

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

I. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF IVY COMPTON-BURNETT

Ivy Compton-Burnett was one of the most original and fascinating literary figures of the twentieth century. She was born on June 5, 1884 at Pinner, Middlesex. Her father, Dr. James Compton-Burnett, was a well-to-do doctor widowed with five children. He married again and Ivy was the eldest of the seven children of the second marriage. Dr. James Compton-Burnett was a scholar and linguist. As a youngman he had studied under Freud in Vienna, and also he was trained as a neurologist. None of the eight Compton-Burnett sisters ever married. The two youngest, at the ages twenty two and nineteen, committed suicide. In 1916 Ivy's dear brother, Noel, was killed in France. Her mother died, and she was left alone to manage household affairs. She herself had a terrible illness-influenza turned into Pneumonia. After this upheaval Ivy Compton-Burnett developed a close friendship with Margaret Jourdain, a writer and authority with the Eighteenth Century Furniture. They lived together in a London flat for 32

years. Again Ivy had a hard blow when her friend died in 1951.

Ivy Compton-Burnett liked her London life where everyone, according to her opinion, was living the same life. The country life was expensive and she could not have afforded it even if she liked it. In fact, Ivy was prudent with her money because she left behind nearly of \$84,000. She left a certain amount to her publishers to bring out a special edition of her 19 novels together. Ivy's literary genius was recognized publically. A Commander Order of the British Empire was conferred on her in 1951 in recognition of her work, and a Dame Commonder in 1967. James Tait Black Memorial Book Prize for the best novel was awarded to her novel *Mother And Son*(1955). Leeds University conferred on her an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters on May 19, 1960. On August 27, 1969 she passed away in her sleep.

Her personal life and experiences are seen entirely transformed in her fiction. It is a common currence in many of her novels that a head of a family marries twice, and there are step-mothers and step-children scenes where the second wife loves her children more than the first wife's children. Her own family might have supplied her with the material because her father, James Compton-Burnett, had married twice. Ivy Compton-

Burnett's mother, Katherine Rees, prided in her lineage. Katherine Rees was a beautiful woman with golden hair. Her beauty was given to Sophia Stace in *Brothers and Sisters* (1929) along with the features. Christian in *Brothers and Sisters* (1929) was a doctor who loved his children and they were more attached to him than to their mother. In real life, too, Ivy's father was a doctor practising away from home while his wife ruled the house.

As far the family prayers conducted in many of her households, Ivy Compton-Burnett had her own background to recall:

"The Doctor was not a church-goer but he was most definitely a christian, and on Sunday evening he always conducted family prayers himself. All the children who were at home and old enough were expected to attend, having first been inspected by Minnie to make sure that they were tidy. All servants were present too, entering and leaving the dinning room in a formal procession. First came the butler, then the cook followed by the maids in black dresses and white caps with lone streamers, buttons, the pageboy and Leeny, the nursemaid, the underservants, whom Ivy referred to as the 'Squalors' bringing up the rear."¹

This can easily fit into any of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels where family prayers are conducted by

summoning the servants. Miss Smith was a much loved nurse of Compton-Burnett children. She looked after their needs and managed things to the best of her ability. She was called 'Minnie' by children. Minnie took the form of Patmore in *Brothers and Sisters*(1929), and in other novels, too, we see her replicas. Much endearing scenes between the governesses and children in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novel spring out of her personal experience.

Ivy Compton-Burnett's mother had a sharp temper of which her servants were afraid. She loved her husband very much and when he died suddenly of heart-failure she chose the deepest mourning clothes as Josephine Napier does in *More Women Than Men* (1933) . She lost her eldest son in 1904 which made her grief unbearable to her children. All these features fit into the character of Sophia Stace in *Brothers And Sisters* (1929). The brother and sister relationship which dominates almost every of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels is also derived from her personal experience. She had a great bond with her brothers-Guy and Novel- whose deaths left her in a void. Guy died of pneumonia. It took quite some years for her to recover. The death-bed scenes which are true to life in her novels seem to reflect her personal experience.

Ivy made use of the names of her relatives and their features in her novels. Her maternal grand- father was a crude tyrant in his household who appeared in various forms in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels. She herself was considered some what a tyrant by her sisters who went into the outside world away from her tyranny. we find that domestic tyranny is common to almost all her novels.

The description of the schools which was elaborately dealt in *Two worlds And Their ways* (1949) was supplied from her own life. She used to attend a school kept by her relatives. Even her last novel, *The Last And The First* (1971) gives clues to her childhood when one of her step-sisters left the home for a job in a school, a share of which was purchased by her father much against Katherine Compton-Burnett's wishes. The self-conscious in *The Last And And The First* (1971) resembles Clemence in *Two Worlds and Their Ways* (1949) and both seem to be self-portraits of Ivy when she was at school and college.

Ivy Compton- Burnett was acclaimed a great hostess at evening tea-parties. These gatherings influence her works. In her novels characters are revealed, plot are developed and the major incidents take

place at the dining table whether it is a family gathering or a formal Party. People, thus gathered there, get involved not only in the gossip but also in the discussions on something pertaining to literature as they do in *Pasters and Masters* (1925).

Besides, Ivy Compton- Burnett remains a good observer and registers many ordinary things in memory. She makes use of them in her works. Everyday - events get transformed into lively fiction in the hands of this wonderful novelist. The experience she gathered in life, whether tragic or comic, supplies her with abundant material for novels. Some of her personal tastes are also reflected in her works.

Almost all the families depicted by her have large spacious gardens where the members go for regular walks. Some of her major characters such as Mrs Ponsonby in *Daughters and Sons* (1937) take personal interest in gardening . In *Mother and Son* (1955), the tyrant Miranda appreciates the garden of Emma Greatheart. In *Elders and Betters* (1944), too, garden serves as a scene of action for the activities of the children.

Ivy wrote nineteen novels during her career 1925 to 1969. *The last one, The Last and The First*, was published posthumously in 1971. Her friends found the

script written in small loose note-books. Without much meddling with it they got it Published .

One may get tempted to compare her with Jane Austen, Henry James and Congreve. Ivy Compton-Burnett, though recognised the similarity of minds between herself and Jane Austen, would not admit her as her literary ancestor.² Ivy confesses through Christy in *Men and Wives*, "I hold no brief for Jane Austen and her kind woman though I am, I want something more involved with the deeper truths and wider issues of life."³ As for Henry James, she read very little of him to be influenced by him; rather she found him to be a writer difficult to understand. She liked Congreve's plays too, but not to the extent of being influenced by them.

With her unusual art, Ivy Compton-Burnett developed a dislike for the modern writers. She had no liking for the modern plotless novels and their trivial and insignificant themes. Her own work is unusual because she restricted the time and range of her novels and wrote in the same way again and again nearly for a period of half a century. Though she lived through the most difficult times of history. She did not allow the external world to creep into her inner world. She was aware of the literary trends of psycho-analysis and stream of consciousness because her own father was a student of Freud. She had

also knowledge of Darwin's origin of species and its implications.

The first world war was left its ugly scars on her. She felt that Britain lost the cream of its generation. And she realised that the state of singleness was forced on women because many young men were killed in the war. She, too, suffered along with the many. But this suffering did not influence her work, because it had no place in the world she had selected. A single woman was not an accepted factor in the society at the time when the stories of her novels took place. There are many single women in Ivy's works and no social criticism is aimed at them.

Thus having known the contemporary world and having lived through the two world wars Ivy Compton-Burnett has deliberately chosen period before 1910 and the family chronicles of the upper-middle class to be the themes of her novels. She spent her youth in the late Victorian time and probably she knew the intricacies of the upper-middle-class-living. Overt decencies of family are maintained in her family chronicles in spite of the hostile under currents. In the families of Ivy's world, children are under strict discipline to the extent of their parents being harsh. During the Victorian Era, the landed aristocracy was hard hit by the agricultural depression. Though Ivy

Compton-Burnett does not make use of the same scene, she shows that the economy of the upper-middle class families is on the verge of decay. It is a well-known truth that by the Education Act of 1870 universal literacy became a fact. This is well reflected in Ivy Compton-Burnett's works *Manservant and Maidservant* (1947) where she makes an illiterate character, Miss Buchanan, an object of ridicule. Pamela Hansford Johnson considered Ivy- "an 'uncontemporaneous' novelist writing at the present time and that she has had her roots in the past but has considerable impact on the present"⁴

ii. The Fictional World of Ivy Compton-Burnett

Though Ivy Compton-Burnett's works always fascinated a small group of admirers it was perhaps, only in the last fifty years that her reading public started widening. Ivy Compton-Burnett who lived to the ripe age of eighty-five was the author of twenty novels which made her the most unclassifiable novelist. She created a world of her own and had a unique way of rendering it.

The author herself does not like to include *Dolores*(1911) among her works. The novel itself is different from the mainstream of her work. Ivy even claims that *Pastors and Masters* (1925) is her first novel.

Dolores was written in collaboration with one of Ivy's brothers.

Dolores(1911) is the story of Dolores Hutton, a Yorkshire vicar's daughter. As a student at Oxford She develops adoration for an elderly playwright, Sigismund Claverhouse, though she never expresses her love. An offer of scholarship is made to Dolores which she welcomes, because it facilitates her stay at Oxford. But she has to give it up in order to teach her step-sisters and brother at home according to the wish of her father. The step-mother of Dolores is not well disposed towards her. Dolores bears her misery silently. An uncle of Dolores offers to provide for the education of her step brother and she gains her freedom to go back to Oxford.

Dolores contemplates marrying Claverhouse who is gradually growing blind. She learns from a scholar that he is in love with Perdita, a friend of hers. He also requests Dolores to persuade Perdita to marry him. Dolores sacrifices her love for fulfilling the wish of the man she adores. Perdita dies in childbirth. Dolores finds that she is a comfort to the old playwright even before a thought about her future crosses her mind. She receives a letter from her father asking her to come home to look after the house, as it is neglected because of the death of his second wife. Dolores dutifully obeys her father for the

second time at the cost of her own future. Soulsby, a friend of Claverhouse, proposes Dolores, but she returns in order to favour her step-sister, Sophia, and successfully arranges the marriage of the two. While at her father's house she learns of the death of her much admired playwright, she attends his funeral at Oxford and returns home only to learn that her father no more needs her as he is marrying for the third time. Having been deprived of every happiness Dolores takes up a teaching job in her old college.

Dolores differs from other novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett not only in its theme but also in its style. Unlike her other novels in *Dolores*, a good number of pages are devoted to discussions about religion, about the formation of Temperance Society and the unification of church of England with the methodist churches. The discussion also turns on the significance of Roman Catholicism.

Ivy Compton-Burnett was hailed as an original writer by the literary world when *Pastors and Masters* was published in 1925. Though the development of a novel largely through dialogues was not entirely unknown, Compton-Burnett's presentation made her a distinguished writer of this technique. The highly polished and cultured

dialogues sparkling with wit, humour and satire was centred round in *Pastors and Masters*.

The school in *Pastors and Masters* (1925) is owned by Mr. Herrick, a literary critic who has a craving to be recognised as a creative writer. He is the head of the school only in name and leaves its management in the hands of tactful Mr. Merry. It is really a Dickensian type of school where the students are not at all important, but it is the fees they pay that matters. Mr. Merry constantly nags the boys and his wife adulterates their preserves. But they publicize on the Present Day that all is well with the school.

Mr. Herrick lives with his half-sister Emily who is a real support to him though he never realises it. One of his old friends, Crabbe, dies, and Herrick finds a typed manuscript of a novel in Crabbe's room. Thinking it to be Crabbe's, Herrick wants to pass it on as his own. He discusses his little book that has Flashed in his mind with his friends, Bumpus and William. Bumpus also wrote a novel long ago but threw it into the grave of one of his friends. Now he also claims to have written a new book which reflects his youthful ideas. A day is fixed for these two writers to read out their manuscripts at a common friend's house. Bumpus speaks at length of the book he has buried and feels sorry that it is no more with him. The

present one, though good, may not be equal to the first. This book is also delayed because he has lost his typed manuscript in Crabbe's room. At this point Herrick feels nervous and postpones his reading. When Bumpus is about to begin, his friend, William, reveals that he has the manuscript of the earlier novel written by Bumpus. At that point Bumpus gives many excuses for not reading his present work, Emily clearly sees through the game. Her brother has stolen the script of Bumpus and Bumpus himself has not written any new book, except the one he wrote years ago. But Emily does not utter a word to her brother in this regard. Thus in this novel, no verdict is passed against wickedness no punishment is given.

Brothers and Sisters (1929) is considered a 'sophoclean tragedy'⁵ about a tightly knit family in a small community, Andrew Stace belongs to the British landed gentry with land to look after and ancestral traditions to keep up. He has a foster son, Christian, and a natural Daughter Sophia. He comes to know much against his liking that an attachment is growing between Christian and Sophia and that it may culminate in marriage. He threatens them with disinheritance. With mounting tension he dies soon, leaving a letter, in which he gives his reason why they should not marry. But nobody gets hold of that letter for twenty-six years.

Christian and Sophia get married and have two sons and a daughter. Sophia becomes a dictator and tyrant in her family. After twenty-six years of their marriage, Christian whose health is failing discovers Andrew's letter and comes to know that his wife is his half-sister and the shock kills him. Sophia too learns the truth, but does not accept defeat. She finally dies of cancer.

In *Men and Wives*(1931) the central figure is Lady Harriet Haslam, wife of sir Godfrey. She is the family tyrant who wants to keep everyone in her grip. She looks after the family accounts and plans things according to her wishes rather than to the needs of the people. She wants everyone to pay special attention to her. She has three sons and a daughter, whose sympathy she wrings out. Once she makes a fake attempt of suicide and then she is sent to a mental home to regain her normal self. In her absence the family makes big strides towards self-contentment. Parties are thrown and charities are given. Lady Harriet's return makes their hearts sink. She tries to have the former hold on men and matters. Her eldest son, Matthew, knowing her opposition to his marriage with a girl of his choice, mixes up a poisonous tablet with her sleeping tablet's and causes her death. His fiancée refuses to marry a murderer. Matthew is upset by his crime and speaks of it to his family. His family publicises

it as his mental delusion and their family-doctor helps them in their endearour Harriet leaves her fortune to her husband with a condition that he should remain her widower. Thus she has her say even after her death.

More Women Than Men (1933) deals with a girl's school which is headed by Josephine Napier. She is a man and woman combined so far as her ability is concerned. She has an obsession for her nephew Gabriel whom she has adopted. When he falls in love with the Daughters of Josephine's friend, she tries to prevent the marriage. But Gabriel marries her. Gabriel's young wife falls ill and he has to leave her under the care of his aunt. Knowing that draught will kill the patient, Josephine exposes the sick girl to draught and achieves her wish. Later it is also revealed that Gabriel is an illegitimate child of her brother and Josephine takes Gabriel's natural mother as a partner of her school. Gabriel leaves his present home and makes another in a different place.

A House and Its Head (1935) has a male tyrant, Duncan Edgeworth, who always has a last word on everything. His meek wife dies because of his carelessness and Duncan very soon replaces her by a pretty young woman. A son is born to his second wife, but Duncan comes to know that it is not his child. His second wife runs away from the family leaving the child behind.

Duncan marries a third time and this time his wife is a familiar person, Cassandra, a former teacher and present caretaker of his children. Sibyl, Duncan's favourite daughter, induces a nurse to kill the child in the family. So, that her husband may inherit the property. So, the nurse turns the gas on and the child is killed and people consider it as accident.

Daughters and Sons (1937) has two household tyrants, eighty-four years-old Sabine Ponsonby and her forty-eight years old daughter, Hetta. Sabine does not allow anyone to give orders in her own house as long as she is there. Hetta orders children and does not allow anyone to come near her widower brother John. He is a writer of repute and Hetta feels proud to have her grip on him. Ever since her brother's wife died Hetta slowly occupies the emptiness to the extent of looming large on her brother. John's second daughter, France also has a writing talent. Though John appreciates her talent, he does not encourage her in that line. So, she publishes her book in the name of Edith, the governess. When the family faces economic crisis, France helps her father with a large amount under the guise of a grateful reader. Later Sabine tampers with a letter addressed to Edith, and comes to the conclusion that Edith is the unknown benefactress. She urges her son to marry Edith. Hetta is

shocked to hear about her brother's marriage. As she cannot dissuade him she tries to keep her position as much as she can. When John receives help from the 'grateful reader' a second time, and when John and Sabine take it as a natural thing, Hetta gets suspicious. She purchases the book which is in the name of Edith and goes through it. As she has expected, she find it out as the work of France. In order to teach a lesson to the members of her family about her indispensableness she leaves, the house with a note suggesting suicide. John is upset. His mother is severely shocked. But Edith manages things to go on as before. Hetta suddenly reappears and asks the members of the family if they have had a lesson. John resents her cruelty and declares that she has lost her place to Edith. Their friends are invited to dinner and Sabine, though old and weak, presides over the table. John tries to keep Hetta in her humbled place. She rebels. She reveals in front of everyone that her mother and brother have taken Edith into their house only for sake of money. In fact the money belongs to France who is afraid of her father's jealousy. The revelation gives a death blow to Sabine, Chaucer, a friend of the family proposes to Hetta and she consents.

A Family and A Fortune(1939) is a story of two inseparable brothers-Edgar and Dudley, Edgar's wife.

Blanche's old father, Matty- her sister and her companion Miss Griffin, come to live at a cottage in their compound. They claim a big share in the family's comfort. suddenly Dudley inherits a fortune from his godfather. All his relatives start planning what to do with the money. Dudley yields to their demands at first but later plans his own life with Matty's friend Maria. This news shocks the family. Blanche dies after a brief illness. Edgar, in his so-called grief, comes close to Maria and wins her. It is too much for Dudley to see his dreams shattered. When he is deprived of his private hours in the company of his brother as a result of his brother's second marriage, Dudley rebels and leaves the house on a winter night. Miss Griffin is driven out of the house on the same night by Matly. Dudley arranges for her stay. He wanders aimlessly and falls ill to the point of death. Edgar and his family rescue him from the jaws of death and the bond between the brothers reviews.

Parent and Children (1941) depicts the relation between parents and children, and also refers to the villainy of a friend of the family. Fulbert, father of nine children, leaves his family for South America on some work. He leaves his wife, Eleanor, in the care of his friend. After a while Fulbert writes to say that he is very ill and is on the verge of death. Later no communication is

received by the family. It is almost believed that Fulbert is dead and the family observes mourning. Fulbert's friend proposes to Eleanor who accepts him readily. As the marriage date is approaching Eleanor's little son spots his father in a town nearby,. Taking a hint from him, his grandmother rushes to the town and brings back her son. Fulbert has sent a telegram to his friend about his return to save the family from a shock . Later it comes to light that the friend deliberately hid the telegram in order to marry Eleanor. Again the old order is restored in the family.

In *Elders and Betters* (1944) Anna Donne is the family tyrant. Being the only Daughter of the motherless family She acts as the mistress of the house. She removes her father and brothers to a new home where she has her cousins as neighbours Sukey, her father's sister, has a fortune of her own and is living with her sister's Jessica's, family. Though everyone looks after her well, Sukey demands more attention from them as she is sick . Anna comes on the scene at an appropriate time and tries to win the love of Sukey by paying her more attention. Suckey, in one of her peculiar moods, makes a will in favour of Anna. Later she realises that it is only just that she should destroy the new will and leave everything to Jessica in whose favour she has already

made a will. She requests Anna to destroy the new will. Anna promises to do that and reads to Sukey who falls a sleep soon and never wakes up. Anna reads both the wills and destroys the one which is in favour of Jessica. Jessica's family is surprised and disappointed to know that Sukey has left everything to Anna. Jessica asks Anna to reveal the truth. Anna exercises her evil influence on grief stricken Jessica and drives her to suicide. With all this underneath and without a prick of conscience Anna lives happily everafter.

Manservant and Maidservant(1947) was published also in the U.S.A. under the title *Bullivant and The Lambs* in (1949). It deals with the two worlds of servants and masters, and is one of the more popular novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett. The author, too, considered it as her favourite novel.

Horace Lamb is a family tyrant and a stingy man who does not even provide minimum comfort to his children. He discovers through a letter that his wife is going to marry his dependent brother for the welfare of the children. He decides to be kind and considerate to his family. So that he may retain his wife and her money. But his children are not much convinced of the change in his character. One day he takes a stroll towards a bridge which is in a dangerous condition. Two of his children

have already heard about the danger and instead of warning their father they keep quiet, Horace comes back having been warned by a signboard and asks his sons to explain their motive in not warning him in time. They say that they are afraid that their father's old self might come back. One of the servant-boys also plans Horace's death by removing the danger, signal from its place, because he has been harassed by Horace. The novel is full of wit and humour. Evil thought only cross the minds of the characters, but never bear ill fruits.

Two Worlds and Their Ways(1949) has two worlds of the elders and the children. Parents expect their son and Daughters to fare too well in their school. Children do not want their parents to think less of them. Both of them cheat their teachers to obtain good marks, but their cheating is discovered and they are sent away from the school. Elders also have their deceitful ways. The book nicely deals with children's psychology and their self-consciousness.

Darkness and Day (1951) is the story of Lovat and Bridget who are talked about as having incestuous relation. Edmund Lovat is made to believe that his wife, Bridget, is his own Daughters by an illicit love-affair. The rumour spreads in the entire household and in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Spruce, the cook, knows the truth

that Bridget is not Edmund's Daughters because she herself is Bridget's mother. Remaining in the background, Mrs. Spruce makes her former lover and Bridget's natural father, Sir Ransome Chance, who is at present know as her god - Father, reveal the truth. Clouds disappear and in the process new relationship crop up. But the secret that Mrs. Spruce is Bridget's mother, remains a secret between Edmund's mother and Mrs. spruce.

The Present and The Past (1953) is a novel dealing with a man whose past clashes with the present and claims him as a victim. Cassius Clare's first wife, Catherine, returns after an absence of nine years to claim her two sons whom she has earlier left with her husband under irreconcilable circumstances. Meanwhile Cassius marries another woman and has three children by her. The second wife tries to be a mother to her step-children, but the eldest boy logs for his own mother. Catherine's return turns the fancy of Cassius towards her. Catherine is only concerned with her children. Catherine and the second wife of Cassius come close to the extent of neglecting Cassius. Cassius attempts a take suicide to draw everyone's attention to him. The truth is out and everyone sees his shallowness. Next time when he is really sick and is lying unconscious, a servant considers it as a fake attempt, too, and this

results in his death. Catherine realises that her arrival is the chief cause of the evil and departs with her two sons to live in a distant place.

Mother and Son(1955) which brought Miss Compton- Burnett, James Tait Black Award in 1956, deals with the relationship of an old mother and a grown-up son which excludes everyone else in the family. Julius Hume's wife, Miranda, is twelve years older than her husband, and has a middle aged son, Rosebery, whose world is dominated by his mother alone. Miranda is the family tyrant who is ruthless in her dealings. There are three more children under her roof who are supposed to be Julius Hume's nephew. They are taken in as Orphans. Miranda gets a companion, Hester, towards whom Rosebery is romantically inclined. Miranda takes proper steps to curb this once. She tells her husband and son about her weakening heart and requests them to come out openly with hidden secrets. Julius confesses that the so-called Orphan children in their home are his children by another woman. Miranda accuses him of infidelity and dies. Later it comes to light that Rosebery is also an illegitimate child of Miranda. Life goes on as before, ofcourse, without Miranda's tyranny.

A Father and His Fate (1957) is the story of Miles who has three daughters and an adopted son,

Malcolm. Miles, alongwith his wife, Ellen, goes abroad and loses his wife in a shipwreck. When he comes home he finds Malcolm's Fiancee, Verena, as a solace. He even decides to marry her. Later it is discovered that Ellen in alive.

A Heritage And Its History (1960) depicts Sir Edward as a bachelor. He allows his younger brother's family to live on his estate. These two brothers live for each other, and when the younger one dies, half of Sir Edward too dies. Sir Edward's nephew, Simaon, too, has a dependent bachelor brother, walter, living in his house . Simon has illicit relations with his uncle's wife, and she gets a son by him . Simon's illegitimate son is known as his Cousin . Simon's own Daughters falls in love with that boy.

The Mighty And Their Fall (1962) is a novel in which Ninian Middleton is the most selfish father and he has a dependent foster brother who is a bachelor. Ninian discards his Daughters when she serves no purpose of his, then destroyes the will of his brother that is made in favour of his daughter, keeps her in good humar and prevents her marriage only to have a lion's share in her inheritance.

In the novel, *A God and His Gifts* Hereward's son, Saloman, wants to marry his cousin, Viola, and

openly requests his father not to meddle with their relationship as he has done on an earlier occasion. But he is twenty-two years late in his request because Hereward has already meddled with the relationship. He fathered Viola twenty-two years ago. Hereward Egerton has extramarital relations with Rosa, a tenant, his wife's sister.

The Last and The First (1971) presents the theme woven around money. Hermia inherits a big fortune. Her step-mother who so far has been discarding her, praises her to the skies and calls her an angel. Now that she has money, the step-mother does not want her to marry lest the money should go away with her. The tyrant of the two families is now tamed by Hermia simply because she has the power of money with her.

Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels have a strong vestigial bond. Though these novels look alike to a lay reader so far as their themes, characters, incidents and milieu are concerned they present kaleidoscopic images—each with different colour combinations and patterns which help us single out each from its family.

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