] of adolescence and childhood,[7][8] even of infancy,[9] he offers an embarrassment of riches to this commentator.

It has been suggested[10] that a tremendous success awaits the writer of a novel of manners which shall show on one page what "they said," and on the opposite page what "they were thinking while they said it." The uniqueness of device is wanting, but something very like this is what Mr. Bennett does.

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1. Hilda Lessways: p 76 (1911)
2. Old Wives' Tale: Chap. XII.
3. Book of Carlotta.
4. Leonora: Chap. X, Whom God Hath Joined: Chap. VII, Clayhanger: Chap. XVII.
5. Old Wives' Tale: Chaps. III and IV, Clayhanger: Chap. IX.
6. Old Wives' Tale: Book II, Chaps. III, IV, VI, VIII, Book IV, Chap. III, The Glimpse: Chap. XXXVII.
7. Clayhanger: Chaps. V - IV, VII-XVII Book I, Old Wives' Tale: Book I, Chaps. I - III, Leonora Chap. III, Hilda Lessways Book I, Chaps. I - VII.
8. Anna of the Five Towns: Chap. III, The Glimpse: Chap. XXXVII.
9. Matador of the Five Towns - Baby's Bath, Old Wives' Tale: Book II, Chap. III.
10. Dr. Richard Burton, Lecture, May 20, 1911.

In Hilda Lessways again, possibly the most psychologic of all the novels, this method is almost characteristic. When George Cannon who had committed bigamy in marrying her, has been discovered and is taking leave of her, Mr. Bennett recounts it in this way:

> "'Why did you keep it from me?' she asked in a very clear and precise tone, not aggrieved, but fatalistic and melancholy.
>
> 'Keep what from you?' at length he met her eyes, darkly.
>
> 'All this about your being married'.
>
> 'Why did I keep it from you?' he repeated harshly, and then his tone changed from defiance to a softened regret: 'I'll tell you why I kept it from you! Because I knew if I told you I should have no chance with a girl like you.....Nobody could fool about with you!' She was flattered, but she thought secretly: 'He could have won me on any terms he liked!...I wonder whether he could have won me on any terms!....That first night in this house, when we were in the front attic - suppose he'd told me then - I wonder!.....But the severity of her countenance was a perfect mask for such weak and uncertain ideas, and confirmed him deeply in his estimate of her. He continued: 'Now that first night in this house, upstairs. He jerked his head towards the ceiling. She blushed, not from any shame, but because his thought had surprised hers. 'I was as near as dammit to letting out the whole thing and chancing it with you. But I didn't I saw it'd be no use. And that's not the only time either"!
>
> She stood silent by the dressing-table, calmly looking at him, and she asked herself, eagerly curious: 'When were the other times?'
>
> 'Of course it's all my fault!' he said.
>
> 'What is?'
>
> 'This!... All my fault! I don't want to excuse myself. I've nothing to say for myself'.
>
> In her mind she secretly interrupted him: 'Yes, you have. You couldn't do without me - isn't that enough? 1

Everywhere in his characterizations, Mr. Bennett shows at length the "mechanics of the human mind". In fact he has developed psychology in the novel further than anyone else has done - not forgetting Henry James. He must be considered a greater

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1. Hilda Lessways: pp 439-441

psychologic novelist than James because his psychology is just as evident, is perhaps, truer, and surely is more understandable, but chiefly because as a <u>novelist</u> he is more successful - if the test is to be the truthful presentment of our common humanity.

His psychologic method is followed with more completeness in the character of Hilda Lessways than anywhere else. In Hilda's mental processes, again and again we see ourselves mirrored - so true it is -. On the day when her mother's determination to collect the rents has so outraged Hilda, we find Hilda coming to tea in an indignant frame of mine. "She could, if she chose" said Mr. Bennett, "easily free her brain from the obsession either by reading or by a sharp jerk of volition, but often she preferred not to do so, saying to herself voluptuously: 'No, I will nurse my grievance; I'll nurse it and nurse it and nurse it. It is mine, and itis just and anybody with any sense at all would admit instantly that I am absolutely right". Thus it was on this afternoon. When she came to tea her face was formidably expressive, nor would she attempt to modify the rancour of those uncompromising features. On the contrary, as soon as she saw that her mother had noticed her condition, she deliberately intensified it.

Another analysis worth noting is to be found where Hilda searches in her mother's wardrobe for handkerchiefs, with the purpose of forstalling the borrowing of her own. She found things in characteristic disorder: "Sighing, she began to arrange the trays in some kind of method. Incompetent and careless mother! Hilda wondered how the old thing managed to conduct her life from day to day with even the semblance of the decency of order. It

did not occur to her that for twenty-five years before she was born and for a long time afterwards, Mrs. Lessways had contrived to struggle along through the world, without her daughter's aid, to the general satisfaction of herself and some others." The handkerchiefs discovered, as Hilda had made sure they would be, she took one of them and descended to the kitchen; giving it to her mother and concealing her triumph beneath a mask of wise, longsuffering benevolence, she would say,.....

This should be double spaced; it is quoted.

" The dialogue which did actually accompany the presentation of the handkerchief, though roughly corresponding to her rehearsal of it, was lacking in the dramatic pungency necessary for a really effective triumph; the reason being that the thoughts of both mother and daughter were diverted in different ways from the handkerchief by the presence of Florrie in the kitchen.

Florrie was the new servant....."

This grievous lack of the show of affection between mother and daughter is not due to a sinful nature in Hilda. It is rather due to the circumstance that Hilda's soul was starving in the arid desert of dishwashing and tea-hour gossip she existed in - an atmosphere, however, in which her mother found nothing wanting. Hilda was to find release - her very salvation - in Pitman's shorthand.

With characteristic psychology Mr. Bennett gives a vivid impression of the girl, as editorial secretary, finding self-expression in her work and consequently showing a saner, sweeter, healthier temper at home and in all the relations of her life.

When Hilda disregards the telegram informing her that her mother is ill in London, there occurs as realistic a bit of psychology as can be found in fiction. Nothing could show the success of Bennett's method more vividly than this:

> "In the middle of the night Hilda woke up, and within a few seconds she convinced herself that her attitude to Miss Gailey's telegram had been simply monstrous. She saw it, in the darkness, as an enormity. She ought to have responded to the telegram at once; she ought to have gone to London by the afternoon train. What had there been to prevent her from knocking at the door of the inner room, and saying to Mr. Cannon, in the presence of no matter whom: 'I am very sorry, Mr. Cannon, but I've just had a telegram that mother is ill in London, and I must leave by the next train'? There had been nothing to prevent her! At latest she should have caught the evening train. Business was of no account in such a crisis. Her mother might be very ill, might be dying, might be dead. It was not for trifles that people sent such telegrams. The astonishing thing was that she should have been so blind to her obvious duty.....And she said to herself, thinking with a mysterious and beautiful remorse of the last minute of her talk with Mr. Cannon: 'If I had done as I ought to have done, I should have been in London, or on my way to London, instead of in the room with him there; and that would not have occurred!' But what 'that' was, she could not have explained. Nevertheless, Mr. Cannon's phrase, 'It's a good thing you didn't go to London', still gave her a pleasure, though the pleasure was dulled.
>
> Then she tried to reassure herself. Sarah Gailey was nervous and easily frightened. Hermother had an excellent constitution. The notion of her mother being seriously ill was silly. In a few hours she would be with her mother, and would be laughing at these absurd night-fears. In any case there would assuredly be a letter from Sarah Gailey by the first post, so that before starting she would have exact information. She succeeded, partially, in reassuring herself for a brief space; but soon she was more unhappy than ever in the clear conviction of her wrongdoing. Again and again she formulated, in her fancy, scenes of the immediate future, as for example at her mother's dying bed, and she imagined conversations and repeated the actual words used by herself and others, interminably. And then she returned to the previous day, and hundreds of times she went into the inner room and said to Mr. Cannon: 'I'm very sorry, Mr. Cannon, but I've just had a telegram - '

> etc. Why had she not said it?...Thus worked the shuttles of her mind, with ruthless, insane insistence, until she knew not whether she was awake or asleep, and the very tissues of her physical brain seemed raw.
>
> She thought feebly:'If I got up and lighted the candle and walked about, I should end this'. But she could not rise. She was netted down to the bed. And when she tried to soothe herself with other images - images of delight - she found that they had lost their power. Undressing a few hours earlier, she had lived again, in exquisite and delicious alarm, through the last minute of her talk with Mr. Cannon; she had gone to sleep while reconstituting those instants. But now their memory left her indifferent, even inspired repugnance. And her remorse little by little lost its mysterious beauty.
>
> She clung to the idea of the reassuring letter which she would receive. That was her sole gling of consolation." 1

Mr. Bennett is frequently mentioned for unusual knowledge of a woman's heart. He has said that his early experience as editor of a woman's magazine taught him much about women. Undoubtedly it did, but there is also, some reason for believing that he has fallen into the characteristic error of the inductive method (to which he swears allegiance) that of generalizing from insufficient data. Not all women find themselves reflected, or their intellectual demands satisfied in any degree by so called "Women's" Magazines, as Mr. Bennett well knows, else how could there be a woman like Carlotta Peel? In this instance as in most others, it is from Mr. Bennett's work rather than from what he says about himself, that conclusions must be drawn.

That Mr. Bennett has rather emphasised the delineation of women in his books, is apparent. In chronological order, he has given us, Anna Tellwright, Leonora Stamway, Carlotta Peel,

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1. Hilda Lessways : Chap. XIV pp 160-161-162.
2. The Truth About an Author: pp "I learned a good deal about frocks, household management, and the secret nature of women especially the secret nature of women".
3. Book of Carlotta: p 9 (1911)

Constance and Sophia Baines, and Hilda Leesways. He has hardly given the same prominence to an equal number of men - Edwin Clayhanger being their only name to put with these as to extent and importance of treatment. Notwithstanding, his characterization of men is perhaps the more powerful phase of his work.

His women form a notable contribution to the literature of womanhood. In his preface to The Book of Carlotta,[1] Mr. Bennett has a significant remark: "On sundry occasions, women have been good enough to say to me apropos of passages in my novels: 'How did you know that? None but a woman could have known that.' And invariably they had hit on passages which I had written as the result of asking myself: 'Now what should I have done in such circumstances? How should I have felt?'"

1. Quoted by Bennett in preface to Book of Carlotta: ed. 1911.
~~6. Old Wives' Tale: ed. 1909, pp175.~~

His analysis of her mental state during the accouchment is one of his most painstaking bits ofwriting. For all its ruthless realism it is touched by a tenderness he rarely permits himself:

> "She was lying quite comfortable in the soft bed; idle, silly; happiness forming like a thin crust over the lava of her anguish and her fright. And by her side was the soul that had fought its way out of her, ruthlessly; the secret disturber revealed to the light of morning. Curious to look at! Not like any baby she had ever seen; red, creased, brutish! But - for some reason that she did not examine - she folded it in an immense tenderness".

The mother, Constance yielding, though in grief and anguish to the father's stern measures for the welfare of their son; years later, bereaved of her husband's guiding will, unable to refuse her boy[1] anything and letting him break her heart by his selfishness - all is delineated with most careful psychology and makes up the Book of Constance.

What mother but would accord a forgiving smile to the perpetrator of this gentle satire:

> "Mrs. Blackshaw had a baby. It would be an exaggeration to say that the baby interested the entire town, Bursley being an ancient blase sort of borough of some thirty thousand inhabitants. Babies, in fact, arrived in Bursley at the rate of more than a thousand every year. Nevertheless, a few weeks after the advent of Mrs. Blackshaw's baby, when the medical officer of health reported to the Town Council that the births for the month amounted to ninety-five and that the birth-rate of Bursley compared favourably with the birth-rates of the sister towns, Hanbridge, Knype, Longshaw, and Turnhill - when the medical officer read these memorable words at the monthly meeting of the Council, and the Staffordshire Signal reported them, and Mrs. Blackshaw perused them, a blush of pride spread over Mrs.Blackshaw's face, and she picked up the baby's left foot and gave it a little peck of a kiss. She could not help

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1. Old Wives' Tale : p271.

feeling that the real solid foundation of that formidable and magnificent output of babies was her baby. She could not help feeling that she had done something for the town - had caught the public eye". 1

Even more enchanting is the mother, Mary Dean, as she brings Edith to enliven her sick and bereaved Uncle Morrice: 2

"To see these two together, especially in panoply, was a moving sight. Mary gazed on her offspring with a passionate and proud affection which no reserve of demeanor could hide.'.. Whenever she was with her child the glance of her eye and the gestures of her body appeared to be saying :"I am a sensible mother. I do not deceive myself about Edith. I am not silly about her. I treat her with firmness. I exact obedience. I am not a slave to her. I do not consider her to be the most marvelous child that was ever born. I merely do my best to bring her up properly and to keep her in good health. I am absolutely impartial concerning her. The last thing I wish is to weary people with her...Still, you will probably admit of your own accord that she does genuinely differ from the ordinary.

You looked at Edith and, if you could see, you saw a miracle. A delicate plant, and Mary, by the long miracle of expert knowledge, watchfulness, self-control, and perseverance, was flowering it in perfection. The contour of those cheeks, the exquisite bloom on them- these were not Mary's creation, but she had evolved them; their flawlessness was her creation. The white frock, cap, stockings, shoes, gloves - in every incredibly meticulous detail you could discern Mary and her maternal passion. The article was finished, in every way finished. The article represented yearsof the activity of a first-class brain and of a terrible affection. It was put forward, with superficial negligence, as being a trifle, a mere female infant conscientionsly cared for, such as exists in tens of thousands all over England. But in the slight involuntary trembling of the head of the mother, in the lifting of that head, in the proud dart from the mother's eye, there was a supreme challenge."

Mr. Bennett's contribution to the study of kinship is of itself enough to secure him a place among the notable names of English fiction. And strangely enough, it is a phase of his work whih has brought forth little discussion among his critics. His

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1. Matador of the Five Towns: (1912) p 38
2. The Glimpse: p 315

marvelous use of background has elicited copious comment, however, futile much of it has been. But this most precious of his offerings has all but been overlooked.

One looks in vain among printed books for a discerning and loving comprehension of the complexities of the relations of parents and children to put beside Clayhanger and the Old Wives' Tale. Now he seems a passionate pleader for misunderstood childhood trampled upon heartlessly by over-confident, self-righteous parenthood; and now the parent, in pitiable perplexity enlists all our sympathies as he tries to preserve himself in the face of the onslaught of the coming generation - foredoomed to ignominious defeat; life, here, again, and the law of evolution is shown terrible, irresistible, but he does not neglect to picture in all its enchantment, the delights of the relationship, the sops and lures life offers parents to keep the race going on. No one can veil the sinister Form in the background more perfectly than he.[1]

The joy of Mrs. Blackshaw with her baby at its bath;[1] of Constance with nine months old Cyril[2] crawling on the hearth rug; of Mrs. Deans with a casualness that was really only an aggravated form of pride, bringing that perfection of human kind, little Edith to console her brother's grief[3] - what sweetness in the common lot is shown here.

But in other studies he gets much below the surface. There is no finer study of mother and daughter in a characteristic aspect of the relationship than Mrs. Baines' encounter with

1. Matador of the Five Towns: p 38
2. Old Wives' Tale: p 172.
3. The Glimpse: p 315

Sophia anent the project of leaving school:

"'Mother, are you there?' she heard a voice from above.

'Yes, my chuck'.

Footsteps apparently reluctant and hesitating clinked on the stairs, and Sophia entered the kitchen.

'Put this curl straight', said Mrs. Baines, lowering her head slightly and holding up her floured hands, which might not touch anything but flour. 'Thank you. It bothered me. And now stand out of my light. I'm in a hurry. I must get into the shop so that I can send Mr. Povey off to the dentist's. What is Constance doing?'

'Helping Maggie to make Mr. Povey's bed'.

'Oh!'

Though fat, Mrs. Baines was a comely woman, with fine brown hair, and confidently calm eyes that indicated her belief in her own capacity to accomplish whatever she could be called on to accomplish. She looked neither more nor less than her age., which was forty-five She was not a native of the district, having been culled by her husband from the moorland town of Axe, twelve miles off. Like nearly all women who settle in a strange land upon marriage, at the bottom of her heart she had considered herself just a trifle superior to the strange land and its ways. This feeling, confirmed by long experience, had never left her. It was this feeling which induced her to continue making her own pastry - with two thoroughly trained 'great girls' in the house! Constance could make good pastry, but it was not her mother's pastry. In pastry-making everything can be taught except the 'hand', light and firm, which wields the roller.One is born with this hand, or without it. And if one is born without it, the highest flights of pastry are impossible. Constance was born without it. There were days when Sophia seemed to possess it; but there were other days when Sophia's pastry was uneatable by anyone except Maggie. Thus Mrs. Baines, though intensely proud and fond of her daughters, had justifiably preserved a certain condescension towards them. She honestly doubted whether either of them would develop into the equal of their mother.

'Now you little vixen!' she exclaimed. Sophia stealing and eating slices of half-cooked apple. 'This comes of having no breakfast! And why didn't you come down to supper last night'?

'I don't know. I forgot'.

Mrs. Baines scrutinized the child's eyes, which met hers with a sort of diffident boldness. She knew everything that a mother can know of a daughter, and she was sure that Sophia had no cause to be indisposed. Therefore she scrutinized those eyes with a faint apprehension

'If you can't find anything better to do', said she

'butter me the inside of this dish. Are your hands clean? No, better not touch it'.

Mrs. Baines was now at the stage of depositing little pats of butter in rows on a large plain of paste. The best fresh butter! Cooking butter, to say naught of lard, was unknown in that kitchen on Friday mornings. She doubled the expanse of paste on itself and rolled the butter in - supreme operation!

'Constance has told you about leaving school?' said Mrs. Baines, in the vein of small-talk, as she trimmed the paste to the shape of a pie-dish.

'Yes', Sophia replied shortly. Then she moved away from the table to the range. There was a toasting-fork on the rack, and she began to play with it.

'Well, are you glad? Your aunt Harriet thinks you are quite old enough to leave. And as we'd decided in any case that Constance was to leave, it's really much simpler that you should both leave together.'

'Mother', said Sophia, rattling the toasting-fork, 'what am I going to do after I've left school?'

'I hope', Mrs. Baines answered with that sententiousness which even the cleverest of parents are not always clever enough to deny themselves, 'I hope that both of you will do what you can to help your mother - and father', she added.

'Yes', said Sophia, irritated. 'But what am I to do?'

'That must be considered. As Constance is to learn the millinery, I've been thinking that you might begin to make yourself useful in the underwear, gloves, silks and so on. Then between you, you would one day be able to manage quite nicely all that side of the shop, and I should be - '

'I don't want to go into the shop, mother'.

This interruption was made in a voice apparently cold and inimical. But Sophia trembled with nervous excitement as she uttered the words. Mrs. Baines gave a brief glance at her, unobserved by the child, whose face was towards the fire. She deemed herself a finished expert in the reading of Sophia's moods; nevertheless as she looked at that straight back and proud head, she had no suspicion that the whole essence and being of Sophia was silently but intensely imploring sympathy.

'I wish you would be quiet with that fork', said Mrs. Baines, with the curious, grim politeness which often characterized her relations with her daughters. The toasting-fork fell on the brick floor, after having rebounded from the ash-tin. Sophia hurriedly replaced it on the rack.

'Then what shall you do?' Mrs. Baines proceeded, conquering the annoyance caused by the toasting-fork. 'I think it's me that should ask you instead of you asking me. What shall you do? Your father and I were

both hoping you would take kindly to the shop and try to repay us for all the - '

Mrs. Baines was unfortunate in her phrasing that morning. She happened to be, in truth, rather an exceptional parent, but that morning she seemed unable to avoid the absurd pretensions which parents of those days assumed quite sincerely and which every good child with meekness accepted.

Sophia was not a good child, and she obstinately denied in her heart the cardinal principle of family life, namely, that the parent has conferred on the offspring a supreme favour by bringing it into the world. She interrupted her mother again, rudely.

'I don't want to leave school at all', she said passionately.

'But you will have to leave school sooner or later', argues Mrs. Baines, with an air of quiet reasoning, of putting herself on a level with Sophia. 'You can't stay at school for ever, my pet, can you? Out of my way!'

She hurried across the kitchen with a pie, which she whipped into the oven, shutting the iron door with a careful gesture.

'Yes', said Sophia. 'I should like to be a teacher. That's what I want to be'.

The tap in the coal cellar, out of repair, could be heard distinctly and systematically dropping water into a jar on the slopstone.

'A school-teacher?, inquired Mrs. Baines.

'Of course. What other kind is there?' said Sophia sharply. 'With Miss Chetwynd'.

'I don't think your father would like that', Mrs. Baines replied. 'I'm sure he wouldn't like it'.

'Why not?'

'It wouldn't be quite suitable'.

'Why not, mother?' the girl demanded with a sort of ferocity. She had now quitted the range. A man's feet twinkled past the window.

Mrs. Baines was startled and surprised. Sophia's attitude was really very trying; her manners deserved correction. But it was not these phenomena which seriously affected Mrs. Baines; she was used to them and had come to regard them as somehow the inevitable accompaniment of Sophia's beauty, as the penalty of that surpassing charm which occasionally emanated from the girl like a radiance. What startled and surprised Mrs. Baines was the perfect and unthinkable madness of Sophia's infantile scheme. It was a revelation to Mrs. Baines. Why in the name of heaven had the girl taken such a notion into herhead? Orphans, widows, and spinsters of a certain age suddenly thrown on the world - these were the women, who, naturally, became teachers, because they had to become something. But that the

daughter of comfortable parents, surrounded by love and the pleasures of excellent home, should wish to teach in a school was beyond the horizons of Mrs. Baines's common sense. Comfortable parents of to-day who have a difficulty in sympathizing with Mrs. Baines, should picture what their feelings would be if their Sophias showed a rude desire to adopt the vocation of chauffer.

'It would take you too much away from home', said Mrs. Baines, achieving a second pie.

She spoke softly. The experience of being Sophia's mother for nearly sixteen years had not been lost on Mrs. Baines, and though she was now discovering undreamt-of dangers in Sophia's erratic temperament, she kept her presence of mind sufficiently well to behave with diplomatic smoothness. It was undoubtedly humiliating to a mother to be forced to use diplomacy in dealing with a girl of short sleeves. In her day mothers had been autocrats. But Sophia was Sophia.

'Whatif it did?' Sophia curtly demanded.

'And there's no opening in Bursley', said Mrs. Baines.

'Miss Chetwynd would have me, and then after a time I could go to her sister'.

'Her sister? What sister?'

'Her sister that has a big school in London somewhere'.

Mrs. Baines coveredherunprecedented emotions by gazing into the oven at the first pie. The pie was doing well, under all the circumstances. In those few seconds she reflected rapidly and decided that to a desperate disease a desperate remedy must be applied. London! She herself had never been further than Manchester. London, 'after a time'! No, diplomacy would be misplaced in this crisis of Sophia's development!

'Sophia', she said, in a changed and solemn voice fronting her daughter, and holding away from her apron those floured, ringedhands, 'I don't know what has come over you. Truly I don't! Your father and I are prepared to put up with a certain amount, but the line must be drawn. The fact is, we've spoilt you, and instead of getting better as you grow up, you're getting worse. Now let me hear no more of this, please. I wish you would imitate your sister a little more. Of courseif you won't do your share in the shop, no one can make you. If you choose to be an idler about the house, we shall have to endure it. We can only advise you for your own good. But as for this.....' She stopped, and let silence speak, and then finished; 'Let me hear no more of it'.

It was a powerful and impressive speech, enunciated clearly in such tones as Mrs. Baines had not employed since dismissing a young lady assistant five years ago for light conduct.

'But, mother.....'
A commotion of pails resounded at the top of the stone steps. It was Maggie in descent from the bedrooms. Now, the Baines family passed its life in doing its best to keep its affairs to itself, the assumption being that Maggie and all the shpp-staff (Mr. Povey possibly excepted) were obsessed by a ravening appetite for that which did not concern them. Therefore the voices of the Bainses died away, or fell to a hushed, mysterious whisper, whenever the foot of the eavesdropper was heard.
Mrs. Baines put a floured finger to her double chin. 'That will do,' said she, with finality.
Maggie appeared, and Sophia, with a brusque precipitation of herself, vanished upstairs.

Dinner was silently eaten, and Constance having rendered thanks to God, Sophia rose abruptly to go.
'Sophia!'
'Yes, mother'.
'Constance, stay where you are,' said Mrs. Baines suddenly to Constance, who had meant to flee. Constance was therefore destined to be present at the happening, doubtless in order to emphasize its importance and seriousness.
'Sophia', Mrs. Baines resumed to her younger daughter in an ominous voice. 'No, please shut the door. There is no reason why everybody in the house should hear. Come right into the room - right in! That's it. Now, what were you doing out in the town this morning?'
Sophia was fidgeting nervously with the edge of her little black apron, and worrying a seam of the carpet with her toes. She bent her head towards her left shoulder, at first smiling vaguely. She said nothing, but every limb, every glance, every curve, was speaking. Mrs. Baines sat firmly in her own rocking-chair, full of the sensation that she had Sophia, as it were, writhing on the end of a skewer. Constance was braced into a moveless anguish.
'I will have an answer,' pursued Mrs. Baines. 'What were you doing out in the town this morning'?
'I just went out', answered Sophia at length, still with eyes downcast, and a rather simpering tone.
'Why did you go out? You said nothing to me about going out. I heard Constance ask you if you were coming with us to the market, and you said very rudely, that you weren't'.
'I didn't say it rudely,' Sophia objected.
'Yes you did. And I'll thank you not to answer back'.
'I didn't mean to say it rudely, did I Constance?' Sophia's head turned sharply to her sister. Constance knew not where to look.
'Don't answer back,' Mrs. Baines repeated sternly,

'And don't try to drag Constance into this, for I won't have it'.

'Oh, of course Constance is always right!' observed Sophia, with an irony whose unparalleled impudence shook Mrs. Baines to her massive foundations.

'Do you want me to have to smack you, child?'

Her temper flashed out and you could see ringlets vibrating under the provocation of Sophia's sauciness. Then Sophia's lower lip began to fall and to bulge outwards, and all the muscles of her face seemed to slacken.

'You are a very naughty girl,' said Mrs. Baines, with restraint. (I've got her, said Mrs. Baines to herself, I may just as well keep my temper.)

And a sob broke out of Sophia. She was behaving like a little child. She bore no trace of the young maiden sedately crossing the Square without leave and without an escort.

(I knew she was going to cry, said Mrs. Baines, breathing relief.)

'I'm waiting,' said Mrs. Baines aloud.

A second sob. Mrs. Baines manufactured patience to meet the demand.

'You tell me not to answer back, and then you say you're waiting,' Sophia blubbered thickly.

'What's that you say? How can I tell what you say if you talk like that?' (But Mrs. Baines failed to hear out of discretion, which is better than valour.)

'It's of no consequence,' Sophia blurted forth in a sob. She was weeping now, and tears were ricocheting off her lovely crimson cheeks on to the carpet; her whole body was trembling.

'Don't be a great baby,' Mrs. Baines enjoined, with a touch of rough persuasiveness in her voice.

'It's you who make me cry,' said Sophia, bitterly. 'You make me cry and then you call me a great baby!' And sobs ran through her frame like waves one after another. She spoke so indistinctly that her mother now really had some difficulty in catching her words.

'Sophia', said Mrs. Baines, with god-like calm, 'it is not I who make you cry. It is your guilty conscience makes you cry. I have merely asked you a question, and I intend to have an answer'.

'I've told you'. Here sophia checked the sobs with an immense effort.

'What have you told me?'

'I just went out'.

'I will have no trifling,' said Mrs. Baines. 'What did you go out for, and without telling me? If you had told me afterwards, when I came in, of your own accord, it might have been different. But no, not a word! It is I who have to ask! Now, quick! I can't wait any longer'.

(I gave way over the castor-oil, my girl, Mrs.

Baines said in her own breast. But not again! Not Again!

'I don't know,' Sophia murmured.

'What do you mean - you don't know?'

The sobbing recommenced tempestuously. 'I mean I don't know. I just went out.' Her voice rose; it was noisy, but scarcely articulate. 'What if I did go out?'

'Sophia, I am not going to be talked to like this. If you think because you're leaving school you can do exactly as you like .....'

'Do I want to leave school?' yelled Sophia, stamping In a moment a hurricane of emotion overwhelmed her, as though that stamping of the foot had released the demons of the storm. Her face was transfigured by uncontrollable passion. 'You all want to make me miserable!' she shrieked with terrible violence. 'And now I can't even go out! You are a horrid, cruel woman, and I hateyou! And you can do what you like! Put me in prison if you like! I know you'd be glad if I was dead!'

She dashed from the room, banging the door with a shock that made the house rattle, And she had shouted so loud, that she might have been heard in the shop, and even in the kitchen. It was a startling experience for Mrs. Baines. Mrs. Baines, why did you saddle yourself with a witness? Why did you so positively say that you intended to have an answer?

'Really', she stammered, pulling her dignity about her shoulders like a garment that the wind has snatched off. 'I never dreamed that the poor girl had such a dreadful temper! What a pity it is, for her own sake!' It was the best she could do.

Constance, who could not bear to witness her mothers humiliation, vanished very quietly from the room. She got halfway upstairs to the second floor, and then, hearing the loud, rapid, painful, regular intake of sobbing breaths, she hesitated and crept down again.

This was Mrs. Baines's first costly experience of the child thankless for having been brought into the world. It robbed her of her profound, absolute belief in herself. She had thought she knew everything in her house and could do everything there. And lo! she had suddenly stumbled against an unsuspected personality at large in her house, a sort of hard marble affair that informed her by means of bumps that if she did not want to get hurt, she must keep out of the way." 1

A comparison of Leonora Stamway and Rose, with Mrs. Baines and Sophia under similar circumstances shows the richness of imagination and the carefully considered psychology of Mr. Bennett. Personality is preciously and infinitely varied: he

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1. Old Wives' Tale: pp 34-39, 54-56

states this with characteristic facility in speaking of the young girl Annunciata Fearns: 1

> "The house existed around Annunciata; it was her frame. And she was so touching in her naivete, her simplicity, her seriousness, her sincerity, her wonder, her capriciousness, her sensitiveness, her gawky grace, her enchanting alternation between childishness and womanliness - she was so touching that even to watch her or to catch her in a characteristic attitude would sometimes bring tears into the eyes of one who had eyes to see. Why? Heaven knows! She was not at all extraordinary. There are thousands and thousands like her, tens of thousands of these strange disturbing mysterious vitalities. And yet, frequency cannot cheapen them. Each is the supreme excuse for the universe, a miraculous vase from which the pure fluid of life itself seems to gush forth."

Under Mr. Bennett's discerning interpretations the two situations however similar in their social features, must show widely different in the outcome because the other factors are personal and human: 2

> "'What's this about your going to London, Rosie?' Leonora asked in a voice soothing but surprised, when the meal had begun.
>
> 'You know, mamma. I mentioned it to you the other day'. The girl's tone implied that what she had said to Leonora perhaps went in at one ear and out at the other.
>
> Leonora remembered. Rose had in fact casually told her that a school friend in Oldcastle who was studying for the same examination as herself had gone to London for six weeks' final coaching under what Rose called a 'ladycrammer'.
>
> 'But you didn't tell me that you wanted to go as well,' Leonora said.
>
> 'Yes, mother I did,' Rose affirmed with calm. 'You forget. I'm sure I shan't pass if I don't go. So I asked father while you were all at this opera affair'.
>
> 'And what did he say?' Ethel demanded.
>
> 'He said he would make inquiries this morning and see'.
>
> Ethel gave a laugh of goodnatured derision. 'Yes', she exclaimed, 'and you'll see too!'
>
> In response to this oracular utterance, Rose merely bent lower over her plate". 3

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1. What God Hath Joined: p110
2. Leonora: p179

"'I do hope you will pass', said Leonora cordially to Rose. 'You certainly deserve to'.

'I know I shan't, unless I get some outside help. My brain isn't that sort of brain. It's another sort. Only one has to knuckle down to these wretched exams first'.

Leonora did not understand her daughter. She knew, however, that there was not the slightest chance of Rose being allowed to go to London alone for any lengthened period, and she wondered that Rose could be so blind as not to percieve this. As for Millicent's vague notions, which the child had furtively broached during her father's absence, the more Leonora thought upon them, the more fantastically impossible they seemed. She changed the subject."

While definitely less psychologic[al] than the Kinship studies in Clayhanger or the Old Wives' Tale, still the picture of the household at Hillport is still satisfactorily realistic. The various individualities in the enforced intimacy of family life; the enfolding of character under that intimacy and the pressure of parental authority, wisely or injudiciously exercised, or shown with revealing clarity:

"'Manma! I'm going to have my tea first thing. The Burgesses have asked me to play tennis. I needn't wait need I? It gets dark so soon'. As Millicent stood there ardently persuasive, she forgot that adult persons do not stand on one leg or put their fingers in their mouths.

Leonora looked fondly at the sprightly girl, vain, self-conscious, and blonde and pretty as a doll in her white dress. She recognized all Millicent's faults and short-comings, and yet was overcome by the charm of her presence.

'No, Milly, you must wait'. Throned on the rustic seat, inscrutable and tyrannous Leonora, a wistful, wayward atom in the universe, laid her command upon the other wayward atom; and she thought how strange it was that this should be.

'But, Ma.....'

'Father specially said you must be in for tea. You know you have far too much freedom. What have you been doing all afternoon?'

'I haven't been doing anything, Ma!

Leonora feared for the strict veracity of her youngest, but she said nothing, and Milly returned full of

annoyance against the inconceivable caprices of parents.

At twenty minutes to seven John Stanway entered his large and handsome dining-room.....

'Where's Rose?' he demanded suddenly in the depressing silence of the tea-table, as if he had just discovered the absence of his second daughter.

'She's been working in her room all day', said Leonora.

'That's no reason why she should be late for tea'.

At that moment Rose entered. She was verytall and pale, her dress was a little dowdy. Like her father and Millicent, she carried her head forward and had a tendency to look downwards, and her spine seemed flaccid. Ethel was beautiful, or about to be beautiful; Millicent was pretty; Rose plain. Rose was deficient in style. She disposed style, and regarded her sisters as frivolour ninnies and gadabouts. She was the serious member of the family, and for two years had been studying for the Matriculation of London University.

'Late again!' said her father. 'I shall stop all this exam work'.

Rose said nothing, but looked resentful.

When the hot dishes had been partaken of, Bessie was dismissed, and Leonora waited for the bursting of the storm. It was Millicent who drew it down.

'I think I shall go down to Burgesses, after all, mamma. It's quite light' she said with audacious pertness.

Her father looked at her.

'What were you doing this afternoon, Milly?'

'I went out for a walk, pa'.

'Who with?'

'No one.'

'Didn't I see you on the canal-side with young Ryley?'

'Yes, father. He was going back to the works after dinner, and he just happened to overtake me'.

Milly and Ethel exchanged a swift glance.

'Happened to overtake you! I saw you as I was driving past, over the canal bridge. You little thought I saw you'.

'Well, father, I couldn't help him overtaking me. Besides.....'

'Besides!' he took her up. 'You had your hand on his shoulder. How do you explain that?'

Millicent was silent.

'I'm ashamed of you, regularly ashamed..... you withyour hand on his shoulder in full sight of the works! And on your mother's birthday too!'

Leonora involuntarily stirred. For more than twenty yearsit had been his custom to give her a kiss and a ten-pound note before breakfast on her birthday, but this year he had so far made no mention whatever of the anniversary.

'I'm going to put my foot down', he continued, with grieved majesty. 'I don't want to, but you force me to it. I'll have no goings-on with Fred Ryley. Understand that. And I'll have no more idling about. You girls - at least you two - are bone-idle. Ethel shall begin to go to the works next Monday. I want a clerk. And you, Milly, must take up the housekeeping. Mother you'll see to that.'

Leonora reflected that whereas Ethel showed a marked gift for housekeeping, Milly was instinctively averse to everything merely domestic. But with her acquired fatalism she accepted the ukase.

'You understand', said John to his pert youngest.

'Yes, papa'.

'No more carrying-on with Fred Ryley - or anyone else

'No, papa'.

'I've got quite enough to worry me without being bothered by you girls.'

Rose left the table, consciously innocent both of sloth and of light behavior.

'What are you going to do now, Rose?' He could not let her off scott-free.

'Read my chemistry, father'.

'You'll do no such thing'.

'I must, if I'm to pass at Christmas,' she said firmly. 'It's my weakest subject'.

'Christmas or no Christmas', he replied, 'I'm not going to let you kill yourself. Look at your face! I wonder your mother.....'

'Run into the garden for a while, my dear', said Leonora softly, and the girl moved to obey.

'Rose,' he called her back sharply as his exasperation became fidgetty. 'Don't be in such a hurry, open the window - an inch.'

Ethel and Millicent disappeared after the manner of young fox-terriers; they did not visibly depart; they were there, one looked away, they were gone. In the bedroom which they shared, the door well locked, they threw off all restraints, conventions, pretences, and discussed the world, and their own world, with terrible candour. This sacred and untidy apartment, where many of the habits of childhood atill lingered, was a retreat a sanctuary from the law, and the fastness had been ingeniously secured against surprise by the peculiar position of the bedstead in front of the doorway.

'Father is a donkey!' said Ethel.

'And ma never says a word!' said Milly.

' I could simply have smacked him when he brought in mother's birthday,' Ethel continued savagely.

'So could have I'.

'Fancy him thinking it's you. What a lark!'

'You are a brick, Milly. And I didn't think you were, I didn't really.'

'What a horrid pig you are, Eth!' Milly protested, and Ethel laughed.

'Did you give Fred my note all right?' Ethel demanded.

'Yes', answered Milly. 'I suppose he's coming up tonight?'

'I asked him to'.

'There'll be a frantic row one day. I'm sure there will', Millie said meditatively, after a pause.

'Oh! there's bound to be!' Ethel assented, and she added: 'Mother does trust us. Have a choc?'

Milly said yes, and Ethel drew a box of bonbons from her pocket.

They seemed to contemplate with a fearful joy the probable exposure of that life of flirtations and chocolate which ran its secret course side by side with the other life of demure propriety acted out for the benefit of the older generation. If these innocent and inexperienced souls had been accused of leading a double life, they would have denied the charge with genuine indignation. Nevertheless, driven by the universal longing, and abetted by parental apathy and parental lack of imagination, they did lead a double life. They chafed bitterly under the code to which they were obliged ostensibly to submit. In their moods of revolt, they honestly believed their parents to be dull and obstinate creatures who had lost the appetite for romance and ecstasy and were determined to mortify this appetite in others. They desired heaps of money and the free informal companionship of very young men. The latter - at the cost of some intrigue and subterfuge - they contrived to get. But money they could not get. Frequently they said to each other with intense earnestness that they would do anything for money; and they repeated passionately, 'anything'.

'Just to look at that stuck-up thing!' said Milly laughing. They stood together at the window, and Milly pointed her finger at Rose, who was walking conscientiously to and fro across the garden in the gathering dusk.

Ethel rapped on the pane, and the three sisters exchanged friendly smiles.

'Rosie will never pass her exam, not if she lives to be a hundred', said Ethel. 'And can you imagine father making me go to the works? Can you imagine the sense of it?'

'He won't let you walk up with Fred at nights', said Milly, 'so you needn't think'.

'And your housekeeping!' Ethel exclaimed. 'What a treat father will have at meals!'

'Oh! I can easily get round mother', said Milly with confidence. 'I can't housekeep, and ma knows that perfectly well'.

'Well, father will forget all about it in a week or two, that's one comfort', Ethel concluded the matter. 'Are you going down to Burgesses to see Harry?' she

inquired, observing Milly put her hat on.

'Yes', said Milly, 'Cissie said she'd come for me if I was late. You'd better stay in and be dutiful'.

'I shall offer to play duets with mother. Don't you be long. Let's try that chorus for the Operatic before supper'". 1

The tyranny of fathers is untempered in Mr. Bennett's tales: Witness Ephraim Tellwright, whose life long tyranny over wife and daughters is mirrored in miniature in this glimpse of him:

"Anna had forgotten to buy bacon, and since little Agnes had to run down to Leal's for it, breakfast would be late It was a calamity unique in her experience! She stood at the door of her bedroom, and waited, vehemently, for Agnes's return. At last the child raced breathlessly in; Anna flew to meet her. With incredible speed the bacon was whipped out of the wrapper, and Anna picked up the knife. At the first stroke she cut herself, and Agnes was obliged to bind her finger with rag. The clock struk the half-hour like a knell. It was twenty minutes to nine, forty minutes behind time, when the two girls hurried into the parlour, Anna bearing the bacon and hot plates, Agnes the bread and coffee. Mr.Tellwright sat upright and ferocious in his chair, the image of offence and wrath. Instead of reading his letters he had fed full of this ineffable grievance. The meal began in a desolat ing silence. The male creature's terrible displeasure per meated the whole room like an ether, invisible, but carrying vibrations to the heart. Then, when he had eaten one piece of bacon, and cut his envelopes, the miser began to empty himself of some of his anger in stormy, tones that might have uprooted trees. Anna ought to feel thoroughly ashamed. He could not imagine what she had been thinking of. Why didn't she tell him she was going to the prayer-meeting? Why did she go to the prayer-meeting, disarranging the whole household? How came she to forget the bacon? It was gross carelessness. A pretty example to her little sister! The fact was that since her birthday she had gotten above hersen. She was careless and extravagant. Look how thick the bacon was cut. He should not stand it much longer. And her finger all red, and the blood dropping on the cloth: a nice sight at a meal! Go and tie it up again.

Without a word she left the room to obey. Of course she had no defence. Agnes, her tears falling, pecked her food timidly like a bird, not daring to stir from her chair, even to assist at the finger.

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1. Leonora: pp 13-23

'What did Mr. Mynors say?' Tellwright inquired fiercely when Anna had come back into the room.

'Mr. Mynors'? she murmured, at a loss, but vaguely apprehending further trouble.

'Did you see him?'

'Yes, father'.

'Did you give him my message?'

'I forgot it'. God in heaven. She had forgotten the message.

With a devastating grunt Mr. Tellwright walked speechless out of the room. The girls cleared the table, exchanging sympathy with a single mute glance. Anna's one satisfaction was that, even if she had remembered the message, she could not possibly have delivered it.

Ephraim Tellwright stayed in the front parlour till half-past ten o'clock, unseen but felt, like an angry god behind a cloud. The consciousness that he was there, unappeased and dangerous, remained uppermost in the minds of the two girls during the morning". 1

The only occasion upon which the story of the Old Wives' Tale is actually taken into the bedroom of John Baines, paralytic, is in order that he may tyrannize impotently, disgustingly over Sophia upon the question of her vocation! 2

Edwin Clayhanger was in a state of resentful intimidation all his life; he thought of his father as of some horrible omnipotence, dominating him by blind chance without reason or justice: The climax came when Edwin desired the financial independence necessary to his projected marriage with Hilda Lessways:

"'I couldn't marry Miss Lessways on a pound a week', Edwin murmured in despair, his lower lip hanging. 'I thought you might perhaps be offering me a partnership by this time!' Possibly in some mad hour a thought so wild had flitted through his brain.

'Did you!' rejoined Darius. And in the fearful grimness of the man's accents was concealed all his intense and egotistic sense of possessing in absolute ownership the business which the little boy out of the Bastile had practically created. Edwin did not and could not understand the fierce strength of his father's emotion concerning the business. Already in tacitly agreeing to leave Edwin the business after his own death, Darius imagined himself to be superbly benevolent.

' And then there would be house-furnishing and so

1. Anna of the Five Towns: pp 87-89
2. Old Wives' Tale: p 47

on', Edwin continued.

'What about that fifty pounds?' Darius curtly inquired.

Edwin was startled. Never since the historicscene had Darius made the slightest reference to the proceeds of the Building Society share.

'I haven't spent all of it', Edwin muttered.

Do what he would with his brain, the project of marriage and house-tenancy and a separate existence obstinately presented itself to him as fantastic and preposterous. Who was he to ask so much from destiny? He could not feel that he was a man. In his father's presence he never could feel that he was a man. He remained a boy, with no rights, moral or material.

'And if as ye say she's got money of her own ...' Darius remarked and was considerably astonished when the boy walked straight out of the room and closed the door.

It was his last grain of common sense that took Edwin in silence out of the room.

Miserable, despicable baseness. Did the old devil suppose thathe would be capable of asking his wife to find the resources which he himself could not bring? He was to say to his wife: 'I can only supply a pound a week but as you've got money it won't matter'. The merenotion outraged him so awfully that if he had stayed in the room there would have been an altercation and perhaps a permanent estrangement.

As he stood furious and important in the hall, he thought, with his imagination quickened by the memory of Mr. Shushions: 'When you're old, and I've got you..' he clenched his fists and his teeth ...' When I've got you and you can't help yourself, by God it'll be my turn!'

And he meant it." 1

It is perhaps, a matter of characterization, to show how after all when Fate with characteristically cruel justice delivered his father into his hands - Edwin did not "savor his revenge."

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1. Clayhanger: pp 384-385

IV: AS AN INTERPRETER OF LIFE.

"But things are so obstinately, so incurably unsentimental".
- The Old Wives' Tale -

(a) The Flush of Life.

"Console me, amuse me, terrify me, make me cry, make me dream, or make me think", the public says to the writer, in the fancy of Guy de Maupassant, while the sincere critic says, "Make me something fine in the form that shall suit you best according to your temperament".[1] The reader of Mr. Bennett's books feels most grateful for the temperament that has found such complete expression in them. For notwithstanding his careful detachment, his splendid objectivity, the reader feels poignantly the force of Mr. Bennett's personality. It is a stimulating contact. It is apt to convict you of shallowness and prudishness and mental cowardice, of being blind and deaf; of sleeping away a life full of marvels, unaware that anything unusual is happening.

Mr. Bennett's curiosity is insatiable, his fearlessness undomitable; his spirit as nearly non-partisan as human nature

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1. Essay of Technique in preface to Pierre et Jean by M. Guy de Maupassant.

can attain to. His attitude is philosophical but without the aloofness of the philosopher. He is a passionate pleader for life. He is enthusiastic about it. He is ecstatic. He convinces you that even sorrow, terror and calamity merely press the wonderful cup of life to your lips. To live is the great thing, to be happy in the general sense is an incident.

"She had scented the feverish perfume of the world",[1] he says of the most powerful and terrific of his brain children, Hilda Lessways. And again:

> "Again yet in her unhappiness she was blest. She savored her unhappiness. She drank it down passionately as though it were the very water of life - which it was. She lived to the utmost in every moment. The recondite romance of existence was not hidden from her" [2]

And then, when the hour of Hilda's trial had come upon her:

> "She began to perceive that this that she was living through was life. She bit her lips. Grief! Shame! Disillusion! Hardship! Peril! Catastrophy! Exile! Above all, exile! These had to be faced and they would be faced." [3]

It is not clear that his doctrine is that to live fully, is to be happy. Life is marvelous, wonderful, unspeakable. - But it is cruel, inscrutable, relentless, terrible. Yet he is emphatically not a pessimist. Such a spirit seems naive, sentimental, beside her passionate earnestness. He reveals wonder, investigation, experience. He pronounces life neither sweet nor bitter, good nor bad, but compounded of all conceivable qualities, sensations, emotions. It is unutterable. It is not the quest

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1. Hilda Lessways: (1911) p 47
2. Ibid p 66
3. Ibid pp 532-533

for happiness that keeps Arnold Bennett's people going on; It is the quest for life - life ever more abundantly. And he pays the tribute of his highest admiration and love to the dauntless spirit of humanity rushing with fierce eagerness upon its unknown way.

This sense of exhiliration in his novels is perhaps the more remarkable in view of the extreme of average, in incident and in character, he elects to portray. The outspoken admiration of William Dean Howells[1] for the young Englishman is not surprising. They are blood brothers in realism; but the venerable dean of American letters finds nothing to be excited about in this most mater-of-fact world. Howells is the novel of manners - his stories are most frequently alluded to as social documents; Bennett on the other hand never wearies of proclaiming the wonder and joy of the world; the derring do of the romanticist seems infantile; the words average and commonplace are themselves condemners of our lethargic, dead-alive state of mind. In Mr. Bennett's field of interest there is nothing average or commonplace. To paraphrase the race Poet; There's nothing either great or small but thinking makes it so. One to whom life is commonplace, who having eyes, sees not, he has set up for our contempt in the person of the estimable ass, Dayson.[2]

> "Arthur Dayson, though a very good shorthand writer, and not without experience as a newspaper reporter and sub-editor, was a nincompoop. There could be no other explanation of his bland complacent indifference as he sat poking at a coke stove one cold night of January, 1880, in full view of a most marvelous and ravishing spectacle. This spectacle was Hilda Lessways very soberly attired, straining at the double iron handlesof a rusty out worn letter press. She clenched her hands and her teeth, and she frowned, as though she loved it. At last she extracted the copied letter and examined it.
> 'Smudged', she murmured, tragic.

1. Harper's Weekly, Harper's Magazine, Mar. 1911, Editors Easy (Chair.
2. Hilda Lessways : (1911) pp 83-86

> And the excellent ass Dayson, always facetiously cheerful, and without a grain of humor, remarked:'Copiousness with the H O, Miss Lessways, is the father of smudged epistles'.
>
> He was over thirty. He had had affairs with young women. He reckoned that there remained little for him to learn. He had deliberately watched this young woman at the press. He had clearly seen her staring under fierce muscular movements, and in her bendings and straightenings, and in her delicate caressings, and in her savage scowlings and wrinklings, and in her rapt gazings, and in all her awful absorption, he had quite failed to perceive the terrible eager outpouring of a human soul, mighty, passionate, and wistful. He had kept his eyes on her slim bust and tight-girded waist that sprung suddenly neat and smooth out of the curving skirt-folds, and it had not occurred to him to exclaim even in his own heart:'With your girlishness and your ferocity, your intimidating seriousness and your delicious absurdity, I would give a week's wages just to take hold of you and shake you!' No, the dolt had seen absolutely naught but a conscientious female beginner learning the duties of the post which he himself had baptized as that of 'editorial secretary".

Mr. Cannon the employer of them both entered, read the letter and remarked to Dayson that it wanted the signature.

> "Dayson took a pen and after describing a few flourishes in the air, about a quarter of an inch above the level of the paper, he magnificently signed: 'Dayson & Co. ' Such was the title of the proprietorship. Just as Karkeek was Mr. Cannon's dummy in the law, so was Dayson in the newspaper business. But whereas Karkeek was privately ashamed, Dayson was proud of his role, which gave him the illusion of power and glory".

The familiar touches hint piquantly that the excellent ass belongs to a numerous family.

Some of Mr. Bennett's critics object to what they call the dead level of his commonplaces. There is nothing, they say, to skip from or to. They charge him with a faulty sense of values and proportion,[1] and instance the several pages of attention

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1. Monumental Realism , Nation Dec. 7, 1911.

given to Edwin Clayhanger's sensations over a new suit of clothes. New clothes are not the big things of life; the older Masters of the novel gave their serious attention only to the big things - and several death bed scenes were cited. Mr. Bennett's defense is the epic quality of his books - the completeness with which they are a study of life - and his psychological method. Things are important or trivial in his novels as they are in experience - from the position they occupy in the sequence of cause and effect which life presents. His method is as truly genetic as is that of the historian. There is no possible generalisation about clothes and death beds. What suit of clothes? Whose death bed? It all depends. A new suit of clothes, when it signifies an entrance into a world hitherto scarce glimpsed except in dreams, but hopelessly, passionately desired; when from those new associations - not possible without the clothes and the confidence they gave to a self-conscious rather awkward and most lovable boy - grew the closest ties of his mature life, his love, his marriage, that suit of clothes becomes a very vital matter.

Mr. Bennett is not without his "big scenes" either, but he is wholly without bombast; he does not flaunt emotion. Pity is the dominating emotion in the death of Darius Clayhanger,[1] and power and restraint characterize his style in the stupendous execution scene at Auxerre.[2]

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1. Clayhanger: Book III, Chaps. XV - XVI.
2. Old Wives' Tale: pp317 - 323

(b) Love and Sex Attraction.

Although there is no lack of marriage and giving in marriage in Mr. Bennett's books, it apparently has never occurred to anyone to call them love stories. He studiously avoids the easy appeal of the glorified love tale with its readily attained heights of passion. Nowhere is his restraint more marked than here. Nor does it follow that he lacks feeling or even passion. But his emotion is deep and still. It is tremendous - possibly because imperceptible.

When Mr. Bennett reveals love, it is the same in essence whatever its manifestation - and whether it is in Leonora's love for Rose or for Arthur Twemlow, in Constance Povey's love for her son Cyril, or in Hilda Lessways' love for Edwin Clayhanger, it is a pure, white light of exceeding great power - to sustain the whole created world and fill with joy the same.

But sex attraction - never confounded with love - is far more prevalent in his pages. Mr. Bennett is like M. de Maupassant in giving a large place to motives springing from sex consciousness, but unlike that brilliant French writer, he does not see sex as the only mainspring of action; he simply includes it in what he conceives to be its true proportion. If he has a Charlie Fearns, he ha s a Lawrence Ridware. Mr. Bennett despises those who ignore the sex element. For the sentimental view of life he has only contempt. His frankness regarding the sensualism and sex is not to be relished - yet certainly not to be criticised by - celibate ladies. Yet his pages are in general unstained by

lasciviousness. One inevitably recurs ~~again~~ to the Henry James dictum. "The finest thing about a work of art is the quality of mind of the artist".

In Mr. Bennett's intense love for humanity, you find often what could almost be called an arraignment of nature. It is so in Carlotta, in Whom God Hath Joined, in Old Wives' Tale (Sophia and Gerald Scales) and in Hilda Lessways (in her union with George Cannon)

Indeed, this union, placed side by side as it is, with the love between Hilda and Edwin Clayhanger affords the readiest means of studying this aspect of his work.

The passionate nature of Hilda, starved as it was for experience, for self-expression, is shown "ripe for love", less obviously, but no less actually than was Meredith's Richard Feverel,[1] the morning he met Lucy plucking berries on the river bank. Only Hilda's creator put the wrong mate in her path. The art of Bennett in this bit of construction, it might be said in passing, far outdistances the older artist's. Bennett is "inevitable" where Meredith is only "possible".

For Hilda, temperamentally differing from her mother on the matter of rent collecting acts upon a sarcastic suggestion of her mother's and "consults her own lawyer" in the matter. In the small borough of Turnhill there was only one firm of Solicitors that occurred to her - Karkeek -. Mr. Karkeek not being in, she saw Mr. Cannon and thus this large handsome dark man, so well dressed (for Turnhill) became the apotheosis of her first, great

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1. Richard Feveral.

wonderful adventure. She had consulted a lawyer regarding the business difficulties between herself and her mother - and the was not yet twenty-one. He was a tall muscular man, and he had stood like a monarch and she had stood like a child. And his gesture seemed to say:

> "'Yes, I know you are afraid. But I rather like you to be afraid. But I am benevolent in the exercise of my power'.....Like a mouse, she had escaped to the stairs. She was happy and fearful and expectant. It was done. She had consulted a lawyer". 1

And he remained, merely this mature man of the world, magical, wondrous, terrifying in his bigness and power, until sometime after Hilda had become his editorial secretary, however, aside from being her employer, -- the magician who had given her life meaning and expression, he affected the only contact with masculinity she had ever known. Beforeher astounding visit to "her own lawyer", her creator said of her:

> "And she had never met a man. It was literally a fact that, except Mr. Skellorn (the old rent-collector whose 'stroke' had precipitated her Fate about her head) a few tradesmen, the vicar, the curate, and a sidesman or so, she never even spoke to a man from one month's end to the next. The Church choir had its annual dance, to which she was invited; but the preverse creature cared not for dancing. Her mother did not seek society, did not appear to require it, Nor did Hilda acutely feel the lack of it. She could not define her need. All she knew was that youth, moment by moment, was dropping down inexorably behind her. And, still a child in heart and soul, she saw herself ageing, and then aged, and then withered. Her twenty-first birthday was well above the horizon. Soon, soon, she would be 'over twenty-one'! And she was not yet born! That was it! She was not yet born! If the passionate strength of desire could have done the miracle time would have stood still in the heavens while Hilda sought the way of life". 2

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1. Hilda Lessways: p 37
2. Ibid: p 9

Thus with a psychology convincingly true, is Hilda shown "ripe" for the taking of a mate.

And her taking of George Cannon - after some months of intimate business association is shown to be due to the attraction of his maturity and overpowering masculinity for her timid, passionate longing girlhood. In another volume Mr. Bennett causes Lawrence Ridware to ask - "What is love? Is it a contact of souls or bodies, or both?"[1] And the answer has been written everywhere - love in completeness of fulfillment is both - but the essential thing is the contact of souls.[2] And between Hilda and George Cannon there was no contact of soul.[3]

When he was lending her his copy of Victor Hugo, he remarked that it was probably the very one his father had lent to his old French teacher, Miss Miranda and added:"Curious, isn't it?" "It was" (said Mr. Bennett) "Nevertheless, Hilda felt that his sense of the miraculousness of life was not so keen as her own."

And when she had abandoned herself fully to the luxury of this unknown desire, and felt herself "being whirled down the river" a part of her brain was calmly reflecting upon the experience in interest - yes - but in dismay. Her conscience, her heart, was outraged; her soul was victimized by Nature, rampant, demanding its fulfillment in relentless impetuosity.

In the Book of Carlotta, the pathos is keener because the catastrophe is complete, while in Hilda, it keeps her in its shadow only for a time.

1. Whom God Hath Joined: (1911) p 36; Leonora: (1911) p 314
2. See Leonora - It was a trifle that they had not loved, etc
3. It would probably be more correct to say - there was not t supreme contact that constitutes love.

Here may be felt the working of Eve's curse:
"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." 1

The arraignment - were there one - but there is not - is of Nature - the race instinct of eugenics. Nature is kind only to the race. She may be cruel to the individual woman. Carlotta a normal, well-sexed woman, might, under other circumstances have been a happy instrument of the race-instinct;(the Race-instinct by Dr. Saleeby, eminent Scotch Eugenist, is called by Arnold Bennet "the Eternal Purpose"); but through the mischances of life - mischances as tragic as those of Romeo and Juliet, she became its victim. How honest she was! How self-less. Yet it is in no sense melodramatic - but finely casual throughout. Her fate the result always of character and environment. Her very virties, victimize her. One recalls Marguerite's piteous complaint:

"And everything that brought me here
Was yet so sweet, was yet so dear."

Many fine women are not fitted to cope with Diazes, of whom his creator says, "Apparently such men as Diaz are born to be the scourge of women". 2

Yet both Carlotta and Hilda lacked religious and moral anchors. They were sailing in dangerous seas without the only Pilot who could surely save them. Hilda is aware of her sin:

"Yet at intervals a voice said very clearly within her: 'All this is wrong. This is base and shameful. This is

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1. Genesis: Chap. III v 16
2. Book of Carlotta: (1911) p viii Preface.

something to blush for, really!" She did blush, but her blushes were a part of the delight. And the voice was not persistent. She could silence it with scarcely an effort, dispite its clarity.[1]

And again:

"Whether the destiny was evil or good did not permanently interest her.[2]

But this is a moral Universe.

How different from this is Anna Tellwright's love for Willie Price, or even Hilda's own for Edwin Clayhanger. The bond between Hilda and Edwin was an intellectual one, but through the intellect, they stirred the imagination each of the other;

On the occasion of the Sunday School Centenary, Edwin remarked on the predominence everywhere in song and banner of inexhaustible tides of blood.

> "'More blood!' he murmured in an intimate half whisper.
> 'What?' she harshly questioned. But he knew that understood.
> 'Well', he said audaciously, 'look at it! It only wants the Ganges at the bottom of the Square....!'
> No one heard save she. But she put her hand on his arm, protestingly. 'Even if we don't believe,' said she, -not harshly, but imploringly, 'we needn't make fun'.
> 'We don't believe'! And that new tone of entreaty! She had comprehended without explanation....Was there another creature male or female, to whom he would have dared to say what he had said to her?" [3]

It is the protective, mother instinct in Anna Tellwright that makes her love Willie Price.

When she was demanding of him, as his landlord, a payment on the arrears of rent, she found herself drawn asunder by her fear of her father's wrath, and her tenderness for him.

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1. Hilda Lessways: p 382
2. Ibid: p 403
3. Clayhanger ed. (1911) p 295

"His tone was so earnest, so pathetic, that tears of compassion almost rose to her eyes as she looked at those simple naive blue eyes of his. His lanky figure and clumsily-fitting clothes, his feeble placatory smile, the twitching movements of his long hands, all contributed to the effect of his defencelessness. She thought of the text: 'Blessed are the meek, 'and saw in a flash the deep truth of it.....

She tried to discover some method of soothing the young man's fears, of being considerate to him without injuring her father's scheme". 1

And when disaster had finally overcome the Prices; the father had killed himself after embezzlement, and Willie more pathetic than ever was leaving an immigrant for Australia, Anna meets him quite by chance in the garden of her new home. For this simple woman betrothed to another before she realizes her love for Willie - scarcely gives it form or utterance, even to herself - but continues in her marriage. In fact another line of conduct never occurred to her as a possibility. But she is sending to Willie out of pity and a desire to retrieve in a measure the effects of her own harshness to him, a letter containing a hundred pound note. She tells him she was to send the letter to the steamer, but asks him to take it now and not to open it until he reaches Melbourne. He is utterly dejected and seems hardly to notice what she is saying:

"'I wish I had never been born', he said. 'I wish I'd gone to prison'."

Now was the moment when, if ever, the mother's influence should be exerted.

"'Be a man', she said softly. 'I did the best I could for you. I shall always think of you, in Australia getting on'.

She put a hand on his shoulder. 'Yes', she said again, passionately: 'I shall always remember you - always'".2

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1. Anna of the Five Towns: p 99 (1910)
2. Ibid : p 296

(c) As a Satirist and Philosopher.

As Mr. Bennett's method is ever psychological so is his mood ever satirical. He laughes at human foibles, always kindly, always cordially, and always including himself as the chief fool in a race of clowns.[1] There has been, perhaps, no equally delicious satire in English in a hundred years.

Both his plots and his style are satirical. He has Hilda Lessways, in a memorable quarrel with her mother say that if her mother persists stubbornly in her determination to collect the rents in person, that she (Hilda) will be slaving when she is her mother's age. Mrs. Lessways gave in - but at middle age Hilda was slaving! Even the titles indicate satire. Whom God Hath Joined were very unsuitably bound together from a natural human standpoint; the gamut of life from the cradle to the grave is told in his most precious offering merely as an Old Wives' Tale.

In the Death of Simon Fuge, one finds behind the glamour of romance and the artistic temperament (the artistic temperament hasn't a leg to stand on when Mr. Bennett has done with it!) the veriest inconsequential commonplace. Toby Hall's way of beginning the New Year is perhaps the height of the absurd.

Knocking at the door of the house he had married four and twenty years before, Toby Hall discovers that the wife who had reminded him once too often that she owned the house they lived in (for which he had deserted her)had in the meantime married

1. His first novel had achieved print. "And in a blinding flash" says Mr. Bennett, "I saw that an author was in essence the same thing as a grocer or a duke".

another, now deceased, and borne a daughter, now married. Still it did not occur to her that she had any "news" for Toby - ignorant of all these details, as they sat together by the fire. Toby decides to step round to the Public House. Priscilla runs after him with the umbrella he appears to have forgotten: but -

> "'No', he answered, 'I hanna forgotten it. I'm coming back'.
> 'That'll be all right', she said.
> 'Ay'".

It will be observed that they act just like people, only they haven't any souls - a circumstance that might seem to some, a criticism of Mr. Bennet's realism, - a criticism, I hasten to add, which he would regard as a delicious subject for satire, in itself.

His humor is not always as merry as it shows upon the occasion of Sophia's memorable battle with her mother. The issue was at one stage of the struggle, doubtful. Sophia was in bed, sullenly disobedient. Mrs. Baines entered the bedroom with an egg cup in one hand and a spoon in the other.

> "'What is it, mother?' asked Sophia, who well knew what it was.
> 'Castor oil, my dear', said Mrs. Baines, winningly.
> The ludicrousness of attempting to cure obstinacy and yearnings for a freer life by means of castor-oil is perhaps less real than apparent. The strange interdependence of spirit and body, though only understood intelligently in these intelligent days, was guessed at by sensible mediaeval mothers. And certainly, at the period when Mrs. Baines represented modernity, castor-oil was still the remedy of remedies. It had supplanted cupping. And, if part of its vogue was due to its extreme unpleasantness, it had at least proved its qualities in many a contest with disease. Less than two years previously old Dr. Harrop (father of him who told Mrs. Baines about Mrs. Povey) being then aged eighty-six, had fallen from top to bottom of his staircase. He

had scrambled up, taken a dose of castor-oil at once, and on the morrow was as well as if he had never seen a staircase". 1

Mr. Bennett, beneath his satire - and even in it - is wonderfully tender. If he does not see the soul in man, at least he sees the heart. Sympathy with the child - with the animal with the helpless and the underdog generally, commands nothing less than love from his readers. This real warmth of heart - which is as far removed from sentimentality as the poles are from each other - results in a magnificent democracy: Mr. Bennett is both intellectually and emotionally a democrat: In the Death of Simon Fuge, he is the first:

> "'And it's her sister who is Mrs. Colclough?'
> 'Yes', he seemed to be either meditative or disinclined to talk. However, my friends have sometimes hinted to me that when my curiosity is really aroused, I am capable of indiscretions.
> 'So one sister rattles about in an expensive motor-car, and the other serves behind a bar!' I observed.
> He glanced at me.
> 'I expect it's a bit difficult for you to understand', he answered; 'but you must remember you're in a democratic district. You told me once you knew Exeter. Well, this isn't a cathedral town. It's about a century in front of any cathedral town, in the world. Why, my good sir, there's practically no such thing as class distinction here. Both my grandfathers were working potters. Colclough's father was a joiner who finished up as a builder. If Colclough makes money and chooses to go to Paris and get the best motor-car he can, why in Hades shouldn't his wife ride in it? If he is fond of music and can play like the devil, that isn't his sister-in-law's fault, is it? His wife was a dressmaker, at least she was a dressmaker's assistant. If she suits him, what's the matter?'
> 'But I never suggested.....'
> 'Excuse me,' he stopped me, speaking with careful and slightly exaggerated calmness, 'I think you did. If the difference in the situations of the two sisters didn't strike you as very extraordinary, what did you mean?'

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1. Old Wives' Tale: p 52

'And isn't it extraordinary?' I demanded.

'It wouldn't be considered so in any reasonable society', he insisted. 'The fact is, my good sir, you haven't yet quite got rid of -xeter. I do believe this place will do you good. Why, damn it! Colclough didn't marry both sisters. You think he might keep the other sister? Well, he might. But suppose his wife had a half-a-dozen sisters, should he keep them all! I can tell you we're just like the rest of the world, we find no difficulty whatever in spending all the money we make. I dare say Colclough would be ready enough to keep his sister-in-law. I've never asked him. But I'm perfectly certain that his sister-in-law wouldn't be kept. Not much'". 1

But in the story of Maggie, domestic drudge of the Baines family, the heart is touched as well as the reason:

"They pressed their noses against the window of the showroom, and gazed into the Square as perpendicularly as the projecting front of the shop would allow. The show-room was over the millinery and silken half of the shop. Over the woolen and shirting half were the drawing-room and the chief bedroom. When in quest of articles of coquetry, you mounted from the shop by a curving stair, and your head gradually rose level with a large apartment having a mahogany counter in front of the window and along one side, yellow linoleum on the floor, many cardboard boxes, a magnificient hinged cheval glass, and two chairs. The window-sill being lower than the counter, into which important articles such as scissors, pencils, chalk, and artificial flowers were continually disappearing: another proof of the architect's incompetence.

The girls could only press their noses against the window by kneeling on the counter, and this they were doing. Constance's nose was snub, but agreeably so. Sophia had a fine Roman nose ; she was a beautiful creature, beautiful and handsome at the same time. They were both of them rather like racehorses, quivering with delicate sensitive and luxuriant life; exquisite, enchanting proof of the circulation of the blood; innocent, artful, roguish, prim, gushing, ignorant, and miraculously wise. Their ages were sixteen and fifteen; it is an epoch when, if one is frank, one must admit that one has nothing to learn: one has learnt simply everything in the previous six months.

'There she goes!' exclaimed Sophia.

Up the Square, from the corner of Kind Street, passed a woman in a new bonnet with pink strings, and a new blue dress that sloped at the shoulders and grew to a

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1. Matador of the Five Towns: pp 140-141

vast circumference at the hem. Through the silent sunlit solitude of the Square(for it was Thursday afternoon and all the shops shut except the confectioner's and one chemist's) this bonnet and this dress floated northwards in search of romance, under the relentless eyes of Constance and Sophia. Within them, somewhere, was the soul of Maggie, domestic servant at Caines's. Maggie had been at the shop since before thecreation of Constance and Sophia. She lived seventeen hours of each day in an underground kitchen and larder, and the other seven in an attic, never going out except to chapel on Sunday evenings, and once a month on Thursday afternoons. 'Followers' were most strictly forbidden to her; but on rare occasions an aunt from Longshaw was permitted as a tremendous favour to see her in the subterranean den. Everybody, including herself, considered that she had a good 'place', and was well treated. It was undeniable, for instance, that she was allowed to fall in love exactly as she chose, provided she did not 'carry on' in the kitchen or the yard. And as a fact, Maggie had fallen in love. In seventeen years she had been engaged eleven times. No one could conceive how that ugly and powerful organism could softly languish to the undoing of even a butt-collier, nor why, having caught a man in her sweet toils, she could ever be imbecile enough to set him free. There are, however, mysteries in the souls of Maggies. The drudge had probably been affianced oftener than any woman in Bursley. Her employers were so accustomed to an interesting announcement that for years they had taken to saying naught in reply but 'really, Maggie!' Engagements and tragic partings were Maggie's pastime. Fixed otherwise, she might have studied the piano instead.

'No gloves, of course!' Sophia criticised.

'Well, you can't expect her to have gloves,' said Constance.

Then a pause, as the bonnet and dress neared the top of the Square.

'Supposing she turns round and sees us?' Constance suggested.

'I don't care if she does', said Sophia, with a haughtiness almost impassioned; and her head trembled slightly.

There were, as usual, several loafers at the top of the Square, in the corner between the bank and the 'Marquis of Granby'. And one of these loafers stepped forward and shook hands with an obviously willing Maggie. Clearly it was a rendezvous, open, unashamed. The twelfth victim had been selected by the virgin of forty, whose kiss would not have melted lard! The couple disappeared together down Oldcastle Street.

'Well!' cried Constance. 'Did you ever see such a thing?'

While Sophia, short of adequate words, flushed and

bit her lip.

With the profound, instinctive cruelty of youth, Constance and Sophia had assembled in their favorite haunt, the show-room, expressly to deride Maggie in her new clothes. They obscurely thought that woman so ugly and soiled as Maggie was, had no right to possess new clothes. Even her desire to take the air of a Thursday afternoon seemed to them unnatural and somewhat reprehensible. Why should she want to stir out of her kitchen? As for her tender yearnings, they positively grudged these to Maggie. That Maggie should give rein to chaste passion was more than grotesque; it was offensive and wicked. But let it not for an instant be doubted that they were nice, kind-hearted, well-behaved and delightful girls! Because they were. They were not angels. 1

Some ten years later on the first day of Constance's reign as Mrs. Povey, mistress of the house, Maggie "gives notice"; she is going to marry Mollins, the fish hawker:

"Constance looked at her. Despite the special muslin of that day she had traces of the slatternliness of which Mrs. Baines had never been able to cure her. She was over forty, big, gawky. She had no figure, no charms of any kind. She was what was left of a woman after twenty-two years in the cave of a philanthropic family. And in her cave she had actually been thinking things over! Constance detected for the first time, beneath the dehumanized drudge, the stirrings of a separate and perhaps capricious individuality. Maggie's engagements had never been real to her employers. Within the house she had never been, in practice, anything but 'Maggie' - an organism. And now she was permitting herself ideas about changes!'

'And what are you thinking of doing, Maggie? You know you won't get many places like this'.

'To tell ye the truth, Mrs. Povey, I'm going to get married mysen'.

'Indeed!' murmured Constance, with the perfunctoriness of habit in replying to these tidings.

'Oh! but I am, mum', Maggie insisted. 'It's all settled. Mr. Hollins, mum'.

'Not Hollins, the fish-hawker!'

'Yes, mum. I seem to fancy him. You don't remember as him and me was engaged in '48. He was my first, like. I broke it off because he was that Chartist lot, and I knew as Mr. Baines would never stand that. Now he's asked me again. He's been a widower this long time'.

Old Wives' Tale: pp 6, 7, 8.

I'm sure I hope you'll be happy, Maggie, but what about his habits?'

'He won't have no habits with me, Mrs. Povey'.

A woman was definitely emerging from the drudge. ..... The vision of Maggie and Hollins at the altar shocked her. Marriage was a series of phenomena, and a general state, very holy and wonderful - too sacred somehow, for such creatures as Maggie and Hollins. Her vague, instinctive revolt against such a usage of matrimony centred round the idea of a strong, eternal smell of fish." 1

One other instance of Mr. Bennett's satiric manner is found in his treatment of Wesleyan Methodism, the prevailing religion of the Potteries. It is found in every book; but passages from the Old Wives' Tale and Anna of the Five Towns will fairly represent it:

"In the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Duck Bank there was a full and influential congregation. For in those days influential people were not merely content to live in the town where their fathers had lived, without dreaming of country residences and smokeless air- they were content also to believe what their fathers had believed about the beginning and the end of all. There was no such thing as the unknowable in those days. The eternal mysteries were as simple as an addition sum; a child could tell you with absolute certainty where you would be and what you would be doing in a million years hence, and exactly what God thought of you. Accordingly, every one being of the same mind, everyone met on certain occasions in certain places in order to express the universal mind. And in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, for example, instead of a sparse handful of persons disturbingly conscious of being in a minority, as now, a magnificent and proud majority had collected, deeply aware of its rightness and its correctness.

And the minister, backed by minor ministers, knelt and covered his face in the superb mahogany rostrum; and behind him, in what was then still called the 'Orchestra' (though no musical instruments except the grand organ had sounded in it for decades), the choir knelt and covered their faces; and all around, in the richly painted gallery and on the ground-floor, multitudinous rows of people, in easy circumstances of body and soul, knelt in high pews and covered their faces. And there floated before them, in the intense and prolonged silence, the clear vision of Jehovah on a throne, a God of sixty of so with a moustache and a

1. Old Wives' Tale: pp 155-156

> beard, and a non-committal expression which declined to say whether or not he would require more bloodshed; and this - God destitute of pinions, was surrounded by white-winged creatures that wafted themselves to and fro while chanting; and afar was an obscene monstrosity, with cloven hoofs and a tail, very dangerous and rude and interfering, who could exist comfortably in the middle of a coal-fire, and who took a malignant and exhaustless pleasure in coaxing you by false pretences into the same fire; but of course you had too much sense to swallow his wicked absurdities. Once a year, for ten minutes, by the clock, you knelt thus, in mass, and by meditation convinced yourself that you had too much sense to swallow his wicked absurdities. And the hour was very solemn, the most solemn of all hours.
>
> Strange that immortal souls should be found with the temerity to reflect mundane affairs in that hour! Yet there were undoubtedly such in the congregation; there were perhaps many to whom the vision, if clear, was spasmodic and fleeting. And among them the inhabitants of the Baines family pew! Who would have supposed that Mr. Povey, a recent convert from Primitive Methodism in King Street Wesleyan Methodism on Duck Bank, was dwelling upon window-tickets and injustice of women, instead of upon his relations with Jehovah and the tailed one? Who would have supposed that the gentle-eyed Constance, pattern of daughters, was risking her eternal welfare by smiling at the tailed one, who, concealing his tail, had assumed the image of Mr. Povey? Who would have supposed that Mrs. Baines, instead of resolving that Jehovah and not the tailed one should have untimate rule over her, was resolving that she and not Mr. Povey should have the untimate rule over her house and shop? It was a pew-ful that belied its highly satisfactory appearance. (And possibly there were other pew-fuls equally deceptive". 1

Anna Tellwright's experience in the revival, too long to quote and meaningless if cut, gives the completest picture of the prevailing religious system of the Five Towns.[2] It has been criticized as irreverent, although I have never known its realism to be questioned. I assume that we may safely trust Mr. Bennett's art creed here. His psychology is convincing, and I cannot see that he has mocked at anything that has any right to be held as sacred by anybody.

Whatever may be the judgment of the public in regard

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1. Old Wives' Tale: pp 87 - 89
2. Anna of the Five Towns: pp 80-86

to the suitability of his comment upon religion, there will scarcely be one to cavil at his taking a hit at modern education; it is a favorite pastime: Could Hilda, in late adolescence, thirsting for life have tasted it first vicariously in books, how differently her life might have unfolded itself. But books were out of her reach:

> "She was in prison with her mother, and saw no method of escape, saw not so much as a locked door, saw nothing but blank walls. Even could she by a miracle break prison, where should she look for the unknown object of her desire, and for what should she look? Enigmas! It is true that she read, occasionally with feverish enjoyment, especially verse. But she did not and could not read enough. Of the shelf-ful of books which in thirty years had drifted by one accident or another into the Lessways household, she had read every volume, except Cruden's Concordance. A heterogeneous and forlorn assemblage! Lavater's Physiognomy, in a translation and in full calf! Thomson's Seasons, which had thrilled her by its romantic beauty! Mrs. Henry Wood's Danesbury House, and one or two novels by Charlotte M. Yonge and Dinah Maria Craig, which she had gulped eagerly down for the mere interest of their stories. Disraeli's Ixion, which she had admired without understanding it. A History of the North American Indians! These were the more exciting items of the set. The most exciting of all was a green volume of Tennyson's containing Maud. She knew Maud by heart. By simple unpleasant obstinacy she had forced her mother to give her this volume for a birthday present having seen a quotation from it in a Ladies' magazine. At that date in Turnhill, as in many other towns of England, the poem had not yet lived down a reputation for mor lity; but fortunately Mrs. Lessways had only the vaguest notion of its dangerousness, and was indeed a negligent kind of woman. Dangerous the book was! Once in reciting it aloud in her room, Hilda had come so near to fainting that she had had to stop and lie down on the bed, until she could convinceherself that she was not the male lover crying to his beloved. And astounding and fearful experience, and not to be too lightly renewed! For Hilda, Maud was a source of lovely and exquisite pain.
>
> Why had she not used her force of character to obtain more books? One reason lay in the excessive difficulty to be faced. Birthdays are infrequent; and besides, the enterprise of purchasing Maud had proved so complicated and tedious that Mrs. Lessways, with

> that curious stiffness which marked her sometimes, had sworn never to attempt to buy another book. Turnhill, a town of fifteen thousand persons, had no bookseller; the only bookseller that Mrs. Lessways had ever heard of did business at Oldcastle. Mrs. Lessways had journeyed twice over the Hillport ridge to Oldcastle, in the odd quest of a book called Maud by 'Tennyson - the poet laureate'; the book had had to be sent from London; and on her second excursion to Oldcastle Mrs. Lessways had been caught by the rain in the middle of Hillport Marah. No! Hilda could not easily demand the gift of another book, when all sorts of nice, really useful presents could be bought in the High Street. Nor was there in Turnhill a Municipal Library, nor any public lending-library.
>
> Yet possibly Hilda's terrific egoism might have got fresh books somehow from somewhere, had she really believed in the virtue of books. Thus far, however, books had not furnished her with what she wanted, and her faith in their promise was insecure." 1

Nor was Edwin Clayhanger better equipped by his education for trying conclusions with the world.

> "The various agencies which society has placed at the disposal of a parent had been at work on Edwin in one way or another for at least a decade, in order to equip him for just this very day when he should step into the world. The moment must therefore be regarded as dramatic, the first crucial moment of an experiment long and elaborately prepared. Knowledge was admittedly the armour and the weapon of one about to try conclusions with the world, and many people for many years had been engaged in providing Edwin with knowledge. He had received, in fact, 'a good education', or even, as some said, 'a thoroughly sound education'; assuredly as complete an equipment of knowledge as could be obtained in the county, for the curriculum of the Oldcastle High School was less in accord with common sense than that of the Middle School.
>
> He knew, however, nothing of natural history, and in particular of himself, of the mechanism of the body and mind through which his soul had to express and fulfil itself. Not one word of information about either physiology or psychology had ever been breathed to him, nor had it ever occurred to anyone around him that such information was needful. And as no one had tried to explain to him the mysteries he carried about with him inside that fair skin of his, so no one had tried to explain to him the mysteries by which he was hemmed in, either mystically through religion, or rationally, through philosophy. Never in chapel nor at Sunday School

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1. Hilda Lessways: pp 6-8

had a difficulty been genuinely faced. And as for philosophy, he had not the slightest conception of what it meant. He imagined that a philosopher was one who made the best of a bad job, and he had never heard the word used in any other sense. He had great potential intellectual curiosity, but nobody had thought to stimulate it by even casually telling him that the finest mind of humanity had been trying to systemize the the mysteries for quite twenty-four centuries. Of physical science he had been taught that gravity was a force which drew things towards the centre of the earth. In the matter of chemistry it had been practically demonstrated to him scores of times, so that he should never forget this grand basic truth, that sodium and potassium may be relied upon to fizz flamingly about on a surface of water. Of geology he was perfectly ignorant, though he lived in a district whose whole livelihood depended on the scientific use of geological knowledge, and though the existence of Oldcastle itself was due to a freak of the earth's crust which geologists call a 'fault'.

Geography had been one of his strong points. He was aware of the rivers of Asia in their order, and of the principal products of Uruguay; and he could name the capitals of nearly all the United States. But he had never been instructed for five minutes in the geography of his native country, of which he knew neither the boundaries nor the rivers nor the terrene characteristics. He could have drawn a map of the Orinoco, but he could not have found the Trent in a day's march; he did not even know where his drinking-water came from. That geographical considerations are the cause of all history had never been hinted to him, nor that history bears immediately upon modern life and bore on his own life. For him history hung unsupported and unsupporting in the air. In the courseof his school career he had several times approached the nineteenth century, but it seemed to him that for administrative reasons he was always being dragged back again to the middle-ages. Once his form had 'got' as far as the infancy of his own father, and concerning this period he had learnt that 'great dissatisfaction prevailed among the laboring classes, who were led to believe by mischievous demagogues' etc. But the next term he was recoiling round Henry the Eighth, who 'was a skilful warrior and politician,' but 'unfortunate in his domestic relations'; and so to Elizabeth, than whom 'few sovereigns have been so much belied, but her character comes out unscathed after the closest examination'. History indeed resolved itself into a series of more or less sanguinary events arbitrarily grouped under the names of persons who had to be identified with the assistance of numbers. Neither of the development of national life, nor of the clash of

> of nations, did he really know anything that was not inessential anecdotic. He could not remember the clauses of Magna Charta, but he knew eternally that it was signed at a place amusingly called Runnymede. And the one fact engraved on his memory about the Battle of Waterloo was that it was fought on a Sunday.
>
> And as he had acquired absolutely nothing about political economy or about logic, and was therefore at the mercy of the first agreeable sophistry that might take his fancy by storm, his unfitness to commence the business of being a citizen almost reached perfection."[1]

Who but can see the achievments of this acme - this climax, this pinnacle of all the centuries, in which space and time have been annihilated; in which mind-stuff or mind dust-[2] has taken the place of soul in psychology[3] and God has been stripped of His pretentions to Purpose, Intelligence and Love and shown by the wonders of the science of evolution to be merely a blind force blundering through a series of experiments in a rather poorly equipped labratory[4] with humanity playing the role of the guinea pig, and getting decidedly the worst of the bargain as pigs always do, - who of us enlightened and confident modérns as we are - but will finish the perusal of this bit of satire with a humble and therefore a truer estimate of the final worth of our achievments:

> "For Constance and Sophia had the disadvantage of living in the middle ages. The crinoline had not quite reached its full circumference, and the dress-improver had not even been thought of. In all the Five Towns there was not a public bath, nor a free library, nor a municipal park, nor a telephone, nor yet a board-school. People had not understood the vital necessity of going away to the seaside every year. Bishop Colenso had just staggered Christianity by his shameless notions on the Pentateuch. Half Lancashire was starving on account of the American war. Garroting was the chief amusement of the homicidal classes. Incredible as it may appear, there was nothing but a horse-tram running between

1. Clayhanger: pp 11-14
2. Principles of Psychology by William James, New York, 1907 Vol. I, p 146 sq.
3. Ibid: p 350
R. See the writings of Mr. Bernard Shaw in general.

Bursley and Hanbridge - and that only twice an hour; and between the other towns no stage of any kind! It was an eraso dark and backward that one might wonder how people could sleep in their beds at night for thinking about their state.

Unhappily the inhabitants of the Five Towns in that era were passably pleased with themselves, and they never even suspected that they were not quite modern and even quite awake. They thought that the intellectua the industrial, and the social movements had gone about as far as these movements could go, and they were amazed at their own progress. Instead of being humble and ashamed, they actually showed pride in their pitiful achievments. They ought to havelooked forward meekly to the prodigious feats of posterity; but, having too little faith and too much conceit, they were content to look behind and make comparisons with the past. They did not foresee the miraculous generation which is us. A poor, blind, complacent people! The ludicrous horse-car was typical of them. The driver rang a huge bell, five minutes before starting, that could beheard from the Wesleyan Chapel to the Cock Yard and then after deliberations and hesitations the vehicle rolled off on its rails into unknown dangers while passengers shouted good-bye. At Bleakridge it had to stop for the turn-pike, and it was assisted up the mountains of Leveson Place and Sutherland Street (towards Hanbridge) by a third horse, onwhose back was perched a tiny, whip-cracking boy; that boy lived like a shuttle on the road between Leveson Place and Sutherland Street, and even in wet weather he was the envy of all other boys. After half an hour's perilous transit the car drew up solemnly in a narrow street by the Signal Office in Hanbridge, and the ruddy driver, having revolved many times the polished iron handle of his sole brake, turned his attention to his passengers in calm triumph, dismissing them with a sort of unsung doxology.

And this was regarded as the last word of traction! A whip-cracking boy on a tip horse! Oh, blind, blind! You could not foresee the hundred and twenty electric cars that now rush madly bumping and thundering at twenty miles an hour through all the main streets of the district." 1

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1. Old Wives' Tale: pp 10-12

(d) Mysticism.

To speak of mysticism in connection with Bennett, arch-realist as he is reputed to be, seems at first blush, paradoxical. But the contradiction is one of terms, not realities. Mr. Bennett sees that there is no cleavage between life and romance; that life is romance.[1] He has said:

"The greatest makers of literature are those whose vision is widest and whose feelings are most intense". And surely no man of vision fails to respond to the mystery throbbing in the heart of things, or to strive to pluck out bits of its secret, - to attain to a little of the Great Unattainable. Even the realist, who is a man of vision, must be a bit of a mystic also.

"Mysticism is not a name applicable to any particular system. It appears in connection with the endeavor of the human mind to grasp ..... the Ultimate Reality of things".[2]

In Mr. Bennett's mysticism, he has aimed at an appeal to reason rather than to feeling, and yet he scarcely succeeds in being reasonable and does secure real feeling.

In some earlier books, Leonora, 1903 and Carlotta, 1905, his mysticism is merely atmospheric:

When Leonora stands beside the death bed of her husband, John Stamway, he says:

1. Arnold Bennett: The Man and His Work, by Coningsby Dawson in The Book of News Monthly, May, 1911.
W. Encyclopedia Britannica XIX p 123

> "The room was filled for her with the majestic sound of trumpets, loud, sustained, and thrilling, but heard only by the soul; a noble and triumphant fanfare announcing the awful advent of those forces which are beyond the earthly sense. John's body lay suddenly deserted and residual; that deceitful brain, and that lying tongue, and that murderous hand had already begun to decay; and the informing fragment of eternal and universal energy was gone to its next manifestation and its next task, unconscious, irresponsible, and unchanged. The ineptitude of human judgments had been once more emphasised, and the great excellence of charity". 1

In the Book of Carlotta, mysticism is more pronounced. Supernatural forces are definitely taken into account - forces at least, which our present knowledge of natural phenomena cannot explain.

When Carlotta had committed the enormity of going unaccompanied to the concert, she finds herself seated before the great virtuoso, Diaz, in almost a pathological state of emotional excitement:

"The tears rise to my eyes, and I stretched out toward Diaz the hands of my soul. My passionate sympathy must have reached him like a beneficient influence, of which, despite the perfect self-possession and self-confidence of his demeanor, it seemed to me he had need".

As the concert proceeded several times the eyes of Diaz met Carlotta's, as it seemed to her miraculously. He had the position of the piano changed, so he could look at her while playing. He always refused encores, but after a mad applause, he halted in front of her and "in his bold grave eyes she saw a question". She nodded her head. He went to the piano. "The prelude in F Sharp", my thought ran. " If he would play that!"

1. Leonora: p 315

"And instantly he broke into that sweet air....."

After his concert when she had flaunted the wisdom of ages and had gone to his hotel with him - I cannot cover the wretchedness of the story as Bennett does - when they were playing, together, the second act of Tristan arranged as a piano forte duet, and as their garments touched, and almost their faces, "at that very moment there was a loud rap at the door, I darted away from him.

> 'What's that?', I cried, low, in a fit of terror.
> 'Who's there?' he called quietly; but he did not stir.
> We gazed at each other.
> The knock was repeated, sharply and firmly.
> 'Who's there', Diaz demanded again.
> 'Go to the door', I whispered.
> He hesitated, and then we heard footsteps receding down the corridor, and looked into the darkness.
> 'Curious', he commented tranquilly; 'I saw no one'".

And after it had ended in disaster, as she had known it would do, and leaving him in the gray morning, - "feeling obscene in the sunshine" - she returns to Bursley to find her aunt dead, he says:

> "My aunt had died about midnight, and it was at midnight that Diaz and I had heard the mysterious knock on his sitting-room door. At the time I had remarked how it resembled my aunt's knock. Had my aunt, in passing from this existence to the next, paused a moment to warn me of my terrible danger? My intellect replied that a disembodied soul could not knock, and that the phenomenon had been due simply to some guest or servant of the hotel, who had mistaken the room, and discovered his error in time. Nevertheless, the instinctive part of me - that part of us which refuses to fraternize with reason, and which we call the superstitious because we cannot explain it - would not let go the spiritualistic theory, and during all my life has never quite surrendered it to the attacks of my brain". 1

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1. Book of Carlotta: p 71

Book II of the Glimpse, deals definitely with consciousness beyond the change of death.[1]

As death approaches, Loring (the story of course is told in the first person) finds that in general his body had his brain in subjection. Still, he had some qualms for the future:[2]

> "After all, if the passage into the new consciousness on the other side of death should somehow correspond in dread with the legendary superstitious of mankind! If the mighty power waiting beyond the horizon should, after all, be vindicative, should even be but scientifically just!...Then the flash was gone. I thought: 'I shall soon know'. And there was a certain feeble adventurous nonchalance in my mood - the insolence, at once titanic and pert, of the human soul before an unimaginable danger!" [3]

His consciousness is analysed somewhat as follows:

> "He 'awoke' to find himself looking at his bed from his study. His brain worked at first with great difficulty. He came to perceive the man lying on the bed, to perceive that it was himself and then, with a 'swift fundamental perception of the instinct', that he was dead.
>
> Terror clutched him.
>
> I still had some sort of a physical organism, patterned apparently on the old, but differing in deep ways which, however, I was not curious enough to consider. I was still I. It was the relic on the bed that was not I". [4]

Inez, his wife, came into the study. She did not see him. He tried to cry out but could make no sound; he could move only a few inches in any direction. Inez went into the bedroom - examined the body on the bed - sobbed and quitted the room. Then he perceived a form resembling himself floating above the bed! "My God" he thought, "How often am I to be multiplied!" The form above the bed and the one in the bed were completely offensive!

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1. The Glimpse: New York, 1909.
2. Ibid: Book I, End of Chap.)'.
3. Ibid: p 132
4. Ibid: p 136

> "'Dead? Yes. What 'they' call dead!'
> But I knew than that there was no such catastrophe as corresponded with your notion of death. There was, however, something more formidable, which wehad not suspected; the forced simultaneous perception of disparate phenomena. This is the most shattering, if not the most desolating experience that the universe holds. Believe me!" 1

Inez continued to spill facile tears on a mass of obscene matter when he was in desparate need of sympathy and moral succor but he could not rouse her to her error. He hears Marion, the maid, telephone the doctor and watches the movements of the women about the corpse. Inez placed a folded handkerchief under the fallen jaw and knotted it at the top of the head. She drew down the eyelids and put "a penny on one and a half crown on the other".

> "Suddenly Inez threw herself down by the bed, before that body, as before an altar, and hid her face in the eiderdown, and wept.
> 'I did love you! I did love you!' she cried in stifled and broken tones. She was pouring out her soul in a passionate ecstasy of repentant grief. But she was pouring it out to that futile, obscene, and negligible mass on the bed, that refuse no more capable of response than a barrow load of earth. It was it that she loved. And I, alive, tingling, isolate, and agonized for lack of human sympathy, stood helpless and disregarded within a few feet of her, in the twilight of the study". 2

The experience during the several hours during which he was "what 'they' call dead" were a revelation in the wonders and possibilities of the physical. He feels sensations of chilliness, although the room was warm; he passionately desires a place in the human world; he had been "sponged off it".

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1. The Glimpse: p 150
2. IBid: p 161

"The freezing blast that moans in the hollow between two worlds nipped me, and I was naked to it".[1]

He next advancing beyond the threshold of another world, observes the "thoughts" of Marion, the servant. They are shapes, of multiple color, beautiful, irridescent, "escaping one by one from that chromatic envelop which surrounded Marion's head".

When he thinks he has left the physical world and is perceiving the wondrous beauty of the spiritual world, he becomes aware that it is not spiritual but physical:[2]

> "And then I asked: 'Why spiritual? Why spiritual more than physical?'
> If hydrogen, if ether, is part of the physicalworld why must this not be called physical? It was gaseous, but are not gases physical? It was less substantial than air, but it had substance, and I could throw it into agitation and deflect its ways. And then I saw that, as in the earthly world, so here, and so forever, it was, and eternally would be, impossible even to conceive any phenomenon that was not fundamentally physical. Nothing could be supernatural. This gave me a feeling of comfortable security".

Again he becomes engrossed in the appearance of Marion's "thoughts"

> "Then recommenced the emanation of clearly defined floating shapes from the head of the ethereal counterpart of Marion. They detached themselves, one after another, in the manner of bubbles, and flowed away in a procession, as different as individuals and as similar as Chinamen. I brought together all my childish faculties to study their birth. Their inception was indubitably to be seen in a whorl or volution of the omnipresent fluid, drawn into the form of Marion, matured there, and then expelled. The movements and modifications were so rapid and so confusing that I could determine no more than this. But as each shape floated off from

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1. The Glimpse: p 150
2. Ibid: p 161

> the creative form, I perceived that the operations of the force which had molded it had also had their effect on the creative form itself, and that the general result was structural cellular change. And while I marveled I knew that I should rightly have marveled more had it been otherwise.
>
> And this was my first dim view of the physical aspect of thought. Only a little while, and I had by an old instinct sought to confirm the attribute 'physical' to the earthly world. I had had to force myself to apply it to this other world. But now I understood that this other world was far more intimately and visibly physical than the earthly. In the earthly, one timorously postulated the physical basis of thought; in this other it was patent". [1]

His relations with the Woman, "radiant beyond all radiant creatures he had ever seen", is merely a study in the exquisite refinement of sensation; as was also his experience in the Palace. In both these experiences, he realized that he was both in heaven and hell, and that their beginnings were in the nature of his personality. They were not rewards nor punishments, but consequences.[2]

This extension and completion of his egoism, he at length found to be hell.[3] He perceived this through the death of desire and a resulting clearnessof vision. The death of desire was the real death - he had not, as he thought, been through death - But as he neared it, actually, he yearned for it, that he might know the truth that was beyond it:

> "And then there visited a beatific ministration - thought shapes that had traveled through immeasurable void to soothe me into unconsciousness. They were the thoughts of Inez. She was praying for the welfare of my soul". [4]

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1. The Glimpse: pp 165-166
2. Ibid: pp 181-195
3. IBid: pp 196-197
4. Ibid: p 201

After the "awakening" by Death, he perceived that this refinement of sensation which he had just experienced was even more pathetic than the grosser brief career that had preceded it.[1]

In the new epoch upon which he had emerged - he found altruistic beneficence. The instinct of self was to melt and be lost.[2] There were "greater beings" veiled in films of splendor..... - the fierce calm rapture of universal communion.... the yearning toward untimate unity".

He saw the past: that his birth into the earthly body was, while a "casing", a vital extension of himself, yet in all reality a prison. The walls which enclosed him in what we call "life" were impenetrable. It was a living burial.[3] Then he approached "the nucleus".

In the Glimpse[4] he sees himself, Maurice Loring, evolving through countless incarnations, each recurring in sequences of three: this imprisonment of worldly existence, the more radiant envelope of exquisite sensation, and the freedom.[5]

"The last and ageless realization, the second a long purgation, the first an ordeal, brief, but full of fate!"[6]

But he discovered that out of each of these incarnations he evolved somewhat "advanced".

He saw the "curve of evolution" always undulating. He

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1. The Glimpse: p 216
2. Ibid: p 208
3. Ibid: Chap. XXVII
4. Ibid: " XXVIII
5. Ibid: p 220
6. Ibid: p 220

could see other beings. "Another race of beings. Other landscapes. But always the same laws".[1] Although his prisons might be metamorphized "I was still individually I". As he witnessed his own births and deaths, so he witnessed the birth and death of worlds. Another greater curve of evolution undulated before him. He witnessed the birth of matter.[2] The curve of evolution shot more boldly upward.....

"And the spirit had no home but its fellow spirit".[3]

"The vision overpowered me. I saw myself in the very dawn of the divine. The communion of these unnamable creatures thrilled into a true coalescence, and surpassed it. And the being thatwas myself gazed with unclouded eye at the source of light and awe, gazing within. And with a sigh of supreme transport I began to yield up my melting individuality in exchange for the final self-knowledge in which resides the clew to the enigma..... I throbbed to the prime pulsations of timeless existence..... I saw... I became.....

The pulsations resolved themselves, with mysterious and formidable portent, into the vast reiterated summoning of a titanic gong that announced the unimagined....."[4]

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1. The glimpse: p 225
2. Ibid: p 229
3. Ibid
4. Ibid: p 230

(e) Moral Values.

In bringing up the question of moral values in the work of chronicler of the Five Towns, a phase of literary criticism is considered which has not held too prominent a place in the art comments of modern reviews. Nevertheless, the middle-class inquiry, "Is it a good book?" will always be entirely pertinent. Moral values are of supreme importance, in art as well as life - because this is, after all, a moral universe. The fullest national recognition of this great truth is the glory of our Anglo-Saxon literature. Any substitution of esthetic for ethical standards is the attitude of the diletante. The truth lies in these lines of Tennyson's, prefacing "The Palace of Art":

> "Beauty, Good and Knowledge are three sisters
> That dote upon each other, friends to man,
> And never can be sundered without tears".

What is moral? What is immoral? A great deal of confusion exists about this in the average way-faring mind. Plain speaking is not immoral though it may offend good taste; a book or any work of art is pure or impure, as the mind of its creator is pure or impure; as his aim is good or base, and as his principles of virtue are based not upon the vagaries of private judgment but upon the natural law which St. Paul affirms even the Gentiles have written in their hearts.[1] It must be remembered that that which is veiled or suggestive is far liklier

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1. Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: II: 14,15.

to be truly immoral than that which is more obviously offensive.

Bennett does not often offend good taste by emphasis upon the physical or sensual. He shows none of the obsession for onesubject that de Maupassant shows; there is a wholesome proportion in his view of motives impelling action. But now and again, in his broad tolerance, he lays himself open to a charge of real confusion of moral values. He is dangerously near something like this in his portrayal of Carlotta Peel: the book is pessimistic; it is almost an arraignment of nature itself. It is saved, artistically, by its restraint and pathos.

An unmistakable instance, however, of a lack of moral standards is this passage from Whom God Hath Joined:

> ".....A couple of hundred yards more, and you are at the summit, in the centre of a triangular country which on geographical maps is colored black to indicate coal. Turn then and look. To the east is the wild gray-green moorland dotted with mining villages whose steeples are wreathed in smoke and fire. West and north and south are the Five Towns - Bursley and Turnhill to the north - Hanbridge, Knype and distant Longshaw to the south - Hanbridge and Bursley uniting their arms in the west. Here they have breathed for a thousand years; and here today they pant in the fever of a quickened evolution with all their vast apparatus of mayors and aldermen, and chains of office, their gas and their electricity, their swift transport, their daily paper, their religions, their fierce pleasures, their vices, their passionate sports, and their secret ideals!.....Railway stations, institute, temples, colleges, graveyards, parks, baths, workshops, theaters, concerts, cafes, pawnshops, emporiums, private bars, unmentioned haunts, courts of justice, banks, clubs, libraries, thrift societies, auction rooms, telephone exchanges, post offices, marriage registries, municipal buildings - what are they, as they undulate below you in their complex unity, but the natural, beautiful, inevitable manifestation of the indestructible Force that is within you? If this prospect is not beautiful under the high and darkened sky, then flowers are not beautiful, nor the ways of animals! If anything that happens in this arena of activity seems to you to need

apologizing for, or slurring over, of concealment, then you have climbed to the top of Toft End in vain!" 1

Tennyson, again shows us the higher truth in this stanza from the Canto 118 of In Memoriam:

".....Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die".

But not often is Mr. Bennett's work marredin this way: "As ye sow so shall ye reap"; and "the wages of sin is death"-, these fundamental truths of our existence are not disregarded by him.

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1. Whom God Hath Joined: pp 5, 6, 7.

V: CONCLUSION.

Great beyond question, as is some of the work Mr. Bennett has already done, to many observers his promise seems even larger than his accomplishment. It is not too much to say that his technique is as remarkable an instrument as any artist has yet wielded in (English) fiction. To produce the illusion of life; to reveal a sense of values; to set forth the eternal significance of the moment that now is; to see life in terms of relative value, and to insist upon the vital necessity of orientation concerning body, mind and spirit - if such be the function of the novelist, surely it is a craft which demands a plastic technique. To say that Mr. Bennett's is adequate is praise indeed, and it is, perhaps, upon the side of technique rather than of vision, that art will be found the richer for the work of Arnold Bennett.

His rich humor, his sympathetic satire, do much toward concealing a substratum of pessimism. Yet unmistakably, he reveals life as grim. He declares it, even, to be so:

> "The naive ecstasties of her girlhood had long since departed - the price paid for experience and self-possession and a true vision of things. The vast inherent

melancholy of the Universe did not exempt her".[1]

and again:

"She esteemed that she knew what life was, and that it was grim". 2

But even the Christian may agree with Mr. Bennett, when the supernatural is left out of account: "The world is a sorry place without God", said Father Byrnes out of the fullness of his mission duties in the public wards of a great city hospital. Mr. Bennett's limitations are not greater than those of his agnostic philosophy.

Real tenderness wherever he finds it; brotherly love wherever it appears, Mr. Bennett respects. He believes in it, moreover, and if he does not show a surfeit of these qualities in his pictures of society, it is because he finds genuine benevolence none too common in life andhe refuses to give countenance to that which is spurious. Again, he reveals life as he sees it. His honesty, sincerity, his refusal to lie about anything, no matter how tempting the opportunity, for the sake of an effect of a theory, make him to be trusted beyond the common lot of fiction writers.

However, effects, for their own sakes, he dispises, and a thesis he consistently avoids. His work is absolutely detached- that is, as much so as is possible to an intense and highly individualized personality. While Mr. Bennett declines to mount the pulpit, or play Sir Oracle - an irresistable temptation to too many artists - still his opinions are everywhere to be discerned. Complete objectivity is, of course incompatible with

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1. Old Wives' Tale: p 16
2. Ibid: p 140
3. Modern Christianity and the Catholic Church. Lecture by Francis J. Byrnes, Pro. Cathedral of St. Mary's, Nov. 16, 1914.

that personal quality which is after all the most precious, as it is one of the basic elements of Art.

All Mr. Bennett essays to do is to tell how things strike him. No one, probably, is more aware that there is no such thing as "the way they are"; that "to tell just how it is" - the Von Ranke method of history, is not possible to the novelist.

He has a philosophy, but he does not thrust it upon you. He has no religion - at least, there is no religious system that he takes seriously, discoverable in his pages. He would, without doubt, say with Thomas Carlyle: "The authentic church catechism of the present century has not yet fallen into my hands!"[1] And I half suspect that that is so.

Mr. Bennett searches for felicity through reality, not ideality. In him there is revealed an honest endeavor to see life whole[2] and with a searching curiosity into all of its parts. He repudiates the thought that we must keep some of our illusions. He desires to see it all; he wishes to live it all intensely. He fears nothing which the fierce light of truth may reveal.

In his pages we live vicariously with men and women whom we recognise to be like ourselves; we see their lives moved by conditions like our own; we see it in perspective; we see it, now and again, a bit of human misery against a background of that beauty and joy which is the heritage of all life.

Dr. Richard Burton once said:[3]

"Our greatest artists are men and women to whom life

1. Thomas Carlyle. Sartor Resartus, Book VII p
2. The Nation, Dec. 7, 1911, asks,"Does he see life whole, or only see it minutely?"
3. The Drama of Idea: Lecture by Dr. Richard Burton, Nov. 14, 1911

> is intense, vibrant with possibilities; to whom 'every morning brings a noble chance'; they are lovers of their kind; they are intensely alive to the zeit-geist - to those ideas which are dominating the world today. With a clearer vision than their fellows, theyreveal these ideas and these aspects of truth".

With such men and women of our age, Arnold Bennett takes his place. Conspicuosly among them, he represents twentieth century modernism. If he cannot be called a prophet, a leader, or a teacher of his age; if he should not come to rank with the great ones of all time, it can truthfully be said that he represents with complete fidelity - the characteristic mood and thought of the age in which he lives, and that he speaks for it with a technique that promises long to outlive the naturalistic and materialistic philosophy of which it is at present the vehicle. It will live as long as men and women live who try in Art to hold the mirror up to Nature.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

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Pride and Prejudice.

Balzac, Honore de
Pere Gariot
The Country Doctor.

Eliot, George,
The Mill on the Floss.

Galsworthy, John
The Patrician.

Hardy, Thomas
The Return of the Native
Far From the Madding Crowd
A Pair of Blue Eyes
Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Howells, W. D.
The Rise of Silas Lapham

Locke, W. J. (Locke W. J.)
The Beloved Vagabond.

James, Henry
Portrait of a Lady
The Wings of a Dove
The Golden Bowl

Meredith, George (Meredith, George)
The Ordeal of Richard Feveral.

Moore, George
Esther Walters
Evelyn Innes

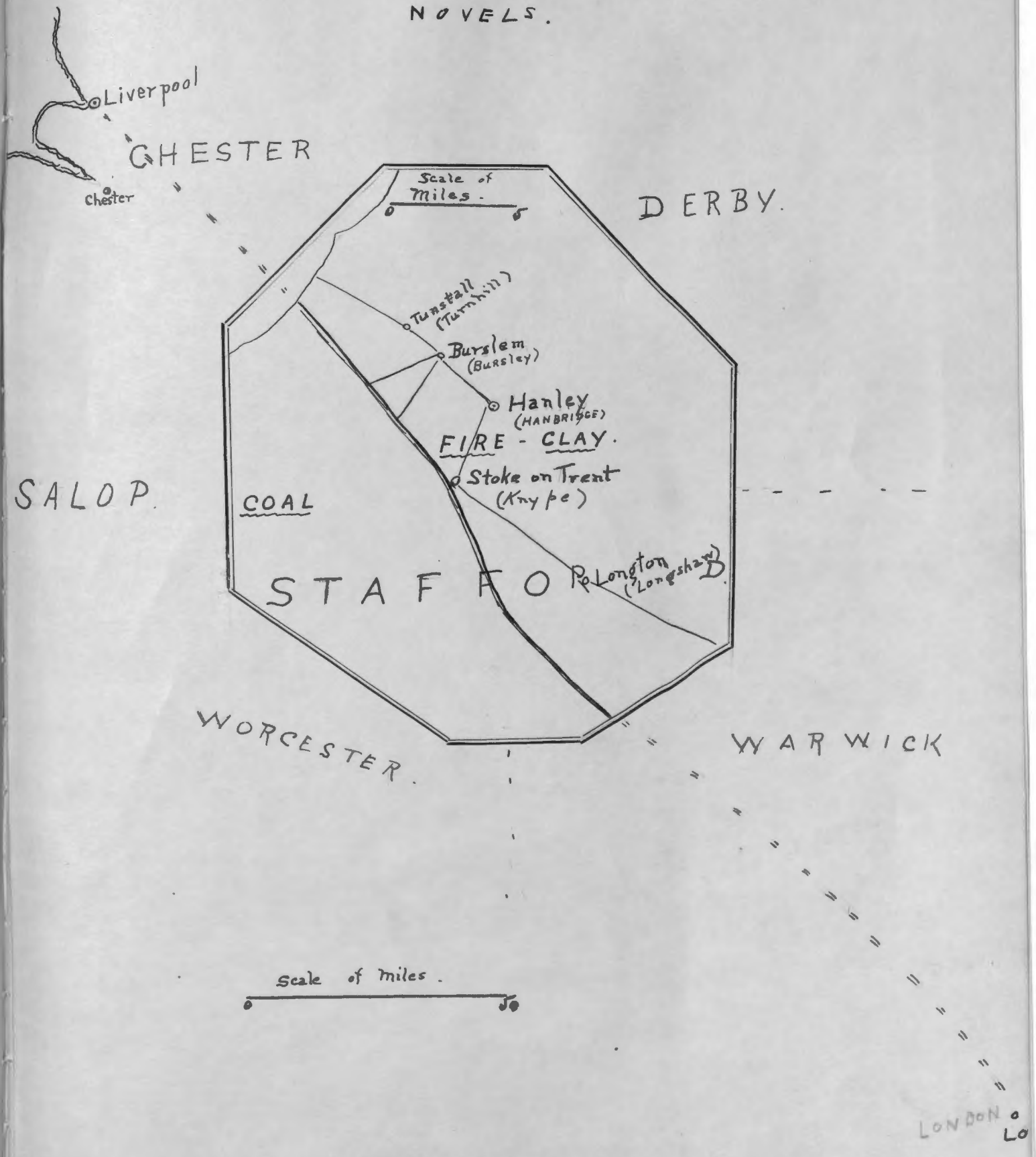
Thackery, W. M.
Henry Esmond
Vanity Fair

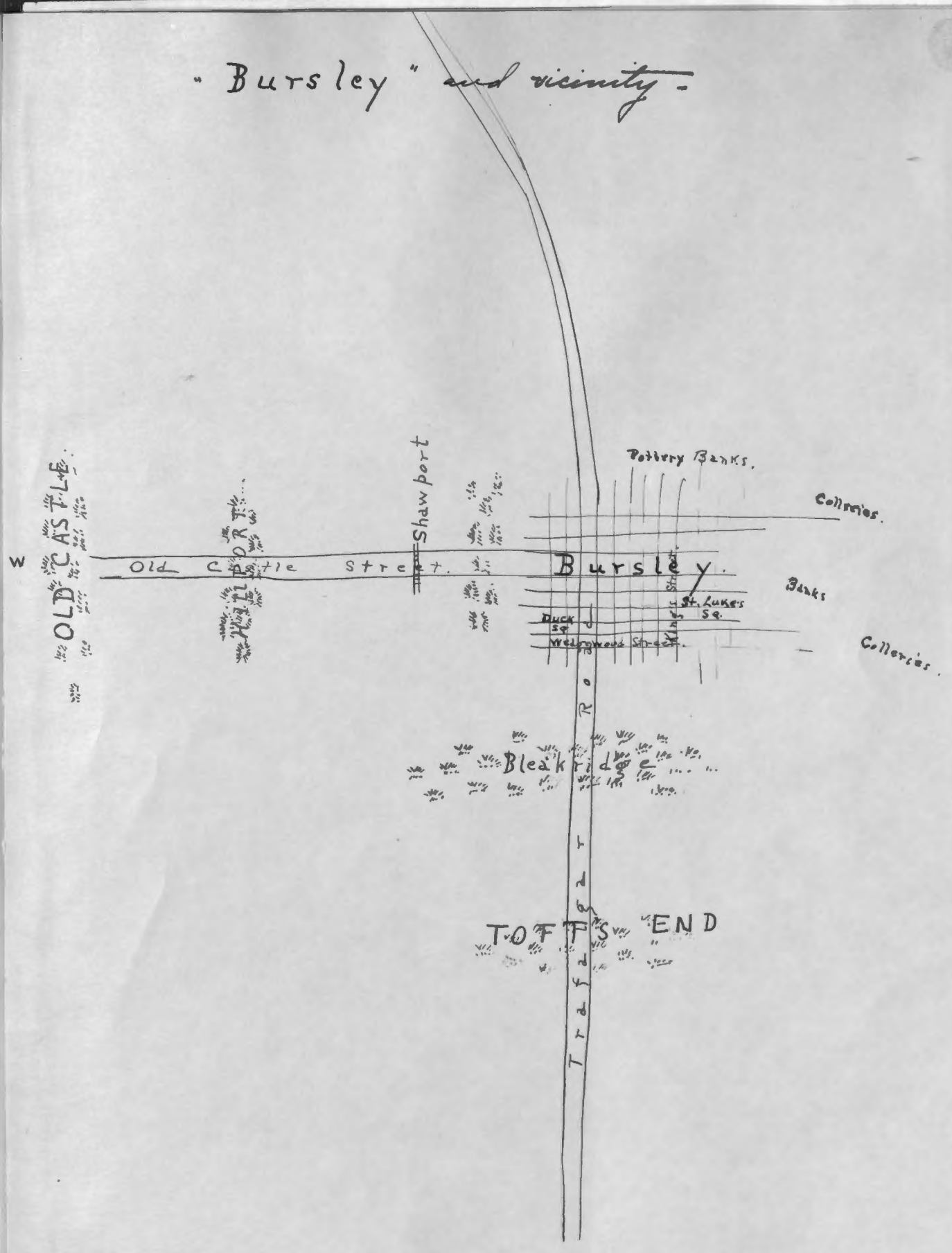
Turgenieff, Ivan Sergenwich
Fathers and Sons
A Lear of the Steppes
On the Eve

"THE DISTRICT"

(Section of Staffordshire, England.)

THE "FIVE TOWNS" OF ARNOLD BENNETT'S NOVELS.




"Bursley" and vicinity.
OLD CASTLE
Old Castle Street.
Shawport
Bursley.
Pottery Banks.
Collieries.
Banks
Collieries.
St. Luke's Sq.
Duck Sq.
Wedgewood Street.
Bleakridge
Trafford Road
TOFTS END
W
S