CHAPTER IV

THE ART OF CHARACTERIZATION
Characterisation, as it is believed to be the acid test of great novels, is one of the most prominent attractions of Arnold Bennett's novels also.

Elizabeth Jenkin's opinion, expressed in the introduction to Vanity Fair, falls in line with this sort of thinking. Jenkin says:

It has always been conceded that the power of creating character is the first attribute of the great novelist; the second is now judged to be an understanding of the structure of society and the influence of economic status. A tacit understanding of these elements does in fact inspire the work of every great novelist of the two preceding centuries.

It is an undisputable fact that great and live characters with a lasting impact are being created by great writers. When many of Bennett's predecessors created their characters with great fanfare; Bennett introduced his characters quietly without much fuss or emotional outbursts. It does not mean that such moments are totally absent from his novels. There are occasions such as Sophia's refusal to fall in line with her mothers' plans, Edwin Clayhangers' angry outbursts before his imposing father, Darius, Anna's cool approach to her extremely angry father, Tellwright after burning the forged documents of Titus Price etc. Yet, by and large, his characters move with measured paces to their logical destinations.
Almost all the characters of Bennett are etched from the middle-class society. Very often the fictional layout of Arnold Bennett was centred around the potteries industry which, in due course, developed into a full fledged industrial landscape. But the people as such did not change in their inner authentic selves in accordance with the growth pace of the industrial landscape. This fact in itself is a substantial cause of anxiety in the characters of Arnold Bennett. Somehow they failed to make a positive and complete adjustment with the new industrial environment around them. Despite their inner restraints, they worked and moved as the people anywhere outside the Five Towns as if they were led by some external forces. Edwin Muir's words are significant in this context. Muir says:

The task of the character novelist is more like the choreographers' than the dramatist's; he has to keep his figures moving rather than acting; and for the most part he has them masked.

This is exactly what Bennett's characters do. They always move and they always work with a kind of self imposed restrictions in the industrial establishments of the Five Towns. Thus Bennett's characters were passing through a transitional cultural crisis. This crisis can be termed in popular sayings as 'transition', 'decadence', 'renovation', 'sickness' etc.
(i) The Edwardian disposition of his character.

Bennett's heroes and heroines are essentially Edwardian in their disposition and modern in composition. Therefore there is always a mounting crisis in the characters themselves as a result of the Edwardian and modern properties conflicting with each other. The Edwardian means to employ that they have a strong desire to be traditional with a mind to acquire a status in the modern society. The expression modern suggests that they stand in conscious opposition to what all the tradition has to offer in the name of settled comfort for the individual in the society. The conflict between the Edwardian and the modern temperamental forces renders the central characters of Bennett into massive personalities undergoing contradictory experiences, without ever resolving to stand in favour of one or the other.

In the authentic selves of these characters there is a constant pendulum-like swinging between a will to believe and desire to doubt and suspect. Both his heroes and heroines are constantly growing in themselves as a result of this inevitable swinging between tradition and individual aspirations. William Bellamy has something very important to say about the essential nature of Bennett's characters. Says Bellamy:

The development of character in Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy is embodied in a dialectical assertion of the self against a hostile, external milieu and aggrandizement of the self by means of the re-appropriation of the terms
of environment by means of the cognitively,
creation of a new 'psychomorphous' world'.

The Edwardians after having undergone the
crisis of economic depression automatically fell into
a world most disagreeable for them. Moreover, the
victorian complacency and compromise started to put
a great strain on their nerves. Therefore they were
under a necessity to make for themselves 'the cogni-
tive creation of new psychomorphous world'. Sophia
in The Old Wives' Tale and Edwin in Clayhanger are
under such authentic necessities to create a new world
for themselves. They find 'a hostile external milieu'
around themselves. Therefore they rebel against their
environments. All this is characteristic of the
Edwardian youths. Bennett gives his whole hearted
consent to the aspirations of the young. But then the
rebellion itself is not an end in itself. The manner
is which Bennett plunges his Sophia and Edwin into a
continual and unending crisis after their rebellion
is to be taken with a sense of alertness and
precaution. To rebel is to invite a challenging strug-
gle. So long the new 'psychomorphous world' created
by themselves for themselves is in tact. Both Sophia
and Edwin stoically bear the crisis. Bennett gives a
great lesson of life through his characters.
(ii) A broad division: Bennett's characters.

The total characters of Bennett can be divided into two substantial categories: the central characters and the supporting characters. Very often the central characters in a given novel of Arnold Bennett are more than one and they stand in relative contrast to each other. We have Sophia and Constance in *The Old Wives' Tale*, Mynors and Willie Price in *Anne of the Five Towns*, Darius and Edwin in *Clayhanger* and the like. All these characters are simultaneously taken from the soil to which they belong that is the Five Towns. There is something typically characteristic of the Five Towns culture in almost all the characters of Bennett's novels, including the non-Five Towns ones. The Five Towns culture is by and large the special microcosm standing as an absolute relational counterpart to the macrocosm of the entire world. However, the most important reason as to why Bennett fixes his characters in the Five Towns culture is to be found in his artistic zeal to present the entire Five Towns culture in a sort of memorable manner. This culture is dear for Bennett because of its simplicity, openness and its standing away from the modern stigmatic conditions of life in the metropolis.
Consequently Jennett rendered his characters out and put suburban in aspirations and pursuits.

In order to make his purpose of truly representing the life of the five Towns Jennett makes a feasible selection of similar and dissimilar characters having many practical effects to share amongst themselves. Each novel of Jennett in its essence is a comprehensive study of a particular family. The inmates of the family are attributed with such individual and personal qualities where with they become different from each other, but fated to share the simultaneous destinies and goals. It is this imposed simultaneity and unanimity of the destiny that becomes personally disagreeable of the central characters. Both Sophia and Constance have much to differ with the imposing circumstances of their domestic lives. These imposing circumstances, while being common to both the sisters, it is interesting to note that their courses of life and destinies were measured altogether in different manners. This is here that Jennett wants to suggest that his characters are irrevocably personal and invincibly themselves. There is nothing typical or general about them. This is so far the central characters are concerned.

But almost all other characters, whom we may call attendant ones, are invariably general and typically
nominating. These attendant characters represent the traditional genre. They are preoccupied with the prime consideration of static security in the name of economic substantivity and social status. It is their exclusive preoccupation for economic and social status that becomes worth rebelling for the central characters.

Sophia rebels completely; and Constance makes a quick compromise with the existing state of affairs without allowing herself to fall into the crisis of making decisions and judgements in respect of her life. To a large extent the presence of Constance as an antitype for herself instinctively provokes Sophia to distinguish herself altogether differently from Constance. Sophia's disposition towards her mother is absolutely oppositional. Mrs. Baines also stands stiffly against Sophia and her new bred desire to be free in determining the future course of her life. Much of the crisis in the life of Sophia is a result of her opposition to almost everybody in her family. The family of Sophia cannot endure a victorian middle-class family with a father to dictate and a mother to execute the dictates of the patter familia. The new sensibilities that are automatically growing in the younger generation have no place or opportunity of asserting themselves as positive faculties or effects. The whole problem emerges because of the new liberal ideas that were taking inroads into the otherwise static and quite calm life of the Five Towns. Because of the extended executions
of trade and commerce, people are freely moving from England to Five Towns and back. These new people are strangers that are symbolising in themselves the new freedoms and altogether different aspirations. There is a fear of novelty in the Five Towns families. They do not allow their children to be exposed to these new properties. As a result of the parental domination Sophia was first asked to stop going to the school. Otherwise Sophia was maintaining a modest desire to become a school teacher and her mentor in this direction is the village school teacher Miss Chetwynd. The sudden and abrupt dictates of her mother ordering her to stop going to the school unwinds an uncontrollable fury in the mind of Sophia. With the entirety of that force of fury she retaliates her mother and stands utterly rebellious in her moods. It is this rebellion that characterises Sophia as an endearing little urchin making right decisions, but forced to stand back or withdraw from her own right judgement. A great injustice was perpetrated on Sophia. One word that explains her character is rebellion. Sophia's mental state here is comparable to that of the revolutionary generations that directly rebelled against all traditions during 1890s. It was 1890s that let loose the 'angst' and fury in the minds of the younger generations. Historically speaking the 'angst' of the 1890s proved to be distinctive. Bennett
wants to give a positive outlet to the younger generations who were deep drowned in these process of 'angst' and fury. He allows Sophia to rebel and makes her take her own independent decisions of her future. How this is done at the height of her emotional fury, but the latter course of her life in which she bravely asserted her genuine feminine precautions suggest that her "angst was replaced by confidence" to borrow the expression of William Bellamy.

But then the rebellious temperament of Sophia was the result of constant repressions perpetrated upon her. Sophia is a very simple and straightforward character. She does not understand what all that her parents, as well as all others in the Five Towns, talk about morality. She certainly understands character and the importance of it for individuals. But she can not consign her to the view that morality is something that should be verbally imposed and circumstantially thrust on an individual. It is something that has been freely chosen by the incumbent. What she cannot understand is the imposition of morality. Had she been tackled lovingly through fond analysis and direct appeal she would never have come to a point of rebellion, a rebellion that had forced her into a life of grave crisis. In this context the word of William Bellamy are highly important. Says Bellamy:
Their predicament was one in which cultural 'sublimation' no longer seems to work; for them the guidelines for a fuller implementation of 'humanity' in society must come not from morality, but from a cognitive analysis.

Bennett's characters are not averse of making this 'cognitive analysis'. Some of them like Sophia, Hilda, Edwin etc. do it logically and strongly. At times they were trying for an interpretation of human values in terms of social consciousness in evolution.

The artist narrator in Bennett keeps aloof at a safe distance, not because he is uninterested in the end and means of the society, but because he tries to cope up with the atmosphere of the post-cultural crisis that is the economic depression of 1880's.

This becomes the foreground of action is his Old Wives' Tale as well as Clayhanger. The main characteristic features of his characters are associated with aspiring to make an adjustment and ultimately failing in their attempt. Without any hesitation it can be stated that Bennett's characters were badly affected by the cultural crisis. Their struggle for adjustment had been aggravated by Darwinian theories and psychoanalytical expositions of Freud. That may be the reason that Bennett's characters did not find much material in the belief of god and religion. Still further, Bennett goes to the extent of directly ridiculing the
superficial in such things. But, however, it is worth noting that Bennett hates ostentatious religious practices but not the pure and simple spirit of Christian religion. There is a way in interpreting Sophia as a true Christian character abounding in what they call that Christ-like sympathy towards others. Outward religion and morality she hated, but the intrinsic spirit of the personal character and the implicit influence of Christian morality was not only accepted but was rigorously live upto Sophia. This is more or less so with most of his central characters.

(iii) Use of externals to have a peep into the interior.

Arnold Bennett had his own way of presenting and developing a character. The traditional way is to explain the psychological aspects of characters according to the situations. In order to reveal the internal faculties of his characters Bennett makes use of the external materials. Thereby he forecasts the expressionistic techniques of the future novelists. He gives laboriously worked out details one after the other. As an example, if he wants to illustrate the personality of a particular character, he does not refer anything directly about his action, passion or perseverance. He prefers to explain the whole atmosphere in which that particular character lives and transacts. Some times a diningroom or a drawing-room or a kitchen may
be explained in scores of lines. He goes after minute details one after the other. An ordinary quick reader may fail to reach the core of the matter.

For Bennett it is the indivisible part of his scheme. Instead of saying whether a person is virtuous or otherwise directly, he releases the informations bit by bit. This method is tiring and elaborate and the impact is slow and cumulative. Reneldekk's words are eminently worth quoting in this context. Wellek says:

Setting in environment; and environments, especially domestic interiors, may be viewed a metonymic, or metaphoric, expressions of character. A man's house is an extension himself. Describe it and you have described him.

It is true that 'a man's house is an extension of himself. The description of such a house will go a long way in explaining the man himself. Instead of that if we try to analyse the psychological aspect of a person we have to add many things of our own. Our presumption of a man's inner reaction is apparently related to our own mental make up. That means in the name of psycho-analysis, we may possibly be creating many duplicates of ourselves. Bennett knew this and that is why he pursued external details rather than the internal crisis of conflict of a person.

Bennett's characters in his masterpiece novel, The Old Wives' Tale, are in general, live and lovable
characters. If Sophia is the most shining star there, Edwin Clayhanger steals the show in Clayhanger, Edwin Clayhanger is one of the most developed characters of the 20th century English fiction. His growth and struggle for establishing a personal identity are graphically explained. Edwin wants to steer himself like a steed but the social inhibitions bind him in the ankle; and despite all his earnest efforts he remains where he is when the novel ends. He was not having the strength of Jude or Michael Henchard or Heathcliff. Even his physical constitution is such that of an innocent child. He was popularly known as 'Clayhanger Lad' He was referred as:

Some knew that it was "Clayhanger lad" a nice-behaved young gentleman, and a spitten image of his poor mother. They all knew what a lad is - the feel of his young skin under his "duds", the capricious freedom of his movements, his tenderness sudden madness, and shoutings and tenderness, and the exceeding power of his unconscious wistful charm (CH, P.28)

The description is fit enough to reveal the tenderness of his inner self through the external features. Edwin's adverse conditioning was the root-cause of his weakness and lack of dynamism. His insight into his own conditioning grows too late and by the time he notices it the wall of adverse conditioning has grown into a formidable fort. In a way Edwin Clayhanger is the alter ego of Arnold Bennett himself. Though Edwin is handicapped with the education of the Five Towns he does not remain passive for a long time. By reaching maturity of age he began to
react sharply at the deliberate errors of his father. Edwin had to suffer a lot because of the stringent economy of his father. It was Edwin's cherished ambition to have a musical instrument. When the benefit fund in his name, amounting to 50 pounds, matured he withdrew a paltry amount from it and bought a brass. One morning Clayhanger began to check the accounts and realising his motto Edwin gathered all his strength for a show-down. It proved beyond doubt that Edwin had come of age. John Bachelor's comment is interesting here. Bachelor says:

At the moment of his angry confrontation with his father Edwin's protracted Adolescence can be seen at last giving way to maturity of a kind. The personality change is not forced, it is part of the closely observed, cumulative nature of Bennett's characterisation.

Edwin has been suffering for long. When it reached its crescendo his angry reaction came out as the hood of a cobra when it was chased or teased by a cat. Bennett succeeds in presenting such scenes with utmost effect and skill. Edwin's angry outbursts are quite interesting.

'What do you mean by calling me a thief?' Edwin and Darius were equally startled by this speech. Edwin knew not what had come over him, and Darius, never having been addressed in such a dangerous tone by his son, was at a loss 'I never called ye a thief'. Yes, you did! Yes, you did! Edwin nearly shouted now (Ch. P.252)
Edwin struck back with all his might. It was true that Darius did not call him a thief but it was not short of calling him a thief to check the accounts suspecting misappropriation of money. Edwin could suffer any longer but when Darius raised his doubting finger towards his integrity he could not control any longer. All this led Walter Allen to put a word in praise of Edwin. Allen remarks:

"All in all, he is among the most attractive heroes of twentieth century fiction."

(iv) **Characters built on negative aspects:**

The plots of Bennett are usually supposed to be general and his characters are specific. If we take out one or the other important character of a novel of Bennett the plot crumbles. This is to say that Bennett’s novels are mainly important for their characters. All the situations that emerge as important and note worthy in his novels are intextricably centred round the characters. As a matter of fact the most important creative phase of Bennett came to an end by 1916. All his Five Towns novels were published by that time. It was in 1923 that he published one more novel of some great importance. That is the Riceman steps. In this novel the theme is laid in the suburbs of London, and it is one of the most important non-Five Towns novels. Here the whole theme of the
novel centres round a typical miser named Henry Earl forward. It is very interesting to note as to how Bennett created a great work of art around this disagreeable character. The miserliness of Earl forward becomes more or less a serious devotional formula for the hero. It is in this devotion to miserliness that we have a pure lover of money for the sake of money. Earl forward when he was required to subscribe for a charity fund he prefers to give away an old and invaluable copy of Gray’s elegy instead of parting with a fresh ten shilling note. Incidentally Earl forward was a book-shop owner. In giving away the copy of the elegy he showed his relative disregard for the great classics. What he is doing is funny and comprehensible. But when we notice his pure passion for money things become clear. In this context the words of Walter Allen are worth quoting. Says Allen:

'Earlforward is a pure miser as we speak of the pure scientist or pure artist. His passion is disinterested. He is obsessed with money but simply for its own sake. He does not speculate, he is not concerned with investment; in a way his miserliness is negative, thus when Dr. Raste invites him to contribute to a hospital charity, rather than give money he offers and an early rare edition of grey’s poems?

In stating that his miserliness is negative Allen means to employ that Earlforward is a poor judge of values. This is what it usually happens when somebody’s inner personality gets sabotaged by one idea or
the other. The nejativism of Earl forward becomes clear because of the fact that he gets exclusively possessed by miserliness. There are innumerable instances in the world where people get possessed by some extreme idea, where with they willingly surrender their inner authentic freedom of choice and judgement. Some other characters of Bennett like Mrs. Baines, Mr. Tovey, even Darius Clayhanger are like this. But in the case of these characters their passionate attachment is towards some or the other generally acceptable traditional idea or property. Therefore they do not become as ludicrous as laughable as Earl forward. About this Earl whose forwardness is exclusively towards miserliness gets a sufficiently criticized by Bennett himself. Says Bennett:

He saw to what an extent he was making a fool of himself—loosing pounds inorder to save a ten shilling note. Ridiculous. Idiotic. Mad: True. He had bought the book for ten shilling and strove to regard the transaction from the angle of his own disbursement, but he could not deny that he was loosing pounds ("steps", p.240)

In fact no miser is really unconscious or unmindful of the harm that his miserliness is capable of inflicting upon his own personality; but even then they exclusively concern themselves to their idiotic unexplainable passion. Therefore the trait is 'true'
inspite of the fact that it is 'Ridiculous: Idiotic: Mad'. Many people in the world have such whimsical-
ties and Bennett substantiates the same quite humor-
ously and credibly. There are innumerable anecdotes
in the novel which exemplifies the foolhardy nature
of Earl Forward. In a way the character of Earlforward
is just a ludicrous extension of Mr. Povey of the Old
Wives' Tale. He also resembles Euphrain Tulwright of
the Anna of the Five Towns in being a ruthless miser.
But none of the above two characters preoccupies the
readers' mind in such a serious manner as Earlforward
imposed upon the readers' minds. Earlforward is partly
funny and partly serious. The idea of money is exclu-
sively important for him. He does not realise the fact
that all the tokens of money are mere symbols of certain
value attached to them. For him these tokens become
worth adorable almost in an idolatorous fashion. Life,
in the sense of comforts of life that could be acquired
through money, has no meaning for him. He gets excited
in its possession and takes care of it with a sort of
devotion. Earlforward in fact represents the widest
spread and most common love of money rampant in all capi-
talist's societies only. Earl forward devotionally
extends this trait to a great ludicrous state. Thereby
he becomes a pleasant caricature of a miser whose stories
of miserliness become interesting or even exciting.
We have to see the profundity of his devotion to money that Earlforward substituted the object of his devotion by some ideological purport the seriousness of his devotion could have become really commendable. But as he is a ruthless miser who turns against himself and renders himself into a laughing stock. What could have been the rationale behind Bennett creating this character and creating a masterpiece around him? Bennett always wanted to create moving masterpieces around the panoramic characters that he created. He is a master craftsman who stretches simple ideas into profound characters. The idea of obstinacy goes to create his Sophia Compassion is what it goes to create Anna of the Five Towns. As the name itself suggest constancy is what it created the character of Constance of Bennett. In his Riceyman steps he is trying his artistic worth in creating a great novel around a negative ideal called miserliness. Bennett breathes a rare human passion in to certain simple ideas prevalent in human societies. It is only in the Riceyman steps he tries a counter and negative idea to reconstruct a glorious novel. It all speaks for his artistic craftsmanship as a character portrayer. Bennett acquires a modest place amongst the great character portayers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and Hardy.
One of the most important characters in the Riceyan steps is Elsie. Mrs. Violet, the wife of Henry Earlward, the miser, was operated upon and died. She had no strength to rally after her operation owing to under-nourishment. This is really pathetic but her husband could not provide her proper nourishment because of his miserly nature. But at the same time the purpose of Riceyan steps is not meant to depress. Against the depressing background of the novel we have the abundant energies and overflowing kindness of the Earlward's servant Elsie. Elsie is "dominated and obsessed by a tremendous instinct to serve". (Riceyan steps Ch.IV)

We are also informed about her power-stricken domestic circumstances including her first marriage. The death of her first husband and her romance with Joe are highly interesting.

Elsie was a friend of the French Polisher's wife, and she slept in the infinitesimal back-room of the first floor with the elder child of the family. She paid three shillings a week for this accommodation, and also helped with the cleaning and the laundry work of the floor in her spare time (RS Part I, Ch.II)

The very tone of the above passage reveals the abundant sympathy of Bennett towards Elsie as a character. Elsie is charitable and resigned. The greatest virtue of her is her tremendous instinct to serve. Innumerable critics have gone to the extent of considering her as the centre of Riceyan steps. Bennett himself got disgusted
above the manner in which Elsie was being praised by the critics. He once wrote that the Riceyan steps were not being appreciated for its excellence. It was being considered great simply because "the heroine thereof is a sympathetic, good reliable, unselfish and chaste character." Lucas further informs us that Bennett was "sick of the praise of Elsie." The whole of London and New York was wishing that they could find a devoted servant like her. One thing that is important about Elsie is that she had a great appetite for life and her employer singularly lacked it. The real purpose of Elsie's character in the novel is to provide a lively antitype to the otherwise drab and lifeless characters of Earl Forward and his wife. Even her 'tremendous instinct to serve' is a stylistic device to aggravate the miserliness and sickness of Earl Forward and his wife. But in all probability the character of Elsie stands as an ideal servant and that makes her the true spirit of service in the Biblical sense.

(v) The minor characters:

Most of the characters in Bennett are typically traditional and Edwardian in essence. They can be considered as flat characters of which type S. J. Forster had spoken at length in his *Aspects of the novel*. Such
characters are important in his novels for the purpose of forcing the central characters towards taking drastic and unconventional decision, about themselves. The very presence of the flat characters in the lives of the radical and creative characters works for the growth of strong emotional contingencies. Mrs. Baines in the Old Wives' Tale,arius Clayhanger in Clayhanger and S uphrai m Tw ell wright of the Anna of the Five Towns can be considered as such flat characters. In addition to them there are innumerable minor characters who contribute for the fulfilment of the life particulars in the content of the novels. Even in delineating the flat characters and the minor characters Bennett is always precautionous in improving the minute details of their behaviours and dispositions. All his flat characters and minor characters, however important or otherwise they are in the lives of others, they are not certainly attractive or important as fictional characters. They can be, with a tolerable exception of a few minor characters, considered as destructive and negative in their attitudes. In short they are the proper trouble makers in the lives of the central characters. But the pains-taking manner in which Bennett talks about them at length suggests that he takes utmost pains to bring out even a flat or a minor character. In fact he had
devoted an entire novel for depicting the ludicrous
details of a typical miser in his kiscayman steps. As
has been rightly pointed out by John Lucas, his MAN
FROM THE NORTH.

... "is a study of drab, unremarkable lives" 12

The central character here is Richard Larch, an aspir-
ing novelist. He along with asked launches on a joint
undertaking of writing on the psychology of the suburbs.
Asked himself is a minor hand at fiction. Their liter-
ary partnership achieves no great success but then their
intentions are sincere and to that extent commendable.
This is reflected in the following lines. asked says to
Richard:

the suburbs, even Walham Green and Fulham,
are full of interest for those who can see
walk along the very street on such a Sunday
afternoon as to-day (reveals) every drama
a tragedy. No comedies, and especially no
farces! Why, child, there is more character
within a hundred yards of this chair than a
hundred Salzacs could analyse in a hundred
years. AMPN, Ch,12)

Bennett himself has typical fascination with the
psychology of the suburbs and he transposes it into the
character of asked. This is what Lucas calls his "pass-
ionate interest in the study of the unremarkable lives"13
This rare interest for the unremarkable and non-consequent-
tial lives is what it makes Bennett a sort of pain-
Taking universal commentator on the unfortunate life of the neglected in the society. Both his flat and minor characters received the same kind of artistic attention from Bennett. In fact when he creates the character of Karlforward his whole hearted artist's sympathies are with him. This is to say that he does not create even his hateful and ludicrous characters with a hatred towards them. He certainly hates the bad characteristic traits. But in his creative moments as an artist he pays a patient and sympathetic attention towards their defects and short comings also. This is the reason that, while we disagree with Miss Baines or with Fell Wright we do not certainly hate them. On the other hand some how Bennett's presentation of these characters makes us look upon them with a sense of tolerance and sympathy. Inspite of the fact that these characters perpetrates a great disaffection and injustice, we do not consider them as villains. There are no villains in Bennett. Only there are a few bad characters who do not know the intensity of the evil that they create. This is exactly so in the case of the societies in which we live.

Moreover, it is not possible to divide the characters of Bennett into good and bad. Even the central
characters who are endearing to the readers' mind, have their short-comings; and with all their short-comings they become loveable. The reason for this kind of response in the readers is to be found in the magnificent characterisation technique of Bennett. Whether they are round or flat, major or minor, remarkable or unremarkable they all invariably become unforgettable as characters.

One of the reasons for the unforgettable nature of his characters lies in the silent, innocent and open-hearted manner with which Bennett looks into the affairs of others. The purpose of creating a world full of characters in Bennett is not all with a mind to reveal the ghostly fearful nature of the world. On the other hand he has all the good intentions of sympathetically familiarising the world of people around us. Thereby he means to enhance our courage to live in the world with security, safety and assurance. Therefore John Lucas further reiterates:

Bennett's great gift is his ability to take us inside ordinary unremarkable houses and show us the ordinary, unremarkable people who live in them and see these things with a passion and relish that lift his fiction far above the ignobly decent.
From the foregoing quotation it is evident that Bennett cannot make his characters and situations either pathetic or melancholic. In spite of the fact that the changing and altering phases of life around him project a great imbalance and crisis in the mind, Bennett prefers to handle his novels with the consummate hand of an artist who balances all the aspects of life, with a sort of absolute objectivity. In order to achieve this objectivity Bennett as a writer imposed upon himself the rare art of providing a light hearted and humorous slant to his narrative performance. He introduces many things in between the lines, with humorous deductions and terminations. Such kind of performance is necessary to provide readability for his novels. If it is not for the art of making characters, situations and incidents interesting and entertaining, the whole purpose of Bennett as a writer would have got defeated. This is so because the drab monotonous reality of life can never provide a continuing interest for the reader. Bennett's ultimate message in his novels lies in the most necessitous wisdom of comprehending life's naivety and inanity, which is the fact of life-styles, particularly in an age of plinth moving alterations and changes, that too suddenly and surprisingly. Humour and irony are the only resolve.
creative modes that can become successful in the art of narrating the sort of the real life-stories. Thus humour and irony constitute the backbone of Jennett's art. That way Jennett is a serious writer, whose concerns are with the heaviness of life as lived by the people. It is with the help of his humour and irony that he successfully brings forth this serious heaviness of life into our experience. In the next chapter his humour and irony are studied, with the purpose of establishing the creative worth of Arnold Bennett as a novelist.

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The passage is from one of the letters of Arnold Bennett's letters, Vol. 3, p. 213.

11. Ibid

12. Ibid, p. 19

13. Ibid, p. 29