CHAPTER III

THE PARALLEL WORLD
Hall's division of the Five Towns gentry into 'three levels' is very significant because Bennett also perceives it more or less in the same vein. The projection of interaction and the intertwining working of the people of the industrial locality of the old Staffordshire is the prime concern of Bennett. Bennett did not make an elaborate study on the people of the first category, but such study is not totally absent from his general scheme. Through 'The Leath of the Simon Fuge' that is what Bennett accomplished. Simon Fuge was a painter from the remote Five Towns whose painting found a place in British museum in London. When Loring a Cambridge-educated young man comes to collect further informations about Fuge, Bennett's strategy of linking the remote and the civilized becomes clear. But Bennett does not take sides. He simply showed that there were people in the Five Towns who could keep abreast with the highly civilised people of the urban cities like London, Devonshire or Manchester. That is why Hall hastens to add that "Bennett's elementary strategy, like James's, is to bring together the representatives of these different civilizations."
Bennett as an author accepts the humble role of a concerned observer rather than a judging author. He does not interfere in the affairs of his characters but he certainly regulates and guides the reactions and responses of the readers.

(1) A faithful rendering of the Potteries life.

In a way the novels of Bennett can be read as faithful renderings of the realities of life as might be true with the mid-Victorian suburbs. Thereby Bennett gathered for himself the sociological treasures of the old times, whose preservation he felt was his duty as an artist. For that matter he had before him the French novelists like Maupassant and Flaubert and many others to guide him in the craft of fiction. While Maupassant and Flaubert gave a romanticised picture of the French middle-class society, Bennett preferred to present the same in the utmost truthful manner. Even the dialectic conventional passages that we find in his novels are absolutely true to the local colours and creeds of the so-called semi-civilized and semi-cultured in comparison to the twentieth century styles of conversation even among the village folks of England. In fact by the end of the first quarter of the 20th century no part of England was left uncontaminated by the modern
technocratic culture and the conniving tactics of
mass production. For the people who are the cultural
prisoners of the 20th century narrowings of indivi-
dual freedom and choice of the novels of Bennett
read like abundant revelations of the hopes, desires
and aspirations of their ancestors just a fifty to
sixty years back. The variations of the life-styles
of the people are as archaically centered and they
give us a full fledged artistic engagement in being
the real life-styles of the people. We in our times
have completely lost the perspective of the real, both
in our personalities and in our social cultural insti-
tutions. A sort of gross corruption entered into
every nook and corner of our lives. The picture of
the social life during the time of Bennett was none
the better. For his immediate readers, Arnold Bennett
opened up a real wonder of practically absorbing the
life exactly as lived by the people somewhat fifty
or sixty years back. The very authentic manner in
which the characters of Bennett lead their lives is
itself a social-filling fictional variation for the
twentieth century readers. It has rightly been point-
ed out that his characters are not compounded classi-
—cally. They are the sort that the romantics of
the 19th century practised. In his central characters
particularly there is a divine passion to be sympathetic like Christ and gratu- 
thous like the characters of André Gide.

In the model of the great French masters (P, B, Z, M, G.) Bennett did not make much personal intrusion into his subjects but however his authorial intrusions are predominantly there and in the artistic performance they serve the same old classical purpose of chorus in the Greek dramas. The words of W. Ward are worth remembering here. Ward says:

Like his French masters, he was a copyist of life, and only indirectly (if at all) a commentator, an interpreter, or an apologist.

Ward conveniently forgets that the fictional world of Arnold Bennett shares its realism with the bygone 19th century life-styles, that too as imagined by the author around the Five Towns. The particular reasons as to why Bennett selects the Five Towns life-style have already been discussed. It is not right to say that Bennett is a 'copyist' like his French masters. What all that he pretended to have copied in his novels is created and fabricated out of the practical life-styles and life-modal of the Five Towns. It is not for Bennett the Five Towns culture would not have figured as a fictional appraisal.
The historians would not have etched it in their records.
The Five Towns is a region which was still standing on the old time values as opposed to the rest of urbanising England. Urbanisation was making inroads even in the Five Towns. But Bennett's concern had always been with the people of the Five Towns. Even in the non-Five Towns novels the central characters had always been the people looking like those of the Five Towns folks. All this raises Bennett to the level of a recreationist rather than a copyist. It is true that he faithfully records the lives of the people as found and discovered by him. Bennett is a rare craftsman who constantly created the contingent feel of the contemporariness in his novels. This contemporariness is the myth that he had created. Such a mythical dimension is a creative necessity for the artist.

To speak the truth Bennett as a person was sufficiently vexed with the newly emerging social and cultural problems. These problems were the products of quick industrialization, mechanisation and urbanisation. All these new emergences appear to him low and cheap when compared to the permanent human values created by the ancestral traditional societies. His novels are primarily about the catastrophic interpersonal relationships in a fast changing world, where the changes
themselves are beyond the controlling hands of the inmates. Life in these circumstances is bound to characterise itself as an uncontrollable phenomenon of effects and results. The real sources of human life are not to be found in these effects and results.

What all that constitutes a happy human life with in the traditions of individualism lies in the assertions of freedoms and choices. Dennett’s novels are such individual assertions of freedoms and choices.

(ii) Presentation of a complex society.

In a complex society of this art that Bennett proposes in his novels such assertions of freedom and choices become inflating forces of crisis and nemesis. This is so because of the fact that the social goals of the different age groups are different. The elder generations, while yet they are the products of the changing times, somehow, fear to allow the younger generations in asserting their freedoms and choices. This is more or less a sociological problem that can never be resolved in any society. Particularly in the social contexts of Bennett the problem becomes insolvable. As such the inmates start distancing themselves from each other. This sort of distancing provides an immediate temporary solution and the problem itself remains insurmountable and unbearable. In *The Old Wives’ Tale* Sophia distances herself and lives her own life
according to her own freedom in Paris. But at the end she comes back and joins her old sister. The pain of distancing oneself was objectively experienced by her when her sister's son Cyril -ovey does not come back home as desired and required by his mother. The painful ordeal that Constance undergoes becomes an eye-opener for Sophia. Therefore, when she hears about the plight of her long-distanced husband she promptly goes to pay a call on him. It is a different matter that she was too late in reaching him to be of any avail for him. But, however, Sophia implicitly learnt the lessons of being human and being an affectionate partner within the boundaries of family institutions.

It was the rising time of a prolific writer like Bennett. That was the time when he had been showing thirst for interesting objects and novel methods. Whatever came in his way got stuck to his absorbing mind. He wanted to picturise the life around him into the pages of his novels especially that prevailed and throbbed in and around the Five Towns. Five Towns, for Bennett, was not a drab and depressing spectacle, though it was so far an outsider with the outlook of big cities of England and other European countries. But all the aspects of life he re-created there. An undercurrent melancholy was evident in most of his Five Towns novels.
Regional novels or novelists were not unfamiliar to English readers by the time Bennett appeared on the scene. Thomas Hardy's Wessex has become almost legendary by this time. When Hardy fabricated fiction with facts, Wessex became a wonderland of multisplendoured personalities. Hardy's novels left deep impress on the reader's minds. Bronte's Yorkshire and Trollope's Barsetshire have come under the suzerainty of Hardy's kingdom. Despite the possibility of these influences, his immediate inspiration came from Edenhillpots who was making name and fame as a regional novelist of Dartmoor. George Moor's influence also was considerable and profound. His novel, A Mummer's Wife, which was set in the potteries background, was an eye-opener to him. It has rightly been pointed out by Edwin Muir that:

The Yorkshire Moore and the Wessex are not places differentiated and recognizable like Mr. Bennett's Five Towns.

The Yorkshire Moore and Wessex are references to the generalised and romanticised realism of Emiley Bronte and Hardy. Bennett's Five Towns are having a particular uniqueness in themselves in being unforgettable as places of habitation anywhere in the world. They have a particular recognition of their own intrinsic modalities of life. It is just possible that Bennett is imaginatively
drawing the picture of Five Towns. But his imaginative grasp of the non conspicuous particulars of life exactly as lived by the people of the Five Towns is simply inevitable. Therefore we don't have any other novelist comparable to Arnold Bennett in being an absolute realist. If we ask a blunt question as to what is particularly different in the Five Towns, we may fail to provide a brief and pointed answer. But somehow it feels that life as lived by the people in the Five Towns has some exclusive clarity of purpose in it; and that purpose lies in trying to live to the fullest extent of the opportunities provided by the Five Towns and not otherwise.

Though Bennett lived in the potteries until he was twenty one, it did not promise him anything significant. But Moore's novel opened before him new vistas of possibilities and wonders. Bennett's sincere gratitude to Moore was expressed through a letter he had written to him on 24th December 1920. Bennett wrote:

I wish also to tell you that it was the first chapter of A Mummer's wife which opened my eyes to the romantic nature of the district I had blindly inhabited for over twenty years. You are indeed the father of all my Five Town books.

Here Bennett makes it clearly known his indebtedness to George Moore without reservation. Suddenly the dingy and
narrow lanes and murky skies of his old Five Towns rose in his mind with new promises. Bennett had already left the Five Towns by this time. Then he had an urge to visit the place again. When Bennett attended the funeral of Teria's drowned fiancé, he tried to visit as many places as possible in the district. He looked at the places through the eyes opened by A Mummer's wife but he saw that he was determined to see. He writes about this in his journal as:

before breakfast, on the heights sneyd green, where the air blows as fresh and pure (seemingly) as at the seaside, one gets glimpses of Burslem and of the lands between Burslem and Norton, which have the very strangest charm — Down below is Burslem nestled in the hollow between several hills, and showing a vague picturesque mass of bricks through its heavy pall of smoke . . . and surrounding the town of every side are the long straight smoke and steam wreaths, the dull red flames . . . This romance this feeling which permeates the district in quite as wonderfully inspiring as any historic memory could be (The Journal Sept. 10, 1897).

The Five Towns of Arnold Bennett's works are staffordshire potteries towns. Though Bennett hailed from the Five Towns, he was eager to get himself out of it, characteristic of the young men who hailed from the provinces. This very attitude is the central idea of his first novel A Man from the North.

As he stayed away from his home town it became clearer to him partly because of the nostalgic thoughts of his childhood and partly due to the impact of the novel, A Mummer's wife. When he went there for some reason he scanned the place which sheltered him for a little more
than two decades. The objects once seemed to be dull and obsolete, suddenly turned out to be enchanting. It happened not because the unpromising things turned promising in the twinkling of an eye, but because a drastic change came into effect in his outlook.

(iii) Influence of George Moore.

Moore had been strongly inspired by his masters Tolstoy and Flaubert in the form and formation of his novel *Kummer's Wife*. Moore imbied inspiration both from *Madame Bovary* and *L'Assomoir*. Bennett has ever been grateful to Moore in showing in his mind the seeds of his successful Five Towns novels. How Moore, like Bennett, appreciated the uneventful incidents and unheroic people of the potteries towns is evident from his own words which we come across in his novel *A Drama of Muslin*.

Moore writes:

> Seen from a far, all things are of equal worth and the meanest things when viewed with the eye of God are raised to heights of tragic awe of which conventionality would limit to the deaths of things and patriots?

This is exactly what Bennett does in his Five Towns novels. He tried to view the things 'with the eye of God' which brought into his mind a 'tragic awe' or in other words an inherent melancholy. From all these Bennett had enough clues to embark upon a grand scheme which he successfully brought to a logical conclusion.
Even the meanest things got ameliorated when viewed with an eye of love and sympathy and this Bennett accepted as the core of his dictum. This goes parallel to the well known Christian concept of a 'Christ-like all embracing compassion'.

If anybody dare say that if Moore had not written his above mentioned novels Bennett would not have written his Five Towns novels would be an overstatement. But the fact remains that it gave enormous impetus to Bennett's dormant desire to project his Five Towns people through a set of novels. Moore used potteries only as a background. Life of any industrial town could be woven in that background. He did not try to render the speech and sentiments of the people who lived in and around the potteries. Above all it was not Moore's aim to attempt a regional novel. But Bennett's purpose was the delineation of life of one particular environment with all the possible paraphernalia. Bennett showed utmost discretion in the selection of his characters who were either from the business community or from the lower middle-class. They suffered from certain inherent environmental impediments.

Moreover it was a changing phase in the social history of England. Queen Victoria ruled the country
with utmost authority and that was the golden age of Great Britain both aesthetically and socially. The great blow exerted by Spencer and Darwin had still its impact on the people and the society at large. Even the most religious minded people began to doubt the veracity and utility of the religion and God. Science and technology exerted tremendous pressure on the society and their respectability increased day in and day out. As a result industrial establishment mushroomed throughout the length and breadth of Europe in general and England in particular. Many industrial towns came up and many slums also grew simultaneously as a corollary to it. Bennett was born and brought up in such an industrial town — the north Staffordshire of England.

The Five Towns of Bennett’s novels were Staffordshire potteries towns and later they were federated into Stoke-on-Trent. The five separate towns were, Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke-upon-Trent and Longton. In Bennett’s books they were renamed as Turnhill, Bursley, Handbridge, Knype and Longshaw. His old castle is the town of New castle under-Lyme. The people of his important novels The Old Wives’ Tale, Clayhanger, Milda Lessways, These Twein, Anne of the Five Towns and other early novels, by and large, hail from these towns. Readers
become familiar with these places as if they know each and every nook and corner of the town. Over the ruins of the old dilapidated mansions a new society was emerging with a new industrial ethos. Arnold Kettle's remark is quite significant in this context. Kettle says:

We come to feel every Stairway and passage, to relish every piece of furniture in the stuffy house on the corner of the square in Bursley.

The canvas is vividly and extensively covered by the exhibition of numerous small facts with all possible details which give us a sense of their essential truth. His attitude towards Bursley is neither myopic nor uncritical. Through these minute details he brings to the surface skillfully the clash between the two generations, one is on the Wane and the other is yet to establish its full command. The realistic touch of Bennett's novels contrived through accumulation of minute details one after the other in quick succession. In Bennett's world everything does not look so fine. That is the matter on which he had strong differences with the Victorians. Bennett thinks that ugliness is an unavoidable part of life. A.C. Ward views it as follows:

He saw ugliness as part of the pattern of life; and the pattern of life without that element was too thread bare to interest him.
Bennett perceived that there could be no hills without dales and no virtues without vices. So in his scheme of presenting a real life-picture he did not try to hide ugliness. This, instead of debilitating the structural fabrics of his Five Towns life, increased their sweetness and genuineness and gave them a semblance of reality. Here we have got nothing to dissociate with the curt observation of ward. Thus Bennett successfully constructs a parallel world of fiction, wherein the comical and pathetic properties of the world are exactly maintained in the same and simultaneous manner as we find them in our every day life. The cultural environment that he reconstructs in his novels abounds in the middle-class pattern in life. In real life Bennett also belonged to a middle class, or to state very precisely, the lower middle-class. So Bennett could easily figure out the pushes and pulls of such a society. In personal life, though he kept away from Five Towns, he felt proud of keeping his identity with the middle-class people of that locality.

In creating such a credible world of the middle-class society Bennett had the co-operation of two other persons, H.G.Wells and Galsworthy who nurtured identical views on such a society. Galsworthy, though he picked up his characters from all classes, his special
Lookings were towards the middle-class. But Wells and Bennett, even after becoming enormously rich, never tried to hide their middle-class consciousness. But all the three were typically interested in that particular class of the society. In appreciation to this class leanings Earnest Baker remarks that:

Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy, both born in 1867, are eminently examples of those novelists who by their intensive study of large segments of the surrounding world, and their honesty and accuracy, leave a record of their time which is intentionally or not, of genuine value as social history.10

All the three, Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy made intensive study of their surroundings and that is why a much of their writings revealed the crux of the social inter-action very convincingly. Though they were together termed as social propagandists, Bennett did not like that epithet. When Baker says that their works have 'Genuine value as social history' there is nothing left for us to disbelieve it. Though Bennett did not like to be called a social propagandist, the people of the Five Towns were uppermost in his mind. This consideration for a particular set of people was not because he was a begot but because his inner self was submitting to his natural instincts. Still we cannot forget the truth that his characters transcend the four walls of his Five Towns. This fact
is further illustrated in the words of Dudley Barker.

Barker says:

His Five Town novels were, certainly, novels of provincial life in an industrial area, but the characters and situations were not peculiar to the potteries.}

Though Bennett's characters hail from five towns, their typical characteristics do not confine them to that particular geographical circle. It is a fact that when he started they were of the Five Towns but when he ended they were fit enough to equal the people belonging to any geographical regions. In other words he began his novels with the Five Towns speciality but ended them with a sort of universality. As an example, Bennett pictures most of the Five Towns parents as tyrannical and their wards are subjected to enormous suppression. But such suppression was not an exclusive characteristic of the potteries Towns but was felt through out the victorian and Edwardian England and even beyond it. The youngsters were supposed to live on the clean chit of their elders. If anybody was found guilty of a minor aberration, the whole society used to frown upon him. This parental tyranny is one of the predominant aspects of his novels namely The Old Wives' Tale, Clayhanger (trilogy) and Anna of the Five Towns etc.
Similarly shrewd businessmen and hypocritical women cannot be an exclusive product of the Five Towns. Such elements can be found anywhere. The rigours of Wesleyan Methodism were enormously felt in the Five Towns. But such rigours were not confined exclusively to the industrial potteries Towns of Staffordshire. Moreover, religious hypocrisy was not the exclusive trait of Wesleyan Methodists. Even today, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the number of religious hypocrites and fanatics is on the increase, whether they belong to oriental or occidental countries.

Exploitation of ignorant and innocent people's sentiments has become an easy way to a cheap success. The same thing was practised in the industrial towns of Staffordshire using the mask of Methodist faith. If there were cards like Henry Machin (The Card) and Samuel Tovey (The Old Lives Tale) in the Five Towns, such cards could be visible through the entire world. Similarly Ephraim Tellwright (Anna of the Five Towns) and Darius Clayhanger (Cleyhanger) are also master misers of the younger days. Such misers can be encountered in any corner of the world irrespective of their adherence to different social and political ideologies. All these clearly show that Bennett's Five Town characters are not the exclusive products of a
topographical region but they are the real representatives of the society at large.

Autobiographical elements:

Bennett's parallel world is revealing in more ways than one while giving solidity to his parallel world, either knowingly or unknowingly, many of his descriptions become closely related to his real life. Many of them he knew intimately as a boy. A person who visits the Stoke-on-Trent, seeking the locale of Bennett's Five Towns novels can hit his target without much trouble. St. John's Square and Swan Bank are two squares at the centre of Burslem. Bennett's much celebrated novels, Clayhanger Trilogy, The Old Wives' Tale, Anna of the Five Towns and Card all spring from this area. Except some temporary digression as the Paris episode of The Old Wives' Tale, or the Brighton anecdotes of Hilda Lessways, most of the actions take place at these two squares.

It may be a matter of conjecture how could Bennett weave such broad and extensive scenes from this silly and narrow squares. Arnold Bennett was an artist who could imagine a hill out of a molehill. He only wanted some skeletons. He added blood and flesh of facts until they grew like size to meet his requirements. Facts and fiction are fused in such a way that we find it difficult to separate them. Many of the incidents
were having the veracity, that they occurred at some time
or the other in his childhood. He had to make only a
serious perusal of his mind. Instead of inventing
the incidents, he simply recast those things which stuck
his mind already. His prodigious memory did every thing
in a convincing manner.

It shall be in the fitness of things to point
out some such instances from his Five Towns novels. In
his novel, Anna of the Five Towns, the suicide of Titus
Alice - the Sunday-School superintendent, is a major
happening. Price commits suicide because as a tenant,
he fails to keep up the payment of rent for the out-dated
pottery works of which Anna is the owner. The incident
echoed through out the Five Towns world. In real life,
Bennett's aunt Sarah - Enoch's sister owned the old
Sneyd pottery, which she inherited from her father. She
let it out for thirty years and did not pay any heed to
the deteriorating condition of the works; it was but
natural that Bennett might have heard many things about
the real plight of the tenants and the workers which
could have stuck in his sensitive mind. When he creat-
ed such a world in Anna of the Five Towns naturally his
childhood experience had undergone an artistic metamor-
phosis.

* Dudley Barker, Writer by Trade: A View of Arnold
Bennett (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966)
\(\text{p.82-83}\). The biographical information given in this
chapter was liberally borrowed from this book.
Another instance relating to this was suicide of a headmaster. The headmaster of the Burslem Wesleyan Day school adjoining to Swan Bank chapel, where Bennett's schooling started in the infant's department. Some years after Bennett left the school, the headmaster, one Henry Wilkinson decided to do away with himself. It was the talk of the town for many months followed. When Bennett incorporated these two incidents and prepared them in the imaginary crucible of his fertile imagination, the outcome had become a major happening in his novel, Anna of the Five Towns. Through that incident Bennett gave a powerful slap on the full face of the hypocritical Methodists.

One of the interesting scenes in Clayhanger is that which proves Edwin Clayhanger's quickness of mind. When the weak floor of the old printing shop was about to give way, Edwin's quick action in a flash, tying the machine chain with the wall hook saved the printing establishment from a great calamity. As a real parallel to this actually a printing press fell through the floor of an old printing shop in the Swan Bank area when Bennett was only a boy. In this way he fabricated many things in his novels which were dug out from his own memory. He cleared such new materials time and again until they figured well to his satisfaction. Many instances he multiplied through varying permutations and combinations.
It was true that Bennett's relationship with his father was not so cordial. The bone of contention was relating to the pursuit of a career. Though Bennett, his father, wanted Bennett to follow his footsteps as a practitioner of law, but Bennett's mental make-up was aesthetic and he wished to be an architect. He wished to escape from the tyranny of his father at any cost as Edwin Clayhanger wished in Clayhanger. Here in real life Bennett succeeded in doing so but his fictional alternative Edwin was compelled to cling to his father's schemes.

Many incidents, if they are separated from the chain, will look ludicrous. But when they are linked in the proper perspective they become altogether attractive. Through these kinds of myriad instances Bennett describes the historic evolution which is strewn all over the five Towns in an organic manner. For instance, the chapter 'The old Sunday-School Teacher', in Clayhanger is significant in many ways. Shushions, the long forgotten Sunday-School teacher appears on the scene all of a sudden on the occasion of the Sunday-School centenary celebrations. From the gate when he turned to the platform to have a seat there & he was stopped there. They said, 'you can't go on the platform without a ticket'. Shushions said:
Bennett's intention behind this episode is clear. He wanted to show how the sincerity and dedication of the older generation became slightable in the hands of the younger generation. Once religion was meant for a way of serving the people, especially the downtrodden. But as the time passed, the stress shifted from service to ostentation and glittering show. That is why the people of the younger generation were least interested in the appearance of a senile ageing oldman. They were least bothered about the stalling service that oldman Mr. Shushions had rendered for a period of more than five decades.

Middle-class crisis:

Great writers like, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, by and large, preferred characters from the middle-class. Dickens was not very particular in this matter. At times he tackled characters from the affluent classes also. George Eliot kept up her preference for the middle-class through out. Her characters who came from the rustic background were quite lonely. Many of them found it difficult to cope up with the intricacies of society in which they had to move.
Whereas Hardy's characters were passing through a moral crisis. They could not lie down calm and quiet before injustice. Once they reacted, they did it with might.

In his preference of the middle-class, Arnold Bennett was greatly influenced by these great novelists. His characters mostly belong to middle-class society. When many of Dickens's characters were victims of the changing atmosphere and Eliot's characters found it difficult to cope up with the rising challenges before them and Hardy's characters prepared to rebel, Bennett's characters were trapped in a crisis who could not escape despite their best efforts. This is true with most of his characters only with slightly varying degrees. One of his early successful novel was Anna of the Five Towns. Here the addition of the 'Five Towns' is very important. Anna can be understood only in the Five Towns perspective. An outsider may think it ludicrous to imagine a character like Anna. She was brought up in such a cloistered atmosphere and she did not feel any sense of pride at being told that she was to be an heiress worth for fifty thousand pounds. This does not mean that she had no normal human aspirations and ambitions. She certainly had. But she could not do anything beyond the whims and fancies of her father. His one blunt stare was enough to get herself melted.
Titus Price and his son Willie Price were Anna's tenants. She knew that their pottery works had not been running in profit. A delay in payment of rent could reasonably be excused. She wanted to help but could not do so because of the imposing father. When Willie begs her for more time for the payment of debts, Anna tells him that her father won't allow for any more delays. Anna says:

"But father means what he says." She looked up at him again, trying to soften her words by means of something more subtle than a smile. "He means what he says; I admire him for it." (AJS 1, 29)

Anna makes it clear that she cannot go beyond the dictates of her father. The pathetic plight of Willie puts her into a moral and psychological crisis. Here the helplessness of both the creditor and the debtor is well juxtaposed. John Lucas' observation on Bennett's presentation of a typical Five Towns predicament seems to be genuine here. Says Lucas:

"Moments like that make one realize just how good Bennett can be. There is no dignity in poverty; it corrupts and warps both the poverty-stricken and the observers of it. And it is built into the Five Towns world. Anna can no more escape its effects than the prices!"

Here both the tormentor and the tormented are in a vicious tangle. Anna makes an effort to make out the reason for such an impasse. Even at the point of repetition the following statement deserves a quoting here. "She had sucked in with her mother's milk the
profound truth that a woman's life is always a renun-
ciation, greater or less. Her's by chance was greater"  
(v.T, p.235)

Crises in the middle-class families are aggra-
vated by poverty. This crises are being well focussed  
through his minor characters like Sara Vondrey of Anna  
of the live Towns and Elsie of the Kigymen Steps. Both  
are passing through enormous torments and mental agonies.  
Sara, the servant of Elsie, was honest and acquiescent  
in their hours of difficulty. The financial constraints  
of the middle and lower-middle class reach their zenith  
when we come across the sad plight of Sara. She tells  
Anna in her death-bed that she had not been paid for her  
service for two years. She told Anna of her personal  
belongings which could be nearly 18 pounds which she  
thought would suffice for her funeral. She knew that in  
such a contingency her masters would not be in a position  
to spend anything substantial.

In the parallel world of Bennett's novels the  
orgreave family was presented as an ideal one. Here  
again Bennett wants to strike at the fact that the tem-
porary flourish and promise they show is not having any  
lasting values. The orgreaves were musical and romantic.  
But all the promise they raised was belied by the time  
the novel ended. A lovable creature like Janet continues
to be a spinster. Doctor Charle too does not arise beyond the suburban Ealing. It is again true in the case of many members of the middle-class family fall from the high pedestal of hope to profligacy and even perdition. The reference made by George Orwell while touching on the middle-class aspect of Charles Dickens and his casual touch on Bennett thereby is in good taste.

Mentally (Dickens) belongs to the small urban bourgeoisie, and he happens to be an exceptionally fine specimen of this class, with all the "points", as it were, very highly developed. This is partly what makes him so interesting. If one wants, the nearest would be H.G. Wells, who has had a rather similar history and who obviously owes something to Dickens as a novelist. Arnold Bennett was essentially the same type, but unlike the other two, he was a midlander with an industrial and Anglican background.

All these great writers preferred middle-class as their object of exploration. The various challenges that they required to face are highly pain-causing at the same time the middle classes are alive to the all embracing instinctive felicities of life social and cultural atmospheres abound in full blooded life and its activities amongst these classes. In a way Bennett's novels are about the middle-class.

The judgement of George Orwell is self-explanatory. That Bennett is a midlander with an industrial and Anglican background is a biographical fact. Orwell
means to employ that these biographical implications mattered most in the novels of Bennett. They are probably responsible for his relative superiority over Wells and Dickens. The faithful manner in which Bennett renders his midlander milieu with industrial and aglican background substantiates his relative superiority for Orwell.

While the essential purpose of Bennett is to create a true realistic picture of life, his goal gets served up with the help of his characters. There is a full fledged gallery of characters in Bennett. They bring in themselves the very life of their times. Bennett's characters have certain goals for themselves. At the outset they are required to be such living personalities in the recollection of whom all the properties of life as lived by them become familiar, lovable and sympathetically involvable for the readers. In the next chapter it is proposed to examine Bennett's art of characterisation.

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