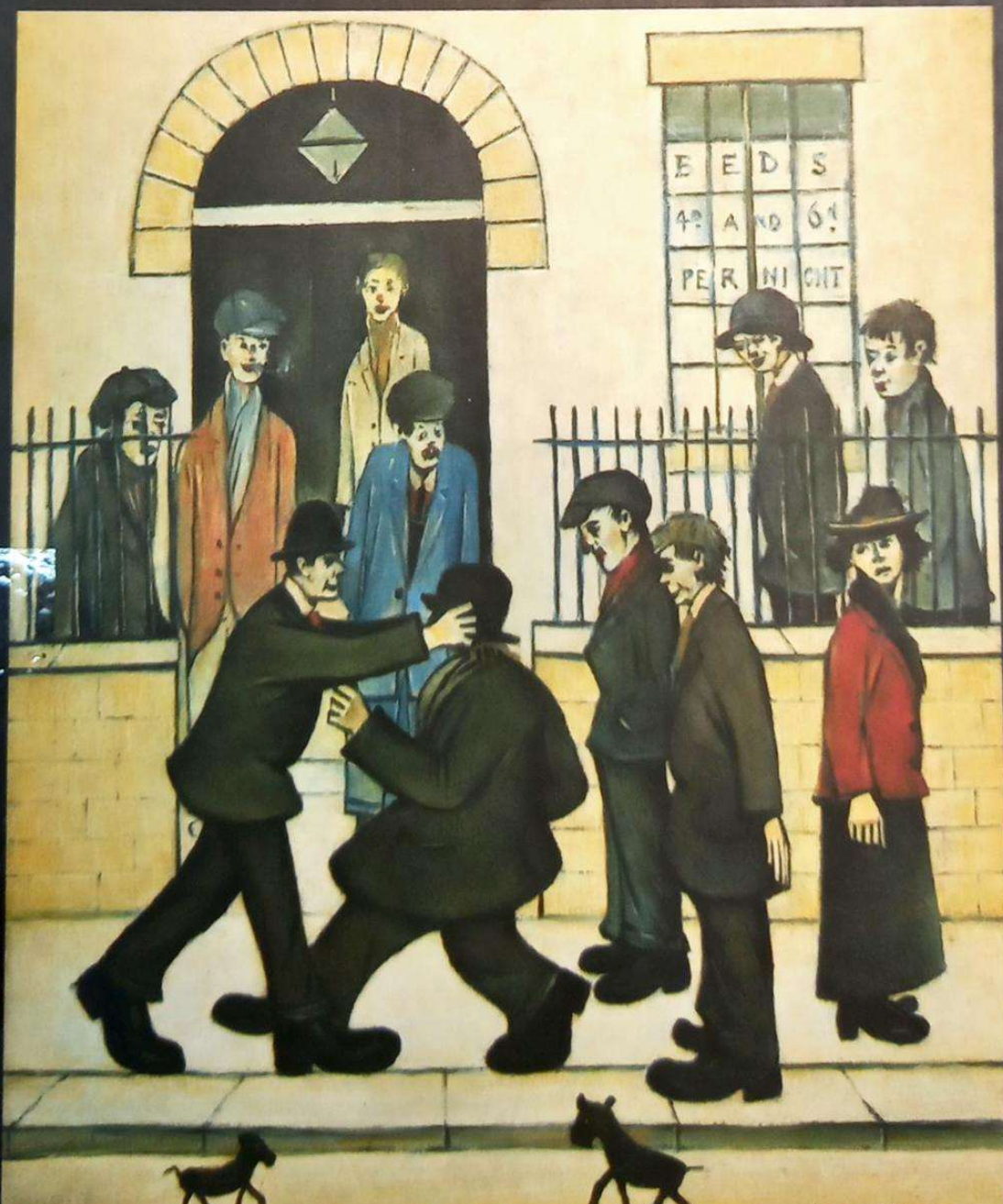


OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY  
2

# STORIES FROM THE FIVE TOWNS

ARNOLD BENNETT





## STORIES FROM THE FIVE TOWNS

Bursley, Hanbridge, Knype, Longshaw, Turnhill – these are the Five Towns of Arnold Bennett's stories, set in the English Midlands in the early 1900s. Today the Five Towns are the city of Stoke-on-Trent, but the place is still famous for its pottery . . . and for the people in Arnold Bennett's stories.

They are not famous or important people. They work in shops and factories; they fall in, and out of, love; they argue and they quarrel. Sometimes they are clever and successful, and sometimes they do very stupid things. Philip has some important news to tell his mother, but he is also going to get a big surprise . . . Sir Jee hates his portrait, but what can he do about it? It was a present from the people of the Five Towns . . . At Knype station, Toby Hall suddenly decides to take the train to Turnhill, but why? Then there are John and Robert. They are brothers, they live in the same house, they eat meals together – and neither has said a single word to the other for ten years . . .





OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY

*Human Interest*

---

## Stories from the Five Towns

Stage 2 (700 headwords)

Series Editor: Jennifer Bassett  
Founder Editor: Tricia Hedge  
Activities Editors: Jennifer Bassett and Alison Baxter



Oxford University Press,  
Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires Cape Town  
Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi  
Kolkata Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi  
Paris São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw  
with associated companies in  
Berlin Ibadan

OXFORD and OXFORD ENGLISH  
are trade marks of Oxford University Press

ISBN 0 19 422986 6

This simplified edition © Oxford University Press 2000

Third impression 2001

First published in Oxford Bookworms 1996

This second edition published in the Oxford Bookworms Library 2000

**No unauthorized photocopying**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Oxford University Press.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Illustrated by Martin Hargreaves

Printed in Spain by Unigraf s.l.

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	i
News of the Engagement	1
The Burglary	7
Beginning the New Year	15
The Silent Brothers	23
 GLOSSARY	 39
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	43
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	44
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	46
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	52
ABOUT BOOKWORMS	53



## NEWS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

My mother never came to meet me at Bursley station when I arrived in the Five Towns from London. She always had other things to do; she was getting ready for me. So I always walked alone up Trafalgar Road, between the factories and past the football field. And so tonight, I had time to



*I always walked alone up Trafalgar Road.*



think. I had some very important news for my mother, and I didn't know how to tell her.

I wrote to my mother every week, to tell her what I was doing. She knew the names of all my friends. I often wrote about Agnes and her family. But it's difficult to write in a letter: 'I think Agnes likes me,' 'I'm in love with her,' 'I'm sure she likes me,' 'I think she loves me,' 'I'm going to ask her to marry me.' You can't do that. Well, I couldn't do it. And on the 20th December I asked Agnes to marry me, and Agnes said yes. But my mother didn't know anything about it. And now, on the 22nd December, I was coming to spend Christmas with my mother.

My mother was a widow. I was her only son – and now I was engaged and she didn't know. I was afraid she was going to be a little unhappy, and I was ready for a difficult evening.

I walked up to the front door, but before I put my hand up to ring, the door opened and there was my mother. She put her arms around me.

'Well, Philip! How are you?'

And I said, 'Oh! I'm all right, mother. How are you?'

She smiled at me. She looked excited and younger than her forty-five years. There was something strange in her smile. I thought: 'She *knows* I'm going to get married. How does she know?'

But I said nothing. You have to be careful with mothers.



## Henry VIII and his Six Wives

JANET HARDY-GOULD

There were six of them – three Katherines, two Annes, and a Jane. One of them was the King's wife for twenty-four years, another for only a year and a half. One died, two were divorced, and two were beheaded. It was a dangerous, uncertain life.

After the King's death in 1547, his sixth wife finds a box of old letters – one from each of the first five wives. They are sad, angry, frightened letters. They tell the story of what it was like to be the wife of Henry VIII of England.

## Tooth and Claw

SAKI

*Retold by Rosemary Border*

Conradin is ten years old. He lives alone with his aunt. He has two big secrets. The first is that he hates his aunt. The second is that he keeps a small, wild animal in the garden shed. The animal has sharp, white teeth, and it loves fresh blood. Every night, Conradin prays to this animal and asks it to do one thing for him, just one thing.

This collection of short stories is clever, funny, and shows us 'Nature, red in tooth and claw'. In other words, it is Saki at his very best.