

WORLD'S  CLASSICS



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

BARCHESTER TOWERS



THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

Barchester Towers

Text edited by

MICHAEL SADLEIR and FREDERICK PAGE

Introduction and Notes by

JOHN SUTHERLAND

With illustrations by

EDWARD ARDIZZONE

Oxford New York

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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

Oxford New York

Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogota Bombay Buenos Aires
Calcutta Cape Town Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong
Istanbul Karachi Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Text © Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page 1953

Chronology © N. John Hall 1991

Introduction, Note on the Text, Select Bibliography, Explanatory Notes

© John Sutherland 1996

Who's Who in Barchester Towers © R. W. Chapman 1953

First published as a World's Classics paperback 1996

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, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press. Within the UK, exceptions are allowed in respect of any fair dealing for the purpose of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms of the licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside these terms and in other countries should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, 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

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Trollope, Anthony, 1815-1882.

Barchester Towers / Anthony Trollope; text edited by Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page; introduction and notes by John Sutherland, with illustrations by Edward Ardizzone.

The world's classics.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Barsetshire (England: Imaginary place)—Fiction. 2. Barchester (England: Imaginary place)—Fiction. 3. Clergy—England—Fiction.

I. Sadleir, Michael, 1888-1957. II. Page, Frederick, 1879-

III. Sutherland, John, 1938-. IV. Title. V. Series.

PR5684.B3 1996 823'.8—dc20 96-1471

ISBN 0-19-282393-0

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Great Britain by
BPC Paperbacks Ltd., Aylesbury, Bucks.

INTRODUCTION

THE genesis of *Barchester Towers* (1857) is well known from Trollope's mellowly retrospective account in *An Autobiography*. Following his 'dogged as does it' philosophy he had served an arduous, ten-year apprenticeship with three earlier novels in two currently popular modes: Irish fiction and historical romance. They were not popular for Anthony Trollope. All had proved failures—one of them (*The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, 1848) had failed so abjectly that lesser men would have given up the writing game altogether, as his publisher candidly advised him to do. But Trollope was not deterred. Not that he had any illusions about the justice of the British public's verdict. 'The idea that I was the unfortunate owner of unappreciated genius never troubled me,' he recalled: 'But still I was clear in my mind I would not lay down my pen' (p. 85).¹

In *An Autobiography* Trollope records the epiphanic moment 'on the little bridge at Salisbury' in late May 1852² when the idea for *The Warden* ('The Precentor' as it was originally called) and a 'series' of Barchester sequels came to him. Following Trollope's cue in *An Autobiography*, the beautiful prospect of Salisbury Cathedral (usually a reproduction of John Constable's oil painting) has often been placed as a frontispiece to reprints of the Barchester Chronicles. But the inspirational experience on the little bridge at Salisbury resonates in other less directly picturesque ways. In *The New Zealander* (the anatomy of England and the English which Trollope wrote alongside *Barchester Towers*) he had taken as his theme the great historian

¹ References are to *An Autobiography*, ed. F. Page (Oxford, 1950).

² There is some confusion on dates, originating in *An Autobiography*, where Trollope misremembers and implies in one place that the idea for *The Warden* came to him in 1851. See R. H. Super, 'Truth and Fiction in Trollope's *An Autobiography*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (June 1993), 77.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Macaulay's symbolic tableau of a man of the far distant future, from a far distant place, standing on London Bridge (which *has* fallen down) contemplating the ruins of London's great Anglican cathedral—a structure which aeons of history have shown to be transient when set against the indestructability of Christian Rome: 'She [the Catholic Church] was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain', Macaulay wrote, 'and she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruin of St. Paul's.'³

Trollope's musing on the cathedral from his bridge at Salisbury occurred at a momentous juncture in English religious life. In 1850 Rome had re-established its hierarchy in England, installing an archbishop and twelve bishops. This 'Papal Aggression' provoked a storm of indignation and angry legislation. To many—including the fifth column of 'Tractarians' (Catholic sympathizers, so-called for the 'Tracts' in which they propagated their views)—the 'Aggression' looked like Mother Church moving to reclaim her most errant child. Was Anglicanism doomed? Was it falling into terminal decay and back into the bosom of Rome? These were thoughts that must have passed through Trollope's mind in 1852, contemplating Salisbury's magnificent pile.

Thackeray and Dickens (whose serials *The Newcomes* and *Little Dorrit* overshadowed *Barchester Towers*) routinely set their narratives twenty to thirty years in the past. Trollope, by contrast, liked to plant his fictions plumb in the present day—it was one of his hallmarks. *The Warden* had dealt with two ecclesiastical scandals which were still some months short of final resolution when the novel was published. On its part, *Barchester Towers* begins with the description of the

³ T. B. Macaulay's comment was made in a review of von Ranke's *History of the Popes*, in the *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1840).

INTRODUCTION

fall of a government which mirrors what was happening that very week (see note to 1.1). So too was Trollope's concern with ecclesiastical matters topical. The great British cathedrals were, in the mid-1850s, anomalous in a peculiarly British way. Their buildings long preceded nineteenth-century Reform and even sixteenth-century Reformation. They were quirkily unregenerate—retaining elements of aboriginal Catholic ritual which would provoke riots in many Anglican parish churches. Cathedral services featured elaborate choral performances, 'chanting', and officiating clergy might, with impunity, wear the obnoxious surplice.

Like other old British institutions, the Anglican cathedrals were beautiful and irrational. And, like other old institutions, they were inefficient and had in some places fallen into corruption. Dickens—in his assault on the Courts of Chancery (in *Bleak House*, 1853), Parliament (the great source of 'muddle' in *Hard Times*, 1854), and the Civil Service ('the Circumlocution Office' in *Little Dorrit*, 1856)—was single-minded in his attack on old English institutions.⁴ Not for him any nostalgia for worn-out social machinery. The great voice of the nation, *The Times* (a paper which Trollope particularly disliked in the 1850s for its 'thundering' self-confidence), was similarly contemptuous. On his part, Trollope was conflicted on the subject of England's old institutions, and—even after reading his books—it is hard to ascertain exactly what his position on ecclesiastic reform was. In politics he labelled himself, with superb self-contradiction, 'an advanced, but still a conservative Liberal'. In church affairs he could be

⁴ Trollope disliked *Little Dorrit* intensely and wrote to the *Athenaeum* in February 1856, offering to write a piece contradicting the third number, with its 'science of government' satire. The editors declined the offer. See *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. N. John Hall, 2 vols. (Stanford, Calif. 1983), i. 43–4 (hereafter abbreviated to *Lett.*); and Bradford A. Booth, 'Trollope and *Little Dorrit*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Mar. 1948), 237–40.

INTRODUCTION

described as a radical, but still a traditional reformist—very hard to pin down, in other words.

The proximate inspiration for the first novel in the Barchester series was recent uproar about the Church's administration of religious charities. There were two egregious cases to hand (there were also, as Geoffrey Best points out, 'dozens' of others which Trollope might have drawn on for *The Warden*).⁵ At St Cross (1845–53), the Earl of Guildford held two livings and was master of St Cross Hospital, for which benefices he received £1,500 a year and did nothing. A series of Chancery suits, and much publicity in *The Times*, forced him to relinquish his sinecures. At Rochester (1848–53), Dr Whiston, the head of the cathedral school, sued the dean and chapter for not disbursing more of their wealth to his pupils. Again, *The Times* took a keen interest in the outcome. These cases, and others like them, led directly to the 'reforming' Charitable Trusts Act of 1854, and a vigilant board of commissioners. *The Times* knew where it stood; evidently the Anglican Church knew where it stood after 1854. But, at the end of *The Warden*, the reader cannot be entirely sure where Trollope stands. From *An Autobiography*, it is clear that—looking back—Trollope was not even sure himself what side he was on. John Bold, the reformer, is pig-headed and destructive. But he is demonstrably right about some things. As Septimus Harding, the Warden, comes to see, it is morally indefensible that funds (like John Hiram's) intended for charity should convert to 'incomes for idle Church dignitaries'. On the other hand, do not for that reason 'tear to pieces' the 'beauty and dignity' of the Church (*An Autobiography*, 93–4). No good, and some real harm, comes out of Harding's giving up his Wardenship, indefensible sinecure though it is.

Trollope had been exposed to formative, but contradic-

⁵ See G. F. A. Best, 'The Road to Hiram's Hospital', *Victorian Studies* (Dec. 1961), 135–50.

INTRODUCTION

tory, religious influences as a child and young man. His mother Frances Milton Trollope loathed evangelicals and lashed them in her novel *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837), a novel whose Revd William Cartwright makes Obadiah Slope look like the best of shepherds. His mother's slanders were still held against Trollope decades later in 1863, when he tried to place a novel with the evangelical magazine *Good Words*.⁶ At another extreme, the young Anthony evidently had a soft spot for Miss Fanny Bent, an old friend of his mother's who lived in the Cathedral Close at Exeter. Miss Bent was to re-emerge, fondly portrayed, as the ultra-Conservative churchwoman Aunt Jemima Stanbury in *He Knew He Was Right*, who thinks it has been downhill all the way since the Regency. On his part, Thomas Trollope, Anthony's father, was thoughtfully middle-of-the-road on church matters. Anthony's older brother (another Thomas) was sent to Alban Hall, Oxford by his father because Mr Trollope approved of the doctrines of the arch-liberal Richard Whately (later Archbishop Whately), who was then principal of the college. Had the family's fortunes not crashed disastrously in 1834 (driving the Trollopes to destitute refuge abroad from their creditors), Anthony would himself have been at New College, Oxford at the height of the Tractarian frenzy, 1835-9. The depiction of Mr Arabin (who is exactly Trollope's age at the time of writing *Barchester Towers*) suggests that Trollope felt that he too would have succumbed to the incense-ridden High Church charisma of Pusey, Newman, and Froude.

The 1850s were, for the Anglican Church, a fraught decade in what had been a fraught period. The early nineteenth-century torpid consensus about the English faith was fissured by fault lines and stirred up by any number of new brooms. Old corruption in the Church had attracted the zeal of the Whigs, following their triumph over their Conservative opponents with parliamen-

⁶ See P. D. Edwards's introduction to the World's Classics *Rachel Ray*.

INTRODUCTION

tary reform in 1832. No more should the Church of England be the Conservative Party at prayer. It should be Whiggism (what would later evolve into Liberalism) militant. Evangelicalism (the 'Low Church' tendency) was passionately opposed by the Oxford Tractarians, who yearned for reunion with Rome as an orphaned child yearns for its mother's breast. Some congregations might be inflamed to physical violence by injudicious introduction of some 'Romish' vestment, genuflexion, or whiff of incense. Other congregations might boycott a minister with too clear a sympathy for anti-Papist Dissenters. Political partisanship aligned itself with doctrinal dispute: reform and ritual became mixed in an explosive brew. There were, in the 1850s, the first tremors of scientific contradictions that would split the Church asunder in 1859, with Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. While Trollope wrote *Barchester Towers*, Anglicanism was fighting hard on four fronts: against insurgent Dissent; against Catholic 'aggression'; against scientific 'agnosticism' and utilitarianism; against political and journalist critics who argued—with all too many examples—that the Church was incompetent to run its own temporal affairs.

Middle-of-the-road Anglicanism defended itself by robust affirmations of the kind embodied in Dr Grantly, whose first reaction to his interview with the new bishop is a roar of wrath that scares the birds out of the trees. More cunningly, and in the way of durable British institutions, the Church of England absorbed and blunted elements of its opponents' attack, developing a Low Church fringe (where Anglicanism blurred invisibly into Dissent and Nonconformity) and a High Church fringe (where it was indistinguishable from Catholicism). There was little persecution and a considerable degree of tolerance. In *Barchester Towers* the new energies drawn from Nonconformity are embodied in Mr Slope and Mrs Proudie (the Bishop—a conscienceless pragmatist—is harder to place, even when *The Last Chronicle of Barset* has run its course).

INTRODUCTION

At the other extreme, Arabin embodies the spiritual, ceremonial, liturgical, intellectual, and ornamental beauty of the High Church. And, it should be added, its effete-ness. In the middle are bluff, middle-of-the-road Broad churchmen like Dr Grantly and his mentor Dr Gwynne and uncomplicatedly good souls like Mr Harding. And where did Trollope stand? He sidestepped the whole thing with his apparently simple (but in fact very tricky) contention that all he desired was that the Church should be run by 'gentlemen'. At various points in his career (as with the Ray family in *Rachel Ray*, or the depiction of the Revd Samuel Saul in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*), he could create approving depictions of evangelicals. In *Barchester Towers* the High Church comes off best (although there is more than a tincture of ridicule in our last sight of the silk-waistcoated Arabin). But *Barchester Towers* should not be seen as in any sense marking out Trollope's definitive position on the question.

Despite their aura of cathedral quiet, small-beer comedy, and 'domesticity', *The Warden* and its sequel *Barchester Towers* may be taken as 'Condition of England' works—quite as much so as *Hard Times*. Like Dickens's industrial novel, Trollope's Barchester novels are permeated with ideas drawn from Thomas Carlyle, who coined the phrase 'Condition of England Question' in *Past and Present*.⁷ The first two Barchester novels follow closely in the track of *Past and Present*—another work which opens with the contemplation of an ancient and ruined church building (the abbey at Bury St Edmunds). Like many of his contemporaries, Trollope was profoundly influenced by Carlyle's dyspeptic vision of modern England while having a number of fundamental disagreements with the sage (he went so far in 1851 as to declare the author of the recently published *Latter-Day Pamphlets* to be mad—none the less, when he wrote *The New Zealander* four years later, Carlyle's

⁷ See *An Autobiography*, ch. 20, for Trollope's views on 'Carlylism'.

INTRODUCTION

Pamphlets were his model). Specifically, Trollope objected to Carlyle's 'pessimism'—or, as he put it in *An Autobiography*, the belief that 'we are all going straight away to darkness and the dogs' (p. 354). Trollope spoofed this apocalyptic Carlylism rather heavy-handedly in the 'Pessimist Anticant' digression in *The Warden*. None the less, as N. John Hall has shown, for all his proclaimed disagreement, Trollope was a Carlylean—at least to the degree that he asked the same questions while coming up with some idiosyncratically un-Carlylean answers.⁸

On one thing Trollope and Carlyle were of one mind—they valued the past and hated its wholesale erasure by the many parties of reform in mid-Victorian England. Trollope was less disposed to be 'off with the old' than his more zealously reforming contemporaries because he knew old England too well to part with it easily. He was steeped in his country in ways that few Englishmen are. The nature of his employment with the Post Office meant that in the period 1851–5 he travelled around rural England on horseback covering as much ground (an average of 40 miles a day), and with as sharp an eye for his surroundings, as had William Cobbett on his *Rural Rides* (1830). In Chapter 22 of *Barchester Towers* there is a heartfelt aside in which Trollope enthuses about the neglected beauties of the grand old buildings of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Dorsetshire. He expatiated on the same theme even more passionately in *The New Zealander*, apparently blaming John Ruskin for the English prejudice against the stones of England:

Men who know Florence and Rome as well or better than they know London; who are closely intimate with the stones of Venice, who have almost watched the building of the palaces of Munich, and who rave of the extensive effects of French designs, have never visited Somersetshire and Dorsetshire, and know nothing

⁸ A. Trollope, *The New Zealander*, ed. N. John Hall (London, 1972), p. xiv.

INTRODUCTION

of the quiet gems which are there embosomed among the finest trees in Europe, the productions of all but unknown English names in the sixteenth century. Such men have heard, and probably only heard, of Hatfield, and Longleat and Montacute. But Hatfield and Longleat and Montacute are, if equal in beauty, not more than equal to scores of mansions and modest country houses which are to be found almost in every parish of our western counties on this side the Tamar. (p. 191)

Trollope had been in those parishes, and knew the 'quiet gems' lying unregarded all over rural England. In the four years immediately preceding the composition of *Barchester Towers* he had 'visited every house—certainly every house of importance—in Devonshire, Cornwall, much of Dorset, Somerset, part of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, and the six southern counties of Wales'.⁹ But no more than Cobbett was Trollope undertaking his rural rides as a tourist. He was an apostle of the new age. Reform rode behind him on his horse. Since 1839 the Penny Post, and the adhesive stamp which made it possible, had revolutionized English communications as radically as the railways in the 1840s, the telegraph in the 1860s, the telephone in the 1890s, radio in the 1930s, television in the 1950s, and the Internet in the 1990s. Every 'improvement' in the postal service that followed Trollope's criss-crossing the country, every pillar-box (an innovation which he was responsible for introducing in 1851), shrank England.¹⁰

With shrinkage came homogenization. Regions, towns, and villages which could communicate by same- or next-day post came to be more like each other. Insidiously, the present is obliterating the past in the world of *Barchester Towers*, even in the three brief months that the narrative

⁹ See R. H. Super, *The Chronicler of Barchester* (Ann Arbor, 1988), 62 and *An Autobiography*, 92.

¹⁰ See idem, 'Reorganizing Rural Posts', in *Trollope and the Post Office* (Ann Arbor, 1981), 20–9.

INTRODUCTION

covers. When the old Bishop dies, the Archdeacon sends the news by telegraph. Touchingly, he has, in the first flush of his filial grief, to explain to his old friend Mr Harding how the newfangled gadget works. We first meet the Proudies in their first-class carriage, rushing down to Barchester at 50 miles an hour. Mrs Proudie falls on the cathedral like a modernizing tornado. Why is there no gas lighting on the ground floor, why no hot-water pipes serving the upper storeys, she demands of the Archdeacon, whose responsibility the medieval plumbing of the palace is? (Termagant she may be, but we can assume there will be less cholera and eyestrain in Barchester under her reign.) The comedy of Mrs Proudie's inaugural 'reception' (one of the great set pieces in Trollope's early fiction) is played out under the horrible glare of her new twelve-jet gas chandeliers—more appropriate to the gin palace than the episcopal palace. Is the picture he is giving the reader a sharp daguerreotype, or a gentler, more diffused, calotype photograph, Trollope muses in the prelude to his second volume? Why does not Sir Omicron Pie charter a special train to come down from London to the mortally ill Dr Trefoil, a character asks, as someone in a contemporary novel might ask—why not charter a Lear jet? While Miss Thorne plans her medieval *fête-champêtre*, her more practical brother the Squire is investigating the advantages of the new McCormick mechanical reaper, recently put on show at the Great Exhibition. It is London papers (notably *The Times*) not local papers that Mr Slope and other advanced spirits in Barchester read.

One great, unmentioned, public event overhangs *Barchester Towers*: the Crimean War.¹¹ Hostilities had broken out in March 1854. In January 1855, as Trollope wrote the first chapters of *Barchester Towers*, the siege of Sebastopol was dragging on, with its terrible cost in British

¹¹ There is one oblique reference to the war in the text, see note to 1.13.

INTRODUCTION

soldiers' lives. In the same month of January, Lord Aberdeen's coalition ministry was brought down on charges of maladministration of the war. Although the war is not directly alluded to, images of warfare pervade the narrative of *Barchester Towers*. One early chapter is provocatively called 'War'. In a recent essay on the novel, which usefully applies new critical theory to Trollope, D. A. Miller notes the omnipresence of 'merry war' (as he terms it) in the text:

It extends—beyond the 'hard battles' fought between the Grantly and Proudie 'forces' and the 'mutiny in the camp' on the other side—from the bedroom politics of Mrs Proudie and the battle of the sexes implied in every marriage and courtship, to the divided selves of characters as diverse as Slope, Quiverful, and Harding. 'War, war, internecine war' (p. 42) is in the archdeacon's heart and—so routinely as to make further evidence merely tedious—in nearly everything else besides.¹²

Perceptive as this is, it is odd that Miller does not register that there was a very unmerry war going on as Trollope embarked on his novel—a contest which, in January 1855 at least, it seemed quite likely that England might lose. Presumably, the post-war publication date of *Barchester Towers* (May 1857) is misleading.

Despite that '1857', it makes sense to see *Barchester Towers*, like Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (1855) and Tennyson's *Maud* (1855), as a work directly conditioned by and responding to the Crimean imbroglio. The war—particularly its disastrous first few months—was a moment of truth for the English ruling classes. More particularly, it posed the crucial question—were they fit to rule? The early conduct of the war was blemished by High Command cock-ups of a kind that would have been the stuff of pantomime, had they not cost so much British blood. Generals like Raglan could not remember that the French were now allies not enemies; cavalry brigades charged madly along

¹² D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, 1988), 112–13.

INTRODUCTION

valleys into the mouths of firing cannon; fighting men were put on half rations and asked to perform above and beyond the call of duty. There was horrible mismanagement. Worse than this, the home population now had access to the facts. The Crimea saw the first effective war reporting—William Howard Russell's pieces for *The Times*, dispatched by electric telegraph without any intervention of a censor. There was also, for the first time in the history of warfare, a photographic record.

Looking back on the events of 1855 while writing *John Caldigate*, twenty years later, Trollope identified the three principal critics who had brought down the government in January 1855 as 'a popular newspaper, a popular member of parliament, and a popular novelist'.¹³ The novelist was, of course, Charles Dickens—the 'Mr Popular Sentiment' of *The Warden*, and the recipient of a couple of sideswipes in *Barchester Towers*. The newspaper was *The Times*, 'The Jupiter', which plays a major meddling role in both novels. The politician was John Arthur Roebuck (1801–79), who moved for an inquiry to look into the conduct of the Crimean War, thus precipitating the downfall of Aberdeen's ministry in January 1855, the month that Trollope began *Barchester Towers*. The Sebastopol committee (with Roebuck as chairman) then went on to become the driving force behind the dynamically effective Administrative Reform Association.

Trollope was as much against inefficiency as any man who ever lived. But criticism of mismanagement of the war, and the Civil Service's poor performance, had served to push through the Northcote–Trevelyan reforms of 1853–4, which determined that entrance to the service should henceforth be by 'merit' and public examination. 'I never learned to love competitive examinations' (p. 112), Trollope declared, with wry understatement, in *An*

¹³ See the World's Classics edition of *John Caldigate*, ed. N. John Hall, 452.

INTRODUCTION

Autobiography. In fact, he hated them. They only served, he felt, to keep out gentlemen in favour of swots. What galled Trollope, as the ARA bandwagon thundered on its way in 1855-6, was the way in which the Civil Service was identified as the main culprit. Only purge Whitehall, the argument went, and all will be well. Principally responsible were *The Times* and Charles Dickens—more particularly Dickens's scathing satire on the 'Circumlocution Office' and appointment by nepotistic patronage in chapter 10 of *Little Dorrit*, published on 1 February 1855.

Trollope's withers were painfully wrung by Dickens's attack on misgovernment by patronage. He had acquired his clerkship at the Post Office in 1834 through a friend of his mother's who was related to someone high up in the service. At his interview Anthony had been asked to copy a piece from *The Times*, and had produced 'a series of blots and false spellings'. He was asked if he knew any arithmetic and—if impolitely pressed on his evasions—the young man would have had to confess that 'I had never learned the multiplication table, and had no more idea of the rule of three than of Conic Sections' (*An Autobiography*, 36). The 19-year-old Trollope was no more capable of passing a competitive examination than of flying to the moon. None the less, he got his desk in St Martin's-le-Grand, with no more embarrassing questions asked.

Clearly, under the new 1855 dispensation a young dolt, such as Anthony Trollope had been in 1834, would have been swept out together with all Dickens's adhesive tribe of Barnacles. But would the Post Office have gained? Trollope had achieved great things for the country's communications over the period 1851-5, winning golden opinions from his superiors. The mark of his achievements was physically evident in the red pillar-boxes springing up in every town in the country. Who could honestly claim that the system that produced him (his mother knew someone who knew someone)—although barnacle-encrusted in the highest degree—was all bad?

INTRODUCTION

In *Barchester Towers* Trollope shifts these questions to the Anglican Church. The Proudies and Slopes, aided by their political friends in high places and Printing House Square, bring their new brooms to the cathedrals of England. No more nepotism. No more Archdeacon Grantly slipping naturally into Bishop Grantly's caligulae. But will Proudie's 'meritorious' election make for a better Church? Since this is Trollope (and not Dickens) the answer is neither an automatic 'no' nor an automatic 'yes', nor even a firm 'maybe'. Trollope does not, of course, like the Proudies and he detests Mr Slope. But he loved telegraphy, railways, and the next-day delivery of the nation's letters. When he went off to hunt of a weekend, he went by special train, and saw nothing wrong in travelling by rail at high speed in order to gallop around the countryside in a red coat. Nor was Trollope an admirer of Ullathorne and its Young England claptrap. Better the vulgar flare of Mrs Proudie's gas chandeliers than Miss Thorne's absurd quintain. Trollope approved of 'improvement' and regarded new brooms as good things in the right place (rural post offices, for instance, where Mr Trollope was regarded by postmasters and -mistresses as a holy terror). But do not for that reason take the new broom to all that is old and beautiful. The quintain may be absurd, but the stonecrop on the walls of Ullathorne Court ('which it had taken three centuries to produce') is beautiful. *Barchester Towers* finally gives us a mixed verdict: Hiram's Hospital—the ancient appendage to the cathedral—is doomed. The best that can be said of it is that the warden's stipend will allow Mrs Quiverful's many daughters to make decent marriages and the many boys to go to college. The cathedral—as we take our leave of it—is still ruled over by Bishop and Mrs Proudie (who, as Trollope says, wears the invisible apron). But the Dean is now an arch-Conservative and becoming, as we hurry over the last few paragraphs, higher and dryer by the minute. And deans, as Trollope