Formative influences on Arnold Bennett as revealed in five representative novels

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Thesis

Formative influences on Arnold Bennett as Revealed in Five Representative Novels

by

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I

The Purpose of This Thesis

In the following thesis it is my intention to show the close relationship between Arnold Bennett's life and the lives of characters in his novels. It is also my purpose to show how closely settings and scenes in his novels parallel his own geographical background. To do this it will be necessary to give a rather detailed biography of Bennett indicating those among his associates who coloured or affected his mode of living or thinking.
II
Biography of Bennett
A. Introduction

Wilbur Cross has stated in the chapter on Arnold Bennett in his book "Four Contemporary Novelists" that Bennett "carried professionalism in literature to the point where it becomes sheer commercialism." (1) The question with Arnold Bennett, accuses Mr. Cross who refers to Bennett's own work, "The Truth About An Author," in support of his contention, has been "how much he (Bennett) could get for a certain number of words in an apt and pleasing arrangement." (2) If the reader were to stop at this non-flattering point concerning Arnold Bennett he would do that author a grave injustice. And yet the claim made by the critical Mr. Cross is valid and cannot be repudiated. We do not seek to excuse that commercialism but rather to condone it on the basis of the fine novels that Arnold Bennett has written and which will be discussed later in this paper. In sympathy too, with the school of thought whose claim is that environment exerts the most preponderant influence upon individuals we begin our study of Bennett in the Five Towns region where he was born and spent his youth.

(1) Wilbur J. Cross -- "Four Contemporary Novelists"
(2) Wilbur J. Cross -- "Four Contemporary Novelists"
B. Surroundings 1867-1931

Enoch Arnold Bennett was born on May 27, 1867 in the district of Shelton, northeast of Hanley, the "Hanbridge" of his Five Towns novels. It is obvious from a reading of his novels dealing with life in the Five Towns that the whole region made an indelible impression on the young Arnold Bennett. In Chapter I of the "Old Wives' Tale" he describes the region to us. "England can show nothing more beautiful and nothing uglier than the works of nature and the works of man to be seen within the limits of the county. It is England in little, lost in the midst of England, unsung by searchers after the extreme; perhaps occasionally somewhat sore at this neglect, but how proud in the instinctive cognizance of its representative features and traits. On every side the fields and moors of Staffordshire, intersected by roads and lanes, railways, watercourses and telegraph-lines, patterned by hedges, ornamented and made respectable by halls and genteel parks enlivened by villages at the intersections, and warmly surveyed by the sun, spread out undulating. And trains were rushing round curves in deep cuttings, and carts and wagons trotting and jingling on the yellow roads, and long, narrow boats passing in a leisure majestic and infinite over the surface of the stolid canals; the rivers had only themselves to support, for Staffordshire rivers have remained virgin of keels to this day.... The district ignores the county, save that it uses it nonchalantly sometimes as leg-stretcher on holiday afternoons,
as a man may use his back garden. It has nothing in common with the county; it is richly sufficient to itself. Nevertheless, its self-sufficiency and the true salt savour of its life can only be appreciated by picturing it hemmed in by the county. It lies on the face of the county like an insignificant stain, like a dark Pleiades in a green and empty sky. And Hanbridge has the shape of a horse and its rider; Bursley, of half a donkey; Knype of a pair of trousers; Longshaw of an octopus; and little Turnhill of a beetle. The Five Towns seem to cling together for safety. Yet the idea of clinging together for safety would make them laugh. They are unique and indispensable because you cannot drink tea out of a teacup without the aid of the Five Towns; because you cannot eat a meal in decency without the aid of the Five Towns. For this the architecture of the Five Towns is an architecture of ovens and chimneys; for this its atmosphere is as black as its mud; for this it burns and smokes all night, so that Longshaw has been compared to hell; for this it is unlearned in the ways of agriculture, never having seen corn except as packing straw and in quartern loaves; for this, on the other hand, it comprehends the mysterious habits of fire and pure, sterile earth; for this it lives crowded together in slippery streets where the housewife must change white window-curtains at least once a fortnight if she wishes to remain respectable; for this it gets up in the mass at six a.m., winter and summer, and goes to bed when the public-houses close; for this it exists - that you may drink tea out of
a teacup and toy with a chop on a plate..." (1)

It is interesting to note here that Bennett's reputation is based, and justifiably so, upon his Five Towns novels. Who would suspect from the minuteness of the above description that Bennett lived in the Five Towns region only during the first third of his life and returned only for short visits after he had achieved success?

He was evidently very sensitive to early impressions, and the minuteness of the local descriptions are a far cry from the prosaic verbiage of the National Encyclopedia which merely states the growing importance of the Staffordshire potteries with the introduction of diverse technical methods and its expansion under the guiding genius of Wedgwood. Wilbur Cross gives us a better picture of this great pottery making region when he looks through Bennett's eyes at his surroundings. "He (Bennett) saw the Five Towns from the point of view of a solicitor's son and clerk, who had received such scant education as the district could give. What most impressed him were the vast labors going forward under 'the smoke-girt amphitheater'. Everywhere the watchword was work, continuous work kept in pace with the hours of the clock. Shopkeepers and manufacturers were clear-headed, shrewd and outwardly honest, though they drove sharp bargains and could condone a theft provided the money stolen was not expended on books or pictures or pleasures

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "The Old Wives' Tale"
but was properly used for getting a start in the world of business." (1) Close fisted, the men became misers at the age of fifty. They enforced prompt obedience, order, and rigid discipline in their families. If a wife died before her husband, thrift demanded that there be no second marriage in case there were an unmarried daughter who might be reduced to the position of a servant to do housework and sit in the kitchen.

Between father and son there was little or no sympathy. Men were satisfied with such virtues as they possessed. "Though they might go to Manchester or London to buy goods, their outlook hardly extended beyond the industrial area. The culture of the arts and sciences, other than statistics was unknown to them." (2) Nowhere in Bennett's characterizations of the Five Towns people do we find the faintest trace of any appreciation or even any perception of scenery or "natural" beauty. The Five Towns mentality in the novels is vigorous and coarse and their egotism constant. Egotism then, moral and social is their predominant characteristic. It is a local condition explained by local conditions. They always think themselves right, for instance. They seldom allow for any point of view than their own. Confronted with new and alien ideals and standards, they show a prickly defensiveness very difficult to overcome. Life was work, Competition, Suffering -- not Idleness, Cooperation, and Enjoyment in cultural pursuits.

(1) Wilbur J. Cross - "Four Contemporary Novelists"
(2) Wilbur J. Cross - "Four Contemporary Novelists"
In an article written for the North American Review, Mr. St. John Ervine lays the blame for the fact that Arnold Bennett never sees beauty in age (as may be verified by a study of his novels) to the spirit of the Five Towns. "It is a harsh, acquisitive spirit busy principally in the accumulation of material things and inclined to measure a man's worth by the amount of his fortune. The leisurely and gracious things of life are not the immediate or even the ultimate concerns of life in the 'Potteries', and old age is likely, in such places, to be harsh and acquisitive. When men and women, who have spent their activities entirely in money-making, reach the age at which they possess much money but are no longer able to employ themselves in its acquisition, they become crabbed, unlovely and mean." (1)

In such an industrially charged atmosphere as Mr. Cross portrays Bennett spent his childhood and years of adolescence. Little is known of his early childhood except that he showed little inclination or trend at that time towards a literary career. His parents were typical representatives of the Middle Class of the Victorian Era. Both were rigid, matter of fact, unpoetical, undemonstrative and almost ashamed of their rare fits of sentimentality while they entertained a secret pride in their well-hidden kindness of heart. Arnold's mother was devoted to her husband and children, had a great sense of duty and responsibility but absolutely no sense of humor. His

(1) St. John Ervine - - "Some Impressions of My Elders"
father was silent, ambitious, determined - almost hard and Arnold never felt any deep understanding of his father. Both his parents had a firm, settled determination to give their children a good education and a strong moral background. Their zeal in attempting to inculcate the rigid moral standards may have had some influence in Bennett's later aversion to this "outward display of morality" but due to their desire for his education he attended the Middle School of Newcastle, "his highest scholastic achievement being the passing of the London University Matriculation Examination." (1)

Bennett's first attempt at creative writing was in competition for the best poem on "Courage" as a school assignment. He won the prize for the best poem. Shortly after, he submitted a short story which he said, "I wrote with the same ease and certainty as I had produced the verse." Because of his metaphors in this story he was subjected to ridicule by the older boys in the school and as he said, "I felt no further impulse to write a story for at least ten years." (2) He was then eleven years old.

Many years later Bennett was to tell of the effect on him of his father's insistence upon rigid religious education by this statement: "Such was the main result of my father's education of me in ceremonial religion, acting on my

(1) J. W. Cunliffe - - "English Literature During The Last Half Century"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
mocking and skeptical temperament in such manner that I soon
had no religious beliefs and I was profoundly inimical to all
manifestations of religion." (1)

Arnold Bennett clearly discovered the solace of li-
terature, in any real sense, after his school days were over
and it may perhaps be concluded that on the whole he received
in youth little vital encouragement towards letters. Some
youthful adventure in journalism were perhaps significant of
latent power and literary inclination, but a small provincial
newspaper for which he wrote offered no great encouragement to
youthful ambition. It was apparent to Bennett that his father
and the community considered that the polite profession of
writing would not "furnish him with the bread and butter of
life, much less the cakes and ale." (2) Besides these sojourns
into the local journalistic field, Bennett was employed by his
father as a clerk. He became dissatisfied with the meager sa-
alary he was receiving and informed his tight-fisted parent that
he must receive an increase in salary or he would leave the
family domicile. Mr. Bennett was surprised at this show of
determination and self confidence but placed little credence
in Arnold's threat to leave home. When the latter saw that
the expected increase in wages was not forthcoming he departed,
true to his word, to London. There he was soon employed as a

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Things That Have Interested Me"
(2) F. J. Harvey Barton - - "Arnold Bennett" in "Writers
of the Day" Series
solicitor's clerk earning a modest livelihood by "a natural gift for the preparation of bills for taxation." (1)

The literary London into which Bennett found his way was the London of the 'nineties. It would be difficult to imagine a contrast in environment more extreme. "While the age of Queen Victoria was drawing towards its close, all that her age had stood for in art, literature, and morals was being repudiated by the young radicals with whom Bennett (soon after his arrival there) associated. Life was freedom, not the restraint of the Five Towns." (2)

Up to his early twenties Bennett had displayed little interest in books or in literature. "His first real interest in a book was 'not as an instrument for obtaining information or emotion, but as a book, printed at such a place in such a year by so and so, bound by so and so, and carrying... fautes d'impression'. It was when he showed a rare copy of "Manon Lescaut" to an artist and the latter remarked that it was one of the ugliest books he had ever seen, that Bennett first became aware of the appreciation of beauty." (3)

At the insistence of his friends at Chelsea with whom he had taken up his abode soon after his arrival in London, Bennett entered and won a competition, conducted by a

(1) F. J. Harvey Darton -- "Arnold Bennett"
(2) Wilbur J. Cross -- "Four Contemporary Novelists"
(3) J. W. Cunliffe -- "English Literature During The Last Half Century"
popular weekly, for a humorous condensation of a sensational serial, being assured that this was "art." The same paper paid him a few shillings for a short article on, "How a bill of costs is drawn up." Meanwhile he was "gorging on English and French Literature, "his chief idols being the brothers de Goncourt, de Maupassant, and Turgenev." (1)

Under the stimulation of his artistic environment at Chelsea and the urging of his new friends, Bennett finally evolved a short story. He sent it to a well-known magazine which refused it but when he presented it to the Yellow Book it was accepted and the enthusiasm with which his story was greeted prompted him to resolve to write a novel. As he said at this time, "I saw that I could write." (2) Bennett's activities soon became multifarious and incessant. He turned to free-lance journalist, contributing all manner of articles to all manner of magazines. He acted, also, during this period, as a fluent and omniscient reviewer, a dramatic critic, a playwright, and a publisher's reader. An amusing account of these diversions appears in "The Truth About An Author."

In ten years or so (1888-1898) Arnold Bennett had learned the whole various routine of literary productiveness and "had decided to be a successful author." (3) After a humiliating period of free-lancing in Fleet Street, he became assistant editor and later editor of Woman.

(1) J. W. Cunliffe - - "English Literature During The Last Half Century"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
(3) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
While sub-editor of Woman Bennett became a dramatic critic and from this experience he became interested in play writing and production. He states in the first volume of his Journals that "My aim in writing plays whether alone or in collaboration has always been strictly commercial." (1900) As well as carrying on his editorial duties in his position on the staff of Woman, Bennett taught journalism to individuals and found that this vocation suited him. "I had an aptitude for it; and my fame spread abroad. Some of the greatest experts in London complimented me on my methods and my results." (1)

He dropped this however, in order to turn his energies to more lucrative fields. Bennett accepted the editorship of Woman in 1896 and it was while editor of that magazine that he learned so much about the "weaker sex," which has astounded his readers all over the world. He considered his position a rather ignoble one and asserts in his Journal (1897) that "although the writing of popular fiction is offensive to me, it is far more agreeable than being tied daily to an office and editing a lady's paper... Moreover, I think that fiction will pay better, and in order to be happy, I must have a fair supply of money." (2) In spite of this dissatisfaction with his position Bennett remained in his editor's chair until 1900 when, induced

(1) Arnold Bennett -- "The Truth About An Author"
(2) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
by the sale of his first novel, "A Man From The North," published in 1898 and the demands made upon his time by his strong desire to write he resigned from that position to devote himself to his literary inclinations.

It is interesting to note at this point Bennett's own acknowledgment of the value of the training received as editor of "Woman." "I learned a good deal about frocks, household management, and the secret nature of women, especially the secret nature of women. As for frocks, I have sincerely tried to forget that branch of human knowledge; nevertheless the habit, acquired then, of glancing first at a woman's skirt and her shoes, has never left me." (1) During this period Bennett also learned something about the naive and flattering diplomacy employed by women in their business dealings with men.

By 1899, while still editor of "Woman" Bennett was thoroughly launched on his career of novelist. On December 31 of that year he wrote "This year I have written 335,340 words, grand total; 224 articles and stories, and four instalments of a serial called 'The Gates of Wrath' have actually been published and also my book of plays, "Polite Farces." My work included six or eight short stories not yet published, also the greater part of a 35,000 word serial, 'Love and Life' for Tillotsons, and the whole draft, 80,000 words of my Stafford-

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
shire novel 'Anne Tellwright.'" (1) We only wonder that he found time for his editorial duties while producing such a mass of wordage.

There are many allusions in his first volume of his "Journals" to his love of the French authors de Goncourt, Flaubert, Balzac, and de Maupassant and he had also read Turgenev in the French translation. It does not surprise us then that in 1900, having resigned from the staff of Woman, he went to France and stayed there for nearly eight years. During this period he lived in the country, but spent much time in Paris and in travelling through the neighbouring countries as well as reading avidly the works of his French heroes. Although the breaking off in 1906 of his engagement to an American girl, Eleanora Green, had a temporary depressing effect upon Bennett so that he henceforth steeled himself against the weakness of passionate love and became more deliberative and objective, he was soon to fall victim to the lure of wedded bliss. He made the acquaintance of Mme. Marguerite Soulé and in 1907, true to his prediction uttered as a young man that he would wed at 40, they were joined in matrimony and the Bennetts retired to Fontainebleau where he began his first serious attempt at a great novel. In this eight-year period of "marking time" Bennett had written and had published "Anna of the Five Towns," (1902) "The Grand

(1) Arnold Bennett - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
Babylon Hotel," (1902) "Leonora," (1903) "The Truth About An Author," (1903) "A Great Man," (1904) "The Book of Carlotta," (1905) "Whom God Hath Joined," (1906) "Hugo", (1906) "The City of Pleasure," (1907) "The Grim Smile of the Five Towns," (1907) and "Buried Alive," (1908). He had been learning his technique but there remained uppermost in his mind the germ of a great novel which we were to see published in July, 1908 as "The Old Wives' Tale." As early as 1903 Bennett was contemplating the writing of a novel to portray the life history of two women instead of one as in Guy de Maupassant's "Une Vie." In his Journal he mentions a restaurant occurrence in which a fat old woman came into the restaurant and aroused almost universal merriment by her eccentric behavior. Bennett reflected: "This woman was once young, slim... Very probably she is unconscious of her singularities... One ought to be able to make a heart rending novel out of a woman such as she."

Thus the Autumn and Winter of 1907-8 saw the newly married couple living in comparative quiet and solitude after the strain of social activities in Paris. Mrs. Bennett did all in her power to match in domestic peace and tranquility the characteristic peacefulness of the Fontainebleau rustic life. That she succeeded may best be attested by the acclaim with which the public greeted Arnold's creative effort during this period. With his fortune as an author assured by the reception to "The Old Wives' Tale," Bennett sought new quarters and granted his wife her choice of a flat in Paris or a country
house in England. Her love for Arnold and her concern over his health which had been impaired during his previous stay in Paris prompted her to select England for their residence.

Comarques, Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex was the official residence of the Bennetts from 1908 until after the War. Summers during that period Arnold spent on his yacht, the "Velsa," while Mrs. Bennett, who was a poor sailor, joined him infrequently on his cruises. In his book, "The Log of The Velsa" Bennett describes in detail the ports he visited and his impressions of them but it remained for Mrs. Dorothy Cheston Bennett to express adequately the influence of the sea upon Bennett. In her biography of Bennett published in 1935 she states that the sea and the vagaries of the winds were the only two things which Bennett accepted without demur. He heeded not the fact that due to contrary winds or to rough seas he was kept from continuing his voyages thus upsetting his planned vacation or work, but remained complacent in the face of these setbacks. However, were any human agency to seek to interrupt or offset or delay his plan of activity that person or persons would be roundly upbraided for his unwanted and unrelished interference.

The quiet of Comarques was shattered after 1914 when Bennett patriotically insisted upon billeting British officers there while they were waiting for orders to go overseas. From 1914 to 1918 Bennett showed an increasing interest in the War. In 1915 he went as a reporter to the trenches.
and was nearly killed. After this experience his nervousness and sleeplessness increased and Mrs. Bennett feared for his sanity. During the latter years of the war, Comarques was often filled with convalescing officers and some were still there when the Bennetts decided (1921) to move permanently to London.

This new post-war London stimulated Arnold Bennett to activities in which he had rarely indulged. The man of fifty-two, who had always hated late nights, began to stay up late, go to suppers, learn to dance, participate in cabaret life, etc. His wife never accompanied him to public functions although there was no indication at this time of the rift which was to separate them permanently in 1922. In fact he had just named his new yacht the "Marie Marguerite" after her. The following year saw the break in their marital relationship and Bennett resumed his bachelor habits. He soon displayed his growing interest in Dorothy Cheston who had one of the leading roles in his play, "Body and Soul," being produced at the Playhouse in Liverpool. As evidence of this interest I refer the reader to the first chapter of Miss Cheston's biography of Bennett. Here she has quoted an invitation to tea received from Bennett only two weeks after their introduction in March, 1922. Bennett's courtship of Miss Cheston has no place in this treatise except as it affected his surroundings so I will merely outline the important changes which resulted from their alliance in 1923.
In April of that year, Miss Cheston and Mr. Bennett enjoyed a vacation together in Paris. He renewed his knowledge of pictures by frequent visits to the museums and in this week of companionship with Miss Cheston, both felt drawn more closely to each other although the purely platonic friendship still existed. Another month of this growing friendship convinced Miss Cheston that were Bennett free, she would marry him so she agreed to share his life. For the first three years of their relationship they lived in separate homes but in 1927, Miss Cheston took up residence in Bennett's Cadogan Square house. Their early life together was interrupted by Bennett's unswerving pursuit of arrangements which had been made when circumstances were different... namely, his spending his Summers on his yacht. Miss Cheston did join him on week-ends and spent a week with him at Cowes and a fortnight at Ostend. On these occasions she was able to see what effect the financial responsibilities which Bennett shouldered had upon him. "That was... the man whose nerves were stretched so tightly in his too observing, too sensing, feeling frame, that they became an unbearable physical misery to him. A man living in a peculiar hell as of twisted spun glass, which over-reflected too much of outward reality." (1) Fortunately, this Arnold Bennett was not often extant.

In April of 1924, the Bennetts left London for a holiday in the Basque country. During this month of almost

(1) Dorothy Cheston Bennett -- "Arnold Bennett, A Portrait Done At Home"
idyllic companionship, Mrs. Bennett sought to convince Arnold of his need of country existence but to all her pleas he remained adamant and they returned to London in May. There she began rehearsals for "The Great Adventure" and he made preparations to leave town for his yachting season. The years 1925-31 passed quickly for the Bennetts. Most of the time was spent in London but there were sojourns to other countries and to the English hinterland. In the Summer of 1925, they went to Salzburg in Austria; (whose climate unfortunately encouraged one of Arnold's cruellest enemies - neuralgia) another Summer holiday was spent in Cornwall where the beauty of the countryside prompted Bennett to say, "It is not England." (1) Arnold, who more and more avidly went to hear the music of Bach and Beethoven, responded to this environment with its fairy loveliness. He could not even attempt to paint the lovely settings because it seemed to him that Nature was his competitor and his efforts would be tawdry in comparison.

The financial difficulties which began to oppress Bennett in the early twenties became more pronounced in the later part of the decade when certain theatrical enterprises in which he had invested failed. Harassed by a shrinking income and by the fact that he had to find a new London residence in 1930, (due to the expiring of his lease on the Cadogan Square establishment) Bennett's mental serenity was threatened and in his haste to obtain a new residence, he acted with precepitation.

(1) Dorothy Cheston Bennett - "Arnold Bennett"
With amazingly little discussion, business arrangements regarding the lease and the conversion of two flats in a modern apartment house into one were settled. After a very short residence there both Mr. and Mrs. Bennett were convinced of the utter hopelessness of living where each felt physically incapable, each day, of overcoming the day's exhaustion. Arnold Bennett had injured his heart in personally superintending the moving of his beloved books and could not possibly stand the strain of another moving. Moreover, there was very little possibility that the enlarged apartment could be sold or let and with it unlet the Bennetts could not afford to live elsewhere. Arnold refused to change his residence and this spirit of defiance to that which would have been best for him re-asserted itself in his insistence a few weeks later that Paris water was "good enough to drink since hundreds of thousands of French people never drank anything else."

That dread disease, typhoid fever, which struck so soon after Arnold's rash act, gradually weakened him and on March 27, 1931 the intrepid spirit of Arnold Bennett left its earthly habitation and confidently soared to the realm of the Unknown.

C. Books

J. W. Cunliffe in his "English Literature During The Last Half Century" has stated that Bennett at 21 had never "wanted to write" (except for money) and had read almost nothing of Scott, Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontes,
and George Eliot, though he had devoured Ouida, boys' books, and serials. We turn then to the study of Bennett's life after he had left Hanley for greener pastures to see what literary interests he had developed.

After the minor successes he had met with in writing for a popular weekly Bennett had decided to adopt the vocation of letters. He "gorged" himself on English and French literature, his chief idols being the brothers de Goncourt, de Maupassant, and Turgenev. To quote Mr. Bennett, "During my brief experience as a newspaper reporter and lawyer's clerk I was absorbing French fiction incessantly... Turgenev, the brothers de Goncourt, and de Maupassant were my gods. I accepted their canons and they filled me with a general scorn of English fiction which I have never quite lost." (1) On September 29, 1896 Bennett wrote in his Journal that, "I ought during the past month to have read nothing but Goncourt," (2) in preparation for the writing of his new novel "Sir Marigold." In this same volume he goes on with comments about Turgenev. "Turgenev generally begins by sketching the previous history of the person with gossipy detail. He is the greatest master of the modern novel. His style is simple, natural, graceful, and effective." (3) After a critical analysis of Balzac in which he states that Balzac had an "instinctive knowledge of how to

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(3) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
leave out everything but the essentials... and that Balzac enjoyed building up the social atmosphere of a place..." (1) Bennett says about Balzac's "La Cousine Bette" that Balzac "must have been in a very frenzy of creative impulse when he wrote it." (2) Reading "The Queen's Necklace" prompted Bennett to compliment Dumas on his handling of the element of suspense.

In his notation of October 25, 1903, Bennett says, "I always find French criticism of English work very instructive, disconcerting, and 'tonic';" (3) while a few days later he states his intention to study Tolstoy for "tone" and technical arrangement in the planning of his future production, "The Old Wives' Tale." Concerning Gaboriau Bennett credits that author with having filled him with big, epic ideas for fundamental plot -- "exactly what I wanted... The central theme must be big, and it will be; all the rest is mere ingenuity, wit and skill. I have now finished "Le Crime d'Orcival" on Thursday, March 31, and it leaves me with a high respect for Gaboriau..." (4) Since this comment immediately follows an earlier mention of Bennett's intention to write the "Book of Carlotta" we may safely assume that it was this novel he had in mind when making the above statement. Bennett's tribute to D'Aurevelly, (Jan.3, 1903) shows his allegiance to Balzac. "D'Aurevelly's stories

(1) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(3) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(4) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
are extremely fine; lofty, proud Spanish. 'La Vengeance d'une Femme' has the best Balzacian romantic quality in it. Only a great artist can be extremely and revoltingly improper. The achievement of the obscene is never the reward of mere perverse audacity. D'Aurevally was a great artist, and he decidedly wrote a book compared to which the average pornographic production is a devotional exercise." (1) Bennett's comments on de Maupassant are as equally flattering as are those on Balzac and quite as numerous. In Volume I of his Journals he makes at least a dozen specific references to de Maupassant crediting that writer with being the source of much inspiration to him.

By 1911 Bennett's faith in Balzac was somewhat less as revealed in his comments on that author's 'Cure de Tours' and 'Pierrette' in January of that year. Bennett admits Saintsbury's criticism that Balzac was an ignorant and a crude man, often childish in his philosophizing but he feels that had Balzac been properly educated and influenced he would have been a great social philosopher. "Balzac's 'apercus' are often astounding... and his vitality is terrific... he is full of inspiring and agreeable ornament..." (2) He was reading Flaubert, too, as is evidenced by his comment on April 29, 1913. "I began to read Flaubert's correspondence all through the other day. Much of it is as depressing as the rest is inspiring. The letters to Madame X are the most terrible and

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
must have been terrible to receive." (1) In spite of his seeming lapse of fidelity to the French literary giant, Balzac, we find Bennett in his second volume of his Journals (1917) complimenting in the most extravagant language Balzac's "Recherche de l'Absolu" and "La Peau de Chagrin." Bennett's devotion to the brothers de Goncourt continued as we may note from a comment made in his Journal on September 9, 1915. "Read a year or two of de Goncourt's Journal recently. Very good. In fact, it had the finest effect on me when I was exceedingly annoyed." (2) Thus, throughout his Journals do we find a generous sprinkling of praise for these French authors.

His taste had also turned to English and Russian literature although he recognizes the worth of these other authors. He felt that the style of George Eliot possessed shrewdness but that it lacked enduring vitality. In reference to Jane Austen he says, "Her style has the beauty and the strength of masculinity and femininity combined and, very nearly, the weakness of neither." (3) About Henry James Bennett comments, "His mere ingenuity, not only in construction, but in expression, is becoming tedious, though one cannot but admire. His colossal cautiousness in statement is very trying." (4) He derived great pleasure in the reading of the letters of Horace Walpole and thought that Samuel

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(3) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(4) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
Butler's "Way of All Flesh" was exceedingly good especially when that author waxes satirical. He did criticize Butler for his carelessness in details of construction and for his tendency to moralize at length. Bennett's eulogistic comments on Taine after having read the "Letters" show that he was influenced by that author. Bennett states, "The portrait of this man gradually grew clear to me and inspired me with ideals similar to his own; the doing simply of the work which one believes to be best, and the neglect of all vain and gross considerations."(1)

Again, on Smollett, Bennett says, "In reading Smollett's 'Travels' it has occurred to me that I go about very blind, wrapped up in myself." (2) Galworthy's "Man of Property" left Bennett with the dissatisfied impression that the situation between Soames and Irene was not solved although the whole work was impressive. This comment merits our criticism inasmuch as Bennett's evaluation of "The Man of Property" was based on that book alone and not on the whole "Forsyte Saga." If the whole work had been considered undoubtedly Bennett's opinion would have differed from his first hasty comment. Conrad's "Chance" was read by Bennett in 1914 and his comments reflect his personal reaction. "This is a discouraging book for a writer because he damn well knows he can't write as well as this... The indirect narrative is successfully managed on the whole... but here and there recounted dialogue and gesture is so minute as

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
In late December, 1916 Bennett was writing his novel, "The Pretty Lady" and had become rather depressed about the book when he decided to read a book of Georgian Poetry. In his Journal comment of December 25 he claims that the reading of this poetry stimulated him to raise the "damn thing to a higher plane than it had yet reached save in odd places here and there." (2) He compliments Chekhov on "A Dreary Story" by saying that the book was one of the finest things he had ever read, he felt that Strackey's "Queen Victoria" was a "great lark", and Macaulay's "Essays" so interested him that immediately on finishing the reading of them he began to reread them.

Bennett's Journals are filled with such pertinent references to authors as those I have indicated above. On the whole, one must acknowledge that the preponderant influence upon him was wielded by the French school while, although he became conversant with the works of the leading Russian and English novelists, only George Moore and George Gissing can be said to have had any great influence on him. As Cornelius Weygandt has stated, "Bennett is derivative, with a theory of selection of material derived from George Gissing, and a theory of attitude... and style derived from George Moore." (3) The section on "Literary Characteristics" of this thesis will treat with these men in more detail.

(1) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Arnold Bennett -- "Journals of Arnold Bennett"
(3) Cornelius Weygandt -- "A Century of the English Novel"
D. Persons Who Influenced Bennett

In the section entitled "Surroundings" we have given quite a detailed picture of the Potteries region and it is now our intention to people it with those who, consciously or perhaps unconsciously, exerted an influence upon Arnold Bennett in his most impressionable period. Mrs. Bennett, Arnold's mother, had a great sense of her duties and of her responsibilities and worked day and night to further her husband's ambitions. "Both she and her husband had a firm determination to give their children a good education and a strong moral background." (1) Do we wonder, then, that Arnold was increasingly aware of and concerned with his growing responsibilities as he grew older? He had observed the struggles of his parents to "get there" and was imbued himself with the same determination which characterized his parents. His aversion to the over-zealous outward manifestations of religious frenzy originated in his mother's training and catechising him as a child when he deeply resented the enforced lectures and church attendance. Perhaps we can envision Bennett as Edwin Clayhanger whom we see at the sessions of the Bible Class silently perfecting himself in the art of profanity and blasphemy while, in secret fury, he envenomed his instinctive mild objection to the dogma, the ritual, and the spirit of conventional Christianity, especially as exemplified in Wesleyan Methodism. At any rate, Bennett's attitude

(1) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett -- "My Arnold Bennett"
as revealed in his novels.

From his father Bennett inherited a "stick-to-it-iveness" which we see revealed in all of his undertakings throughout his life. He was bound to succeed, or to write 2000 words a day, or to finish a book by the following Tuesday, etc., etc., etc. However, Arnold was to disappoint his father who desired that his eldest son should be a successful business man or lawyer. Instead, at the encouragement of his teacher at the "Middle School" Arnold wrote an acceptable story and some verse. Probably this teacher, was the first to encourage Bennett's literary ability.

After leaving Hanley and taking up quarters in London, Bennett found friends who treated him as a beloved younger brother. They were artists, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Marriott. A childless couple, most charming and true, they aroused in Arnold a love of art and painting which was to manifest itself later in his desire to become a connoisseur of the fine arts. Their encouragement was supported by that of a group of modern young artists with whom Bennett lived in Chelsea and, as a result of these early friendships, Bennett's knowledge of art increased rapidly until he became more of an authority in that field than many critics of repute. In his three volumes of "Things That Have Interested Me" Arnold Bennett makes numerous allusions to his attendance at many "showings" of contemporary art and his erudite chapters on "Paintings" and "Painters" strengthen the reader's faith in Bennett's knowledge.
H. G. Wells soon became a friend of Arnold Bennett and was instrumental in enabling Bennett to satisfy his ambition to study the French people and especially the Parisians. In 1900 Bennett, having resigned from the editorship of Woman, felt free to go to France and study at first hand the country of his literary idols. Through H. G. Wells he met Henry Davray who was engaged in translating the novels of Wells into French. Mr. Davray proved his worth by introducing Bennett into select "salons" and there presenting him to the cream of literary and artistic society. "In the literary world Bennett met, amongst others, Marcel Schwob, married to a clever actress, Marguerite Moreno -- at that time a member of the 'Comedie Francaise' -- He met an even more interesting man, Emile Martin, a Parisian dilettante, whose ideas, tact, habits, outlook appealed to Arnold extremely... He spoke English, but preferred speaking French, and Arnold had the benefit of it." (1) To Emile Martin's friendship Bennett owed his knowledge of Paris and of French character and customs. Bennett fell in love with the furniture of Napoleon's period which he saw at the historical Fontainebleau Palace. He was inspired by Napoleon's love of pageantry, by his tenacity, perseverance, and success and we may truly say that this inspiration encouraged the worker in Bennett; "the man afraid of splendour, sumptuousness, and power, yet striving to get them all." (2)

(1) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett -- "My Arnold Bennett"
(2) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett -- "My Arnold Bennett"
In Paris, too, he was a frequent visitor to meetings held at the home of Mr. and Mme. X. There he met and was impressed by Maurice Ravel, at that time a struggling young pianist; Debussy, Deodora de Severac, Ricardo Vignes and Valery Larbard of music renown were among the illustrious personages; the literary world was represented by Herman Paul, Andre Gide, Paul Fargue, and Grasset, the publisher. At these meetings heated discussions arose concerning the worth of a musical, literary or artistic work and Bennett, at first contented with listening, began to join in the discussions. These lasted into the early morning hours and often ended with Ravel or Debussy playing some original composition to soothe the excited guests. Bennett was often accompanied to his flat by Pierre Bonnard or Vallotton or Redon -- painters of good repute or by the renowned sculptor Rodin. There, on his doorsteps, the discussions continued, flourished, and then died a lingering death as the chill dawn made its appearance. The influence of these "salon" gatherings is intangible and immeasurable but it does exist and we can point it out only in the widened range of interest and knowledge which Bennett began to manifest. This increased range of interest may be noted in his later novels or in his Journals.

This active life in Paris was undermining Bennett's health and he found a place to retire to each week -- again through Henry Davray. This retreat is called Les Sablons. It is near Moret-sur-Loing, close to the Forest of Fontaine-
bleau. After meeting Marguerite Soulé whom he took for his wife on July 4, 1907, Bennett and his wife moved to a small comfortable house at Fontainebleau. There the Bennetts were undisturbed for a period of 8 months during which Arnold created the "Old Wives' Tales."

Not content to remain where he was after the success of the "Old Wives' Tale" Arnold proposed that they move either to a large flat in Paris or to a country home in England. Mrs. Bennett, knowing how Bennett's health had been endangered during his former residence in Paris, decided on England and it is there that we next see Arnold surrounded by a host of new and old friends. Among his notable visitors at Comarques in England was George Doran, Bennett's American publisher who had been so friendly to him after their meeting in Paris. Unquestionably both men were of mutual assistance to each other and Bennett partly owed his popularity and success in America to the publicity given his works by Mr. Doran. Too, Bennett engaged in the writing of articles on many subjects at the suggestion of his American publisher. James Pinker, English literary agent, was a frequent visitor to the Bennetts' English home while Frank Swinnerton and Hugh Walpole, Bennett's disciples, were often guests of Bennett at Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex.

Among his close friends in his last year at Comarques and in his final years in London are included such literary lights as Mrs. Belloc Lowndes and Mr. E. V. Lucas, the poet. Max Aitkin, (Lord Beaverbrook) became acquainted with Bennett
and aided him considerably in his attempts to realistically portray the English Judiciary in one of his later novels.

I have purposely neglected thus far to state the influence upon Arnold Bennett of those closest to him. I refer, of course, to Mrs. Bennett, nee Marguerite Soulie and to Dorothy Cheston, who, though never legally married to Bennett, cohabited with him and took his name after due process of law.

The former probably struck a responsive chord in Bennett after their first meeting in Paris. She possessed the typical neatness of attire and habits which is characteristic of the French bourgeoisie. She had worked hard as a girl and young woman to gain some education and the right to adopt the vocation she sought. These similarities between her life and that of Bennett awakened his friendly interest and, soon becoming aware of her love for him, he, in turn, became more deeply interested, and after some deliberation, proposed marriage to her. This action was not unpremeditated but was the result of careful weighing of the advantages which might accrue from the marriage. He appreciated her intelligence, her dramatic ability, her rationalism (characteristic of most Parisiennes) and her ability to maintain a "menage" which was attractive and tastefully arranged. She in turn was thrilled by his magnetic personality.

It is questionable whether Marguerite Soulie had any great positive influence on Arnold Bennett. There existed between them a mutual fondness and a deep understanding until
the rift arose. She was acquiescent to all his whims and, knowing his idiosyncrasies, did all in her power to make his task an easier one. She subjected her own personality that his might become more resplendent. Bennett was aware of this and appreciated her thoughtfulness but tended to accept her graciousness as the "expected thing" -- evidence that the Victorian in him still lived. We can at least say that it was Marguerite Soulie who made it possible for Bennett to work in surroundings conducive to good work and, as a result of her untiring efforts to aid him, he produced his finest work, "The Old Wives' Tale." Marguerite Soulie was the companion of Bennett more than the wife or mistress.

In 1921, circumstances arose which alienated the friendship between husband and wife and Marguerite Soulie quit his flat in London at the request of his solicitors. That she still held him and still holds him in deep affection is evidenced in her later book "My Arnold Bennett" published in 1932.

Dorothy Cheston began to play a prominent part in Bennett's career in 1922. Arnold Bennett met her for the first time in early March of that year when he witnessed a performance of his play "Body and Soul" in which she played one of the leading roles. At a supper given after the performance in honor of the noted author and the equally well-known actor, Arthur Bourchier, Miss Cheston was introduced to Arnold who, with his accustomed tact and kindliness, made her at ease. From this casual acquaintanceship grew the friendship which
was to unite them in parenthood and which was dissolved only on his death in 1931.

In my section entitled "Surroundings" I have traced rather completely the progress of their relationship until its termination. Therefore, I am not concerned here with a repetition of these facts but rather with an interpretation of them. It is extremely difficult to point out in any specific instance how Miss Cheston influenced Arnold Bennett. We know from the study of the phases in their courtship that Bennett loved her with a passion -- unusually controlled, nevertheless -- that he had never felt for Marguerite Soulie and it is questionable if he had ever been so ardent a wooer of Miss Eleanora Green, his ex-fiancée. He regarded Miss Cheston in a less objective light than that which he focused upon all his other friendships and relationships. According to Miss Cheston, she and Arnold Bennett were more "en rapport" than he had been with Marguerite Soulie. He earnestly desired Miss Cheston in marriage and since Mrs. Marguerite Soulie Bennett would not consent to a legal separation, (and Bennett abhorred the thought of the divorce court) Miss Cheston finally consented to his pleas that she share his life with him. After 1927 they lived as man and wife under the same roof in Cadogan Square.

A direct result of the relationship between Miss Cheston and Bennett was the increased financial needs of the author. Under the terms of his separation agreement with Mrs. Bennett, Arnold had provided generously for her future. With
the added expense of Miss Cheston and (later) their daughter Virginia, Arnold was driven to unceasing work to keep in luxury those he loved and to maintain Mrs. Bennett in comfortable circumstances. The results of these Herculean mental efforts took its toll and we note his increased need for "vacations" and diversions. When the theatrical ventures in which he had rather heavily invested collapsed, his financial worries were intensified.

Certainly we can attribute his undiminished activity as a playwright, as a theater critic, and as a producer to his desire to be thoroughly conversant with all phases of theater work and, especially, to his intense wish and hope for the theatrical stardom of Miss Cheston. From their earliest acquaintanceship, Arnold Bennett had indicated his desire that she continue in her career and he had done all he possibly could to further her ambitions. It is only fair to state at this point that Miss Cheston, in spite of the appellation of "producer's protege" strove earnestly to make herself as fine an actress as was possible.

By the time that the friendship between Arnold Bennett and Miss Cheston arose, he was in his fifties — all his life he had been building up his personal habits which could be changed but slightly, if at all, by contact with others. Doubtlessly, Miss Cheston succeeded in modifying somewhat the rigid habits which Arnold had formed but that there was no lasting effect may be seen in his attitude in
the making of three decisions in his last years. One of these
was his refusal to live in the Basque country of France because
of its proximity to the residence of his relations through
Marguerite Soulé. His better judgment perceived the superior-
ity of living conditions there over those in London. Another
incident was the refusal to back down on his lease in the Lon-
don apartment which he detested, and thirdly, his defiance to
the Parisian waiter's "Ah, ce n'est pas sage, Monsieur," when
he insisted upon drinking the typhoid laden water of Paris.
This defiance to reason and blind obedience to the will which
had carried him through his successful life was the direct cause
of his death.

Perhaps the only thing which can be added to the
above might be to say that Dorothy Cheston satisfied for Bennett
the emotional need which all men possess. If only for that rea-
son we are justified in saying that whatever Bennett created,
or might have created had not Death intervened, while she lived
with him, was affected somewhat by his feelings towards her.
Possibly, had he completed his "Dream of Destiny" we might find
definite proof of that which we now offer only as a supposition.

I have treated in my earlier section of "Books" those
authors of France, Russia, and England who have influenced
Bennett's literary style and I shall give them more emphasis
in the section on "Literary Characteristics." For the present,
I turn to the study of the personal qualities of the Five Towns
author.
E. Personal Characteristics

"A tall, slim, elegant Englishman with grey hair -- distinguished looking -- firm hand shake, charming smile... hands, white and well cared for; purity of the forehead; kindness of the eyes, boyishness of the smile, determination, inquisitiveness, sharpness of the nose... pale colorless voice."

(1) Such is the mental comment of Miss Soulie concerning Bennett when introduced to the noted author in 1906. We must accept this description as emanating from a prejudiced person inasmuch as Miss Soulie's view does not correspond to that view held by most critics of Bennett. Other, more impersonal, views will be given later. As the friendship of the French actress and the English author grew, Miss Soulie learned more of the personal idiosyncracies of her husband-to-be. Throughout both of her books on Bennett we find allusions to his personal habits and traits which I record below as they occur to me.

Arnold Bennett, as a youth and in his early manhood, had known little of the luxury which accompanies wealth. It is no wonder, then, that with the acquiring of a fairly large income, Bennett satisfied his innate craving for comfort. He insisted upon comfort whether in his own home, at the theater or music hall, or when traveling on his yacht or on trains. This taste for luxury and comfort inspired Bennett to greater

(1) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett -- "Arnold Bennett"
efforts. In his play, "The Great Adventure" Arnold Bennett has his hero echo his sentiments by having that character say, "The best is good enough for me." (1) Again in "The Truth About An Author" Bennett states, "I love luxury and luxury costs money... I could not work so hard if I did not know my luxuries depend upon what I earn." (2) This intense desire for wealth as a means of providing comforts and luxuries was characteristic of Bennett. It was accompanied by an equal desire for fame and for position. Success, to Bennett meant recognition by society - the class which had the time to read and a taste for reading; he worked to attain the inner circles of the London elite; he sought assiduously the "open sesame" which would open the portals of society's inner sanctum. As his success increased we note an increasing eagerness in Bennett to acquire culture. It is a rather curious fact that Bennett devoted so much time and effort to acquiring that which, in the eyes of the typical Five Townsman, was not worthy of more than casual attention. Arnold Bennett may not have been the "typical Five Townsman" but he really never wholly overcame the effect of the Five Towns morality. He possessed the true Englishman's love of afternoon tea and loved to have friends to enliven this short period of respite from his daily labors. While living in Paris during his later apprenticeship as a writer Bennett made a practice of lunching

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "The Great Adventure"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
alone in a certain Montmartre restaurant but he always varied
his places of dining and never dined alone.

As an artist and author Arnold remained the "bourgeois." He could only work in tidy surroundings -- was upset by
untidiness and carelessness. This insistence upon order was a
result of the lesson he learned as a youth that "tidiness and
order save time and money." He disliked any change of habits
and surroundings but we find support for his aversion to change
in the declaration by both Marguerite Soulie and Dorothy Cheston
that any change made by anyone else (in the matter of moving
classroom, or replacing a picture, for example) left one with
the impression that the change had been for the worse and so
articles were placed as Arnold wished them to be placed.

Bennett was his own Simon Legree. He had always known
how to make the best of his twenty-four hours a day. "No human
machine has ever worked more efficiently or at a more regular
speed -- one gear for work, one for play..." (1) He lived for
his work, put it before everything and everybody, even his own
welfare; he regarded himself as a machine to produce book after
book, article after article, etc.

His success had increased his self-confidence to a
point which bordered on extreme egotism and self-centredness
and yet he had moods of extreme kindness and was capable of
deep and lasting affection. Bennett possessed a somewhat

(1) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett - - "Arnold Bennett"
philosophical slant in his attitude towards life and towards people in that he did not expect more from human nature than human nature could give. He realized his own shortcomings and abilities and was quick to discern accurately the failings or attributes of those with whom he came in contact. Having done this he expected a relatively greater or lesser achievement from those under his scrutiny. He tended to be sympathetic, generous, and understanding but, as Miss Soulie charges, he could be extremely hard, cruel, and pitiless especially if he thought he was being imposed upon because of his provincial aspect.

Arnold Bennett's journalistic traits which he acquired while still a resident of Hanley persisted throughout his life. He always carried a notebook in his pocket and observed two laws in beginning his creative work for the day. These rules to which he adhered so rigidly were:

1) To write in the morning from notes taken the day before. (Usually from 5 A.M. to 7 A.M.)

2) To make himself an early cup of tea -- about 7 A.M.

After this morning tea, Bennett returned to bed for a perusal of the day's mail until it was time for him to have his bath, dress, and get ready for breakfast at 9 A.M. After breakfast he smoked a cigarette and then either worked until lunch or sought material for writing. After lunch he rested for a short while and then resumed work until dinner. He never
wrote after dinner. This was his daily routine whenever he was engaged in the writing of any books or article. Is it surprising that in his Journals Arnold Bennett states the year's total output to be 335,000 words?

Bennett was a man of many hobbies. His interest would be maintained at fever pitch for a time and then the hobby was forgotten in the pursuit of another. During the first decade of the twentieth century he became a music enthusiast and was justifiably proud of his piano playing. He practiced hours each day and won the plaudits of Ravel whom he had met at M. and Madame Godebski's in Paris. After his marriage, Bennett became interested in calligraphy and when his wife, Marguerite, complimented him on his work, he decided to use printed characters throughout the whole manuscript of "The Old Wives' Tale." Another hobby of this period was Bennett's flair for writing literary articles for the "New Age" under the name of Jacob Tonson and during the War he engaged in the writing of political articles.

He combined his interest in yachting with his love for painting and drawing in watercolor. Although never vain-glorious about his artistic efforts, Bennett knew when a watercolor was above average and felt a natural glow of pride in his work. Later his interest veered to black and white drawing in which activity he met with but fair success. From 1919 onwards his hobbies assumed a more varied trend and we find Arnold Bennett interested in modern painting, in buying pictures, in
meeting and encouraging (or discouraging, in some instances) young painters, poets, musicians, pianists, actors and actresses. He enjoyed reading modern poetry and, as mentioned in the section on "Surroundings," later engaged in dancing and in theatrical enterprises.

Unlike most of us, Arnold Bennett felt no need of a very intimate friendship. He was very happy when genial admiration was shown to him and was pleased when he had a chance to do a good deed. Miss Soulie has claimed that the friends whom Bennett loved the most were sometimes trusted the least and that Arnold was, on occasions, suspicious of his intellectual equals. In the many articles and books on Arnold Bennett which I have examined I have found no justification for or corroboration of these contentions.

St. John Ervine has stated that, of all the men of letters with whom he was acquainted, Arnold Bennett was the most generous and kindly to young people. He felt that Mr. Bennett was happier on the whole with young people than he was with their elders, and he assiduously sought their society. "He is amused by their extravagances, but not to the extent of sneering at them. He likes youth to be dandiacal, to have an air, to be arrogant, but not to be ill-bred, or pretentious or third-rate." (1) In spite of Bennett's notable kindliness, he could be merciless to humbugs, and stories are told of de-

(1) St. John Ervine — "Some Impressions of My Elders"
vastating things said by him to presumptuous persons and fools. The blunt speech of the Five Towne was native to his tongue, and he passed judgment without mincing his words. Mr. Ervine continues, "Bennett is a keen man of business, and he is full of contempt for the rather sloppy-minded man of letters who allows himself to be worsted in a bargain. Most men of quality are lonely men, oddly isolated in spirit, and Mr. Bennett is not an exception to the rule, but more than his compeers, I think, he is a companionable person in a small group chiefly because of that romantic interest he has in all things, animate and inanimate. He has a wider knowledge of books than most men of letters. He likes the savor of life, and life for him includes the pictures of Corot and the gramophone and French poetry and the novels of George Moore and newspapers and motorcars and Balzac and Bernard Shaw and the right brand of French beans." (1)

While editor of "Woman" Bennett acquired that knowledge of women which was one of his outstanding characteristics. He appreciated their virtues and discerned their shortcomings and had divided all women into categories which, for the reader's enjoyment, I list below:

a. Kind Hearts  
b. Deceitful  
c. Interesting  
d. Dull  
e. Capable  
f. Stupid

I find it impossible to satisfactorily interpret some of these categories but I can safely say that Bennett's

(1) St. John Ervine -- "Some Impressions of My Elders"
knowledge of women was unquestionably great as proved by the portrayal of Leanora, Carlotta, Hilda Lessways, Helen With The High Hand, and of the heroine in "The Pretty Lady." They are all splendidly drawn but lack the vital spark which would have made them as immortal as are Cleopatra and Thais." (1)

Until the last ten years of his life, Bennett was his own master. He had felt, as proved to the satisfaction of all, that the Five Towns region was a stage of sufficient importance to accommodate all the human passions he wanted to describe in his realistic novels. With this success, he could, and did, condescend, command, and dominate to his own liking. Although he was very sensible ordinarily, he amuses us by his sincere allegiance to ---'s pills or to ---'s tablets, etc. His was a highly-strung temperament and most of his illnesses had been the result of over-taut nerves. Still, he swore by various patent medicines as they struck his fancy and confidently dosed himself with them.

As an individual, Bennett was not, as I have stated elsewhere, greatly influenced by others. I have indicated in the section entitled "Books" that he was indebted for some of his literary traits to the French masters - Balzac, de Maupassant, and Flaubert - and to his English predecessors, Gissing and Moore. These men will be given greater consideration in the next section. It may be said at this point that Bennett exerted a great influence on the writers of his generation and on those people with whom he associated. We may note improve-

(1) Mrs. Marguerite (Soulie) Bennett - "Arnold Bennett"
ment in the works of Frank Swinnerton and of Hugh Walpole be-
cause of Bennett's constructive criticism. Bennett loved to
give advice (a natural human failing) and sought to improve peo-
ple. He so affected his wife, Marguerite, that she was on the
verge of a nervous breakdown and only through the development
of all her combativeness, endurance, and patience was she able
to counter the assertive nature which was Arnold's.

Bennett possessed a certain rigidity in bearing and
habit which expressed itself most visibly in a social deport-
ment that was so peculiarly his own as to indicate that its
origin lay in his psychological "make-up." Partly due to this
same origin was the deliberation, foresight, and even anxiety,
that he expended upon the small adventures of life -- on the
planning of pleasures great and small, and travels long and
short.

Miss Cheston has expressed her belief that the secret
of Arnold's zest and the reason why it had always been so com-
municable resided in his having carried over into maturity the
delight "which is ordinarily killed or submerged after early
youth through a change in mental processes and the substitution
of practical for imaginative processes." (1) Miss Cheston also
feels that the picture of Arnold Bennett as the cynically know-
ing man of the world "was but a legend" and she hastens to
state that the picture he always presented to her was contrary
to the generally accepted one. "The mind and interest (of

(1) Mrs. Dorothy (Cheston) Bennett -- "Arnold Bennett"
Bennett) was not bent upon self-interest nor upon a venal plane. It was for this reason that advantage could be taken of the characteristic nobility of his bent of mind by those who were either concerned or obsessed by venal ends. This may have been because he found that to exercise his mind upon disturbing and disintegrating thoughts or suspicions ruined its creative bent. And he felt that precious time -- working time -- must not be wasted in such a way. He guarded not merely his time for work, but also the level and tenor of his mind from petty preoccupations which lowered instead of elevated the spirit, and turned instead to contemplation of the purest created beauty he could find, whether in picture gallery, museum, or concert hall." (1)

Bennett had no interest in card games looking upon them as time-wasting devices, because life was all too short and waste of time the most evil form of extravagance. He had no will for cards, and in his heart he disapproved of them all but occasionally, on calm evenings while on his yacht he would indulge in Tiddly-winks. This innocent game was curiously expressive of his taste in light pastimes and when playing it he looked extraordinarily like a boy playing marbles, a boy old enough to know he is enjoying himself.

Characteristic of Bennett was the weight of argument he would bring to bear on so large a number of points; and often he seemed to use an energy on things requiring only the breath of thistledown, that was sufficient to have moved a solid ton.

(1) Mrs. Dorothy (Cheston) Bennett - - "Arnold Bennett"
This tendency of Arnold Bennett to rationalize at the expense of instinct or feeling led Dorothy Cheston to exclaim at the close of their second year together that "(Bennett)... through his ability to think so straight, was tempted -- and fell into the pitfall of overbalancing his emotional life by reason." (1) His characteristic efficiency and self-sufficiency had the effect upon a woman of making her feel redundant.

Arnold Bennett loved beauty with a profound love. It uplifted him. Beauty in art more than in the "untutored pageant of nature," music and the arts, but above all music at the latter part of his life; these were his joys and probably his needs when the strenuous life in London began to take its toll.

Rebecca West has drawn a rather interesting picture of Bennett in her book "Arnold Bennett Himself." The following excerpts will give the reader a picture of the physical Bennett. We may then clothe this effigy in the characteristics already indicated to obtain a complete and accurate portrait of the man.

"He possessed an astounding appearance: Although not actually obese, his outline had the swelling quality of a balloon. He moved his limbs with a curious stiffness, as if they were thick like a pachyderm's. His head was habitually retracted, as if with the intention of resisting by cool rigidity of bearing the threat of a fist flourishing in his face. His hair proved that its grayness was not a sign of any serious slackening of vitality by rising in a cockatoo crest. Among the stammerers who

(1) Mrs. Dorothy (Cheston) Bennett -- "Arnold Bennett"
have cashed in on their disability he ranked very high, his trick of closing his eyes and holding his mouth open for a moment before he said the important word in a sentence had been developed to the pitch of perfection. His style of dressing had quieted down in his later years, and he no longer went to the opera in a shirt front embroidered with green fleur-de-lys, but it was still cumbersome and ornate, rather like English Empire furniture.

"This figure was not quite the real Arnold Bennett. It was a creation of the real Arnold Bennett. It was a baroque exterior into which a shy man had converted all the oddities of which he was most sensitive, so that he could have somewhere to hide... His claim and attitude of being the ideal metropolitan which the provincial longs to be was faintly burlesqued. It was freely admitted that the claim was absurd." (1)

A. G. Gardiner has added to Miss West's description with the following: "Bennett's cockiness is a pose; behind that delightful swagger is the most sincere and deliberate of craftsmen, incessantly industrious, distressingly orderly, distributing his time with rigorous economy; his eye, with the drooping lid and considering glance, taking in the play around him; his notebook ever handy to receive his impressions while they are fresh; a hedonist by taste but a martinet by will, hating sloppiness in others, but still more in himself; working with undeviating loyalty to the limited but rigorous code by which he lives. No one ever doubted his word, and falsity shrivels in

(1) Rebecca West — "Arnold Bennett Himself"
his presence. In spite of his external hardness, he is one of those rare men to whom you would go when the pillars of your firmament were falling and to whom you would not go in vain." (1)

Arnold Bennett has described himself with evident truth when he said that his three major qualities were: "First, an omnivorous and tenacious memory -- the kind of memory that remembers how much London spends per day in cab fares just as easily as the order of Shakespeare's plays or the stock anecdotes of Shelley and Byron. Second, a naturally sound taste in literature and, third, the invaluable, despicable, disingenuous journalistic faculty of seeming to know much more than one does know." (2)

He might have added a precise and penetrating observation. The observation and the memory were alike exercised on the Five Towns, that section of England which has remained so exclusively English and so incurably provincial. Here is the setting for his greatest works because he knew this best.

Frank Swinnerton who admits his indebtedness to Arnold Bennett for the latter's constructive criticism has written a little eulogy of his benefactor which I quote in terminating this section of my thesis: "Bennett never did nor said anything which was not filled and made delightful by his strong, sane, and nonsensical humor. That humor, which gave to "The Card" and "Buried Alive" their distinction, was unsleeping. It saved

(1) A. G. Gardiner - - "Portraits and Portents"
(2) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
him at all times from an overestimate of his own gifts. He was never solemn, never self-important. His impulse was to help all. That impulse landed him in a thousand difficulties and it may have killed him before he had any reason to expect death; but he had a rich, benevolent, and truly disinterested life, of which magnanimity was the keynote. The number of his benefi-
ciaries are beyond computation; he gave his time, his interest, his care, and his money with a readiness possible only to one of large mind and large heart." (1)

F. Literary Characteristics

In "The Truth About An Author" Bennett makes some in-
teresting confessions. Having "devoured" Ouida as a youth, he attributes to that author his taste for "liaisons under pink lampshades which (1) always had but, which, owing to a puri-
tanical ancestry and upbringing, I was never able to satisfy." (2) Later when he began to revere the French masters he states, "I clearly remember that the purpose uppermost in my mind was to imitate what I may call the physical characteristics of the French novels. There were to be no poetical quotations in my novels, no titles to the chapters; the narrative was to be di-
vided irregularly into sections by Roman numerals only... My novel was to be a mosaic consisting exclusively of Flaubert's mot justes... composed into the famous ecriture artiste of the de Goncourts... I had sworn solemnly that I would keep the novel

(1) Frank Swinnerton -- Preface of "Arnold Bennett's Letters To His Nephew"
(2) Arnold Bennett -- "The Truth About An Author"
form unsullied for the pure exercise of the artist in me. What became of this high compact? I merely ignored it... It was forgotten the instant I saw a chance of earning the money of shame."

(1)

In keeping with Bennett's policy of "earning the money of shame" he wrote voluminously on many subjects. So frequent and varied were these writings that many critics spoke unfavorably of their author. An article on Bennett in the April 18, 1931 issue of the Literary Digest has as its title: "Not An Author But A Writing Man". This title briefly states that Bennett's journalistic traits seem to overwhelm his more creative bent. He was a prodigious worker and some of his work was plainly of the "pot-boiling" variety. Of this, however, Bennett was never ashamed and his ability to turn from such "pot-boilers" to a work like "Riceyman Steps" is still the cause of much amazement among writers and critics.

In all of his work, whether of a serious or of a farcical nature, we may note attention to detail which has rarely been equalled. An illustration of this concern over detail may be seen in the anecdote about Bennett which told of his elaborate preparations for the taking of a passport photograph. He summoned a good photographer to his house and gave a careful sitting. "It was characteristic of Mr. Bennett. Of an exact mind and ever careful of his personal appearance, he was running no risk of a freakish metamorphosis." (2)

(1) Arnold Bennett - - "The Truth About An Author"
(2) Literary Digest - - April 18, 1931
William Dean Howells speaking from the "Editor's Easy Chair" of Harper's Magazine has hailed Arnold Bennett as a man of the first rank. On the controversial subject of the mass of details found in Bennett, Mr. Howells states, "The mass of Mr. Bennett is wrought over with close detail, which detracts nothing from its largeness... We would not spare the least of his details, and as we have suggested, his mass is a mass of details, not only superficially, but integrally.

"If it shall be demanded how, since he is a mass of details, his work can also be epical, we will say that the central motive of his fiction, that is, his good fiction - is the collective life of those Five Towns, and that his fiction revolves around this, falling back into it by force as of gravitation, when it seems finally thrown off from it. It is epical, not with the epicality of the Odyssey, but of the Iliad, and its hero is a population of Achain homogeneity, yet it is not Homeric so much as it is Tolstoyan, and its form, its symmetry, its beauty is spiritual rather than plastic." (1)

My personal reaction to Mr. Howells' comment is to attribute his enthusiasm to an ebullient imagination which has caused its possessor to utter a judgment marked more by exuberance than by impartial criticism.

"Arnold Bennett had the first necessity for a novelist in his insatiable appetite for life. He loved every phenomenon which the world presented to him and grudged no expense

(1) Wm. Dean Howells Editor's Easy Chair -- Harper's Magazine
of time and energy in studying it." (1) The phenomena which the world was presenting to him at the moment when he began writing were those which composed life in the Five Towns; the amalgam of always patient and occasionally heroic and occasionally contemptibly supine endurance of routine and tedium, of staunchness and obstinacy, of preference for the uncolored stuff which lasts longer than the colored stuff which wears into holes - characteristic of English provincial life.

The writings of Bennett stand for a purer liberation than do those of Wells and Galsworthy. Bennett felt that a novel need not depict nice people; it need not inculcate an established system of morality, it need not be loyal to any standard of delicacy, but it must celebrate or portray life. He piled up sober studies of provincial existence until the world took notice and saw that a barrier had been built up between it and the floods of romanticism that had threatened to wash it away.

Bennett at first sought to attract the world's attention by writing "thrillers" "as glossily efficient and abounding in gadgets as a modern bathroom." (2) Miss West claims that he invented the modern type of detective story that is half an adventure story although it is this writer's belief that other writers were developing that type of story at the same time. Perhaps even there may have been predecessors of

(1) Rebecca West - - "Arnold Bennett Himself"
(2) Rebecca West - - "Arnold Bennett Himself"
Bennett and of his contemporaries. In keeping with his characteristic desire to have everything, Bennett in his detective novels not only showed us the crime being committed but also portrays the rapture of the flight as well as that of the chase. "The Grand Babylon Hotel" is an excellent example of this trait.

In the writing of "The Old Wives' Tale," Bennett used his power of empathy to enter into each of his characters in turn, to imagine how each of them would have reacted to all of their experiences. He analyzed each moment that was thus presented to him until he squeezed the last drop of significance from it; he synthesized the results of his analysis with his dogged determination to get the right relationship between his thought and the reader's attention so that once read, it is retained.

Very seldom, however, does Bennett show his characters as searching their own soul. He shows what is more profoundly true than any amount of introspection - that the middle class are incapable of searching their own souls; that Five Townsmen (like most Englishmen) act upon a balance of considerations, but seldom think the considerations out. "Impulse and inhibition are forever struggling on the surface. Action is character and character, in people like these, (the Five Townsmen) is only the habitual inveterate surface of an imperfectly exercised mind." (1)

(1) F. J. Harvey Darton -- "Arnold Bennett"
Writers of The Day Series
Coupled with Arnold Bennett's appetite for life was his optimism. Lucy L. Hazard in an article on Bennett says: "The optimism of Arnold Bennett is born of imagination... and the distinguishing feature of Bennett's imagination is his power to see miracles." (1) It is Bennett's power of seeing romantic miracles in the trivial and in the commonplace which differentiates him from such a realist as Chekhov. Both men build up detail upon detail with artistic fidelity. Chekhov, however, leaves us with an impression of gray emptiness—a sense of the flatness of life while Bennett stirs up in us wonder and excitement at the fresh realization of the "interestingness of existence." (2) The writer's opinion concerning Bennett's optimism would coincide with that held by Miss Hazard if she were a little more reserved in her view. Not all of us are stirred to the realization of the "interestingness of existence" and many may feel a vein of pessimism running throughout his work. Each view is too extreme since each reader's individual interpretation of the lives of the characters will determine his judgment concerning the optimism or pessimism in Bennett. Since Bennett speaks not about but through his characters, in order to analyze the unquenchable love of life in Hilda, Edwin, Rachel and the others. Life is intensely interesting and worth living in spite of all its disappointment and miseries. Why?

Miss Hazard ventures these suggestions: "Bennett's

(1) Lucy L. Hazard — "Arnold Bennett: Optimist"
(2) Lucy L. Hazard — "Arnold Bennett: Optimist"
characters have what he calls 'the most precious of all faculties... the power to feel intensely.' They savor life with a terrific zest. They are interested by its feverish perfume, spellbound by its formidable magic. They live in a sensuous ecstasy." (1)

Not only the commonplace, but the painful can arouse sensations which keep men and women gloriously alive, vibrant to the mysterious romance of life. It is the keen interest in their own lives which give to the characters of Bennett's novels the sense of moving in a drama.

Bennett's optimism, then, his formula for making poetry out of fact, consists, not in the glossing over the realities of life, coarse, disgusting, and saddening though they may be, but in finding in them an absorbing significant interest.

F. J. Harvey Darton has indicated three elements in Bennett's character as an artist. He considers Bennett to be a Five Townsman - "keen, interested, exceedingly shrewd, very practical and efficient, limited in certain directions, rather coarse-fibred in others." (2) He also considers him to be a trained manipulator of words and to be highly-strung which means that in spite of a most efficient self-control Bennett is "always expressing some aspect of his experience, opening some tiny window of his soul, speaking out some whisper of personality."

(1) Lucy L. Hazard - "Arnold Bennett: Optimist"
(2) F. J. Harvey Darton - "Arnold Bennett"
Mr. Darton feels that the fantasias written by Bennett were all written for pleasure and for profit. Each contains ideas but they are not great ideas. They deal with a characteristic phenomenon of material civilization, raised to its highest power. In spite of the novelty of conception and their agile modernity, the fantasias have all the defect of execution. "The denouement in sensational fiction should be delayed as long as possible. Arnold Bennett postpones his revelations deftly but he invariably overcrowds his plot and so untangles the unfolding. The striking initial incident in each case appears to be the summit of his inspiration. He lavishes great care upon it, and then does not appear to trouble so much about what follows, so long as he can pile up sensations rapidly." (1)

A more charitable view of Bennett as the Five Towns novelist is held by Mr. Darton. He pays tribute to Bennett's sustained effort of imagination which produced the apparently endless succession of small prosaic things which of themselves induce no imagination and therefore are all the more difficult to portray. Mr. Darton considers the union of impersonal strength and personal bravado in Arnold Bennett as his most characteristic trait. He feels that Bennett did not appreciate the fact that religion is the framework of some sort of philosophy of existence in those who hold it, or if he did, he does not deal with it in his novels. (Mr. Darton's opinion on this point coincides with that of Mr. Weygandt which is given in

(1) F. J. Harvey Darton — "Arnold Bennett"
The society which Arnold Bennett describes (in his Five Towns novels) and his point of view in describing it is middle class. This society belongs to a marked epoch of industrial evolution. Bennett was among the first to have introduced this society and this epoch in English fiction. No one, however, preceded Bennett in the portrayal of the middle class manufacturer in his own voice.

Arnold Bennett so profoundly mastered his art that he was able to present the Five Towns as a "passionless panorama of life." He is so efficient, however, that he economises details. He is so skilled that he may not always realize the unevenness of labor easily accomplished. He has an unfortunate mediocrity of style in keeping with his own definition of that almost indefinable thing. (See Literary Taste, Chap. VI.)

Mr. Darton states that Bennett's style varied directly as did his matter. "He really does write bad English now and then, when the matter is not necessarily bad. There is no beauty in his English, no majesty: yet there is beauty and majesty in some of the thoughts he suggests -- thoughts which will exist, for every reader, in other words than those he uses." (1)

The explanation of Arnold Bennett's "bad English" as described by Mr. Darton may be found in Bennett's fidelity to immediate impressions. "immediacy is what he wants and what

(1) F. J. Harvey Darton -- "Arnold Bennett"
he gets." (1) Since it is neither in words chosen because of their beauty nor in words which compose into beauty when they are put together that his impressions come to him, an effect of beauty in his reporting words would perhaps seem in his eyes like an infidelity to the things reported. A like explanation may serve of the lack of rhythm in his prose because "rhythm is often the outcome of contest and collusion between what the eye sees and what the heart remembers at the very moment of seeing." (2)

So marked is Bennett's gift for immediacy that the things he noticed years ago, before he knew he was an observer, read like things observed the day before yesterday. This gift is united with that other extraordinary faculty of Arnold Bennett -- seen at its best in "The Old Wives' Tale" -- for representing the flowing of time. Even among great novelists few have Arnold Bennett's touch for making what he has brought to the surface look as if he had found it there.

H. G. Wells does not agree with Mr. Darton's criticism of Arnold Bennett's "mediocrity of style." This is evidenced by his comment that Bennett's pride was in craftsmanship rather than in artistic expression, "mystically intensified and passionately pursued after the manner of Conrad. He was ready to turn to anything, provided it could be done well." (3)

This reader's reaction to the criticisms of both Mr. Darton and Mr. Wells is that their comments on Bennett's style

(1) The New Republic "Books and Things" Jan. 12, 1921
(2) The New Republic "Books and Things" Jan. 12, 1921
(3) H. G. Wells -- Experiment in Autobiography
are too all-embracing. There is unquestionably a mediocre style found in some of the lesser works of Bennett but in his great works he had combined the quality of excellent craftsmanship with that of superior artistic expression.

Bennett's great work possesses gravity. One would almost think that men are born old in Bursley, so little sense of wonder and ecstasy do they show. There is but one hint of rapture in all the Five Towns novels -- that recurrent mention of the garden of the Orgreaves in "Clayhanger." And yet there is the converse of that gravity to be weighed. When one has considered all the pettiness and coarseness and gloom of the Five Towns, there still remains something deeper, some quality not described, not mentioned, which makes Arnold Bennett's characters human. Perhaps it is this "something deeper" which Miss Hazard has called optimism. Other writers would attribute this quality to some other reason. Mr. Darton feels that it is the spirit of freedom in them. "They value their independence. They have one and all a robust and confident bravery. Yet they would all laugh at the idea of upholding or proclaiming the Rights of Man. They do not know that they themselves are the embodiment of them. All their pride, their bustling life, their concentrated narrow force, their ambitions, and their courage, are sprung of a growth into that wider, nobler liberty towards which the army of mankind's might is forever toiling." (1)

(1) F. J. Harvey Darton -- "Arnold Bennett" Writers of the Day Series
Mr. St. John Ervine has stated that Arnold Bennett was a romantic realist with a slight tendency towards sentimentality. "His romantic realism seems to plunge desperately into sentimentality when he contemplates very old age and death." (1) Bennett seldom, if ever, permits his very old people to die placidly. Their disappointments press upon them, if they are not prevented from remembering them by senility or gross disease. Paralysis claims many of them. Age does not beautify them nor bring peace to them, nor do they face their end with undiminished heads. Arnold Bennett is remarkably consistent in this view of old age and death, and perhaps it is natural that he should regard it so gloomily when one remembers how completely he is enthralled by youth.

"Bennett is of the frankest of men and of the most arrogant." (2) Thus does Cornelius Weygandt begin his treatise of that author and supports his contention with the following: "The frankness appears in all his writing, that which he would have creative and that which is critical. The arrogance appears chiefly in his critical writing; it would be out of place in the stories that are intended as art, and Bennett is resolute in suppressing himself when his art demands that suppression...

Bennett is not one of the originators; he is derivative, with a theory of selection of material derived from George Gissing, and a theory of attitude derived from George Moore and the

(1) St. John Ervine - "Some Impressions of My Elders"
(2) Cornelius Weygandt - "A Century of The English Novel"
French masters of George Moore, and a style derived from George Moore himself." (1)

Paul Elmer More has stated that the interests of Gissing and Bennett were quite similar in many respects. Both felt that fiction ought to "dig deeper" into the substratum of life; Gissing, in his earlier years, expressed his opinion that "Art, nowadays, must be the mouthpiece of misery, for misery is the keynote of modern life," but in his more happy later years, he coincided with Bennett's view that art was an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest for life. The closest similarity between the two men may be noted in their allusions to the power of the human will -- "the vast dumb tumultuous will to live that struggles into consciousness through all the horrors and madnesses" -- Gissing himself words it. The greatest creative work of each concerns itself with the subject with which each was most familiar. Gissing used the life of the poor for his greatest work while Bennett's best work deals with the Five Towns region. This "best work" of each has similar qualities; a sincerity of purpose, a shrewdness of observation, a depth of sympathy and command of form, and, in Gissing, "a sadness and pessimism of outlook" (2) which is not found in Bennett.

Support for Mr. Weygandt's contention that Bennett has derived his "theory of attitude" from George Moore and the French masters of George Moore may be found in William

(1) Cornelius Weygandt - - "A Century of The English Novel"
(2) Edwin Bjorkman - - "Voices of Tomorrow" (pp. 224-40)
Rothenstein's comment that Moore, like Bennett, made no pretense of dignity, and possessed no reticence but a "Rousseau-like candor" (1) towards art. Both were interested in art and were very critical of artists and of artistic efforts. In Rothenstein's book of sketches, "Twenty-Four Portraits", the comment on Moore by Gilbert Keith Chesterton is, "Moore was handicapped as an artist by the habit of journalism -- the very opulence of his spontaneity." I have indicated throughout this work how most critics are in accordance concerning this particular failing in Bennett.

Stuart P. Sherman lends additional strength to Weygandt's premise that Bennett's theory of attitude and style is derived from Moore. Mr. Sherman's belief is that Moore occupies a position in English Literature which closely corresponds to that occupied by Flaubert in French Literature. In Moore's "Esther Waters," that novelist has merely discovered what his French predecessors -- Balzac, de Maupassant, and Flaubert -- knew: that the intimate life history of a scullery maid can be made to yield artistic satisfaction equivalent to that formerly yielded by the perfumed lady of romance. Flaubert's "Un Coeur Simple" is obviously related to "Esther Waters.

Bennett, reading Moore and the French authors, is struck with the poignancy of life in the lower and middle classes and decided that his work must be equally "realistic."

(1) William Rothenstein -- "Men and Memoirs" (p. 240)
Can we not point out the similarities in the circumstances leading to the running away from home of Kate Ede in Moore's "The Mummer's Wife" and Sophia Baines in "The Old Wives' Tale?" The dissimilarity in the lives of the two is chiefly seen in their individual reactions to the new Bohemian influences with which they came in contact. Kate Ede, reflecting the aesthetic naturalism of Moore, begins to tipple and to disintegrate; Sophia, true to the Five Towns morality, really leads a life of asceticism. A closer analogy of the creators of these two characters may be drawn by noting how each has his characters display with indomitable spirit the "will-to-live" which carries them through their crises.

The "Realism" or "Naturalism" adhered to by Bennett in his serious work was a method of representation without idealization which late 19th century French writers raised to a system and which claims a monopoly of truth in its artistic treatment of the facts of nature and life. Although realism is usually identified with a group of 19th century writers which includes Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Huysmans, Zola, the Goncourts, and others, the method may be traced back through the ages. This I merely mention since my concern is only with those realists who directly influenced Bennett.

In accordance with the belief of most critics, Mr. Weygandt repeats that to Bennett "the most precious of all faculties" is the "power to feel intensely." "And Yet," pursues Mr. Weygandt, "human as (Bennett) is, the emotions revealed in
his books are but a part of the many emotions man is heir to.

Sex, of course, is the source of most of the emotions he is concerned with, (although not to the extent found in D. H. Lawrence, for example) and the desire for gain provocative of most of the rest. He considers, too, those that arise from the restlessness of youth, the thirst for adventure, the itch for notoriety, the lust of power. There is little concern with the emotions arising from nature or religion, and, despite his interest in painting and music and literature, hardly more with the joys of art." (1)

It may be the lack of interest in the Five Towns explains the little account of them, outside of "Sacred and Profane Love," the "Clayhanger" trilogy, and some moments of "The Old Wives' Tale," but in religion, certainly, there has been a deep interest throughout all the years which Bennett covers in his novels.

Dorothea Rice Hughes has felt that Bennett is somewhat concerned with religion and has made a rather exhaustive study of Bennett's treatment of that subject. Her conclusions are that Bennett gives Wesleyan Methodism a prominent place in his picture of a democratic community; that he perceived Wesleyan Methodism as a force that is able to restrain men and women; that; in the minds of the people who profess Methodism, there is fear of a judgment here and now on the sin and frailties of men; and lastly, that Bennett hates Wesleyan Methodism.

The general theme of Mr. Bennett's masterpieces, determined by the central interest of his philosophy, is the

(1) William Rothenstein — "Men and Memoirs"
development of character in relation to a society which is also developing. He has no foolishly simple mechanical formula for the process. He has rather a sense that this relationship involves an interplay of forces of fascinating and inexplicable complexity.

"His sense of the marvelous intricacy of (his) theme explains his elaborate presentation of the community life in which his principal figures have their being. He is bent upon bringing before the eye of the reader every scrap of evidence that may be conceived of as relevant to the 'case'. The reader who believes that character is determined mainly by inherited physiological traits finds in the Five Towns novels a physiological account of three successive generations. The reader who holds that education is the significant factor is abundantly supplied with the educational factors of father and children and grand-children. The reader who lays stress upon a changing environment and the pressure of the hour sees how from decade to decade and from year to year, the hero or heroine is housed and clothed and fed and occupied and amused; and wrought upon by parents and children and relatives and friends and servants and strangers; and subjected to the influence of social customs and business and politics and religion and art and books and newspapers transmitting to the thick local atmosphere the pressure of the world outside. The reader who looks for the main currents of the nineteenth century in the Five Towns discovers the Clayhanger family and their neighbors developing in relation to the democratic movement, the industrial revolution,
the decay of dogmatic theology, the extension of scientific thought and invention, the organization of labor, and the diffusion of aesthetic consciousness." (1) One's impression before this spectacle is of admiration at the unrelenting artistic energy which keeps this presented community life whole and steady and yet perceptibly in motion, at the force of composition which keeps the principal figures from being immersed in the life of the community. "The secret of this 'somehow' is that Mr. Bennett implicitly recognizes as an artist what he explicitly declares as a popular philosopher, namely, the existence in the individual of something deeper than the body, deeper than the mind - an ultimately responsible, independent, spiritual self with the power to control, in some measure, its circumstances." (2)

A. G. Gardiner feels that our interest in Bennett is caused by that author's amazing interest in his subjects. "He recites the contents of a drapery shop with such enthusiasm that the picture becomes a vivid personal experience of our own." (3) He does not achieve this miracle as Dickens achieved it, by personifying inanimate things, by making them fantastically alive; he achieves it by the medium of his own unfailing interest in his theme, whatever it happens to be, and by the incomparable simplicity and directness of the relation.

"It is the ordinary things of life that he makes so extraordinary. It is the commonplaces of life, and the common-

(1) Stuart P. Sherman - - "On Contemporary Literature"
(2) Stuart P. Sherman - - "On Contemporary Literature"
(3) A. G. Gardiner - - "Portraits and Portents"
place men and women that journey through life, that he translates in the alembic of his imagination. The people are often unpleasant people whom you would loathe to meet in life. 'You feel as if they were your relatives and you disliked them,' as "Punch" observed of the "Clayhanger" family. Mr. Bennett neither likes them nor dislikes them. He is profoundly interested in them, as Fabre is interested in wasps and spiders, and he fills us with the contagion of his curiosity." (1)

Arnold Bennett has none of the feverish unrest and discontent of H. G. Wells or of George Bernard Shaw. He is neither a teacher nor a missionary nor a philosopher, but an artist recording the pageant of life as it passes before him. The functions of literature, in his view, is to interpret life as it is, not as it ought to be, and its highest achievement is the enlargement of our visions of reality. If he has a "message" at all, it is the modest one expressed in his remark that, "What I am always wanting to make people see is that the world is a jolly fine place."

Speaking of Bennett's productivity, G. W. Harris has said: "Large and rapid productivity does impose its penalties, and readers whose supreme delight is in distinction of style and a fastidious choice of words should be forewarned that such graces of artistry are hardly to be met with even in the best of this man's books." (2) Bennett himself felt that his writing was of a careful nature, however. He has spoken of the exalta-

(1) A. G. Gardiner -- "Portraits and Portents"
(2) G. W. Harris -- "Arnold Bennett: A New Master In English Fiction"
tion of the aesthetic aspect of literature which often led to a
play of words apart from subject matter as if style were not in-
herent in the material with which a great master moulds his art.
Reading in French fiction incessantly, Bennett served his appren-
ticeship under Flaubert and de Maupassant. "I wrote," he says
of that period, "with a nice regard for English; I would lavish
a night on a few paragraphs; and years of this penal servitude
left me with a dexterity in the handling of sentences that still
surprises the possessor of it." (1)

Bennett was in reaction against the old narrow con-
ception of the novel. He seems to say: Let us see if we cannot
bring fiction into the very business of life. So he casts aside
the conventional framework of the novelist's art - its logic,
nemesis, and so-called "significant incidents" of "crucial mo-
ments" all of which are artifical devices for making life much
more simple than it really is. "After all, as Hazlitt had re-
marked, our conduct is governed by the common occurrences of
everyday, which, though they once appeared trivial, assume sig-
nificance in the long perspective of later years." (2) Bennett's
characters are placed in this long perspective. His masses of
facts, statistics, and particulars, quite apart from the ques-
tion of their relevancy in specific instances, are impressive
when thus viewed as a whole. He accomplished his purpose, which
was to throw over fiction the illusion of life as lived by or-
dinary men and women.

(1) Wilbur Cross - - "Four Contemporary Novelists"
(2) Wilbur Cross - - "Four Contemporary Novelists"
Mr. Hackett has expressed his opinion that Arnold Bennett "is working out a new theory of fiction: that the life of the community should in these democratic days take the place of life of one individual, which was the theme of the epic and older novel... The history of dull and endless days, in a country town and an uncongenial business, is told with an art not often equalled. No one can better depict outer monotony and inner drama than Arnold Bennett. He had grasped the secret that the life of each one is a momentous and moving spectacle to the soul that watches from within. A man's experience is his stained-glass window, dull to the passer-by, but full of meaning and color to the eyes that catch the transmitted light."

(1) Here Mr. Bennett is strongest. He reminds the reader sometimes of Galsworthy, more often of Gissing, but neither of them has his uncanny gift of creeping inside the minds of his characters, and seeing outside events through their luminous egoism. Certain critics do feel that Gissing had this power of placing himself "within the individual." Paul Elmer More in the "Shelburne Essays" states after a more lengthy support of this contention, that "Gissing would, in a word, write from the inside."

(2) Undoubtedly Bennett did, at least to superficial eyes, adhere to Gissing's exhortation to "put money in thy purse."

Too, Bennett felt with Gissing that "to lack current coin is

(1) Francis Hackett - - Recent Fiction and The Critics
(2) Paul Elmer More - - "Shelburne Essays"
to lack the privileges of humanity and (that) indigence is the death of the soul." Bennett did strive for material wealth and position but the dearth of references to his predecessor in his Journals and other writings leads one to believe, with Mr. Weygandt, that Bennett's chief indebtedness to Gissing is for the theory of selection which he emulated.

Coningsby W. Dawson has called Arnold Bennett "The British Balzac" for the reason that Bennett discovered, as did Balzac, that there is no cleavage between life and romance but that, properly speaking, life is romance. I have already mentioned how this same point of view was held by Flaubert and de Maupassant and was later acquired by George Moore; however, the comparison to Balzac is capable of being maintained.

Each man chose a definite stage for his novels. Balzac undertook to people Paris with fictional characters; Arnold Bennett did the same for the "Five Towns." Balzac, in his breadth of sympathy, took in life in all its phases, comedy and tragedy. He was not concerned with conventions or prejudices; it was the panorama of living men that he set out to paint. The same vital interest in the mere fact of existence is the source of enthusiasm for Arnold Bennett. He accepts men and women as they are, without idealization, builds up about them a certain train of circumstance and traces their emotional development under external pressure. As with Balzac, for him life is comedy, even when it is tragic. His attitude toward the world which he creates is non-committal and un-impassioned.
But the true greatness of his work rests on the same plane as that of the French master with whom he has been compared -- its universality. The problems he describes and the types he portrays are so true to human nature that they are not limited to the nineteenth century of "The Five Towns." They are to be found everywhere and in all ages. "He has the 'time-spirit' in the best of his work, which will withstand the rust of time."

What does contemporary literature -- to say nothing of enduring literature, in prospect -- owe to the work of Arnold Bennett? It is plain, that he adapted to the naturalism trend that new and invaluable instrumentality perfected by Henry James, the subjective method, the knack of enabling us to know people as they seem to themselves, the triumph of discovering in the commonplace the externally wonderful. As a person, we owe in part to his example and encouragement the best work of Hugh Walpole and Frank Swinnerton. As a social historian we are in his debt for many genre pictures of more than one class of society and type of character. Perhaps some may hold the opinion that mankind in general is indebted to him most largely for his contribution to what may only be called economics, since it highly concerns the modes of life and the practice of living; and here, of course, is meant his effort to tell men about women, very important, and to tell women about men.

(1) Coningsby W. Dawson -- "Arnold Bennett: The British Balzac"
Arnold Bennett's true worth will be measured by the generations to come and not by those who have watched his climb to recognition and fame. In closing this section of my thesis, I wish to quote a contemporary's view of Bennett so that posterity may compare its evaluation of that author with the opinion held by one of his generation:

"A MAN FROM THE NORTH"

Here lies a man, from common clay descended, Who took the common people of the clay And from their lives of grime and greatness blended Created Life that shall not pass away.

Here lies a child who penned with childish pleasure The pageantry before his eyes unfurled, The pomps and shows, the luxury and leisure, The gauds and glitter of the rich man's world;

Yet still could sing, with sympathy unblunted, With understanding welded doubly sure, The saga of the straitened and the stunted, The patience and the pathos of the poor.

Here lies a sage who saw in things material The outward workings of some cosmic plan -- Each day a chapter in some breathless serial Written by Fate for the delight of Man.

Here lies a jester with a sense of duty, A master-craftsman in his craft engrossed, A steadfast friend, a worshipper of beauty, A kindly critic and a perfect host.

Here lies, in fine, a connoisseur of living For whom adventure lurked in every breath; Shall not his soul go forth without misgiving To greet the Great Adventure which is Death?

(From "Punch" 31st May, 1931)
III
Results of Biographical Elements on His Novels

A. Introduction

It is inevitable that a man whose literary idols were Flaubert, de Maupassant, Balzac, Turgenev, and the de Goncourts and who was directly influenced by his English predecessors, George Gissing and George Moore, should emulate the literary characteristics of these authors. Thus it is not surprising to us that in Arnold Bennett's serious work we find an attempt to capture the "mots justes" of Flaubert, the insatiable appetite for life and power of observation with attention to details for which Balzac and de Maupassant were justly famed; the occasional lapses into journalism derived from the de Goncourts; the sustained effort of imagination which enabled Bennett to realistically and interestingly portray the prosaic happenings in life, and the highly developed power of empathy derived from these English and French authors which is revealed throughout his Five Towns novels by the picture of life from the viewpoint of his protagonists.

Equally predominant in the Five Towns novels are those characteristics which resulted directly from Bennett's own life and experiences. Arnold Bennett was shrewd, efficient, and practical; his main characters possess these traits. He knew English provincial life and it is doubtful whether his portrayal
of this could be improved upon. As Editor of "Woman" he acquired a deep knowledge of women which is shown in all his feminine characters; his desire for wealth, fame, and position engendered perhaps by his early life and fed by his first small successes has its counterpart in the determination to succeed found in his heroes and heroines.

The Five Towns morality which insists upon order and tidiness, upon leaving nothing to chance; which is marked by the knowledge of the gravity of life and by the inability of the middle class to search its own soul while most of its acts are determined by impulse or inhibition; its will-power, its determination, its stick-to-it-iveness - all these traits are found in Arnold Bennett himself because he was a Five Townsman and they are found in his best-remembered characters because they, too, are Five Townsmen. We now turn to the study of the Five Towns novels to note how they were affected by Arnold Bennett's personal and literary experiences.

B. Old Wives' Tale

Dr. Robertson Nicoll writing of the "Old Wives' Tale" a few years after it was published said: "The Old Wives' Tale is of the first magnitude. The story is a masterpiece and it lacks only a touch of poetry to put it in the very front rank... Few books in English mirror back so truly and with such a fine sense of proportion the relative amounts of joy and sorrow that enter into the average human life -- the unconscious selfishness of youth, the rash haste to reach forward and grasp opportunities,
the relentless encroachment of disease, the loneliness of old age, the inevitability of death..." (1)

Dr. Nicoll thus briefly states that Arnold Bennett accomplished in this novel what he had sought to do: to portray "what Life is" through the long, detailed, slow, leisurely narrative depicting life in all its manifold phases -- significant of the rise of Realism, of the increasing belief that in these democratic times, the life of the whole community rather than the life of a single individual, is the novelist's best theme. "The Old Wives' Tale" reflects all the breadth and the narrowness, all the strength, the impotence of the English middle class; of England, perhaps.

The portrayal of an apparently endless succession of small prosaic things is one of the most obvious determinants of the success of this work. This requires a sustained effort of imagination which is all the more remarkable because there is no imagination visible in the plain tale. We are given all the details which lend the illusion of life to the scene portrayed before us. In the shop of John Baines, for example, we learn how the counters are arranged, where different articles are sold, how clothes are folded and unfolded and measured for customers, in what corners the clerks sit when there is nothing to do, where the main entrance is, how it is cluttered up with goods, how the windows are dressed and who shows the most skill in dressing them, and so on to the words on the huge sign extending...

(1) Frederic T. Cooper -- "Some English Story Tellers"
along the front. "There must be a full description of the houses people live in, including the number and disposition of the rooms, doors, and windows, the style of the furniture, what the house cost or what the rental is if the family does not own it, where the members usually sleep, sit, eat, and entertain their friends, what their amusements are, and what the lonesome wife or widow may see as she looks over St. Luke's Square." (1)

This attention to detail is found throughout the book. The reader's imagination remains inactive in the face of Bennett's description of John Baines' house:

It was a composite building of three storeys, in blackish-crimson brick, with a projecting shop-front and, above and behind that, two rows of little windows. On the sash of each window was a red cloth roll stuffed with sawdust, to prevent draughts; plain white blinds descended about six inches from the top of each window. There were no curtains to any save one; this was the window of the drawing-room, on the first floor at the corner of the Square and King Street. Another window, on the second storey, was peculiar, in that it had neither blind nor pad, and was very dirty; this was the window of an unused room that had a separate staircase to itself, the staircase being barred by a door always locked. The building had also a considerable frontage on King Street, where, behind the shop, was sheltered the parlour, with a large window and a door that led directly by two steps into the street. A strange peculiarity of the shop was that it bore no signboard. Once it had had a large signboard which a memorable gale had blown into the square. Mr. Baines had decided not to replace it... (2)

Again in viewing Constance's search for the laudanum to ease Mr. Povey's aching tooth we get an excellent picture of

(1) Wilbur J. Cross — "Four Contemporary Novelists"
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" — p. 7
the corner cupboard in the parlor of the Baines's domicile:

Constance moved a little fearfully to a corner cupboard which was hung in the angle to the right of the projecting fireplace, over a shelf on which stood a large copper tea-urn. That corner cupboard, of oak inlaid with maple and ebony in a simple border pattern, was typical of the room. It was of a piece with the deep green "flock" wall paper, and the tea-urn, and the rocking-chairs with their antimacassars, and the harmonium in rosewood with a Chinese papier-mache tea-caddy on the top of it; even with the carpet, certainly the most curious parlour carpet that ever was, being made of lengths of the stair carpet sewn together side by side. That corner cupboard was already old in service; it had held the medicines of generations. It gleamed darkly with the grave and genuine polish which comes from ancient use alone. The key which Constance chose from her bunch was like the cupboard, smooth and shining with years; it fitted and turned very easily, yet with a firm snap. The single wide door opened sedately as a portal. (1)

The description of Maria Insull defies improvement and we may feel that in this passage Bennett had done his best to capture the "mots Justes" of Flaubert whom he emulated:

Marie had gradually lost such sexual characteristics and charms as she had once possessed. She was as thin and flat as Charles Critchlow himself. It was as though her bosom had suffered from a prolonged drought at a susceptible period of development, and had never recovered. The one proof that blood ran in her veins was the pimply quality of her ruined complexion, and the pimples of that brickish expanse proved that the blood was thin and bad. Her hands and feet were large and ungainly; the skin of the fingers was roughened by coarse contacts to the texture of emery-paper. On six days a week she wore black; on the seventh a kind of discreet half-mourning. She was honest, capable, and industrious; and beyond the confines of her occupation she had no curiosity, no intelli-

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" — pp. 20-1
gence, no ideas. Superstitions and prejudices, deep and violent, served her for ideas; but she could incomparably sell silks and bonnets, braces and oilcloth; in widths, lengths, and prices she never erred; she never annoyed a customer, nor foolishly promised what could not be performed, nor was late nor negligent, nor disrespectful. No one knew anything about her, because there was nothing to know. Subtract the shop-mistress from her, and naught remained. Benighted and spiritually dead, she existed by habit. (1)

These passages are merely representative of a much larger number which so excellently show Bennett's power of observation and of description; they also show his concern over details and the setting forth of the innumerable prosaic happenings which influence the lives of his protagonists. Equally typical of Bennett's descriptive power is the description of Cyril's first (and last) birthday party, the funeral of John Baines, the death of Mrs. Daniel Povey, the first avowal of love between Sophia Baines and Gerald Scales in the Hatfield Hotel, the "Hotel de Vezelay" where Sophia spent a sleepless night while her husband cavorted with a courtesan, and the description of the "Pension Frensham, Rue Lord Byron, Paris." Truly Bennett had learned his lesson well from his French and English predecessors and his experience as a journalist had aided him to coordinate his mass of detail with greater facility.

Frank Swinnerton has said that Bennett possessed an insatiable appetite for life and that he was extremely sensitive to the unfolding of life's phenomena. His interests and concerns were numerous and varied and it is natural that this power

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- pp. 273-4
of intense awareness should have manifested itself in the experiences of his characters in the "Old Wives' Tale." For instance Bennett, like Mrs. Baines, cannot withstand the seduction of the elephant whose sudden attempt to maim a spectator netted him the death penalty. He has his readers stream across St. Luke's Square to ask Mr. Critchlow for "some alum" with which to preserve the tiny piece of elephant which they intend to surreptitiously remove from the huge carcass. The few of us who remain with Sophia who had so miscalculated the importance of the elephant are spectators to this throbbing of life which exerts so strong an appeal.

The phenomenon of Samuel Povey's imposing himself on Mrs. Baines while she is secretly reproaching him for his inability to do so is unfolded before us and she, with characteristic Five Towns obtuseness, is unaware of the imposition. This same lack of imagination in Samuel Povey and Constance led to the disastrous ending of Cyril's birthday party which Bennett so completely describes. Equally complete and lifelike (though Bennett himself confessed that he had never seen a public execution) is his description of the guillotining of the French murderer:

From the little street at the rear of the guillotine appeared a priest, walking backwards, and holding a crucifix high in his right hand, and behind him came the handsome hero, his body all crossed with cords, between two warders, who pressed against him and supported him on either side. He was certainly very young. He lifted his chin gallantly, but his face was incredibly white.
Sophia discerned that the priest was trying to hide the sight of the guillotine from the prisoner with his body, just as in the story which she had heard at dinner.

Except the voice of the priest, indistinctly rising and falling in the prayer for the dying, there was no sound in the square or its environs. The windows were now occupied by groups turned to stone with distended eyes fixed on the little procession. Sophia had a tightening of the throat, and the hand trembled by which she held the curtain. The central figure did not seem to her to be alive; but rather a doll, a marionette wound up to imitate the action of a tragedy. She saw the priest offer the crucifix to the mouth of the marionette, which with a clumsy unhuman shoving of its corded shoulders butted the thing away. And as the procession turned and stopped she could plainly see that the marionette's nape and shoulders were bare, his shirt having been slit. It was horrible...

The distant bell boomed once. Then a monosyllabic voice sounded, sharp, low, nervous; she recognized the voice of the executioner, whose name she had heard but could not remember. There was a clicking noise...

After her illness, Sophia is pictured in a more cheerful mood than that with which she watched the execution. In the description of her ride to the Champs Elysees in the fiacre with Chirac we find Bennett's own awareness of the "heady savour of life:"

The fresh breeze and bright sunshine and the large freedom of the streets quickly intoxicated Sophia -- intoxicated her, that is to say, in quite a physical sense. She was almost drunk, with the heady savour of life itself. She saw the flat as a horrible, vile prison, and blamed herself for not leaving it sooner and oftener. The air was medicine, for body and mind too. Her perspective was instantly corrected. She was happy, living neither in the past nor in the future, but in and for that hour. And beneath her happiness moved a wistful melancholy for the Sophia

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- pp. 338-9
who had suffered such a captivity and such woes. She yearned for more and yet more delight, for careless orgies of passionate pleasure in the midst of which she would forget all trouble... (1)

Dick Povey, too, looks at life with a zest equal to Bennett's. He created a sensation with his boneshaker and as he grew older he amazed the ageing Constance with his enthusiasm. On the occasion of Maria Critchlow's attempted suicide he exclaims, "By Jove! I'd better go and see if I can help, hadn't I?... Strange isn't it, how I manage to come in for things? Sheer chance that I was here today! But it's always like that! Somehow something extraordinary is always happening where I am." (2) This, too, ministered to his satisfaction and to his zest for life.

Bennett's characters possess the power to feel intensely. Sophia is deeply shaken in her rendezvous with Gerald Scales when that worthy sprang to the top of the old pit shaft wall. Her reaction is expressed by Bennett in this way:

Sophia shrieked loudly. She saw Gerald at the distant bottom of the shaft, mangled, drowning. The ground seemed to quake under her feet. A horrible sickness seized her. And she shrieked again. Never had she guessed that existence could be such pain... (3)

The feelings which overwhelm Constance in the last stages of pregnancy are presented with a startling vividness after the episode of Cyril's birthday party when he had hidden

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 392
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 594
(3) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 121
in the coal cellar and for this was punished by Mr. Povey, Con­
stance is again deeply moved. As Bennett says:

Constance could not sleep. As she lay darkly awake by her husband, her secret being seemed to be a-quiver with emotion. Not exactly sorrow; but not exactly joy; an emotion more ele­
mental than these! A sensation of the inten­sity of her life in that hour; troubling, anxious, yet not sad! She said that Samuel was quite right, quite right. And then she said that the poor little thing wasn't yet five years old, and that it was monstrous.
The two had to be reconciled. And they never could be reconciled. Always she would be between them, to reconcile them, and to be crushed by their impact. Always she would have to bear the burden of both of them.
There could be no ease for her, no surcease from a tremendous preoccupation and responsi­bility. (1)

Other incidents in the narrative are equally revealing of the power of Bennett's characters to feel intensely. We may note Samuel Povey's reaction to the sight of the dead Mrs.
Daniel Povey; Sophia's agitation when she witnessed the French mob singing the refrain of the Marseillaise; the shock to Con­stance when Cyril's perfidious conduct was revealed; the reac­tion of all Bursley to the execution of Daniel Povey; and
Sophia's awareness of her illness in the French "maison" where the two courtesans interrupted their normal existence to immerse Sophia in cold baths every three hours.

Bennett possessed the power of empathy - the ability to place himself within the characters and to observe life from their viewpoint and of experiencing their sensations. Evidence

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" - - p. 199
of this power is found in such lines as the following which reflect Sophia's unconscious attempt to attract Gerald Scales:

She did not know what she was doing; she was nothing but the exquisite expression of a deep instinct to attract and charm. Her soul itself emanated from her in an atmosphere of allurement and acquiescence. Could those laughing lips hang in a heavy pout? Could that delicate and mild voice be harsh? Could those burning eyes be coldly inimical? Never! (1)

After the New Year's Watch Service Gerald Scales is found on the doorstep of the Baines residence. Mrs. Baines invites him in after hearing his simple declaration that he had been set upon by thugs. Sophia, sitting opposite him in the parlour was in a state of superlative happiness:

All her misery, doubts, despair, rancour, churlishness, had disappeared. She was as softly gentle as Constance. Her eyes were the eyes of a fawn, and her gestures delicious in their modest and sensitive grace. Constance was sitting on the sofa, and, after glancing about as if for shelter, she sat down on the sofa by Constance's side. She tried not to stare at Mr. Scales, but her gaze would not leave him. She was sure that he was the most perfect man in the world. A shortish man, perhaps, but a perfect. That such perfection could be was almost past her belief. He excelled all her dreams of the ideal man... There is no hyperbole in this description of Sophia's sensations, but rather an under-statement of them. She was utterly obsessed by the unique qualities of Mr. Scales. Nothing would have persuaded her that the power of Mr. Scales existed among men or could possibly exist. (2)

Arnold Bennett enters into the role of Samuel Povey as that clerk watches the exchange of pleasantries between

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 76
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 100
Constance and Mr. Scales and shows us the insane jealousy awakened in Mr. Povey by these trivialities; later, in the role of Sophia, Bennett reveals her feelings as she walks to her tryst with Gerald Scales; Bennett even attempts to describe the phenomena of life as it appears to the mind of Cyril while still a baby. Cyril is rolling about on the hearthrug, which had been covered with a large soft woolen shawl:

Cyril had no cares, no responsibilities. The shawl was so vast that he could not clearly distinguish objects beyond its confines. On it lay an india-rubber ball, an india-rubber doll, a rattle, and fan. He vaguely recollected all four items, with their respective properties. The fire also was an old friend... He had occasionally tried to touch it, but a high bright fence always came in between. For ten months he had never spent a day without making experiments on this shifting universe in which he alone remained firm and stationary. The experiments were chiefly conducted out of idle amusement, but he was serious on the subject of food. Lately the behaviour of the universe in regard to his food had somewhat perplexed him, had indeed annoyed him. However, he was of a forgetful, happy disposition, and so long as the universe continued to fulfil its sole end as a machinery for the satisfaction, somehow, of his imperious desires, he was not inclined to remonstrate. He gazed at the flames and laughed, and laughed because he had laughed. He pushed the ball away and wriggled after it, and captured it with the assurance of practice. He tried to swallow the doll, and it was not until he had tried several times to swallow it that he remembered the failure of previous efforts and philosophically desisted. He rolled with a fearful shock, arms and legs in air, against the mountainous flank of that mammoth Fan, and clutched at Fan's ear. The whole mass of Fan upheaved and vanished from his view, and was instantly forgotten by him... At last he became aware that a face was looking down at his. He recognized it, and immediately
an uncomfortable sensation in his stomach disturbed him; he tolerated it for fifty years or so, and then he gave a little cry. Life had resumed its seriousness. (1)

There are many other examples of this power in Bennett to place himself within the characters. We see Cyril's birthday party from his viewpoint; when Cyril leaves to study in London we are given Constance's view of his departure; Sophia's flat refusal to write home for money at Gerald Scales's request is shown with her reasons for her refusal; we are even permitted to gaze into Sophia's soul to find the reasons why she had encouraged Chirac and then repulsed him. Surely, this power in Bennett was one of his most pronounced traits and if the reader wished he could easily find hundreds of specific instances in which Bennett adopts the role of his characters.

Equally characteristic of Bennett was his will-power or determination. All of his important characters in the "Old Wives' Tale" possessed this stick-to-it-iveness to a large degree. Sophia shows it in her determination to be a school teacher; she shows it in her running away with Gerald Scales in spite of parental opposition and in her successful combat against all the vicissitudes which oppressed her. Cyril possessed this same determination (and the less sympathetic readers will say "wilfulness") and shows it as early as his first birthday party when he seized the cake in the hand of his neighbor. Samuel Povey shows this trait in his bullying of Mrs.

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" - - pp. 183-4
Baines in acquiring Constance's hand in marriage and again in his fight to free Daniel Povey. Constance shows it strikingly when she accuses Sophia at Buxton of trying to "run her."

Even old Critchlow is determined to have Maria Insull as his wife and succeeds in exerting his dominance over that poor creature.

Arnold Bennett's attitude towards death and towards old age borders on the somber. Mr. Baines dies of asphyxia "the upper part of his body had slipped down and his head was hanging, inverted, near the floor between the bed and the ottoman. His face, neck, and hands were dark and congested; his mouth was open, and the tongue protruded between the black, swollen, mucous lips; his eyes were prominent and coldly staring." (1) The murdered Mrs. Daniel Povey lay stretched awkwardly on a worn horse-hair sofa, "her head thrown back, her face discoloured, her eyes bulging, her mouth wet and yawning: a sight horribly offensive." (2) The sight of the dead Gerald Scales is not a pretty one:

The face on the bed was painfully, pitifully old. A withered face, with the shiny skin all drawn into wrinkles! The stretched skin under the jaw was like the skin of a plucked fowl. The cheek-bones stood up, and below them were deep hollows, almost like egg-cups. A short, scraggy white beard covered the lower part of the face. The hair was scanty, irregular, and quite white; a little white hair grew in the ears. The shut mouth obviously hid toothless gums, for the lips were sucked in. The eyelids were as if

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 78
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 225
pasted down over the eyes, fitting them like kid. All the skin was extremely pallid; it seemed brittle. The body, whose outlines were clear under the sheet, was very small, thin, shrunk, pitiable as the face... (1)

Even the attempted suicide of Maria Insull is ignominious in that she stabbed herself unsuccessfully with a pair of scissors and spewed blood in the shop.

The thought of old age has no charm for Bennett. Sophia echoes his sentiments when, in seeing Gerald Scales so wasted in death, her thoughts were morose. "Why should youth and vigor come to this?" she seems to question as she acknowledges that youth and vigor always do come to that. She saw herself as a tall, forlorn woman who had once been young and now was old: "a woman who had once exulted in abundant strength, and trodden proudly on the neck of circumstance, and now was old." (2)

When we watch Mrs. Baines leaving her home in St. Luke's Square to stay with her sister at Axe we are impressed with her departure from the scene of her struggles and her defeat "whither she had once come as slim as a wand, to return stout and heavy, and heavy-hearted to the home of her childhood." (3) Other views of old age are drawn with an equal poignancy: there is Mr. and Mrs. Critchlow; there is Constance whom Bennett describes as "the tragic muse, aged, and in black silk;" (4) there is Niepce, the amorous grocer, who

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- pp. 571-2
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 572
(3) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 141
(4) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 545
received such a cold reception from Sophia. He is said to "have a rather ridiculous, undignified appearance, common among old men before their morning toilette is achieved... His rotund paunch lifted the bedclothes, upon which for the sake of extra warmth, he had spread unmajestic garments." (1) Bennett's best description of old age and one in which he has captured again the "mots justes" of Flaubert is that of Madame Foucault - the time-worn, disfigured courtesan prostrate before the beautiful young Sophia:

When Sophia bent over Madame Foucault and touched her flabbiness the illusion of dignified beauty vanished and instead of being dramatically pathetic, the woman was ridiculous. Her face, especially as damaged by tears, could not support the ordeal of inspection; it was horrible; not a picture, but a pallette; or like the coloured design of a pavement artist after a heavy shower. Her great relaxed eyelids alone would have rendered any face absurd; and there were monstrous details far worse than the eyelids. Then she was amazingly fat; her flesh seemed to be escaping at all ends from a corset strained to the utmost limit. Above her boots - she was still wearing dainty, high-heeled, tightly laced boots - the calves bulged suddenly out.

As a woman of between forty and fifty, the obese sepulchre of a dead vulgar beauty, she had no right to passions and tears and homage, or even the means of life; she had no right to expose herself picturesquely beneath a crimson glow in all the panoply of ribboned garters and lacy seductiveness. It was silly; it was disgraceful. She ought to have known that only youth and slimness have the right to appeal to the feelings by indecent abandonments. (2)

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" - - p. 411
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" - - pp. 375-6
Such are the thoughts of Sophia as she gazed down on Madame Foucault and such are Bennett's own views towards old age.

As Editor of "Woman" Bennett had learned much about the female sex and about their clothes. A good illustration of his knowledge of women and also of his ability to place himself within his characters is that scene in which he describes the newly-wedded Constance's use for the first time of the ancestral bed-chamber. He says:

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 deaths, 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... She esteemed that she knew what life was, and that it was grim... To see 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. (1)

The fullness of Bennett's description of Sophia's new ensemble which she had just purchased in Paris would excite a modern clothes stylist to envy:

On this evening she wore the first of the new costumes. She had worn it all day. Characteristically she had chosen something which was not too special for either afternoon or evening, for either warm or cold weather. It was of pale blue taffeta striped in a darker

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 151
blue, with a corsage cut in basques, and the underskirt of a similar taffeta, but unstriped. The effect of the ornate overskirt falling on the plain underskirt with its small double volant was, she thought, and Gerald too, adorable. The waist was higher than any she had had before, and the crinoline expansive. Tied round her head with a large bow and flying blue ribbons under the chin, was a fragile flat capote like a baby's bonnet, which allowed her hair to escape in front and her great chignon behind. A large spotted veil flew out from the capote over the chignon. Her double skirts waved amply over Gerald's knees in the carriage, and she leaned back against the hard cushions and put an arrogant look onto her face, and thought of nothing but the intense throbbing joy of life, longing with painful ardour for more and more pleasure, then and for ever. (1)

Bennett's power of making ordinary things interesting is revealed throughout the "Old Wives' Tale" but it is in his description of English provincial life with its insistence upon order and tidiness and its perception of the gravity of life that the best illustrations of this power are found.

We learn how Constance after the departure of her mother to Axe had gradually gained skill and use in the management of her household and of her share of the shop, so that these machines ran smoothly and effectively and a sudden contretemps no longer frightened her. Gradually she had constructed a chart of Samuel's individuality, with the submerged rocks and perilous currents all carefully marked, so that she could now voyage unalarmed in those seas.

Both she and Samuel worked consistently hard, rising early, "pushing forward," as the phrase ran, and going to bed early from sheer fatigue;

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- pp. 307-8
week after week and month after month as season changed imperceptibly into season. In June and July it would happen to them occasionally to retire before the last silver of dusk was out of the sky. They would lie in bed and talk placidly of their daily affairs... And then, just before she went to sleep, Constance might reflect upon her destiny, as even the busiest and smoothest women do, and she would decide that it was kind. (1)

The auction at which all "that extensive and commodious messuage and shop situate and being No. 4, St. Luke's Square" (2) was set up for general bidding is an excellent study of the tactics employed by the Five Townspeople at public auctions. The reader is made to feel a personal interest in this auction and in all of the events which involve the Five Townspeople. We cannot observe the separating of the house from the store after it was sold without being impressed by the fact that such an ordinary thing should prove interesting to us. This same interest grips us as we observe the French restaurant and especially the arrangement of the table service on the occasion of Chirac's and Sophia's "holiday." Even the fact that Constance is to wear her second best mantle in her journey to meet Sophia arouses our interest and, with Constance, we remove crumpled balls of paper from the sleeve of this mantle.

Under the heading of "Surroundings" in this paper is found a detailed picture of life as it appears to the Five Townspeople. Life, to them, was a serious business and they

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 172
(2) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 270
acknowledged its seriousness by a gravity of mien and purpose. This gravity is portrayed in the "Old Wives' Tale" although it is mitigated by the optimism of youth which is best seen in the indomitable spirit of Sophia and Constance, and in the energetic enthusiasm of Dick Povey.

Samuel Povey greets his crawling baby with, "Oh, you little scoundrel," as he shakes a forefinger towards the child's nose and in the next breath he resumes his gravity and his ordinary pose to ask if tea is ready. Cyril, crawling and playing on his grandmother's shawl is suddenly aware that he is hungry. He forgets his toys to give a little cry. Life had resumed its seriousness for him. His cries are ignored by Samuel and Constance because it lacks still ten minutes to feeding time. The gravity of life is intensified for Sophia after Gerald Scales deserts her and Cyril's neglect of Constance does not give life a more roseate hue in her eyes while Samuel is disheartened by the punishment meted out to Daniel Povey. Although these are isolated instances they are representative of the whole texture of life as it appears to the characters in this novel.

Mrs. Marguerite Soulé Bennett has spoken of the inherent neatness and order which marked her husband's existence. Constance Baines and Mrs. Baines both possessed this trait to a great degree. Sophia displays it in her attempt to improve her surroundings in Madame Foucault's apartment and later in her management of the "Pension Frensham." Mrs. Dorothy Cheston Bennett has spoken of the public's impression that Arnold
Bennett was solely interested in making money but refutes that with her contention that Bennett's concern for wealth was solely due to the extent of his financial obligations. Only Sophia of all his characters seems greatly concerned with acquiring wealth. Witness her attempts to amass money during the siege of Paris. She had only a charwoman to help her and when this servant died, she did not hire another in order that she might save even more money. As Bennett says:

She went up to her room every night with limbs exhausted, but with head clear enough to balance her accounts and go through her money. She did this in bed with thick gloves on. If often she did not sleep well, it was not because of the distant guns, but because of her preoccupation with the subject of finance. She was making money, and she wanted to make more. She was always inventing ways of economy. She was so anxious to achieve independence that money was always in her mind. She began to love gold, to love hoarding it, and to hate paying it away. (1)

During her last few years with Constance they both sought to spend much more freely but the habit of stern thrift practiced for so many years had been too strong for Sophia's theories. The squandering of money pained her. She could not, in her age, devise expensive tastes. This thrift bordering even sometimes on parsimony was generally practiced by the Five Towns inhabitants. To them the acme of life was a high standard in physical comfort and economic efficiency.

The morality of the Five Towns is epitomized in the sensations which Constance experiences as she gazes upon Sophia's body:

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- p. 410
"This," she says, "this is the piteous, ignominious end of Sophia's wondrous gifts of body and soul." Hers had not been a life at all. And the reason? It is strange how fate persists in justifying the harsh generalizations of Puritan morals, of the morals in which Constance had been brought up by her stern parents! Sophia had sinned. It was therefore inevitable that she should suffer. An adventure such as she had in wicked and capricious pride undertaken with Gerald Scales, could not conclude otherwise than it had concluded. It could have brought nothing but evil... Mingled with Constance's pity was a stern recognition of the handiwork of divine justice... (1)

In a superficial view of this novel, Sophia is the one who lives, Constance the one who vegetates. But what Arnold Bennett makes clear beyond mistaking is that both live and that those two different careers are equally triumphs of fortitude or womanly courage. Constance, wondering whether she shall wear her best or her second best to honor the return of the sister whom she has not seen for more than a quarter of a century, and pathetically undecided between the tram and the train, is as momentous a figure as Sophia caught in the Paris of 1870 and earning her little fortunes while others starve. She is as momentous because she is as fully and as faithfully revealed. To us her life may seem gray; but to her it is scarlet.

Not only are we made to understand the characters: in rare moments, or after unusual accumulations of experience, it is given them to reach something like understanding of each

(1) "Old Wives' Tale" -- pp. 580-1
other. Constance and Sophia, reunited after thirty years, find themselves infinitely closer now by understanding than once they had been by blood. As aged women, coming together from widely sundered lives, taught by suffering and loss, they are strangely though not sentimentally near each other.

"It is this aspect of the "Old Wives' Tale" that expresses the point of last importance in Mr. Bennett's philosophy of life: his insistence on experience as the only 'teacher of the meaning of life.' Dissonant personalities like those of Constance and Sophia, can come together at the end, however different their lives; they can come together because each has learned what life is.

"The last and crowning experience is the mysterious discovery that somehow life has meant the same to both, that it means the same thing to everybody... That is the whole meaning of the story. It is everywhere the best meaning of Arnold Bennett... He sanctions and fortifies the natural human passion for believing that life can somehow, behind all the miseries and the mysteries, mean something profoundly worth while." (1)

C. Clayhanger

The critics are by no means unanimous in their opinions concerning this first volume of the "Clayhanger Trilogy." Their views vary from one of ecstatic praise to another of almost indifferent acceptance. Frederic Taber Cooper says of "Clayhanger", "This book is the first of a trilogy the central

(1) H. T. and W. Follett - "Some Modern Novelists"
theme of which was to be the breaking down of the old spirit by the new in the central provinces of England. It is the study of the unfolding and maturing of a single human character; it would be rather difficult to overpraise it when considered as such... (1) Mr. Bettany in an article in the magazine, "Current Literature," offers his opinion that "there is little in Clayhanger except the revelation of the psychology of a father and his son." (2) Dorothy Van Doren hastens to uphold the real greatness of the book with her statement, "I should place 'Clayhanger' above the 'Old Wives' Tale'. 'Clayhanger' has a quality of reality that is unique in English fiction. Clayhanger himself is more real than the men you will meet tomorrow on the street; because the man on the street has his secret life, which you cannot penetrate, but Clayhanger's secret life, which nobody in the novel knows but himself, is revealed to the reader in all its pitiful or admirable, or futile or triumphant details..." (3) Geoffrey West impartially states that "'Clayhanger' is a freer but less perfect piece of work than the 'Old Wives' Tale.' Its characters live more abundantly, more really even, but intermittently. What it lacks, alone or more correctly viewed in its place as the first part of the 'Clayhanger Trilogy,' is the form, unity, harmony of a perfect homogeneity, of the earlier work... The trilogy seems as a whole much less completely and inclusively conceived than

(1) Frederic Taber Cooper — "Some English Story Tellers"
(2) Mr. Bettany — "Arnold Bennett: The Novelist of The Five Towns"
(3) Dorothy Van Doren — "The Nation"
the epic of Constance and Sophia, and the end lacks the inevitability of death." (1)

This reader tends to be in sympathy with Mr. Cooper's assertion that "Clayhanger" "is the study of the unfolding and maturing of a single human character," a character surrounded with the illusion of "reality" which so impresses Miss Van Doren. We see Edwin Clayhanger, the schoolboy, resolving to begin at once the full exercise of his powers, to achieve self-perfection in spite of his short-comings; Clayhanger, the youth, afraid of his father, afraid to speak what is in his mind, unwilling to enter his father's shop yet entering it, fitting at last securely into the routine of the printing business; Clayhanger, the man trying to overcome his shyness, reading, pondering, settling into a rut of meticulous regularity, and jerked out of that rut twice by Hilda - the strange, intense, inexplicable woman whom he loves. "This," as Miss Van Doren says, "this is life, made fuller and richer and more credible than life by the mystery of art... This is the complete mind and heart of a man, as every man knows his own mind and heart and none other..." (2)

To say, however, that the novel concerns itself solely with the character growth of Edwin Clayhanger would be misleading. There are many other aspects of the novel nearly as incomparable as the portrait of Clayhanger: his father's terrible childhood on the potbanks, working eighteen hours a day

(1) Geoffrey West - - "The Problem of Arnold Bennett"
(2) Dorothy Van Doran - - "The Nation"
at the age of seven, and staying for a brief, indescribably horri-
ble night at the poorhouse; Darius's disintegration and death;
the boy George and his influence on Edwin; the full, gay, vigor-
ous life of the Orgreaves, so bitterly in contrast to the re-
straint and intellectual poverty of the Clayhangers; and the life
of the town - real, sharp, indubitable.

In this book as in the "Old Wives' Tale" Arnold Ben-
nett's characteristics as a writer are apparent; first, the
fulness and correctness of his observation; second, his willing-
ness to set down everything about his characters, whether flat-
tering or not; third, his power to see external surroundings
and internal conflicts through the eyes of his characters; fourth,
his preoccupation with money. This latter characteristic must
be differentiated from that possessed by a Midas or by a grasp-
ing character from Dickens. It is more a concern with affluence
and wealth because they represent a barrier against the inroads
of poverty and hunger. True, Darius was horrified when Maggie
dared to add meat to their evening meal which usually was com-
prised of bread and tea but we can attribute that to the haunt-
ing vision of the "Bastile" which never left him. Edwin, though
scandalized by the lavishness of the Orgreave family when jams
and meat and a fruit pie loaded the table, indulges more and
more in simple luxuries and Raises the wages of his employees.
We must not be too harsh in our judgment on the thrifty traits
which the characters display.

Arnold Bennett's description of Duck Square testifies
to the fulness of his observation:
Duck Square was one of the oldest, if the least imposing, of all the public places in Bursley. It had no traffic across it, being only a sloping rectangle, like a vacant lot, with Trafalgar Road and Wedgwood Streets for its exterior sides, and no outlet on its inner sides. The buildings on those inner sides were low and humble, and as it were withdrawn from the world, the chief of them being the Duck Inn, where the hand-bell-ringers used to meet. But Duck Square looked out upon the very birth of Trafalgar Road, that wide straight thoroughfare, whose name dates it, which had been invented, in the lifetime of a few then living, to unite Bursley with Hanbridge. It also looked out upon the birth of several old pack-horse roads which Trafalgar Road had supplanted. One of these was Woodisun Bank, that wound slowly up hill and down dale, apparently always choosing the longest and hardest route, to Hanbridge; and another was Aboukir Street, formerly known as Warm Lane, that reached Hanbridge in a manner equally difficult and unhurried. At the junction of Trafalgar Road and Aboukir Street stood the Dragon Hotel, once the great posting-house of the town, from which all roads started. Duck Square had watched coaches and waggons stop at and start from the Dragon Hotel for hundreds of years. It had seen the Dragon rebuilt in brick and stone, with fine bay-windows on each storey, in early Georgian times, and it had seen even the new structure become old and assume the dignity of age. Duck Square could remember strings of pack-mules driven by women 'trpesing' in zigzags down Woodisun Bank and Warm Lane, and occasionally falling, with awful smashes of the crockery they carried, in the deep, slippery, scarce passable mire of the first slants into the valley. Duck Square had witnessed the slow declension of these roads into mere streets, and slum-streets at that, and the death of all mules, and the disappearance of all coaches and all neighing and prancing and whipcracking romance; while Trafalgar Road, simply because it was straight and broad and easily graded, flourished with toll-bars and a couple of pair-horsed trams that ran on lines. (1)

(1) "Clayhanger" -- pp. 20-1
Facing Duck Square was the house and shop of Darius Clayhanger, the success; the man who, as a child seven years old labored and suffered under inexpressibly horrible conditions. Bennett has captured the pathos of this "child-man's" career in his description of Darius as a "mould runner;"

The next morning, at half past five, Darius began his career in earnest. He was 'mould-runner' to a 'muffin-maker,' a muffin being not a comestible but a small plate, fashioned by its maker on a mould. The business of Darius was to run as hard as he could with the mould, and a newly-created plate adhering thereto, into the drying-stove. This 'stove' was a room lined with shelves, and having a red-hot stove and stove-pipe in the middle. As no man of seven could reach the upper shelves, a pair of steps was provided for Darius, and up these he had to scamper. Each mould with its plate had to be leaned carefully against the wall, and if the soft clay of a new-born plate was damaged, Darius was knocked down. The atmosphere outside the stove was chill, but owing to the heat of the stove, Darius was obliged to work half naked. His sweat ran down his cheeks, and down his chest, and down his back, making white channels, and lastly it soaked his hair.

When there were no moulds to be sprinted into the drying-stove, and no moulds to be carried less rapidly out, Darius was engaged in clay-wedging. That is to say, he took a piece of raw clay weighing more than himself, cut it in two with a wire, raised one half above his head and crashed it down with all his force upon the other half; and he repeated the process until the clay was thoroughly soft and even in texture. At a later period it was discovered that hydraulic machinery could perform this operation more easily and more effectually than the brawny arms of a man of seven. At eight o'clock in the evening Darius was told that he had done enough for that day, and that he must arrive at five sharp the next morning to light the fire, before his master the muffin-maker began to work. When he inquired how he was to light the fire his master
kicked him jovially on the thigh and suggested that he should ask another mould-runner. His master was not a bad man, at heart, it was said, but on Tuesdays, after Sunday and Saint Monday, masters were apt to be capricious.

Darius reached home at a quarter to nine, having eaten nothing but bread all day. Somehow he had lapsed into the child again. His mother took him on her knee, and wrapped her sacking apron round his ragged clothes, and cried over him and cried into his supper of porridge, and undressed him and put him to bed. But he could not sleep easily because he was afraid of being late the next morning. (1)

With "Big James" Yarlett, preparing to go into the "Dragon," as his subject, Bennett's descriptive power may again be observed:

Big James looked enormous. The wide lapel of his shining frock-coat buttoned high up under his beard and curved downwards for a distance of considerably more than a yard to his knees: it was a heroic frock-coat. The sleeves were wide, but narrowing at the wrists, and the white wristbands were very tight. The trousers fell in ample folds on the uppers of the gigantic boots. Big James had a way of sticking out his chest and throwing his head back which would have projected the tip of his beard ten inches forth from his body, had the beard been stiff; but the soft silkiness of the beard frustrated this spectacular phenomenon, which would have been very interesting to witness. (2)

The appearance of Edwin Clayhanger under the critical examination of Janet Orgreaves is photographically presented to the reader:

Beginning at the bottom, his boots were clumsy, his trousers were baggy and even shiny, and they had transverse creases, not to be seen in the trousers

(1) "Clayhanger" -- pp. 33-5
(2) "Clayhanger" -- p. 80
of her own menkind; his waistcoat showed plainly the forms of every article in the pockets thereof, - watch, penknife, pencil, etc., it was obvious that he never emptied his pockets at night; his collar was bluish-white instead of white, and its size was monstrous; his jacket had 'worked up' at the back of his neck, completely hiding his collar there; the side-pockets of his jacket were weighted and bulged with mysterious goods; his fair hair was rough but not curly; he had a moustache so trifling that one could not be sure whether it was a moustache or whether he had been too busy to think of shaving.

Janet received all these facts into her brain, and then carelessly let them all slip out again, in her preoccupation with his eyes. She said they were sad eyes. The mouth too was somewhat sad (she thought), but there was a drawing down of the corners of it that seemed to make gentle fun of its sadness. (1)

Arnold Bennett often turned this power of description upon ordinary things or occurrences and made them very interesting. For example, in the building of Bleakridge, the Clayhanger's new home, there is much concern with the drawing-room with its bay-window. Bennett pictures this for us and then compares it to the Orgreaves' drawing-room. This drawing-room was twice as big as the Clayhangers' and of an interesting irregular shape. Although there were in it two unoccupied expanses of carpet, it nevertheless contained what seemed to Edwin immense quantities of furniture of all sorts. Easy-chairs were common, and everywhere. Several bookcases rose to the low ceiling; dozens and dozens of pictures hid the walls; each corner had its little society of objects; cushions and candlesticks abounded; the piano was a grand, and Edwin was astounded to see another piano, a small upright, in the further distance; there were even two fireplaces, with two mirrors, two clocks, two sets of ornaments, and two embroidered screens. The general effect was of extraordinary lavish profusion, of wilful, splendid, careless extravagance. (2)

(1) "Clayhanger" - - pp. 189-90
(2) "Clayhanger" - - pp. 237-8
In like manner does Bennett recreate for us the atmosphere of the "Dragon," the interior of the printing shop, the celebration of the Sunday School Centenary, the moving of the Clayhangers from Duck Square to "Bleakridge," Aunt Clara - "a damned fine woman," Janet Orgreaves who passes from blooming youth to gracious age, the banquet of the S. F. P. F. (Society for the Prosecution of Felons), etc., etc., etc.

Many of these descriptions may be cited as evidence of Bennett's interest in the phenomena of life. Like Edwin Clayhanger on his way home from his last day at school, Bennett surveys the two canal boats approaching the bridge and wonders vaguely which of the two would reach the bridge first, he doesn't see the horse and the child but he notes them as the advance guard of the problems which the world will present to him; the Dragon Hotel which had survived all revolutions by the mighty virtue and attraction of its ale, reminds Bennett of the interestingness of existence; the sound of the tram bell floating in through the Clayhangers' open window prompts Auntie Clara "with warm and special interest in the phenomena of the tram" to say, "There's the tram." (1) The building of the new chapel through which Mr. Orgreaves conducts Edwin is a fount of much interest to that youthful aspirant to the role of architect; perhaps the Orgreaves may be considered as the characters who best represent Bennett's appetite for life - they were an adventurous family, always ready for anything, always on the lookout for new sources of pleasure, full of zest in life. They

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 58
liked novelties, and hospitality was their chief hobby. They made fun of nearly everybody, but it was not mean fun. The description of the Orgreave drawing-room reflects the spirit of the Orgreaves. As Bennett says:

It was the drawing-room of a man who had consistently used immense powers of industry for the satisfaction of his prodigal instincts; it was the drawing-room of a woman whose placidity no danger could disturb, and who cared for nothing if only her husband was amused. Spend and gain! And, for a change, gain and spend! That was the method. Work till sheer exhaustion beat you. Plan, scheme, devise! Satisfy your curiosity and your other instincts! Experiment! Accept risks! Buy first, order first, pledge yourself first; and then split your head in order to pay and to redeem! When chance aided you to accumulate, let the pile grow, out of mere perversity, and then scatter it royally! Play heartily! Play with the same intentness as you worked! Live to the uttermost instant and to the last flicker of energy! Such was the spirit of Osmond Orgreave, and the spirit which reigned in the house generally, if not in every room of the house. (1)

Tom Orgreave played the piano well (as did Bennett) and Edwin, typical representative of the Five Towns, listens with little understanding. Bach affected him strangely.

He would ask for Bach out of a continually-renewed curiosity, so that he could examine once more and yet again the sensations which the music produced; and the habit grew. As regards the fugues, there could be no doubt that, the fugue begun, a desire was thereby set up in him for the resolution of the confusing problem created in the first few bars, and that he waited, with a pleasant and yet trying anxiety, for the indications of that resolution, and that the final reassuring and utterly tranquillising chords gave him deep joy. (2)

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 238
(2) "Clayhanger" -- p. 334
Edwin became aroused, as did all the Five Townsmen, over the Labor-Conservative election and over speeches by Parnell and Gladstone. He had the peculiar grim joy of the Midlander and Northerner in defying an element. Picture him at Brighton venturing forth into the storm in his search for Preston Street and you have the spirit of the Five Towns glorying and thriving in opposition to physical forces.

In this book as in the "Old Wives' Tale" Bennett displays his power of entering into the role of his characters and of experiencing their feelings and emotions and reactions to external and internal stimuli. The character of Edwin is especially realistic. Having left school he assumes the privileges as well as the duties of a man and we watch him in his attic room as he seeks to improve his draughtsmanship. When he looks at his watch it is half-past eleven - much later than his usual hour for retiring and this makes him exultant:

A delicious wave of joy and of satisfaction animated him. He had never been up so late, within his recollection, save on a few occasions when even infants were allowed to be up late. He was alone, secreted, master of his time and his activity, his mind charged with novel impressions, and a congenial work in progress. Alone?... It was as if he was spiritually alone in the vast solitude of the night. It was as if he could behold the unconscious forms of all humanity, sleeping. This feeling that only he had preserved consciousness and energy, that he was the sole active possessor of the mysterious night, affected him in the most exquisite manner. He had not been so nobly happy in his life. And at the same time he was proud, in a child-like way, of being up so late. (1)

(1) "Clayhanger" - - pp. 104-5
Again, after his first evening spent at the Orgreaves, his sensations are revealed to us:

He was intoxicated; not with wine, though he had drunk wine. A group of well-intentioned philanthropists organized into a powerful society for combating the fearful evils of alcoholism, had seized Edwin at the age of twelve and made him bind himself with solemn childish signature and ceremonies never to taste alcohol save by doctor's orders. He thought of this pledge in the garden of the Orgreaves. "Damned rot!" he murmured, and dismissed the pledge from his mind as utterly unimportant, if not indeed fatuous. No remorse! The whole philosophy of asceticism inspired him, at that moment, with impatient scorn. It was the hope of pleasure that intoxicated him, the vision which he had had of the possibilities of being really interested in life. He saw new avenues towards joy, and the sight thereof made him tingle, less with the desire to be immediately at them than with the present ecstasy of contemplating them. He was conscious of actual physical tremors and agreeable smartings in his head; electric disturbances. But he did not reason; he felt. He was passive, not active. He would not even, just then, attempt to make new plans. He was in a beatitude, his mouth unaware that it was smiling. (1)

We may even peer into his soul as he wrestles with the disturbing thought that Hilda had "taken a fancy" to him:

He despised her because it was he, Edwin, to whom she had taken a fancy! He had not sufficient self-confidence to justify her fancy in his own eyes. His argument actually was that no girl worth having could have taken a fancy to him at sight! Thus he condemned her for her faith in him. As for his historic remark about belief, — well, there might or might not be something in that; perhaps there was something in it. One instant he admired it, and the next he judged it glib and superficial. (2)

(1) "Clayhanger" — pp. 255-6
(2) "Clayhanger" — p. 266
On the occasion of another meeting with Hilda we see his change of front. He preferred that she should have taken a fancy to him, even though he discovered no charm in her, no beauty, no solace, nothing but matter for repulsion. "He wanted her to think of him, in spite of his distaste for her; to think of him hopelessly." (1) As he unwittingly falls deeply in love with Hilda we witness his behavior which seems inexplicable to him until he begins to sense the reason for it and then the re-collection of his original antipathy to Hilda troubles him:

She was the same girl. She was the same girl who had followed him at night into his father's garden and so merited his disdain. She was the same girl who had been so unpleasant, so sharp, so rudely disconcerting in her behaviour. And he dared not say that she had altered. And yet now he could not get her out of his head. And although he would not admit that he constantly admired her, he did admit that there were moments when he admired her passionately and deemed her unique and above all women. Whence the change in himself? How to justify it? The problem was insoluble, for he was intellectually too honest to say lightly that originally he had been mistaken. He did not pretend to solve the problem. He looked at it with perturbation, and left it. The consoling thing was that the Orgreaves had always expressed high esteem for Hilda. He leaned on the Orgreaves.

He wondered how the affair would end? It could not indefinitely continue on its present footing. How indeed would it end? Marriage... He apologised to himself for the thought... But just for the sake of argument... supposing... well, supposing the affair went so far that one day he told her... men did such things, young men! No! Besides, she wouldn't... It was absurd... No such idea really!... And then the frightful worry there would be with his father, about money and so on... And the telling of Clara, and of everybody. No! He simply could not imagine himself married, or about to be married.

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 280
Marriage might happen to other young men, but not to him. His case was special, somehow... He shrank from such formidable enterprises. The mere notion of them made him tremble. (1)

Finally in their mutual avowal of love the poignancy of his feeling is revealed:

His suffering was intolerable. It was torture of the most exquisite kind. Her hand pressed his. Something snapped in him. His left hand hovered shaking over her shoulder, and then touched her shoulder, and he could feel her left hand on his arm. The embrace was clumsy, in its instinctive and unskilled violence, but its clumsiness was redeemed by all his sincerity and all hers. His eyes were within six inches of her eyes full of delicious shame, anxiety, and surrender. They kissed... He had amorously kissed a woman. All his past life sank away, and he began a new life on the impetus of that supreme and final emotion. It was an emotion that in its freshness, agitating and divine, could never be renewed. He had felt the virgin answer of her lips on his. She had told him everything, she had yielded up her mystery, in a second of time. Her courage in responding to his caress ravedished and amazed him. She was so unaffected, so simple, so heroic. And the cool, delicate purity of those lips! And the faint feminine odour of her flesh and even of her stuffs! Dreams and visions were surpassed. He said to himself, in the flood-tide of masculinity: "By God! She's mine." And it seemed incredible. (2)

Ten years later when Edwin's fancy was for a brief moment fastened on Janet and he weighed her beauty, her charm, and her affection, his instinct cooled his fancy. "He remembered Hilda with painful intensity. He remembered the feel of her frock under his hand in the cubicle, and the odour of her

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 357
(2) "Clayhanger" -- p. 369
flesh that was like fruit and... he grew melancholy." (1)

The feelings of Edwin in his relationship to Clara, to Auntie Hamps, to Maggie, to Darius, to Osmond Orgreave, to Janet and to the phenomena of Five Towns existence and interests is revealed by Bennett with the same passionate adherence to truth and reality.

The antipathy which existed between Darius and Edwin did not prevent the former from holding him in admiration:

There was something about Edwin that his father admired, even respected and envied... an occasional gesture, an attitude in walking, an intonation, a smile. Edwin, his own son, had a personal distinction that he himself could never compass. Edwin talked more correctly than his father. He thought differently from his father. He had an original grace. In the essence of his being he was superior to both his father and his sisters. Sometimes when his father saw him walking along the street, or coming into a room, or uttering some simple phrase, or shrugging his shoulders, Darius was aware of a faint thrill. Pride? Perhaps; but he would never have admitted it. An agreeable perplexity rather - a state of being puzzled by how he, so common, had begotten a creature so subtly aristocratic... aristocratic was the word. And Edwin seemed so young, fragile, innocent and defenceless! (2)

The best illustration of Bennett's ability to reveal the working of Darius's mind is seen in his reaction to the near collapse of his shop:

Darius had seen the whole course of his printing business brought to a standstill, and all his savings dragged out of him to pay for reconstruction and for new machinery. He had seen loss of life which might be accounted to his negligence. He had seen, with

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 491
(2) "Clayhanger" -- p. 107
that pessimism which may overtake anybody in a crisis, the ruin of a career, the final frustration of his lifelong daring and obstinacy, and the end of everything. And then he had seen his son suddenly walk forth and save the frightful situation. He had always looked down upon that son as helpless, coddled, incapable of initiative or of boldness. He believed himself to be a highly remarkable man, and existence had taught him that remarkable men seldom or never have remarkable sons. Again and again had he noted the tendency of remarkable men to beget gaping and idle fools. Nevertheless he had intensely desired to be able, when acquaintances should be sincerely enthusiastic about the merits of his son, to pretend, insincerely, and with pride only half-concealed, that his son was quite an ordinary youth. (1)

Darius's allegiance to Mr. Shushions who had been the instrument to remove him from the "Bastile" was striking. In spite of his rough and brusque exterior he was capable of intense feeling. The death of Mr. Shushions was probably the direct cause of the illness which gradually robbed Darius of his mental and physical powers and finally overwhelmed him in death. Bennett has clearly drawn this character: He was hard and domineering, lacked understanding when in his right mind and when his mind was diseased it lacked the power to be aggressive. Thus he dies, as do many of Bennett's characters, under rather ignominious circumstances.

The other characters in the narrative exist and have the illusion of reality but the rapidity with which they fade in one's memory tends to make the reader conclude that they

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 129
are, in comparison to Edwin and Darius, somewhat weakly drawn. This is not necessarily an indictment of Bennett since it is obvious that that author did not want all his characters to be equally powerful but was interested wholly in the growth of one—Edwin Clayhanger.

Bennett's attitude towards death is more strikingly revealed in the "Old Wives' Tale" than in "Clayhanger." In this later work we witness the demise of only old Shushions and of Darius Clayhanger. Shushions, found starving and destitute, had been taken to the work-house - the dreaded "Bastile" of Darius's childhood - and had died. This to Darius was a terrible blow. That his benefactor should have died in the very institution from which he, Darius, had been saved was shocking. And the shock ended the useful career of Darius Clayhanger. In the last hours of Darius's illness every part of his physical organism was deranged, and wearied out.

His features combined the expression of intense fatigue with the sinister liveliness of an acute tragic apprehension. His failing faculties were kept horribly alert by the fear of what was going to happen to him next. So much that was appalling had already happened to him! He wanted repose, he wanted surcease; he wanted nothingness. He was too tired to move, but he was also too tired to lie still. And thus he writhed faintly on the bed; his body seemed to have that vague appearance of general movement which a multitude of insects will give to a piece of decaying matter. His skin was sick, and his hair, and his pale lips. The bed could not be kept tidy for five minutes. (1)

(1) "Clayhanger" - - p. 527
In the early hours of the morning while Edwin watched over him Darius passed through several crises of Cheyne-Stokes breathing and Edwin felt that the next one could not be worse. But it was worse:

Darius breathed like a blown dog that has fallen. He snatched furiously at breath like a tiger snatching at meat. He accomplished exertions that would have exhausted an athlete, and when he had saved his life in the very instant of its loss, calling on Clara as on God, he would look at Edwin for confirmation of his hope that he had escaped death. The paroxysms continued, still growing more critical. Edwin was aghast at his own helplessness. He could do absolutely naught. It was useless to hold the hand or to speak sympathy and reassurance. Darius at the keenest moment of battle was too occupied with his enemy to hear or feel the presence of a fellow-creature. He was solitary with his unseen enemy, and if the room had been full of ministering angels he would still have been alone and unsuccoured. He might have been sealed up in a cell with his enemy who, incredibly cruel, withheld from him his breath; and Edwin outside the cell trying foolishly to get in. He asked for little; he would have been content with very little; but it was refused him until despair had reached the highest agony. (1)

Death was a relief to that tortured soul.

Bennett felt that old age was an unkind tyrant which robbed youth of its loveliness, of its pliancy, and of its zest for life. When he contrasts youth and age the latter is shown in a very unfavorable light. To the sixteen year old Edwin, Darius Clayhanger was an old man:

A man who for him had always been old, generally harsh, often truculent, and

(1) "Clayhanger" — pp. 530-1
seldom indulgent. He saw an ugly, undistinguished, and somewhat vulgar man (far less dignified for instance than Big James), a man who had his way by force and scarcely ever by argument; a man whose arguments for or against a given course were simply pitiable, if not despicable; he sometimes indeed thought that there must be a peculiar twist in his father's brain which prevented him from appreciating an adverse point in a debate; he had ceased to expect that his father would listen to reason. (1)

Seven years later his father had "grown fat...":

Some of his scanty hair was white; the rest was grey. White hair sprouted about his ears; gold gleamed in his mouth; and a pair of spectacles hung insecurely balanced half way down his nose; his waistcoat seemed to be stretched tightly over a perfectly smooth hemisphere. He had an air of somewhat gross and prosperous untidiness. Except for the teeth, his bodily frame appeared to have fallen into disrepair, as though he had ceased to be interested in it, as though he had been using it for a long time as a mere makeshift lodging. And this impression was more marked at table; he ate exactly as if throwing food to a wild animal concealed somewhere within the hemisphere, an animal which was never seen, but which rumbled threateningly from time to time in its dark dungeon. (2)

Darius, as an invalid cowed by Edwin's assertiveness, was a pathetic figure. "With his pimpled face and glaring eyes, his gleaming gold teeth, his frowns of a difficult invalid, his grimaces and gestures which were the result of a lifetime devoted to gain, he made a loathsome object." (3)

Bennett's description of old Shushions at the Sunday School Celebration is especially poignant:

The old man had changed, nearly out of recognition. The old man had lived too long;

(1) "Clayhanger" -- pp. 105-6
(2) "Clayhanger" -- p. 192
(3) "Clayhanger" -- p. 495
he had survived his dignity; he was now nothing but a bundle of capricious and obstinate instincts set in motion by ancient souvenirs remembered at hazard. The front of his face seemed to have given way in general collapse. The lips were in a hollow; the cheeks were concave; the eyes had receded; and there were pits in the forehead. The pale silvery straggling hairs might have been counted. The wrinkles skin was of a curious brown yellow; and the veins, instead of being blue, were outlined in Indian red. The impression given was that the flesh would be unpleasant and uncanny to the touch. The body was bent, and the neck eternally cricked backward in the effort of the eyes to look up. Moreover the old man was in a state of neglect. His beard alone proved that. His clothes were dirty and had the air of concealing dirt. And he was dressed with striking oddness. He wore boots that were not a pair. His collar was only fastened by one button, behind; the ends oscillated like wings; he had forgotten to fasten them in front; he had forgotten to put on a neck-tie; he had forgotten the use of buttons on all his garments. He had grown down into a child again, but Providence had not provided him with a nurse.

Worse than these merely material phenomena was the mumbling toothless gibber of his shrill protesting; the glassy look of idiocy from his fatigued eyes, and the inane smile and impotent frown that alternated on his features. He was a horrible and offensive old man. He was Time's obscene victim. (1)

Even the jolly and apparently ever-youthful Osmond Orgreave is the victim of Time. His attempts at facetiousness were the slowly prepared and rather exasperating attempts of an aging man. Influenza had weakened and depressed him; he looked worn and even outworn. But not influenza alone was responsible for his appearance. "The incredible had happened: Osmond Orgreave was getting older. His bald head was not the worst (1) "Clayhanger" — pp. 299-300
sign of his declension, nor the thickened veins in his hands, nor the deliberation of his gestures, nor even the unsprightly-ness of his wit. The worst sign was that he was losing his terrific zest in life; his palate for the intense savour of it was dulled." (1)

As in the "Old Wives' Tale" so in "Clayhanger," the characters have the power to feel intensely. Edwin is thrilled as by an exquisite and vast revelation on hearing the famed Bursley quartet's version of "Loud Ocean's Roar." "He had never guessed that song held such possibilities of emotion. The pure and fine essential qualities of the voices, the dizzying harmonies, the fugal calls and responses... all this enfevered him to an unprecedented and self-astonished enthusiasm." (2) Darius shows his depth of feeling in his convulsive embrace of Edwin after the latter had saved the shop from disaster. Edwin and Hilda are both emotionally disturbed in their cubicle tryst; Big James at the news of Darius's illness makes a solemn resolve under stress of deep emotion that he would "never raise his voice in song again." (3) On his deathbed Darius again shows his depth of feeling by insisting upon presenting his gold watch and chain to Edwin as a token of his gratitude for the care he had received at Edwin's hands. Hilda's love for Edwin and his reciprocity of this feeling is revealed again when they are reunited after the death of Darius. As Edwin bends over

(1) "Clayhanger" -- p. 640
(2) "Clayhanger" -- pp. 92-3
(3) "Clayhanger" -- p. 426
the transfigured face of Hilda she passionately confesses her love for him:

"My heart never kissed any other man but you!" she cried. "How often and often and often have I kissed you, and you never knew!... It was for a message that I sent George down here - a message to you!... I names him after you... Do you think that if dreams could make him your child - he wouldn't be yours?"

Her courage, and the expression of it, seemed to him to be sublime.

"You don't know me!" she sighed, less convulsively.

"Don't I!" he said with lofty confidence.

After a whole decade his nostrils quivered again to the odour of her olive skin. Drowning amid the waves of her terrible devotion, he was recompensed in the hundredth part of a second for all that through her he had suffered or might hereafter suffer. The many problems and difficulties which marriage with her would raise seemed trivial in the light of her heart's magnificent and furious loyalty. He thought of the younger Edwin whom she had kissed into rapture, as of a boy too inexperienced in sorrow to appreciate this Hilda. He braced himself to the exquisite burden of life. (1)

Helen T. Follett and Wilson Follett have expressed their belief that the Five Towns present in a staggeringly simple way the whole riddle of industrialism. It is deplorable and indispensable; you cannot get along without it, and you cannot endure the result of it. They then seem to ask, "Can it all be worth while?"

This reader feels that the question is answered by the lives of the main characters in the novels. They possess (1) "Clayhanger" - - p. 698
the will to live and the determination to overcome their difficulties. Darius struggles against adversity; Hilda does, Edwin continues his father's work, Janet uncomplainingly accepts life's dictates - surely life must be worth living if the characters refuse to bow under its yoke. The background of their struggles is extremely important. "Bennett treats the Five Towns with a prolonged and tremendous series of appeals to the physical senses; he conveys subtly an impression of their effect on the masses of the people who dwell in them, and of their importance to other masses of people throughout England.

"The real significance of the scene in such books as "Clayhanger" is its causal connection with the characters. That atmosphere of ovens and chimneys, of smoke by day and ruddy glare by night, of mud and packing straw, of habits decreed and regulated by the laboring schedule, is omnipresent; and it creates the personae after its kind. It is woven intimately into the texture of their personalities... There is no more consistent embodiment in the novel of the doctrine that people derive their temperaments, their outlook, their whole tone, from the source of their livelihood." (1) In the light of this last statement we can understand and sympathize with the temperament of Darius Clayhanger and of Edwin Clayhanger - both somber, grave, concerned with the problem of life in contrast to the Orgreaves whose happy doctrine was to spend and then earn that which was needed to pay their debts. The Orgreaves were some-

(1) H. T. Follette and Wilson Follette - "Some Modern Novelists"
what removed from the Five Towns influence through virtur of the type of work done by Osmond Orgreave. Darius, however, had worked in the mines and he bears the stamp of the conditions among which he grew just as Hardy's redleman bears in the very pores of his skin the ruddy complexion of his trade.

One definite value of "Clayhanger" as a human document lies in the untiring fidelity with which Arnold Bennett convinces us that his characters are so constituted that they must inevitably have said and done precisely what he records, and not otherwise. This realism spoken of so highly by Miss Van Doren is the chief characteristic of this first volume of the "Clayhanger Trilogy."

D. Hilda Lessways

This second volume of the "Clayhanger Trilogy" is the biography of Hilda Lessways from young girlhood to the edge of middle life just as its predecessor was the biography of Edwin Clayhanger through approximately the same period. Hilda enters the pages of "Clayhanger" for a strange and breathless interval—just long enough to win the heart of the young printer and fill his head with flushed and romantic dreams and, as it appears, to return his love. Then without explanation or even an adequate farewell, she drops out of his existence.

"In 'Hilda Lessways' Bennett supplies the chain of circumstances which dragged her away from the fulfilment of her promise and bound her to a different destiny. He not only explains, he justifies and ennobles her. This time it is Edwin
Clayhanger who enters for a breathless interval presently to drop out of sight unexplained and but half understood. In the first book, Hilda is the woman whom Clayhanger sees and thinks he knows, - in the second she is that woman as she knows herself. The Clayhanger of the first book is self-understood - he of the second book is the different person whom Hilda Lessways never knew quite so well as she supposed. (1) To explain this seeming discrepancy we have only to recall how persons change with the growth of our knowledge of them, until we can hardly think back to how they seemed to us on first acquaintance.

In this volume which portrays Hilda Lessways to us with the completeness marking the portrayal of Edwin Clayhanger in the earlier book, we are given excellent views of the panorama of life as it appears to the intensely feeling nature of Hilda. She looks at the world with the eyes of impotent genius - sees the sunset, hears the wind, submits to the kisses of men, beholds death, bears a child with terrible yet beautiful awareness of the splendor and the mystery of life. She is impulsive rather than reflective and has a deep intelligence, the sort of intelligence that causes her to appreciate great moments when they arrive.

Witness her reciting Tennyson's "Maud" to herself in her bedroom. She became so deeply immersed in her reading that she came near to fainting and had to stop and lie down on the bed until she could convince herself that she was not the male

(1) Helen Thomas and Wilson Follett - - "Some Modern Novelists"
lover crying to his beloved. "An astounding and fearful experience, and not to be too lightly renewed. For Hilda, 'Maud,' was a source of lovely and exquisite pain." (1)

Just as Hilda's attitude towards her mother was one of self-contradiction so was her attitude towards existence. Sometimes this profound infelicity of hers changed its hues for an instant, and lo! it was bliss she bathed in. This phenomenon disconcerted her because as Bennett says, "She did not know that she had the most precious of all faculties - the power to feel intensely." (2) It was this power which caused the "business of domesticity" to appear so disgusting to her. Her feelings as she watched Florrie on her knees washing the kitchen floor are revealed to us:

Today Florrie was a charming young creature, full of slender grace. Soon she would be a dehumanized drudge. And Hilda could not stop it! All over the town, in every street of the town, behind all the nice curtains and blinds, the same hidden shame was being enacted: a vast sloppy, steaming, greasy, social horror - inevitable! It amounted to barbarism, Hilda thought in her revolt. She turned from it with loathing. And yet nobody else seemed to turn from it with loathing. Nobody else seemed to perceive that this business of domesticity was not life itself, was at best the clumsy external machinery of life. (3)

Hilda is able to interpret Sarah Gailey's reluctance to go to London as her half-brother requested - the vision of Sarah's fear in contrast to the ruthless strength in George Cannon's enterprising spirit seemed "extraordinarily and incom-

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- p. 7
(2) "Hilda Lessways" -- p. 10
(3) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 48-9
prehensively tragic" (1) to Hilda; Hilda herself experiences ecstatic bliss and fear in that breathless moment with George Cannon when the two were alone in the newspaper office; when Edwin Clayhanger expressed his opinion that, "You can't help what you believe. You can't make yourself believe anything... There's no virtue in believing," (2) Hilda was thunderstruck.

She was blinded as though by a mystic revelation. She wanted to exult, and to exult with all the ardour of her soul. This truth which Edwin Clayhanger had enunciated she had indeed always been vaguely aware of; but now in a flash she felt it, she faced it, she throbbed to its authencity, and was free. It solved every difficulty, and loosed the load that for months past had wearied her back. "There's no virtue in believing." It was fundamental. It was the gift of life and of peace. Her soul shouted, as she realized that just there, in that instant, at that table, a new epoch had dawned for her. Never would she forget the instant and the scene - scene of her re-birth. (3)

Later, as Hilda watched Edwin Clayhanger going through the sparse hedge and she deliberated whether she should follow him to question him about his expressed opinion, the "skin of her face puckled, and a physical wave of emotion seemed to sweep downwards through her whole body. The thrill was exquisite but it was intimidating..." (4) The Sunday School Centenary described in much detail in "Clayhanger" has a profound effect upon Hilda. The words "When I survey the wondrous Cross" surged upon her impressionable nature with all the "multitudinous significance of the crowd," and to prevent an outburst of

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 125
(2) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 241
(3) "Hilda Lessways" - - pp. 241-2
(4) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 247
tears she turned savagely upon Edwin in her passionate support of the hymn.

In this fashion is Hilda excited by much of the phenomena of life - her indignation over the vacillation of the newly enriched Mr. Karkeek which brought about the ruin of George Cannon; her submissive acceptance of the revealing of George Cannon's bigamy hid a pity for that injudicious person and a concern for herself; her instant avowal of the greatness of Richard Crashaw after his poetry and prose had thrilled her, her apprehension and finally her conviction that she was to be a mother - all are evidence of what Bennett terms "that most precious faculty." Hers is the hyper-sensitive nature whose emotions are incomprehensible to those of more flaccid temperament.

Mrs. Elia W. Peattie has said that it is Bennett's peculiar talent that he can insist upon the overwhelming predominance of the commonplace and that he can depict the commonplace till the tedium of it saturates the very soul of the reader, and yet that he can all of the time keep the star of beauty faithfully before the gaze. "It is," continues Mrs. Peattie, "as if he compelled us to travel the weary miles of an old mine and kept for our hope only the one guarded flame at the shaft." (1)

Certainly, Hilda, moving from one uninteresting place to another, surrounded by the old, the ill, the dull, with the

(1) Mrs. Elia W. Peattie - "Current Literature"
mess of a boarding house about her and a heavy lover in George Cannon to stand for a more or less offensive romance, ought not to absorb our attention. But it is her very submergence in the sea of the commonplace that identifies her with the rest of us. She, just as we, must snatch at joy, at charm and loveliness as a man on the welfare rolls must snatch at his weekly pittance, if she is to have any of it at all. Her scene with George Cannon in the narrow room of "The Chichester"; her pursuit of Edwin Clayhanger over the back hedge, her rendezvous with him in his office cubicle - these and many other occurrences were the outward manifestation of her attempts to taste the joy of life.

In "Hilda Lessways" as in the "Old Wives' Tale" and in "Clayhanger," Bennett has remained faithful to his reputation for enjoying and appreciating the "savour of life." He again shows us his remarkable aptitude to make the most ordinary things interesting, his concern with the phenomena of life and his keen appetite for all phases of existence flavors his descriptions and make the most elaborate and detailed paragraph one to be enjoyed even by the indifferent reader. Witness his view of Turnhill as it appeared to Hilda Lessways:

From the window of her bedroom, at the front of the house, Hilda looked westwards up toward the slopes of Chatterley Wood, where as a child she used to go with other children to pick the sparse bluebells that thrived on smoke. The bailiwick of Turnhill lay behind her; and all the murky district of the Five Towns, of which Turnhill is the northern outpost, lay to the south. At the foot of Chatterley Wood the canal wound in large curves on its way towards the undefiled plains of Cheshire and the sea. On the
canal-side, exactly opposite to Hilda's window, was a flour-mill, that sometimes made nearly as much smoke as the kilns and chimneys closing the prospect on either hand. From the flour-mill a brick path, which separated a considerable row of new cottages from their appurtenant gardens, led straight into Lessways Street, in front of Mrs. Lessways' house. By this path Mr. Skellorn should have arrived, for he inhabited the farthest of the cottages.

Hilda held Mr. Skellorn in disdain, as she held the row of cottages in disdain. It seemed to her that Mr. Skellorn and the cottages mysteriously resembled each other in their primness, their smugness, their detestable self-complacency. Yet those cottages, perhaps thirty in all, had stood for a great deal until Hilda, glancing at them, shattered them with her scorn. The row was called Freehold Villas: a consciously proud name in a district where much of the land was copyhold and could only change owners subject to the payment of 'fines' and to the feudal consent of a 'court' presided over by the agent of a lord of the manor. Most of the dwellings were owned by their occupiers, who, each an absolute monarch of the soil, niggled in his sooty garden of an evening amid the flutter of drying shirts and towels. Freehold Villas symbolized the final triumph of Victorian economics, the apotheosis of the prudent and industrious artisan. It corresponded with a Building Society Secretary's dream of paradise. And indeed it was a very real achievement. Nevertheless Hilda's irrational contempt would not admit this. She saw in Freehold Villas nothing but narrowness (what long narrow strips of gardens, and what narrow homes all flattened together!), and uniformity, and brickiness, and an eternal laundry. (1)

His description of George Cannon is more reminiscent of a woman's fastidious observation than of a man's careless acceptance of externals:

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 10-11
George had deep black eyes, and black hair, like Hilda's; good, regular teeth, and a clear complexion; perhaps his nose was rather large, but it was straight. With his large pale hands he occasionally stroked his long soft moustache; the chin was blue. He was smartly dressed in dark blue; he had a beautiful necktie, and the genuine whiteness of his wristbands was remarkable in a district where starched linen was usually either grey or bluish. He was not a dandy, but he respected his person; he evidently gave careful attention to his body; and this trait alone set him apart among the citizens of Turnhill.(1)

Hilda appears to us as a "thin, brown-frocked girl, wearing a detested but enforced small black apron; with fine, pale, determined features, rather unfeminine hair, and glowering, challenging black eyes... She was undeveloped and did not even look nearly twenty-one..." (2) In contrast to Hilda is Janet Orgreave:

She had the charm of her sex, and she depended on it. She had grace and an overflowing goodness. She had a smooth ease of manner. She was dignified. And, with her furs, and her expensive veil protecting those bright apple-red cheeks, and all the studied minor details of her costume, she was admirably and luxuriously attired. She was the usual, as distinguished from the unusual, woman, brought to perfection. She represented no revolt against established custom; doubts and longings did not beset her. She was content within her sphere: A destined queen of the home. And yet she could not be accused of being old-fashioned. None would dare to despise her. She was what Hilda could never be, had never long desired to be. She was what Hilda had definitely renounced being. (3)

Nothing is too insignificant to warrant being neglected according to Arnold Bennett's "Credo." He unfolds the most

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 33
(2) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 39
(3) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 99
personal incidents in the domestic life of Hilda and her mother. We witness Hilda’s strange semi-hostile, semi-loving attitude towards that inefficient creature, her mother, who, paradoxically enough, possessed a shrewdness which amazed even Hilda. Hilda, convinced of her sense of order and of her mother’s disorder gloats silently when she uncovers her mother’s handkerchief in the closet, yet she cannot quite comprehend how her mother has cemented the broken relationship with Sarah Gailey. Hilda’s visit to the lawyer, George Cannon, assumes in her eyes a major importance. She has deviated from the narrow confines of Five Towns morality to boldly plunge into the uncharted sea of business relations. She is proud of being one of the first "stenographers" in the Five Towns, proud to be a cog in the machine organized to produce the new paper. This same zest marks all her undertakings – from the cleansing of the Preston Street boarding house to the ecstatic surrender to Edwin Clayhanger’s gesture of love.

Evidence of Bennett’s attention to details may be found in the following description of activity in the Hornsey railroad station in which Hilda awaited the arrival of an uncle of Mrs. Lessways:

She had waited over half an hour, between eight and nine, and in that time she had had full opportunity to understand why those suburban stations had been built so large. A dark torrent of human beings, chiefly men, gathered out of all the streets of the vicinity, had dashed unceasingly into the enclosure and covered the long platforms with tramping feet. Every few minutes a train rolled in, as if from some inexhaustible
magazine of trains beyond the horizon, and, sucking into itself a multitude and departing again, left one platform for one moment empty, and the next moment the platform was once more filled by the quenchless stream. Less frequently, but still often, other trains thundered through the station on a line removed from platforms, and these trains too were crammed with dark human beings, frowning in study over white newspapers. For even in 1880 the descent upon London from the suburbs was a formidable phenomenon. Train after Train fled downwards with its freight towards the hidden city, and the torrent still surged, more rapid than ever, through the narrow gullet of the station. It was like the flight of some enormous and excited population from a country menaced with disaster.

When Bennett turns his photographic eye upon the Preston Street lodging house there is little than escapes his observation. A glance into Sarah Gailey's room reveals the shabby dressing table with its tottering lamp surrounded by a litter of bills and other papers, clothes hung behind the door away slightly in the warm draught from the open window while a bit of muslin strains, in its apparent effort to be released, from the collar of the night-robe lying at the foot of the bed...

His description of Brighton as it appeared to Hilda on her first is equally thorough:

Hilda surveyed the city with expectant and hopeful curiosity. The quaint irregularities of the architecture, and the vastness of the thronged perspectives, made promises to her romantic sense. The town seemed to be endless as London. There were hotels, churches, chapels, libraries, and music-shops on every hand. The more ordinary features of main streets - the marts of jewellery, drapery, and tobacco - had an air of grandiose respectability; while the narrow alleys that

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - pp. 178-9
curved enigmatically away between the lofty buildings of these fine thoroughfares beckoned darkly to the fancy. The multiplicity of beggars, louts, and organ-grinders was alone a proof of Brighton's success in the world; the organ-grinders, often a man and a woman yoked together, were extraordinarily English, genteel, and prosperous as they trudged in their neat, middle-class raiment through the gritty mud of the macadam, stolidly ignoring the menace of high-stepping horses and disdainful glittering wheels. Brighton was evidently a city apart. (1)

In this novel Bennett's knowledge of women is most obvious in his portrayal of Hilda but his characterizations of Janet Orgreave who is described above, of Mrs. Lessways, of Sarah Gailey, of Florrie and Louisa, are memorable. The picture of Hilda as the stenographer - hard, immature, graceless, harsh, inelegant, dowdy, persists throughout the narrative and is softened only by our intimate views of her soul in moods of deep, restrained passion. Hilda, like many of us, is wrapped and swathed in reticence. Not only is it her instinct to refrain from relating her emotions but she could not do so if she would. She generally acted first and reflected afterwards as may be seen in such incidents as the seeking out of Mr. Cannon for legal advice, in accepting his marriage proposal and in assuming the task of managing the boarding house in Brighton.

In spite of her inability to explain her own feelings, even to herself, Hilda was conscious of a strange mixture of happiness and unhappiness within her. As Bennett expresses this, "In her unhappiness she was blest. She savoured her unhappiness.

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - - pp. 309-10
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." (1)

When George Cannon approached Hilda in regard to the sale of her property in Turnhill her curt replies and ungracious behavior were an affront to his sympathetic concern. She knew not why she spoke and acted thus and secretly railed against herself. "Why do I talk like this? Why can't I talk naturally and gently and cheerfully? I've really got nothing against him." (2) Thus she questioned herself and Bennett attributes her biting acrimony towards George Cannon as an external evidence of her inward agitation in the presence of this man. With equal insight does Bennett picture Hilda as she is tortured with an extraordinary and disconcerting impulse to seize George Cannon's hand. Assuming Hilda's role Bennett describes her feeling:

She struggled against this impulse, but the impulse was part of herself and of her inmost self. She was afraid, but her fear was pleasurable. She was ashamed, but her shame was pleasurable. She wanted to move away from where she stood. She thought: "If only I willed to move away, I could move away. But, no! I shall not will it. I like remaining just here, in this fear, this shame, and this agitation." She had a clear, dazzling perception of the splendour and the fineness of sin; but she did not know what sin! And all the time the muscles of her arm were tense in the combat between the weakening desire to keep her arms still and the growing desire to let her hand seize the hand of George Cannon. And all the time the heavy footstep was ascending the interminable staircase. And all the time George

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 66
(2) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 193
Cannon, with averted head, was fumbling in the bag. And then, in a flash, she was really afraid; the fear was no longer pleasurable, and her shame had become a curse. She said to herself: "I cannot move now. In a minute I shall do this horrible thing. Nothing can save me." Despairing, she found a dark and tumultuous joy in despair. The trance endured for ages, while disaster approached nearer and nearer. (1)

It would be difficult to express more poignantly a person's feelings under identical or similar circumstances and were Bennett's French idols to read this passage they would nod their approval. Bennett is less successful in his attempt to portray Hilda's joy after having informed George Cannon of the unhappy plight of his half-sister:

She was suddenly happy; she was inspired by an unreasoning joy. She was happy because she was so young and fragile and inexperienced, and he so much older, and more powerful and more capable. She was happy because she was a mere girl and he a mature and important male. She thought their relation in that moment exquisitely beautiful. She was happy because she had been exceedingly afraid and the fear had gone. The dark Square and far-stretching streets lay placid and void under the night, surrounding their silence in a larger silence; and because of that also she was happy. (2)

Arnold Bennett captures the pride which marks genteel poverty in his characterization of the needy Sarah Gailey:

In her declension, she was still perfect of speech. But the authority and the importance were gone in substance; only the shadow of them remained. She had now, indeed, a manner half apologetic and half defiant, but timorously and weakly defiant. Her head was restless with little nervous movements; her watery eyes seemed to say: "Do not suppose that I am not as

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - - pp. 202-3
(2) "Hilda Lessways" - - p. 110
proud and independent as ever I was, because I am. Look at my silk dress, and my polished boots, and my smooth hair, and my hands! Can anyone find any trace of shabbiness in me?" But beneath all this desperate bravery was the wistful acknowledgment, continually peeping out, that she had after all come down in the world, albeit with a special personal dignity that none save she could have kept. (1)

In contrast to this we have the picture of the fifteen-year old Florrie, confident of her charms and seductiveness:

In the delusion that she was utterly solitary in the house, Florrie was whistling, not at all like a modest young woman, but like a carter. Hilda knew that she could whistle, and had several times indicated to her indirectly that whistling was undesirable; but she had never heard her whistling as she whistled now. Her first impulse was to rush out of the bedroom and 'catch' Florrie and make her look foolish, but a sense of honour restrained her from a triumph so mean, and she kept perfectly still. She heard Florrie run into her mother's bedroom; and then she heard that voice, usually so timid, saying loudly, exultantly, and even coarsely: "Oh! How beautiful I am! How beautiful I am! Shan't I just mash 'em!" (2)

In spite of the tirade launched against Arnold Bennett by Dorothea Price Hughes concerning his attitude towards religion, especially as revealed in the "Clayhanger Trilogy," there is comparatively little mention of that topic. True, Edwin Clayhanger, in the novel which best delineates him, is seen as a foe to the outward manifestations of religion in his indifference and mild scorn for the Sunday School Centenary and for Mr. Shushions, but there is little in that novel to warrant the length of Miss Hughes's dissertation. In "Hilda Lessways" there

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 118-9
(2) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 138-9
is even less mention of religion - in fact, we observe the same scene at the Sunday School Centenary as it appeared to Hilda. She is thrilled by the chorus, disturbed by the callowness of the crowd witnessing the pathetic efforts of Mr. Shushions to reach the speaker's stand, and annoyed at Edwin Clayhanger's lack of masculine decision in aiding Mr. Shushions.

Bennett's concern for wealth is more strikingly revealed in the "Old Wives' Tale" than in "Hilda Lessways." In this latter work there is but one definite allusion to this trait although there is the implied struggle of Mrs. Lessways, of George Cannon, of Karkeek, and of Sarah Gailey to obtain wealth and security. Hilda, having given up her room during the busy August holiday season, is proud because her sacrifice was adding thirty shillings a week to the gross receipts of the "Cannon Boarding House."

The benefit was in no way here, and yet she gloated on it, thinking pleasurably of George Cannon's great Japanned cash-box, which seemed to be an exhaustless store of gold sovereigns and large silver, and of his mysterious - almost furtive - visits to the Bank. Her own capital, invested by George Cannon in railway stock, was bringing in four times as much as she disbursed; and she gloated also on her savings. The more money she amassed, the less willing was she to spend. This nascent avarice amused her, as a new trait in his character always amuses the individual. She said to herself: "I am getting quite a miser," with the assured reservation: "Of course I can stop being a miser whenever I feel like stopping." (1)

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - pp. 354-5
In "Hilda Lessways" there is some support for Cornelius Weygandt's contention that one of the dominant influences in Bennett is his concern over sex. One could misinterpret Hilda's intensity of emotion as being a result of a sex drive or of inhibition but a careful study of her character would dissolve that belief. She does distinguish between love as she imagines it to be and as it exists between her and Clayhanger, from the feeling she had for George Cannon:

With the inexorable realism of her sex she easily dismissed inconvenient names and theories, and accommodated herself to the fact. And the fact was that she overwhelmingly wanted George Cannon, and, as she now recognized, had wanted him ever since she first saw him. The recognition afforded her intense pleasure. She abandoned herself candidly to this luxury of an unknown desire. It was incomparably the most splendid and dangerous experience that she had ever had. She did not reason and she had no wish to reason. She was set above reason. Happy to the point of delicious pain, she yet yearned forward to a happiness far more excruciating. She was perfectly aware that her bliss would be torment until George Cannon had married her, until she had wholly surrendered to him. (1)

After her marriage she is even more candid:

She was disappointed with her marriage. Amid the fevers of bodily appetite she could clearly distinguish the beginning of lassitude; she no longer saw her husband as a romantic and baffling figure; she had explored and charted his soul, and not all his excellences could atone for his earthliness. She wondered grimly where and under what circumstances he had acquired the adroitness which had charmed and still did charm her. She saw in front of her a vista of days and years in which ennui would probably increase and joy diminish. And she put her shoulders back defiantly, and thought:

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 381-2
"Well, here I am anyhow! I wanted him and I've got him. What I have to go through I shall go through!" (1)

The personality of Arnold Bennett extends itself in various characteristics of the Five Towns and of its inhabitants. In this novel, however, he has remained more objective and has interposed himself to a lesser degree than in the "Old Wives' Tale." We may draw an analogy between one of his personal traits with that possessed by Hilda. Hilda possessed a passion for order and efficiency which has its counterpart in Bennett's own meticulous arrangement of his surroundings. George Cannon possessed this same trait as the arrangement of objects on his desk in Karkeek's office seems to indicate. Edwin Clayhanger was also the efficient and orderly Five Townsman.

The early youth of Bennett, spent in the Five Towns region, shows its influence in the unquestioned authenticity of his description of this region. The description of the Market Square of Turnhill is characteristic:

The Market Square of Turnhill was very large for the size of the town. The diminutive town hall, which in reality was nothing but a watch-house, seemed to be a mere incident on its irregular expanse, to which the two-storey shops and dwellings made a low border. Behind this crimson, blue-slated border rose the loftier forms of a church and a large chapel, situate in adjacent streets. The square was calm and almost deserted in the gloom. It typified the slow tranquility of the bailwick, which was removed from the central life of the Five Towns, and unconnected therewith by even a tram or an omnibus. Only within recent years had Turnhill

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- p. 419
got so much as a railway station - railhead of a branch line. Turnhill was the extremity of civilization in those parts. Go northwards out of this Market Square, and you would soon find yourself amid the wild and hilly moorlands, sprinkled with iron-and-coal villages whose red-flaming furnaces illustrated the eternal damnation which was the chief article of their devout religious belief. And in the Market Square not even the late edition of the Staffordshire Signal was cried, though it was discreetly on sale with its excellent sporting news in a few shops. In the hot and malodorous candle-lit factories, where the real strenuous life of the town would remain cooped up for another half-hour of the evening, men and women had yet scarcely taken to horse-racing, and would gamble upon rabbits, cocks, pigeons, and their own fists, without the mediation of the Signal. The one noise in the Market Square was the bell of a hawker selling warm pikelets at a penny each for the high tea of the tradesmen. The hawker was a deathless institution, a living proof that withdrawn Turnhill would continue always to be exactly what it always had been. Still, to the east of the Square, across the High Street, a vast space was being cleared of hovels for the erection of a new town hall daringly magnificent. (1)

Again, he catches the spirit of the Five Towns in his delineation of Florrie who has been hired as servant to Mrs. Lessways:

Today Florrie was a charming young creature, full of slender grace. Soon she would be a dehumanized drudge. And Hilda could not stop it! All over the town, in every street of the town, behind all the nice curtains and blinds, the same hidden shame was being enacted: a vast, sloppy, steaming, greasy, social horror - inevitable! It amounted to barbarism, Hilda thought in her revolt. She turned from it with loathing. And yet nobody

(1) "Hilda Lessways" — pp. 28-9
else seemed to perceive that this business of domesticity was not life itself, was at best the clumsy external machinery of life. On the contrary, about half the adult population worshipped it as an exercise sacred and paramount, enlarging its importance and with positive gusto permitting it to monopolize their existence. (1)

The self-sufficient, good-natured mediocrity of Arthur Dayson is the epitome of Five Towns provinciality. Bennett hated this and is somewhat unsympathetic with its total lack of imagination. Still, he was concerned with the mass and his description of the potters' meeting in the "Blood Tub" was vivid:

The contrast between the open street and the enclosed stuffiness of the dim and crowded interior was overwhelming. Hundreds of ragged and shabby men sat in serried rows, leaning forward with elbows out and heads protruding as they listened to a speech from the gimcrack stage. They seemed to be waiting to spring, like famished and ferocious tigers. Interrupting, they growled, snarled, yapped, and swore with appalling sincerity. Imprecations burst forth in volleys and in running fires. The arousing of the fundamental instincts of these human beings had, indeed, enormously emphasized the animal in them. They had swung back a hundred centuries towards original crude life. The sophistication which embroiders the will-to-live had been stripped clean off. These men helped you to understand the state of mind which puts a city to the sack, and makes victims especially of the innocent and the defenceless. (2)

Somewhat with a renewal of his mild scorn Bennett pictures for us the final internecine folly of strikers -

(1) "Hilda Lessways" - pp. 48-9
(2) "Hilda Lessways" - pp. 510-11
turning their exasperated wrath upon each other and drinking where they should be purchasing food...

The inexorable visage of death is not treated with the grimness which characterized the "Old Wives' Tale." In that book we are shocked by the perverse death of John Baines, the violent death of Mrs. Daniel Povey, the pitiful death of Samuel Povey and the tragic death of Gerald Scales. In "Hilda Lessways" we have only Mr. Skellorn's death and that of Mrs. Lessways. Neither is given in much detail. The former dies of a paralytic shock while the latter dies of peritonitis induced by a perforating cancer. Neither can be called a "lovely death" (if death may be considered to be such) and yet neither of them possess enough distinction to warrant the display of Bennett's eulogistic or descriptive powers. The subject of "old age" also receives much less attention than was given in the earlier work. We see only Mrs. Lessways' thin wrinkled face, bordered by her untidy black and glossy hair, with an expression of tragic fretfulness upon it. Miss Gailey appeared to Hilda as a woman alone, unhappy, unattractive, enfeebled, ageing. "It seemed to Hilda inexpressibly cruel that people must grow old and weak and desolate; it seemed monstrous." (1) As Sarah Gailey grows older we see her as a shrivelled, neurotic, plaintive person with knotty hands and unlovely figure, wrenched by three genuine complaints - rheumatism, sciatica, and neuritis.

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 273-4
The novel "Hilda Lessways" offers much evidence that Bennett's power of empathy had not been diminished if it had not been augmented since the writing of the "Old Wives' Tale." He is especially successful in his attempt to view externals as Hilda sees them. Bennett expresses Hilda's impassioned resentment of her mother's desire to collect the rents; he pictures her fierce contentment in the dismal, dirty, newspaper office; he envisions her tempestuous outbreak at the contemplation of Sarah Gailey's plight; he portrays her despair which accompanied her "nervous breakdown" after the death of her mother; we see her sadness as the story of George Cannon's youthful adversities touch her sensitive heart; we are even able to gaze into Hilda's mind as she pictures her ideal future - married to Edwin Clayhanger:

She pictured that future which had loomed grandiose, indefinite, and strange - she saw it quite precise and simple as the wife of such a creature as Edwin Clayhanger. The change was astounding in its abruptness. She saw all the delightful and pure vistas of love with a man, subtle, baffling, and benevolent, and above all superior; with a man who would be respected by a whole town as a pillar of society, while bringing to his intimacy with herself an exotic and wistful quality which neither she nor anyone could possibly define. She asked: "What attracts me in him? I don't know. I like him." She who had never spoken to him! She who never before had vividly seen herself as married to a man! He was clever; he was sincere; he was kind; he was trustworthy; he would have wealth and importance and reputation. All this was good; but all this would have been indifferent to her, had there not been an enigmatic and inscrutable and unprecedented something in his face, in his bearing, which challenged
and inflamed her imagination. (1)

In similar fashion does Bennett portray Hilda's first reaction to the cheap boarding house in Brighton, to the amorous advances of George Cannon, to the startling disclosures about George Cannon's past by the enraged Louisa, and to Hilda's own awareness that she was to be the mother of George Cannon's child. She is the figure most clearly drawn just as Edwin Clayhanger was in the first volume of the Trilogy. The other characters are there and are vivid only as they come within the scope of the light which Bennett has turned upon Hilda.

The reader's picture of Hilda as he closes the book with regret is of a slight, dark slip of a girl "who generally acted first and reflected after." Hilda can only draw her dark, heavy brows together and look out wistfully at the pageant of life; or now and then, she may swing dizzily into it for a moment and march to the beat of the triumphant drums, but then she must drop out, broken and saddened, and pay a great price for her hour of ecstasy.

E. These Twain

The scheme of the first two volumes of the "Clayhanger Trilogy" is rounded out in this book in which the two previous points of view are combined and superposed. In "Clayhanger" we were given the picture of Edwin Clayhanger as he seemed to himself; in "Hilda Lessways" we saw Hilda and her world as it appeared to herself; now we are shown how each appears in the

(1) "Hilda Lessways" -- pp. 217-8
other's eyes in the light of their more intimate relationship. This third volume possesses much more glibness and flippancy than do the earlier two but it has real value in its full and merciless revelation of the pettiest things in married life. It is the superposition of the two individual points of view which makes that revelation possible.

"These Twain" bears the stamp of Bennett's journalistic career in its somewhat tedious relating of details which may be considered entirely irrelevant to the unfolding of the story or the development of the characters. We are overwhelmed with the account of the extravagant efficiency of the radiator in the front hall of the Clayhanger home; the changing over of the breakfast room into "Hilda's room" occupies too great a space in the narrative; the efficacy of prayer is somewhat startlingly revealed in the incident of the "penknife from Heaven" but, apart from its humor, the incident has no real place in the narrative, while the many pages devoted to the description of Harry Hesketh's home, Alicia, to the children, and even to Harry's skill as a tennis player might, in consideration of the reader, have been left out without impairing the actual story or character development. Although other incidents and descriptions could have been eliminated without harm to the story they all are evidence of Arnold Bennett's attention to the most minute details. He saw ordinary things in a different light than we do and he apparently felt it incumbent upon him to relate all this phenomena to his readers.
Because of this characteristic of Arnold Bennett's we can gaze into the Clayhanger bedroom with an astounding degree of intimacy; Hilda's disorder, Edwin's talent for order and organization are revealed at a glance as we watch the two preparing to retire; Auntie Hamps, that grandiose figure (as the external world views her) is unsympathetically stripped of her shield by Bennett's recounting of her home life:

Her teas, at which a fresh and costly pineapple and wonderful confectionery and pickled salmon and silver plate never lacked, were renowned, but the general level of her existence was very mean. Her servants, of whom she had many, though never more than one at a time, were not only obliged to be Wesleyan Methodists and to attend the Sunday night service, and in the week to go to class-meeting for the purpose of confessing sins and proving the power of Christ, - they were obliged also to eat dripping instead of butter. The mistress sometimes ate dripping, if butter ran short or went up in price. She considered herself a tremendous housewife. She was a martyr to her housewifely ideals. Her private career was chiefly and endless struggle to keep the house clean - to get forward with the work. The house was always going to be clean and never was, despite eternal soap, furniture polish, scrubbing, rubbing. Auntie Hamps never changed her frowsy house-dress for rich visiting attire without the sad thought that she was "leaving something undone." The servant never went to bed without hearing the discontented phrase: "We'll, we must do it tomorrow." Spring-cleaning in that house lasted for six weeks. On days of hospitality the effort to get the servant "dressed" for tea-time was simply desperate, and not always successful.

Auntie Hamps had no sense of comfort and no sense of beauty. She was incapable of leaning back in a chair, and she regarded linoleum as one of the most satisfactory inventions of the modern age. She "saved" her carpets by means
of patches of linoleum, often stringy at
the edges, and in some rooms there was more
linoleum than anything else. In the way of
renewals she bought nothing but linoleum, -
unless some chapel bazaar forced her to pur-
chase a satin cushion or a hand-painted grate-
screen. (1)

This is the Auntie Hamps who told Clara with rapture
that she liked Clara's new drawing-room suite while deep with-
in her she abhorred the hideous imitation rosewood "with
salmon-tinted upholstery ending in pleats and bows." (2)

Were Arnold Bennett living today what a ponderous
volume he would write in describing our gambling devices and
"contests!" The "missing word" craze which he treats from
its inception to its final inglorious end would not excite
more than the slightest interest to our generation made cal-
lous by the multiplicity of contests on the radio, in the
newspapers, and in the theaters.

The double funeral of Mr. and Mrs. Osmond Orgreave
serves as subject for Bennett's journalistic pen. We almost
expect to find a typical newspaper account of the funeral as
we read his account of its aftermath:

Today the blinds were up again; the funeral
horses with their artifically curved necks
had already dragged other corpses to the ce-
metery; the town existed as usual; and the
family of Orgreave was scattered once more.
Marian, the eldest daughter, had not been
able to come at all, because her husband
was seriously ill. Alicia Hesketh, the
youngest daughter, far away in her large
house in Devonshire, had not been able to

(1) "These Twain" -- pp. 100-1
(2) "These Twain" -- p. 106
come at all, because she was hourly expect­ing her third child; nor would Harry, her husband, leave her. Charlie, the doctor at Ealing, had only been able to run down for the funeral, because, his partner having broken his leg, the whole work of the prac­tice was on his shoulders. And today Tom, the solicitor, was in his office exploring the financial side of his father's affairs; Johnnie was in the office of Orgreave and Sons, busy with the professional side of his father's affairs; Jimmie, who had made a sinister marriage, was nobody knew precisely where; Tom's wife had done what she could and gone home; Jimmie's wife had never ap­peared; Elaine, Marian's child, was shopping at Hanbridge for Janet; and Janet, remained among her souvenirs. An epoch was finished, and the episode that concluded it, in its strange features and its swiftness, resembled a vast hallucination. (1)

In spite of births and deaths life sweeps on unend­ingly and under the guidance of our ever-observant Mr. Bennett we are presented a clear picture of Edwin's new shop with its Smithers machine and its begrimed young girls, slaves to the machine's unending revolutions. A more cheerful picture even better illustrates Bennett's power of observation and descrip­tion when we view the immediate surroundings of Harry Hesketh's country home:

Hilda and Harry Hesketh stood together in the soft warm Devonshire sunshine bending above the foot-high wire-netting that se­parated the small ornamental pond from the lawn. By their side was a St. Bernard dog with his great baptising tongue hanging out. Two swans, glittering in the strong light, swam slowly to and fro; one had a black claw tucked up on his back among downy white fea­thers; the other hissed at the dog, who in his vast and shaggy good-nature simply could

(1) "These Twain" — p. 190
not understand this malevolence on the part of a fellow-creature. Round about the elegant haughtiness of the swans clustered a number of iridescent Muscovy ducks, and a few white Aylesburys with gamboge beaks that intermittently quacked, all restless and expectant of blessings to fall over the wire-netting that eternally separated them from the heavenly hunting-ground of the lawn. Across the pond, looking into a moored dinghy, an enormous drake with a vermilion top-knot reposed on the balustrade of the landing-steps. The water reflected everything in a rippled medley-blue sky, rounded woolly clouds, birds, shrubs, flowers, grasses, and brown-olive depths of the plantation beyond the pond, where tiny children in white were tumbling and shrieking with a nurse in white. (1)

As we accompany the party visiting Dartmoor prison we are made acquainted with all the details of that bleak countryside with its spare hedges and granite walls - exquisitely beautiful in the morning light and seeming to radiate moral and physical health in contrast to the depressing confusion of stairways and corridors to be found in the prison. De Maupassant and Zola would chuckle in appreciation of Bennett's description of the prison interior with its "galleries of perforated iron protected from the abyss of the colossal and resounding iron hall by iron balustrades while far away, on the opposite side, a glint of sunshine had feloniously slipped in transpiercing the gloom..." (2) Truly a dismal place.

This attention to details is manifested also in those descriptions which are proof of Bennett's appetite for life and for its phenomena. Sometimes we may detect a note of whimsical

(1) "These Twain" - - p. 267
(2) "These Twain" - - p. 301
humor as in the incident of Auntie Hamps' burial where the three Wesleyan ministers, standing in the driving rain, removed their flat round hats and put on skull caps while skilfully balancing their umbrellas aloft. Perhaps Bennett had his tongue in his cheek, too, when he has George say to Bert, "Well, all right. We'll pray for a bicycle. But we'd better all stand as close as we can to the wall, under the spouting, in case." (1) That "in case" conjures up in the reader's mind the vision of a bicycle hurtling down from Heaven upon the affrighted boys with a suddenness and devastating effect beyond description.

Arnold Bennett was himself a pianist and became conversant with many of the masters. It is not surprising then to see and hear Tertius Ingpen and the Orgreaves playing selections from Grieg, Schumann and Beethoven to the select group at Hilda's Sunday night musicale. Ingpen may easily be considered as the mouthpiece of Bennett when he tells Hilda, that

"When you've finished running risks you're dead and you ought to be buried. If I was a wife I should enjoy running a risk with my husband. I swear I shouldn't want to shut myself up in a glass case with him out of all the draughts! Why, what are we all alive for?" (2)

Edwin is struck with the poignancy and interestingness of life as he surveys Hilda and George Edwin kneeling in her room while the flickering candles lend an almost mystic aura to the setting. Clara's conjugal joy as revealed especially in

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 62
(2) "These Twain" -- p. 182
her intimacies with Rupert strongly affected Hilda who wished that her George was only two and a half years old again. She was envious of the Benbow family life and yet a moment before she had been execrating it. She, like Bennett, felt that "the complexity of the tissue of existence was puzzling." (1) Edwin, conscious that he had achieved a great victory over Hilda in the building of his new shop, is also aware of her inimicalness and though this dissatisfied him, he felt that it gave zest to his existence.

With typical Five Towns curiosity in the affairs of others Bennett reveals the Orgreave-Hamson flirtation; the sad plight of Emmie, servant to Miss Hamp; the secretive affair of Tertius Ingpen; the grasping, deceitful natures of the Benbow family, and the growing miserliness of Tom Orgreave. Not fatigued by these labors he turns his attention to the case of George Cannon, jailed for an offense of which he was not guilty, and after shaking our faith in the worthiness of that individual, restores it to us by telling of the check received by Edwin from a more successful George Cannon in America. Even the servant problem of that day excites Mr. Bennett's attention and he recites at length the difficulties that Hilda faced after her cook had fallen in love and left her.

From that moment Hilda had ceased to be the mistress who by firmness commands fate; she had become as other mistresses. In a year she had had five cooks, giving varying degrees of intense dissatisfaction. She had even dismissed the slim and constant Ada once, but, yielding to an outburst of penitent af-

(1) "These Twain" — p. 125
fection, had withdrawn the notice. The last
cook, far removed from youthfulness or pret-
tiness, had left suddenly that day, after
insolence, after the discovery of secret beer
and other vileness in the attic-bedroom, after
a scene in which Hilda had absolutely silenced
her, reducing ribaldry to sobs. Cook and trunk
expelled, Hilda had gone about the house like a
fumigation, and into the kitchen like the embo-
diment of calm and gay efficiency. She would
do the cooking herself. She would show the
kitchen that she was dependent upon nobody.
She had quickened the speed of Ada, accused
her "tartly," but not without dry good-humour,
of a disloyal secretiveness, and counselled
her to mind what she was about if she wanted
to get on in the world. (1)

In a conversation between Tertius Ingpen and Edwin
Clayhanger Bennett dares even to express his views on marriage
through the mouth of Ingpen:

"I don't specially mean," said Ingpen, tranquil
and benevolent, "what I may call physical free-
dom. I'd give that up. I like a certain amount
of untidiness, for instance, and I don't think
an absence of dust is the greatest thing in the
world; but I wouldn't in the least mind giving
all that up. It wouldn't really matter to me.
What I won't give up is my intellectual free-
dom. Perhaps I mean intellectual honesty. I'd
give up even my intellectual freedom if I could
be deprived of it fairly and honestly. But I
shouldn't be. There's almost no intellectual
honesty in marriage. There can't be. The en-
tire affair is a series of compromises, chiefly
based on the part of the man. The alternative
is absolute subjection of the woman, which is
offensive. No woman not absolutely a slave ever
hears the truth except in anger. You can't say
the same about men, and you know it. I'm not
blaming: I'm stating. Even assuming a married
man gets a few advantages that I miss, they're
all purely physical - "

"Oh no! Not at all."

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 356
"My boy," Ingpen insisted, sitting up, and gazing earnestly at Edwin. "Analyze them down, and they're all physical - all! And I tell you I won't pay the price for them. I won't. I've no grievance against women; I can enjoy being with women as much as anybody, but I won't - I will not - live permanently on their level. That's why I say I might have been fool enough to get married. It's quite simple."

"Hm!" (1)

"These Twain" gives a rather more complete picture than its predecessors of the industrial, physical, and moral background of the Five Towns which serves as back drop to the panorama of existence of Bennett's protagonists. The suburb of Bleakridge is carefully drawn with its distinguishing between the "old important" homes - like that of the Member of Parliament, of Osmond Orgreave, or of Edwin Clayhanger; next we see the three terraces waning in their fancied importance; we witness the onrush of cheap, new houses "pushing" up to the old established homes and finally the evacuation of the owners of these large homes for more commodious quarters such as "Ladder-edge." We see revealed Edwin's justifiable pride in his home and note this same trait in the other characters. It is a Five Towns characteristic to be "house-proud" and Edwin was essentially a Five Townsman. Being that, he knew little except his work. In contrast to Ingpen, for example, he was very provincial. Dvorak was nothing but a name to him; beyond the correct English method of pronouncing that name, he had no knowledge whatever of the subject in hand.

(1) "These Twain" -- pp. 505-6
The home of Auntie Hamps or of Clara Benbow is typical of the lower middle class in the Five Towns. At "canning" or "preserving" time the kitchen of either establishment would be lined with earthenware or with glass jars while the brilliant copper pan "sacred" to preserving would be over the kitchen fire. Hilda resented the mediocre respectability and the depths of domesticity which she surveyed in these houses. As Bennett says:

Hilda sat grimly in the threadbare sitting-room amid morocco-bound photograph albums, oleographs, and beady knickknacks, and sniffed the strong odour of jams; and in the violence of her revolt against that widespread messy idolatrous eternal domesticity of which Auntie Hamps was a classic example, she protested that she would sooner buy the worst jam than make the best, and that she would never look under a table for dust, and that naught should induce her to do any housework after midday, and that she would abolish spring-cleaning utterly. (1)

Edwin, somewhat removed from the core of the Five Towns, is unable to contemplate the Sunday musical evening without knowing it to be something rash, fantastic, and hopeless. "Were it known it could excite only hostility, horror, contempt, or an intense bovine indifference; chiefly the last... Breathe the name of Chopin in that land..." (2) This same fear of Five Towns opinion made Edwin paint "Office" on the entrance door to his new shop rather than the romantic and high-sounding "Counting-House" which he had at first contemplated. He was sympathetic to Labor and yet dared not express his dissatisfaction with

(1) "These Twain" - - p. 101
(2) "These Twain" - - p. 162
the industrial system which made men and women gravelling slaves to the employer. To Edwin's father, Darius, an employee was an employee to be hired as cheaply as possible and to be exploited as completely as possible. The attitude of Big James towards the underlings was precisely that of his deceased master.

They would not be unduly harsh, they would often be benevolent, but the existence of any problem, and especially any fundamental problem, beyond the direct inter-relation of wages and work could not conceivably have occurred to them. After about three quarters of a century of taboo trade-unions had now for a dozen years ceased to be regarded as associations of anarchistic criminals. Big James was cautiously in favor of trade-unions, and old Darius Clayhanger in late life had not been a quite uncompromising opponent of them. As for Edwin, he had always in secret sympathized with them, and the trade-unionists whom he employed had no grievance against him. Yet this unanswerable, persistent question would pierce the complacency of Edwin's prosperity. It seemed to operate in a sort of fourth dimension; few even amongst trade-unionists themselves would have reacted to it. But Edwin lived with it more and more. He was indeed getting used to it. Though he could not answer it, he could parry it, thanks to scientific ideas obtained from Darwin and Spencer, by the reflection that both he and his serfs, whatever their sex, were the almost blind agencies of a vast process of evolution. And this he did, exulting with pride sometimes in the sheer adventure of the affair, and sharing his thoughts with none... Strange that once, and not so many years ago either, he had been tempted to sell the business and live inert and ignobly secure on the interest of invested moneys! But even today he felt sudden fears of responsibility; they came and went. (1)

The Five Towns seemed intolerable by their dirt and ugliness to Edwin even as he contemplated the wildness of the

(1) "These Twain" – p. 233
moorland on his visit to Dartmoor Prison. His thoughts were turbulent. "Lithography - you had but to think of the word to perceive the paltriness of the thing. Riches, properties, proprieties, all the safeties, - futile... Yet Edwin seemed to guess that beneath the tiresome surfaces of life in the Five Towns the essence of it might be mystically lived." (1) Ingpen struck home when he accused Edwin of being in a "coma" and of thinking only of his works and of his house. As Ingpen continues his tirade to Edwin we are able to contrast Ingpen's more urban viewpoint with Edwin's provincial one:

"You've become a good specimen of the genus 'domesticated business man.' You've forgotten what life is. You fancy you're at full stretch all the time, but you're in a coma. I suppose you'll never see forty again - and have you ever been outside this island? You went to Llandudno this year because you went last year. If you happen now and then to worry about the failure of your confounded liberal Party you think you're a blooming broad-minded publicist. Where are your musical evenings? When I asked you to go with me to a concert at Manchester last week but one, you thought I'd gone dotty, simply because it meant your leaving the works early and not getting to bed until the unheard-of-time of one thirty a.m." (2)

Of course Edwin was not as truly provincial as was Albert or Clara Benbow or Auntie Hamps and yet he might have lapsed into that category had not Hilda continually prodded him from the heights of her urbanism acquired by her residence at Brighton. The influence of the Orgreaves and of Tertius Ingpen also unquestionably helped to raise him above the Five Towns.

(1) "These Twain" - - p. 295
(2) "These Twain" - - p. 384
In this novel, "These Twain", Bennett has portrayed most acutely the power of his characters to feel intensely. Sophia, in "The Old Wives' Tale," is capable of blazing wrath or of crushing scorn when aroused, but Hilda is able to soar to ecstatic heights of bliss merely because of the success of a musicale or because she has secured a wagonette from her husband. Edwin, too, drinks deeply of the ale of life as Hilda brews it for him and, on rare occasions through his actions, enhances the flavor of the nectar of life for Hilda. Their united stand against Mr. Peartree and Auntie Hamps who sought to persuade Edwin to accept the office of Treasurer of the Additional Chapels Fund made them both tingle with joy in their victory.

After Mr. Peartree and Miss Hamps had left the room Hilda leaped at Edwin and kissed him violently, saying, "I had to kiss you while it's all going on." (1) As she spoke ardent vitality shimmered in her eyes. Both are deeply thrilled by certain poetry and music.

The strange beauty of Whitman and the strange beauty of Dvorak seemed to unite, and both Edwin and Hilda were uplifted, not merely by these mingled beauties, but by their realization of the wondrous fact that they both took intense pleasure in the same varied forms of beauty. Happiness rose about them like a sweet smell in the spaces of the comfortable impeccable drawing-room. And for a moment they leaned towards each other in bliss. (2)

Hilda is affected strongly by her antipathy to the

Benbow family:

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 45
(2) "These Twain" -- pp. 92-3
Their narrow ignorance, their narrow self-conceit, their detestation of beauty, their pietism, their bigotry - revolted her. In what century had they been living all those years? Was this married life? Had Albert and Clara ever felt a moment of mutual passion? They were nothing but parents, eternally preoccupied with "oughts" and "ought nots" and forbiddances and horrid reluctant permissions. They did not know what joy was, and they did not want anybody else to know what joy was. Even on the outskirts of such a family, a musical evening on a Sunday night appeared a forlorn enterprise. And all the families in all the streets were the same. Hilda was hard enough on George sometimes, but in that moment she would have preferred George to be a thoroughly bad rude boy and to go to the devil, and herself to be a woman abandoned to every licence, rather than that he and she should resemble Clara and her offspring. All her wrath centered upon Clara as the very symbol of what she loathed. (1)

Married life for Edwin and Hilda was by no means a quiet succession of conjugal joys. Their earliest months of marriage were comparatively quiet but the temperament of Hilda was so different from that of Edwin that peace, for long, was unthinkable. Their bitter disputes and rancour often opened a dangerous breach between them and then in an exhausting (for Edwin, at least) reconciliation the chasm was bridged for the moment. Edwin could not forgive her interference in his affairs and she, practicing the acknowledged power of the one who is most loved over the one who is the lover, exploited her husband to the utmost. Their differences were over minor affairs at times, such as in the placing of the furniture for the musicale, but, nevertheless, the breaches existed and grew

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 123
and when they were temporarily closed Hilda returned to the attack. Hilda's passionate nature assuaged Edwin's wounds when she kissed him with such superb violence that "she drew his life out of him and poured in her own." (1) Still her machinations with the intent of forcing Edwin to buy "Ladderedge" almost lost Hilda her husband. Edwin suddenly discovered what to all other people is obvious - that if Hilda had not been unjust in asserting her own individuality there could be no merit in yielding to her. He had decided to reconcile himself to injustice because that was the "master achievement." This decision saved the marriage and was an augury of the future happiness in store for the protagonists of the novel.

Although Edwin displayed at least on one memorable occasion - the night of the Sunday musicale - that his actions were determined by impulse more than by rationalism, it is Hilda in whom impulsiveness is most marked. She threw a bombshell into the calm of the Benbow household by suggesting to Maggie that the latter might be desirous of selling the Clayhanger home in Bleakridge to Edwin; she altered the arrangement of furniture in the drawing-room of her home in spite of Edwin's expressed wish that it remain unchanged; she constantly interfered in Edwin's affairs without thinking of the consequences of her acts; she said things to Edwin and then questioned herself, "Why do I say such a thing?"; without consulting Edwin she decided to take George to London to be examined by an

(1) "These Twain" - - p. 185
occultist; her kisses to Edwin possessed all the love, surrender, anger, and remorse that characterizes impulsive natures. In those moments when she was stirred she was not a woman - "she was an instinct, a desire, a ruthless purpose." (1)

It is doubtful if any other character in this novel possesses the impulsiveness of Hilda Clayhanger. Only one approaches her in this respect and that person is Tertius Ingpen. Support for this contention may be found in the nature and tone of the conversations he carried on with Hilda and with Edwin. There is always the lurking suspicion in the reader's mind, however, that this ingenuousness was merely the external covering or guise for his keen analysis of situations. If the reader can convince himself that Ingpen is really ingenuous, then he may be said to have an impulsive nature.

In this novel Bennett does not seem to be concerned greatly with the problem of death. We do witness the death of Auntie Hamps but it is a negligible view and the treatment Bennett gives to the actual dying of Mr. and Mrs. Orgreave is even more incidental. Nor do we find as sharply drawn pictures of old age as we did in the "Old Wives' Tale." Janet Orgreave is older and feels a sense of futility and superfluousness in the social scheme of the Five Towns but in London she becomes acclimatized and is happy; Hilda grows more solid and set, still, not a hair of her dark head has changed color; Miss Hamps, alone, is proof that the ravages of time are unceasing - in her last illness her posture reminded Edwin of an exhausted animal, sur-

(1) "These Twain" — p. 431
prised by the unconsciousness of final fatigue, shameless in the intense need of repose. "Auntie Hamps... was just an utterly wearied and beaten creature" (1) and yet her approaching demise had endowed her with a tragic dignity.

Hilda, in "These Twain," is the embodiment of Bennett's desire for wealth and fame and even her acquisitiveness may be excused on the basis that it was due to her fierce protective nature which resented the impositions of Clayhanger relatives upon Edwin. She really considered him to be a dupe to schemers like Albert Benbow and the thought of that worthy infuriated her. She was ambitious for herself in so far as social position and prestige were concerned, but this ambition was mitigated by the fact that she sought to "enrich" Edwin's world through a widened social sphere. Her envy was aroused by the luxurious surroundings of the Heskeths and she longed for those same luxuries. In perfect contrast to Hilda's magnanimous acquisitiveness was Albert Benbow's niggardly maneuverings for wealth. We cannot help despising him for his "toadying," for his avaricious nature, and for his persistent, injudicious inquiries about Auntie Hamps' will. Bennett meant this minor character to appear infinitesimal in the reader's eye and he succeeded in his intention.

The pornographic element in this novel is slightly more obvious than in "Hilda Lessways" but, since the most vivid passages concern the love between Hilda and Edwin, we accept

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 410
their relationship while we are conscious of the ecstatic bliss which accompanied these manifestations of love. The plight of Emmie is treated rather casually and Ingpen's relations with the wife of the insane asylum inmate are merely hinted at.

Bennett's attitude towards religion is much more obvious than in the earlier books. In fact, it is upon this volume of the "Clayhanger Trilogy" that Dorothea Price Hughes has based her uncomplimentary criticism of Bennett's view towards Wesleyan Methodism. Edwin Clayhanger, unfortunate victim to the young Mr. Peartree's fervent nature which devised the Saturday Afternoon Bible Class for school boys thus depriving these boys of the half-holiday, was still embittered at the memory of this injustice and for that reason had never forgiven Mr. Peartree.

He had left Mr. Peartree's Bible Class a convinced anti-religionist, a hater and despiser of all that the Wesleyan Chapel and Mr. Peartree stood for. He deliberately was not impartial, and he took a horrid pleasure in being unfair. He knew well that Methodism had produced many fine characters, and played a part in the moral development of the race; but he would not listen to his own knowledge. Nothing could extenuate, for him, the noxiousness of Methodism. On the other hand he was full of glee if he could add anything to the indictment against it and Christianity. Huxley's controversial victories over Gladstone were then occurring in the monthly press, and he acclaimed them with enormous gusto. When he first read that the Virgin Birth was a feature of sundry creeds more ancient than Christianity, his private satisfaction was intense and lasted acutely for days. When he heard that Methodism had difficulty in maintaining its supply of
adequately equipped ministers, he rejoiced with virulence. His hostility was the more significant in that it was concealed - embedded like a foreign substance in the rather suave gentleness of his nature. At intervals - decreasingly frequent, it is true - he would carry it into the chapel itself; for through mingled cowardice and sharp prudence, he had not formally left the Connexion. To compensate himself for such bowings-down he would now and then assert, judicially to a reliable male friend, or with ferocious contempt to a scandalized defenceless sister, that, despite all parsons, religion was not a necessity of the human soul, and that he personally had never felt the need of it and never would. In which assertion he was profoundly sincere. (1)

Edwin remembered all the frightful and degrading ennui which when he was young he had suffered as a martyr to Wesleyanism and dogma; "he remembered all the sinister deceptions which he had had to practice and which had been practiced upon him." (2) Now, however, there was nothing but a bland indifference which did not even scorn as he refused to be treasurer of the District Additional Chapels Fund. Bennett's aversion to the external manifestation of religion may be seen in Edwin's refusal of Mr. Peartree's offer and also in Edwin's thoughts about Auntie Hamps. "She worshipped God under the form of respectability, but she did worship God. Like all religious votaries she placed religion above morality; hence her chicane, her inveterate deceit and self-deceit." (3) Bennett, a rationalist, disliked the crude sensuous swayings to a religion of emotion, and adhered to his own code. This, perhaps,

(1) "These Twain" — pp. 28-9
(2) "These Twain" — p. 41
(3) "These Twain" — p. 427
was not above reproach but it was in keeping with his convictions.

"These Twain" completes the treatment given of the characters, Edwin Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways, begun in the two earlier volumes of the Trilogy. In this last book the reader is able to perceive Edwin as he appeared to Hilda and Hilda as she appeared to Edwin, and the reader can also see how the externals which made up their joint existence appear to the mind of each. Bennett has succeeded in the difficult task he set out to do and for that reason Hilda and Edwin are far more intimately revealed than if we viewed them objectively. We live and feel with each and yet stand apart from both because of Bennett's highly developed power of empathy.

Edwin, exasperated by Hilda's opposition to the new "works" says in his heart to her:

"What's it got to do with you? You manage your home, and I'll manage my business! You know nothing at all about business. You're the very antithesis of business. Whatever business you've ever had to do with you've ruined. You've no right to judge and no grounds for judgment. It's odious of you to asperse any of the Orgreaves. They were always your best friends. I should never have met you if it hadn't been for them. And where would you be now without me? Trying to run some wretched boarding-house and probably starving. Why do you assume that I'm a d---d fool? You always do. Let me tell you that I'm one of the most common-sense men in this town, and everybody knows it except you. Anyhow I was clever enough to get you out of a mess... You knew I was hiding something from you, did you? I wish you wouldn't talk such infernal rot. And
moreover I won't have you interfering in my business. Other wives don't, and you shan't. So let that be clearly understood."
In his heart he was very ill-used and very savage. (1)

In reality his spoken words are, "Well, we shall see."

When the building was actually under way Edwin is thrilled at the sight of some drawings of the floor plan made by George.

It seemed to him wondrous, miraculous, overwhelming, that his own disappointed ambition to be an architect should have re-flowered in his wife's child who was not his child. He was reconciled to being a printer, and indeed rather liked being a printer, but now all his career presented itself to him as a martyrisation. And he passionately swore that such a martyrisation should not happen to George. George's ambition should be nourished and forwarded as no boyish ambition had ever been nourished and forwarded before. For a moment he had a genuine conviction that George must be a genius. (2)

Hilda seemed to accept the idea of the new shop, too, and Bennett pictures Edwin's relief. This relief is short-lived, however, because Hilda's caprices quickly aroused Edwin's anger and disgust. His thoughts on the occasion of Hilda's blunt, "I must go over and see Janet at once..." (to commiserate with Janet over the unfortunate elopement of Johnnie Orgreave) are typical evidence of his reaction to her impulsiveness.

"Why at once?" the superior male demanded. Disdain and resentment were in his voice. Hundreds of times, when alone, he had decided that he would never use that voice - first, because it was unworthy of a philosopher, second, because it never achieved any

(1) "These Twain" - - pp. 84-5
(2) "These Twain" - - pp. 216-17
good result, and third, because it often did harm. Yet he would use it. The voice had an existence and a volition of its own within its being; he marveled that the essential mechanism of life should be so clumsy and inefficient. He heard the voice come out, and yet was not displeased, was indeed rather pleasantly excited. A new grievance had been created for him; he might have ignored it, just as he might ignore a solitary cigarette lying in his cigarette case. Both cigarettes and grievances were bad for him. But he could not ignore them. Useless to argue with himself that he had already smoked more than enough, - the cigarette had to emerge from the case and be burnt; and the grievance too was irresistible. In an instant he had it between his teeth and was darkly enjoying it.

Of course Hilda's passionate pity for Janet was a fine thing. Granted! But therein was no reason why she should let it run away with her. The worst of these capricious, impulsive creatures was that they could never do anything fine without an enormous fuss and upset. (1)

As the years of their married life passed their conflicts increased alarmingly, or so it seemed to Edwin. He perceived that the struggle between his individuality and hers could never cease.

No diplomatic devices of manner could put an end to it. And he had seen also that as they both grew older and developed more fully, the conflict was becoming more serious. He assumed that he had faults, but he was solemnly convinced that the faults of Hilda were tremendous, essential, and ineradicable. She had a faculty for acting contrary to justice and contrary to sense which was simply monstrous. And it had always been so. Her whole life had been made up of impulsiveness and contumacy in that impulsiveness. Witness the incredible scenes of the strange Dartmoor episode - all due to her stubborn irrationality! The perspective of his marriage was plain to him in the night, - and it ended in a rupture. He had been

(1) "These Twain" - - p. 247
resolutely blind to Hilda's peculiarities, dismissing incident after incident as an isolated misfortune. But he could be blind no more. His marriage was all of a piece, and he must and would recognize the fact... The sequel would be a scandal!... Well, let it be a scandal! As the minutes and hours passed in grim meditation, the more attractive grew the lost freedom of the bachelor and the more ready he felt to face any ordeal that lay between him and it... (1)

The chicane and deceit to which Hilda resorted in order to persuade Edwin to purchase "Ladderedge" almost resulted in the break-up of the weakened marriage. When Edwin became fully aware of her intrigue his anger was at fever pitch. On their return to Bleakridge, a quarrel arose over such an insignificant subject as the improper laying of the fire and Edwin stamped out into the night.

His brain throbbed and shook like an engine-house in which the machinery was his violent thoughts. He no longer saw his marriage as a chain of disconnected episodes; he saw it as a drama the true meaning of which was at last revealed by the climax now upon him. He had had many misgivings about it, and had put them away, and they all swept back presenting themselves as a series of signs that pointed to inevitable disaster. He had been blind, from wilfulness or cowardice. He now had vision. He had arrived at honesty. He said to himself, as millions of men and women have said to themselves, with awestruck calm: "My marriage was a mistake." And he began to face the consequences of the admission. He was not such a fool as to attach too much importance to the immediate quarrel, nor even to the half-suppressed but supreme disension concerning a place of residence. He assumed, even, that the present difficulties would somehow, with more or less satisfaction, be adjusted. What, however, would not and could not be adjusted was the temperament that produced them. Those dif-

(1) "These Twain" — p. 429
difficulties, which had been preceded by smaller
difficulties, would be followed by greater.
It was inevitable. To hope otherwise would
be weakly sentimental, as his optimism during
the vigil in Auntie Hamp's bedroom had been
weakly sentimental. He must face the truth:
"She won't alter her ways - and I shan't stand
them." No matter what their relations might
in future superficially appear to be, their
union was over. Or, if it was not actually
over, it soon would be over, for the forces
to shatter it were uncontrolled and in-
creasing in strength. (1)

Such dire thoughts oppressed him as he walked along
but suddenly there flashed into his mind, complete, the great
discovery of his career.

If Hilda had not been unjust in the assertion
of her own individuality, there could be no
merit in yielding to her. To yield to a just
claim was not meritorious, though to withstand
it would be wicked. He was objecting to in-
justice as a child objects to rain on a holiday.
Injustice was a tremendous actuality! It had
to be faced and accepted. (He himself was un-
just. At any rate he intellectually conceived
that he must be unjust, though honestly he could
remember no instance of injustice on his part.)
To reconcile oneself to injustice was the master
achievement. He had read it; he had been aware
of it; but he had never really felt it till
that moment on the dark canal-bridge. He was
swayed, thrilled by the realization. He longed
ardently to put it to the test. He did put
it to the test. He yielded on the canal-bridge.
And in yielding, it seemed to him that he was
victorious. (2)

With this victory in his heart he returned homeward
with an acquiescence which made his future a glorious thing to
contemplate.

(1) "These Twain" -- p. 513
(2) "These Twain" -- pp. 522-3
Hilda is drawn with even more completeness than Edwin. Her sadness, disgust, indignation and moodiness aroused by the mediocrity of the Five Towns intellect is glowingly described. She is even conscious of her grievances against Edwin although she considered him to be quite different from the rest of the Clayhanger family. Ordinarily he was quite calm in his relationship with her, but her interference in the purchase of the Bleakridge house from Maggie aroused Edwin to the point of being dictatorial. This surprised Hilda but she maintained her outward composure:

Nevertheless the amiable calm which she maintained astonished even herself. She was not happy, but certainly she was not unhappy. She had got, or she was going to get, what she wanted; and here was the only fact important to her; the means by which she had got it, or was going to get it, were negligible now. It cost her very little to be magnanimous. She wondered at Edwin. Was this furious brute the timid, worshipping boy who had so marvellously kissed her a dozen years earlier - before she had fallen into the hands of a scoundrel? Were these scenes what the exquisite romance of marriage had come to?... Well, and if it was so, what then? If she was not happy she was elated, and she was philosophic, and she had the terrific sense of realities of some of her sex. She was out of the Benbow house; she breathed free, she had triumphed, and she had her man to herself. He might be a brute - the Five Towns (she had noticed as a returned exile) were full of brutes whose passions surged and boiled beneath the phlegmatic surface - but he existed, and their love existed. And a peep into the depth of the cauldron was exciting... The injustice or the justice of his behaviour did not make a live question. (1)

Hilda was again surprised when she became convinced that Edwin had all intention of carrying out his plans concern-

(1) "These Twain" — p. 132
She had been staggered by the revelation that he was definitely committed to the project of lithography and the new works. Not one word about the matter had he said to her since their altercation on the night of the reception; and she had imagined that, with his usual indecision, he was allowing it to slide. She scarcely recognized her Edwin. Now she accused him of a malicious obstinacy, not understanding that he was involved in the great machine of circumstance and perhaps almost as much surprised as herself at the movement of events. At any rate she was being beaten once more, and her spirit rebelled. Through all the misfortunes previous to her marriage that spirit, if occasionally cowed, had never been broken. She had sat grim and fierce against even bumbailiffs in her time. Yes, her spirit rebelled, and the fact that others had known about the Shawport land before she knew made her still more mutinous against destiny. She looked round dazed at the situation. What? The mild Edwin defying and crushing her? It was scarcely conceivable.

A more tender side of her nature is revealed by her thoughts as she contemplated Edwin after his tiresome journey to Tavy Mansion:

"That wistful look in his eyes has never changed, and it never will. Imagine him travelling on Sunday, when the silly old thing might just as well have come on Saturday, if he'd had anybody to decide him! He's been travelling for twenty-four hours or more, and now he's here! What a shame for me to have dragged him down here in spite of himself! But he would do it for me! He has done it... I had to have him for this afternoon! After all he must be very good at business. Everyone respects him, even here. We may end by being really rich. Have I ever really appreciated him?... And now of course he's going to be annoyed again. Poor boy!" (2)

(1) "These Twain" -- pp. 177-8
(2) "These Twain" -- p. 284
Usually, however, Bennett has us see Hilda as the impetuous, wilful creature whose power of will was constantly opposed to Edwin’s, whose very existence was dependent upon the unhesitant pursuit of her own ends even though they were in conflict with those of the man whom she had married. And yet, because of those delightful moments when she surrenders to Edwin we are left with the conviction that Edwin could not but love and admire this fierce, impulsive creature. She knew that she was necessary to his existence, exploited him, and loved him more intensely because he permitted the exploitation. She was conscious of and lived up to the creed of "each for himself in marriage." Life for her, without adherence to such a creed would have been a worthless, dull, uninviting existence.

"These Twain" must be remarked as one of the best and truest records ever penned of the reality of - in the common understanding - uneventful married life. The profoundest Bennett speaks is in that cardinal passage which occurs in the last chapter, entitled "The Discovery," in which Edwin discovered that "to reconcile oneself to injustice was the master achievement." Truly a great discovery and yet it is so obvious as to be almost banal.

Francis Hackett, that ardent enthusiast of Arnold Bennett, paid a fitting tribute to the author of "These Twain" when he wrote:

"The gratitude that is due to any real artist is great but the gratitude due to an artist who adheres to life in its common motivation seems to me exceptional."
"The very sensitiveness that makes a man an artist tends to confine him to those situations which engage and indulge his sensitiveness. Because the world of gross and common action, of common necessity, is hostile to the spectator, the spectator easily becomes hostile in return. But Mr. Bennett is a spectator who has retained a beautiful sympathy for motivations and susceptibilities alien to the artistic type. He has transcended interest in 'ideas' and purposes to spread human nature before us. 'These Twain' is a triumph of disciplined fictive imagination, a triumph both of artist and man." (1)

F. Riceyman Steps

It is an accepted fact among the literary world that Arnold Bennett's best works have as their background the setting in which he spent his youth - the Five Towns Region. The discriminating reader of his works must agree with this universal belief because of the feeling engendered within him when he reads such a book as the "Old Wives' Tale" or any one of those books which comprise the "Clayhanger Trilogy."

"Riceyman Steps" has its locale in the great metropolitan industrial district of Clerkenwell and though it possesses excellent character portrayal and reveals Bennett's unimpaired power of detailed description, the reader is left with a rather vague sense of disappointment. Not as poor as "The Card" or "Mr. Prohack," this book still falls somewhat below "Hilda Lessways" or "These Twain."

In "Riceyman Steps" we have Bennett returning to his study of the French formula - neglected while he turned out (1) Francis Hackett - "New Republic"
fantasias, articles, and pocket philosophies - in his imitation of de Maupassant's emotional power of rendering a given situation with the utmost skill and effectiveness. A brief summarizing statement of this book would be the simple declaration that "Riceyman Steps" is an intensive study of the development, power, and effect of avarice. There is little besides the portrayal of Henry Earlforward's miserliness and its effect upon him, upon his wife, and upon their servant, Elsie Sprickett. This somewhat sweeping indictment must be softened in view of the fact that the Clerkenwell district, King's Cross Road, and Riceyman Square possess the illusion of unquestioned reality as also do the characters who inhabit Riceyman Square.

The novel, however, is primarily a study of avarice manifested in a multitude of ways. Our introduction to that subject is on the occasion of Mrs. Arb's refusal to pay over sixpence for a cook-book priced at ninepence by Henry Earlforward. Finally in a gesture of magnanimity he presented the book to her as a gift. This cemented their friendship and after a brief courtship they are married - with a ring purchased from the proceeds of the sale of her former marriage ring. The one-day honeymoon is a study of the extent of Earlforward's dislike of spending. The price of admission to the famous Madame Tussaud's waxworks staggered him although his wife paid the fee; the meal costing ten shillings and sevenpence almost sickened him and his agreeing to visit the Chamber of Horrors (one and fourpence) was an invisible gesture of the most mag-
nificent and extravagant heroism. Bennett pictures Henry's
greed for wealth in this passage:

Withal, as he extracted a pound note from
his case, he suffered agony - and she was
watching him with her bright eyes. It was
a new pound note. The paper was white and
substantial; not a crease in it. The dim
water-marks whispered genuineness. The
green and brown of the design were more
beautiful than any picture. The majestic
representation of the Houses of Parliament
on the back gave assurance that the solidity
of the whole realm was behind that note.
The thing was as lovely and touching as a
young virgin daughter. Could he abandon
it for ever to the cold, harsh world? (1)

His nature was unable to withstand the expenses of
his honeymoon and, on the pretext of an aching knee, persuaded
Violet (his wife) to return home with him. Imagine his con­
sternation at seeing his establishment being vacuum-cleaned!
His first thought, even though this was Violet's wedding gift
to him, was of the expense. "How much does it cost?" he que­
rried repeatedly and anxiously and, on being told that it would
cost thirteen or fourteen pounds, he almost collapsed. In
ironical but characteristic vein Mr. Bennett has Earlforward
ask the workmen about the disposal of the removed dirt with
the question, "Do you sell it? Do you get anything for it?"
(2)

Those who suffer most keenly from this avarice are
Mrs. Earlforward and Elsie. The former, though somewhat sym­
pathetic with her husband's love of money and persuaded by her

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - - pp. 91-2
(2) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 102
feelings to imitate him, is extremely fearful of the self-denial which her husband practiced because of the possibility that this practice would result in his ill-health or death. Her protests against his lack of appetite and against his reluctance to warm the house with an occasional fire went unheeded and she bitterly acknowledged to herself that his passion for wealth exceeded his passion for her. Elsie, duped by her canny mistress into accepting twenty pounds and "keep" as her yearly wage is forced to put into practice the parsimonious tactics of her employers. Her room is never warm, she must use candles sparingly and must use extreme caution in the consuming of that expensive item - food. As for Henry Earlforward, his bland denial to Violet that he was depriving himself of the necessities of life probably convinced him if it did not convince her.

Henry has the faculty for appearing disinterested in wealth-getting which his actions belied. For example, as he sipped tea he might say to Violet with amiable detachment, "Let me see. Did you give me an account of that one pound you had for spending yesterday?" (1) Yet his refusal to wear his good blue trousers to an auction forced his wife to repair his torn trousers in bed with only a candle for light and heat. Seeing this, Henry got out of bed and drew up the blinds, and with a gesture towards the candle, said, "I think you won't want that now." (2)

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - p. 119
(2) "Riceyman Steps" - p. 126
His refusal to eat the specially prepared steak at tea-time was not due to lack of appetite as he professed, but because he saw in the steak the opening wedge in a drive to separate him from his beloved wealth through such "insane" purchases. It was this episode and her final yielding to Henry that convinced Violet her power over Henry did not exist. "He was in love with her, but he was more in love with his grand passion and vice, which alone had power over him, and of which he, the bland tyrant over all else, was the slave." (1)

Thus in countless small ways did the hoarding of wealth continue until such time as Violet's own physical condition frightened her and aroused her vehement protest against Henry's steadfast refusal to have his ailment attended to. The too-long neglect of their physical selves resulted in the death of both - Violet, from lack of strength due to under-nourishment, and Henry from a cancer in the stomach. Only Elsie retained her health and vigor and that was due to her nocturnal visits to the cage in which food was kept and to her consumption of (to Henry Earlforward) unheard-of quantities of raw bacon.

This, Bennett, seems to say, is the inevitable result of injudicious economy and thrift. The worshippers of Mammon leave their fruits behind for others - others as unworthy as the Reverend Augustus Earlforward - to enjoy.

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 151
The physical background for this rather harrowing recital of the cause and effect of greed is drawn with the same undiminished vigor which marks Bennett's descriptions in the "Old Wives' Tale." Here, however, we have Riceyman Square drawn for us instead of St. Luke's Square:

Riceyman Square had been built round St. Andrew's in the hungry 'forties. It had been built all at once, according to plan; it had form. The three-story houses (with areas and basements) were all alike; and were grouped together in sections by triangular pediments with ornamentations there-on in a degenerate Regency style. These pediments and the window-facings and the whole walls up to the beginning of the first floor were stuccoed and painted. In many places the paint was peeling off and the stucco crumbling. The fronts of the door-steps were green with vegetable growth. Some of the front-doors and window-frames could not have been painted for fifteen or twenty years. All the horizontal lines in the architecture had become curved. Long cracks showed in the brickwork where two dwellings met. The fanlights and some of the iron work feebly recalled the traditions of the eighteenth century. The areas, except one or two, were obscene. The Square had once been genteel; it ought now to have been picturesque, but was not. It was merely decrepit, foul and slatternly. It had no attractiveness of any sort. Evolution had swirled round it, missed it, and left it. Neither electricity nor telephones had ever invaded it, and scores of windows still had venetian blinds. All men except its inhabitants and the tax-collector, the rate-collector, and the school attendance officer had forgotten Riceyman Square. (1)

To the eye of Mrs. Arb, stranger to the Clerkenwell district, Riceyman Square appeared especially unattractive as it lay frowsily supine after the week's hard labor.

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- pp. 43-4
All the upper windows were shut and curtained, and most of the ground-floor windows. The rare glimpses of forlorn interiors were desolating. Not a child played in the roadways. But here and there a housewife had hung her doormats and canaries on the railings to take the holy Sabbath air; and newspapers, fresh as newly gathered fruit, waited folded on doorsteps for students of crime and passion to awake from their beds in darkened and stifling rooms. Also little milk-cans with tarnished brass handles had been suspended in clusters on the railings. Cats only, in their elegance and their detached disdain, rose superior to the terrific environment. The determined church bells ceaselessly jangled. (1)

Henry Earlforward presents a striking figure as he escorts Mrs. Arb through the Square. He was neither stout nor thin, his thin black hair was speckled with grey, but his complexion was still good; and the rich, inordinately rich red lips under a small greyish moustache and above a short pointed beard, were quite remarkable in their suggestion of vitality. He peered at near objects with his small brown eyes and it would have taken an experienced and cautious observer of mankind to judge his age accurately. Henry would have said that he was in the prime of life and, since he was not senile, his clothes and bearing were that of a man conscious of the importance of a neat, sprightly appearance. As he walked a slight limp was barely perceptible.

In contrast to Henry's staid and unhurried manner is the keen restlessness of Mrs. Arb. She was slim but imposing and her ingenuous questioning about the Square's peculiarities created a favorable impression upon Mr. Earlforward. As they

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- pp. 44-5
sauntered along through the Square they approached St. Andrew's Church with its yellow bricks and blue slate roof. Bennett describes the church with such thorough attention to details as to include even the reaction of the observer to its ugliness. As he says, "The eye could not rest anywhere upon its surface without pain." (1)

Thus does Bennett create the general impression that the whole Clerkenwell district and especially Riceyman Square was "down at the heel." The extreme poverty and squalor of the mass of people who lived in the ugly concrete blocks in the center of the Square seem to oppress him as, indeed, they do the reader. However, Bennett mingles a kind of whimsical humor with the pathos of his description of Elsie's home before she became a "general" for Mr. and Mrs. Earlforward. For instance, he says that the children of the lusty meat salesman all had rickets "out of naughtiness," (2) while the French-polisher on the first floor emitted an odor which often competed with the characteristic house odor of stale soapsuds and who had an everlasting cough "out of ill will for mankind." (3)

The private existence of the meat salesman's family and of the French-polisher's family is bared to our amused glance while we listen to the opprobrium heaped upon these groups by a spinster on the second floor who was profoundly and bitterly dissatisfied for the mere reason that she was a

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 43
(2) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 48
(3) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 48
spinster, and who loathed the sounds of altercation arising out of the misuse of the entrance-hall or of some other commonplace incident. Only Elsie seems to lead a normal life in this household, and on Sunday mornings while the rest of the adults lay in a "paradisaical coma" Elsie kept her eyes on the children of the house as they quietly played in the yard. Elsie was slatternly, dirty and without any grace of adornment but since it was her natural, respectable state to be so, no one, (and least of all, Elsie) thought her existence was unusually hard.

Through his descriptive power Bennett has succeeded in making ordinary scenes, persons, and occurrences very interesting to the reader. The view of King's Cross Road from Riceyman Steps, the relating of the mishaps and final success of the subterranean railroad, the knife-wielding incident in Mrs. Arb's store, the drunken behavior of the French-polisher of the tenement-district, the "honeymoon" of the Earlforwards, the existence of Elsie in the Earlforward household, the inimical attitude of Mrs. Earlforward in the Bauersch episode, the illness of Joseph, and of Mr. and Mrs. Earlforward culminating in the death of the latter two and, finally, the break-up and disappearance of T. T. Riceyman's book store - all these excite our interest because of the manner of their presentation. Bennett has truly succeeded in this novel in his desire to portray a given situation with the utmost effectiveness.
As a character study, "Riceyman Steps" concerns itself mainly with the delineation of the personalities of Mr. and Mrs. Earlforward and of Elsie Sprickett. We are aware of Joseph, Elsie's shell-shocked lover, of Jerry Perkins, of Dr. Haste, and of the Belroses but they are but shadowy figures in the background of the story. Not only do we observe the main characters as others see them, but we see them as they seem to themselves and to one another, and we are able to observe, although to a lesser degree than in "Clayhanger," the workings of their minds when under the stimulus of external occurrences.

Mrs. Arb, thin, bright, cheerful, with scintillating eyes attracted Henry Earlforward who was accustomed to neither cheerfulness nor brightness. Her welcoming smile inspired him and uplifted him to higher plane of existence. Conscious of her attraction for him she secretly exulted and waited for further overtures on his part. She beheld Mr. Earlforward with favour.

His pointed short beard, so well trimmed, seemed to give him the status of a pillar of society. She still liked his full red lips and his fresh complexion. And he was exceedingly neat. True, he wore the same black, shirt-hiding tie as on weekdays, and his wristbands were still invisible; his hat and overcoat were not distinguished! But he had on a distinguished new blue suit; she was quite sure that he was inaugurating it that day. His slight limp pleased and touched her.

Oh! He was a man with reserves, both of character and of goods. Secure in these reserves, he could front the universe. He was self-reliant without being self-confident. (1)

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 40
When their relationship had grown more intimate after a few weeks of acquaintanceship we witness her reaction to a rather indirect allusion by Mr. Earlforward of his love for her:

She could not withstand his melting glance.
She knew that their intimacy, having developed gradually through weeks, was startlingly on the point of bursting into a new phase.
The sense of danger with her, as with nearly all women, was intermittent. The man was in love with her. He was in her hands. What could she not do with him? Could she not accomplish marvels? Could she not tame monsters?
And she understood his instincts; she shared them. And he was a rock of defence, shelter, safety!... The alternative: solitude, celibacy, spinsterishness, eternal self-defence, eternal misgivings about her security; horrible! (1)

Mrs. Arb nodded assent to Henry's suggestion that he visit her that night and with her acquiescence she knew that she had uttered the deciding word of her fate:

She trembled with apprehension and felicity. He was a wonderful man and an enigma. He inspired love and dread. As the day passed her feeling for him became intense. At closing time her ecstatic heart was liquid with acquiescence. And she had, too, a bright, adventurous valour, but shot through with forebodings. (2)

During the first months of her marriage to Mr. Earlforward, Violet was very happy; happy in yielding her will to his, in adopting all his ideas. She experienced a sensuous pleasure in the passionate resolution to be his disciple and lieutenant. As the months passed, however, her sympathies were somewhat alienated by his refusal to eat specially prepared food and to provide adequate warmth for their needs. She was

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 73
(2) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 74
upset, too, by the ingenuous Elsie whose wolfish appetite (or so it seemed to Henry) made such inroads into the family larder. Violet's remorse was great as Dr. Haste revealed to her that the probable cause of Henry's lack of appetite was a cancer at the cardiac end of the stomach. She reproached herself for not believing Henry when he declared that he was not hungry. Her imagination, whetted by her own illness, magnified his as she looked at him lying exhausted on the bed. She saw a man whose aspect had considerably worsened:

The facial emaciation was accentuated, and the pallor of the ears and the lips, and even his beard and hair were limp as if from their own fatigue. Elsie's greed was now an infinitesimal thing in Violet's mind, and the importance attached to it struck her as wildly absurd. Yet she had a strange, cruel desire (which she repressed) to say to Henry: "Your bluff has failed! Your bluff has failed! And look at you!" (1)

And then Violet's thoughts turned to the approaching Christmas for which she had secretly been making plans for merriment; she had meant to get Elsie's aid because she knew that Elsie had in her the instincts of fancy and romance:

Pathetic! She thought of her anger at Elsie's indiscretion in telling a customer that the master would never get up again. Ridiculous anger! He never would get up again; and what did it matter if all Clerkenwell knew in advance? The notion of Henry spending money on the cure of his damaged knee seemed painfully laughable. His dread, genuine or affected, of communism, seemed merely grotesque. She saw a funeral procession consisting of a hearse and one coach, leave Riceyman Steps. The coffin would have to be carried across the space from

(1) "Riceyman Steps" – p. 214
the shop-door to the main road, as no vehicle could come right to the door. Crowds! Crowds of gapers! (1)

Then, as Violet's own feeling of illness was intensified she was bitter against Henry. She saw in him a man "egotistic, ruthless, childish, naughty, illogical, incalculable, the supreme worry of her life..." (2) Her passionate outburst against his obstinacy hastened her own collapse so that it was she who was taken to the hospital rather than Henry. There, her career ended on the operating table - the result of insufficient strength to withstand the operation.

Mr. Earlforward is shown as a man who, from the plenitude of his inexperience, knew women deeply. He knew their characteristic defects and shortcomings. It seemed to him that Mrs. Arb was remarkably free from such:

It seemed to him, as it has seemed to millions of men, that he had had the luck to encounter a woman who miraculously combined the qualities of two sexes, and the talent to recognize the miracle on sight. He would not go so far as to assert that Mrs. Arb was unique (though he strongly suspected that she must be), but there could not be many Mrs. Arbs on earth. He was very happy in youthful dreams of a new and idyllic existence. (3)

These dreams seemed to be materializing as his friendship with Mrs. Arb progressed. He thought of her as a shrewd woman. A woman certainly not without ideas. Her thrift appealed to him in his secret passion for amassing wealth and he

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 214
(2) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 223
(3) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 58
deemed her to be a fitting helpmeet in the task of gratifying the passion. This belief was severely shaken when she vehemently upbraided him for his refusal to eat the steak she had prepared especially for him.

He had miscalculated Violet and underestimated the possibilities of the married state. He saw, for the first time clearly, that certain conjugal problems are not to be solved by reason, and that if he wished to survive the storms of a woman's temperament he must be a traitor to reason and intellectual uprightness. In brief, the game must obviously be catch-as-catch-can.

Ah! He was deceived in Violet. Because she would not pay more than sixpence for a needed book, and because she had surpassed himself in sweating a charwoman, he had been fool enough to believe that she was worthy to be his partner in the grand passion of his life. Well, he was wrong. He must count her in future as the enemy of his passion, and plot accordingly. (1)

The deterioration in health of both Henry and Violet was rapid. Faced with the prospect of going to a hospital Violet was acquiescent but Henry remained adamant in his refusal to leave his house. Bennett shows us Henry's mental turmoil as he fought against the forces who wished to move him to the hospital:

The enterprise was too enormous and too perilous. Once in, when would he get out again? And nurses were frightful bullies. He would be helpless in a hospital. And his business? It would fall to ruin. Everything would get askew. And the household? Astounding foolishness would be committed in the house if he lost his grip on it. He could manage his business and he could manage his household; and nobody else could. Besides, there was no sound reason for going

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - - pp. 155-6
into a hospital. As for washing out his stomach, if that was all, give him some mustard and some warm water, and he would undertake to do the trick in two minutes. The doctor evidently desired to make something out of nothing. They were all the same. And women were all the same, too. He had imagined that Violet was not like other women. But he had been mistaken! She had lost her head—otherwise she would never have sent for the doctor in the middle of the night. The doctor would undoubtedly charge double for a night visit. And the fire, choking and roasting him! He saw himself in the midst of a vast general lunacy and conspiracy, and he alone maintaining ordinary common sense and honesty. He felt the whole world against him; but he could fight the whole world. He had perfect confidence in the fundamental hard strength of his nature. (1)

Having delivered his final refusal to leave the house, Henry, by an immense effort of will, limped from his bedroom to the office of the closed shop. There as he peered at the tell-tale slip of paper which indicated Elsie's borrowing from his wealth, Henry lapsed into a comatose state and then died—ignoble victim of an ignoble passion.

Elsie, in spite of her unimaginative nature, was instinctively loyal to Joe, to her employer and to her sex. She entered into a mild conspiracy with Mrs. Arb, who wished to examine the premises of her future husband, and she concealed her knowledge of the thoroughness of this inspection from Mr. Earlforward. On the other hand, she answered Mrs. Arb's questions about Henry with a surprising reticence and tact. Her protective instinct was spread like a mantle over the unhappy,

(1) "Riceyman Steps" — p. 218
shell-shocked Joe and she was never happier than when ministering to the wants of her lover. The calm certainty with which she waited for Joe after his year of absence cloaked a disturbed heart which often prompted, "Supposing I've been too harsh. Will Joe come back?" Then her disillusionment when the anniversary of his going away passed without Joe making his appearance was relieved shortly after by news of her returned lover. How kindly and patiently she cared for her two patients in the gloomy Earlforward house - Joe with his fever-warmed body and Henry perspiring from the effort of withstanding the pain of his cancerous growth. Elsie did not possess the imaginative enterprise of a Clara Barton or of a Florence Nightingale but she was instinctively carrying out their precepts.

Of course Elsie is seen in other less poignant situations. Bennett reveals her inner feelings as she surveys her bedroom in her new home:

Do not suppose that the bedroom had no grand, exciting quality for Elsie. It had one. It was solely hers. It was the first bedroom she had ever in all her life had entirely to herself. More, in her personal experience, it was the first room that was used as a bedroom and nothing else. Elsie had never slept alone in a room, and she had very rarely slept in a bed alone. She had had no privacy. She now gazed on every side, and what she saw and felt was privacy; a luxurious sensation, exquisite and hardly credible. She abandoned herself to it as Mrs. Arb had abandoned herself to the kiss of Henry Earlforward. It was a balm to her grief. It was a retreat in which undisturbed she could enjoy her grief. (1)

(1) "Riceyman Steps" - - p. 87
Her appetite led her into delicate altercation with her mistress and we are permitted to see Elsie's yielding to temptation. It is extremely easy to tiptoe along with her to the cage in which food was kept, surreptitiously remove the scorned steak and with the last mouthful suddenly burst into tears at the inexplicableness of human nature which caused her to do such terrible things. The subtle vein of humor which underlies the description of her fall is worth noting:

The steak, during its cooking, had caused her a lot of inconvenience; the smell of it had awakened desires which she had had difficulty in withstanding; it had made her mouth water abundantly; and she had been very thankful to get the steak safely into the dining-room without any accident happening to it. But now the steak did not challenge her weakness. Resolution had triumphed over the steak. Her too active and ingenious mind became, however, entangled in the conception of the tiny fragment lying by the steak itself. She examined the fragment. A mouthful; no more! In the morning it would be dried up and shrunk to nothing. It would be wasted. She picked up the fragment out of curiosity, just to see exactly what it was like, and in an instant the fragment had vanished. The fragment did not seem to go into her stomach; it subdivided itself into a thousand parts, which ran through her veins like fire, more potent than brandy, more dreadfully inspiring than champagne.

From this moment the steak was turned into a basilisk, with a devilish, sinister fascination for her. She ceased to wash up. She was saddened by the domestic infelicity of her employers; she was cast down and needed a tonic. She felt that without some pick-up she could not bear the vast grief of the world. She went through the agonies of the resisting drunkard dragged by ruthless craving nearer and nearer to the edge of the fatal precipice. Would her employers themselves eat the steak on the morrow? Very probably not. Very probably Mrs. Earlforward on the morrow would authorize her, Elsie,
to eat the steak. If she might eat it tomorrow she might eat it tonight. What difference to her employers whether she ate it tomorrow or tonight? Moreover, if Mrs. Earlforward had not been upset she would quite possibly have given Elsie express permission to eat the steak. Elsie began to feel her self-respect slipping away, her honour slipping away, all right-mindedness slipping away, under the basilisk's stare of the steak. (1)

A few minutes later we have Elsie sobbingly relating to Mrs. Earlforward that, "I don't know what made me do it, 'm but I've eaten the steak and I run straight in to tell you, 'm." (2)

This is the same girl who, a short time later when Mrs. Earlforward was dead and Henry was dying, gnashed her teeth in anger at his obstinacy. She was humiliated on his behalf by his stupidity and on her own behalf by her failure to get him to the hospital:

What preoccupied her was less the danger to her employer's health, and perhaps life, than the moral and social aspects of the matter. She would have liked to give her master a good shaking. She was losing her fear of the dread Mr. Earlforward; she was freely criticizing and condemning him, and, indeed, was almost ready to execute him - she who, under the continuous suggestion of Mrs. Earlforward, had hitherto fatalistically and uncritically accepted his decrees and decisions as the decrees and decisions of Almighty God. He had argued with her; he had defended himself against her; he had shown tiny glimpses of an apprehension that she might somehow be capable of forcing him to go to the hospital against his will. He had lifted her to be nearly equal with him. The relations between them could never be the same again. Elsie had a kind of intoxication. (3)

(1) "Riceyman Steps" -- pp. 153-4
(2) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 154
(3) "Riceyman Steps" -- p. 244
Elsie belonged to that class of mankind which is always apprehensive about something or other. Now that both Mr. and Mrs. Earlforward were dead she was fearful of the future and even when Dr. Raste assured both Elsie and her husband-to-be of work in his home she was still apprehensive but it was more a lack of faith in her own ability to cope with future dangers than a fear of the dangers themselves. Bennett leaves us with the view of Elsie and Joe, arm in arm, treading the streets leading out of Riceyman Square to Myddletown Square. There, we fervently hope, a happier existence in the service of Dr. Raste lies in store for Elsie and her lover.
IV
Conclusions

It is obvious from the evidence of the foregoing novels that Arnold Bennett's characteristics as an author are a direct outgrowth of his environment and of his life experiences. His characters possess to a varying degree the harsh acquisitive spirit of the Five Towns; Edwin and Hilda Clayhanger are averse to the outward manifestations of religion as practiced in the Five Towns; all of Bennett's protagonists possess a determination or will to achieve their goals whether it is the amassing of gold or the acquiring of a wife. They possess an insatiable appetite for life and thrill with intense feeling to the ever varying phenomena of life; they look upon life as a serious business but temper their gravity with an optimism that "everything will probably turn out alright."

Since old age in the Five Towns is looked upon as that period when a man's productivity ceases, it assumes the guise of a treacherous Unknown and all seek to forestall its dangers through the practice of thrift and even miserliness. And the older the characters become the more avariciously do they seek to amass wealth for future needs.

In these novels, Bennett reveals the results of his study of the French masters of Realism and of their English
imitators, George Gissing and George Moore. From Balzac, Bennett derived his vital interest in the mere fact of existence, accepting men and women as they are, without idealization, building up about them a certain train of circumstances and tracing their emotional development under external pressure. From de Maupassant and Balzac he derived his power of building up the social atmosphere of his scenes and he imitated their instinctive knowledge of the use of masses of detail which, though overwhelming, are all relevant. Flaubert contributed the "mots justes" which are so liberally sprinkled throughout Bennett's descriptive passages while Bennett's study of the de Goncourts, plus his journalistic career, made the task of portraying his innumerable scenes and characterizations a more facile one.

The success with which George Moore was able to express in "Esther Waters" that the intimate life history of a scullery maid can be made to yield artistic satisfaction equivalent to that formerly yielded by the perfumed lady of romance was a determinant of Arnold Bennett's attitude towards his own material. As Cornelius Weygandt said, "Bennett is indebted to George Moore for his theory of attitude." Weygandt also credits George Gissing with determining Bennett's theory of selection of material through the poignancy and interestingness of his novels dealing with the poor. Since Gissing had selected that with which he was most familiar, reasons Weygandt

(1) Cornelius Weygandt -- "A Century Of The English Novel"
(and this reasoning is supported in the novels) so Bennett selected for his great work that region and people which he knew best - the Five Towns. Gissing, too, though to a lesser degree, possessed the power of empathy which is one of Bennett's most characteristic traits and which may be found in highly developed form in de Maupassant.

Finally, Arnold Bennett's own personal experiences have their influence on his novels. His career as Editor of "Woman" gave him an insight into the secret nature of women which is constantly revealed in the novels; his power of observation of all phenomena was highly developed during his journalistic and editorial career; he developed an omnivorous and tenacious memory which stood him in good stead in his descriptions of the Five Towns, and his life in Paris gave him the physical background for that section of "The Old Wives' Tale" which has its setting in the French capital.

Thus, in the choice of subject matter, in the settings, and in the character portrayals of Bennett's novels do we find ample evidence of his personal, environmental, and literary background.
Summary

In this thesis I have endeavored to prove that there is a marked correlation between the life of Arnold Bennett and his novels.

In section II I have given a rather complete account of his surroundings during his life; of the books which influenced his living and thinking and writing; of the persons - literary and non-literary - who inspired Bennett. There is also included a detailed account of his personal and literary characteristics.

In section III I have shown the relation of this biographical material with five of his novels - four dealing with the Five Towns region in which he spent his youth, and one with its setting in London in which he spent his last eight years of life. I have found that there are four outstanding characteristics of Bennett, namely: the fulness and correctness of his observation; his willingness to set down everything about his characters, whether flattering or not; his power to see external surroundings and internal conflicts through the eyes of his characters; and lastly, his preoccupation with money. In section III I have endeavored to give adequate proof that Bennett possessed these characteristics through specific quotations from his novels which support my contentions.
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