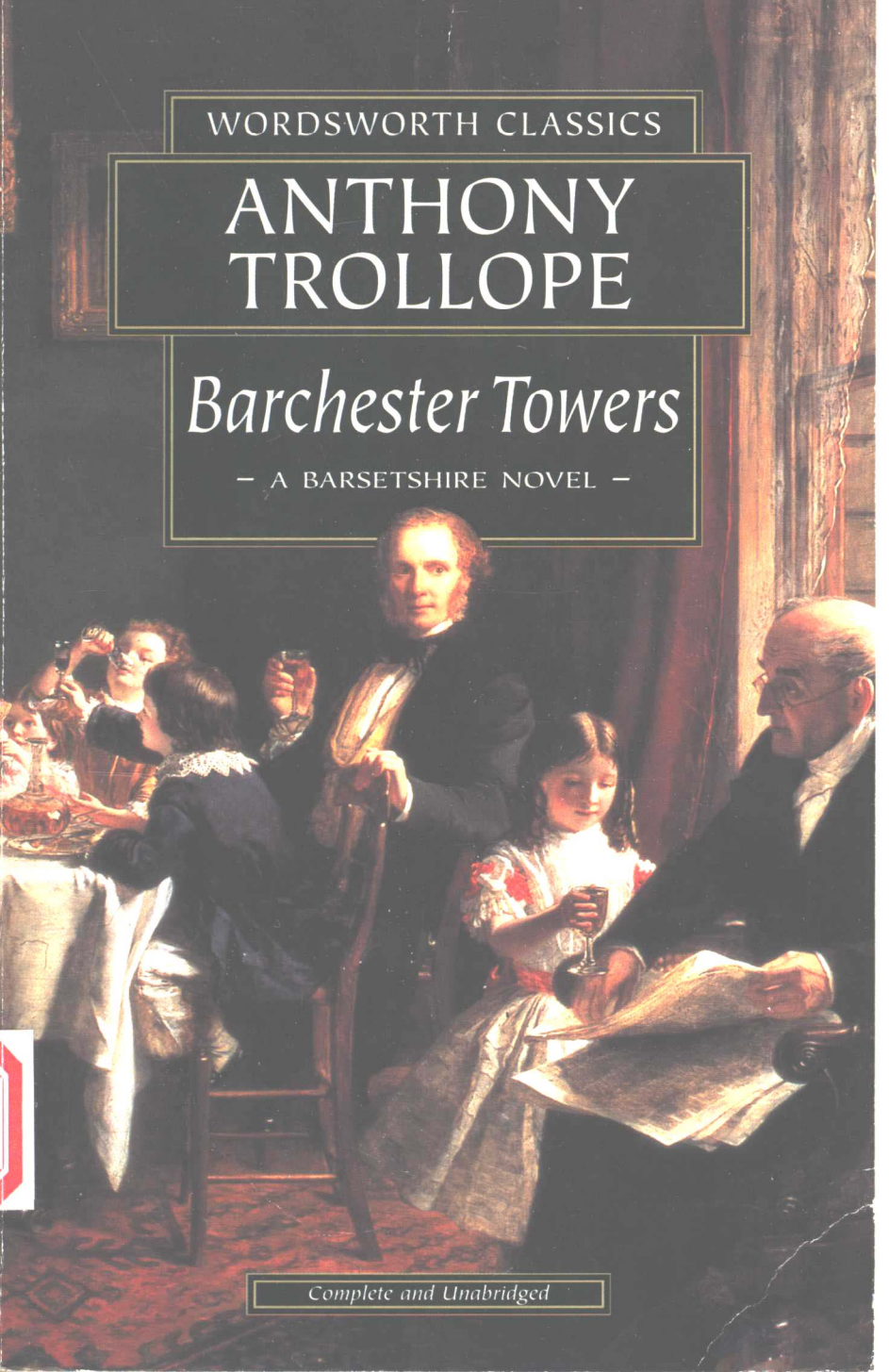
WORDSWORTH CLASSICS
ANTHONY TROLLOPE
Barchester Towers
– A BARSETSHIRE NOVEL –
Complete and Unabridged

BARCHESTER TOWERS

Anthony Trollope

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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INTRODUCTION

Barchester Towers represents a pivotal moment in Anthony Trollope's (1815–82) career as novelist. Published in 1857, it was his fifth novel, the second in what came to be known as the Barsetshire series. Trollope received an advance of £100 plus half-profits for the novel, an arrangement remembered in his *Autobiography* (1883) as 'a first real step on the road to substantial success'. By comparison, only three years later he received ten times more, or £1000, for *Framley Parsonage* when it was published in *The Cornhill Magazine*, edited by Trollope's literary hero, William Makepeace Thackeray. *Barchester Towers* launched Trollope on his huge popular and financial success which came in the 1860s, as *The National Review* forecast in their review of Trollope's novels in 1858:

> He has powers which, if used with due painstaking conscientiousness, may make him one of the most successful novelists of the day, as they always render him readable and entertaining. But above all, he has the gift of finishing his work to the most minute detail without becoming for an instant tedious or trivial; and this is a gift so rare that it should never be neglected.

A year later, *The Times* (parodied in *Barchester Towers* as the *Jupiter)* called Trollope 'the most successful novelist – that is to say, of the circulating library sort', indicating his largely middle-class readership. After *Barchester Towers*, Trollope went from strength to strength, consolidating this readership, even if every novel was not as popular.

Trollope began using a unique and now well-known writing method during the composition of the novel. As a civil servant in the Post Office with full-time duties, he started writing whilst travelling around Britain on the railways on official Post Office business. As he describes it, 'I found after a few days' exercise that I could write as quickly in a railway-carriage as I could at my desk. I worked with a pencil, and what I wrote my wife copied afterwards.' He also conceived of using diaries to document his progress; he aimed at writing 250 words per page and hoped to complete forty manuscript pages per week, and, more often

than not, he succeeded in his high-speed rate of production. For him, writing was a wholly professional business as his writing method and negotiations with publishers indicate.

Interestingly, the manuscript reader for Longman, Trollope's publisher at this time, was less pleased with the novel than subsequent readers and reviewers and he recommended a number of changes. He reacted against Madeline, whom he called 'a most repulsive, exaggerated and unnatural character', and thought that Trollope was 'playing with his reader' by 'showing how easy it is for him to write a novel in three volumes'. The reader's suggestion to reduce the novel from three to two volumes was rejected by the author since 'how two words out of every six are to be withdrawn from a written novel, I cannot conceive'. He magnanimously agreed to change 'fat stomach' to 'deep chest' but otherwise relatively few adjustments were made.

Although Trollope's works have always been enjoyed and have received an enthusiastic revival in recent years, *Barchester Towers* may be the novel for which he is best known. Writing in the mid-1870s, he recalled:

> It achieved no great reputation, but it was one of the novels which novel readers were called upon to read. Perhaps I may be assuming more to myself than I have a right to do in saying now that *Barchester Towers* has become one of the novels which do not die quite at once, which live and are read for perhaps a quarter of a century; but if that be so, its life has been so far prolonged by the vitality of some of its younger brothers. *Barchester Towers* would hardly be so well known as it is had there been no *Framley Parsonage* and no *Last Chronicle of Barset.*

Perceptively, Trollope recognises the appeal of his novels as a series. What we now term the Barsetshire chronicles include *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers*, *Dr Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864) and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). Although many characters and settings overlap in the series, the novels are not sequels in the way we might regard some fiction or films today; the *Last Chronicle* cannot be considered as *The Warden*, Part Six. The novels were published in various forms – *Barchester Towers* originally as a three-volume novel, *Framley Parsonage* and the *Small House* as magazine serials, and the *Last Chronicle* in weekly parts – and the experience of reading the work very much differed according to each cultural product. Furthermore, the novels were not actually published together as a series until 1878, even though many readers would have followed the events in Barsetshire from one novel or serial

to the next, not least because of thematic links: the clerical motif; the urban/rural divide; the gendered power struggles, to name a few. Although we tend to think of Trollope as the author of two great series (his other being the Palliser or Parliamentary novels in the 1860–70s), Victorian readers encountered Trollope less uniformly than we, and in the context of his other numerous novels, stories, travel books and magazine articles.

Contemporary reviewers of Trollope often praised him for his 'photographic' realism, and although *Barchester Towers* is more overtly satiric in its mock-epic tone than some of his other realist fictions, in the background we can glean much about mid-Victorian culture. The incoming Whig government is, no doubt, Palmerston's administration of 1855 and there is a brief mention, for example, of the 'first threatenings of a huge war' (Chapter 11), referring to the Crimean War which lasted from 1854 to 1856. Equally, references to recent literature and popular culture abound, such as allusions to Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* or to Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* and *Little Dorrit*; allusions such as these provide us with a sense of the shared knowledge of Trollope's community of readers. This is one way in which *Barchester Towers* reads as a cultural document of its time, bringing into the novel the 'real world' of the reader.

The immediate cultural context for the clerical politics in the novel is the tension between High and Low Church of England clergy in the wake of the Oxford Movement in the 1830–40s. After the Catholic Emancipation of 1829 which lifted restrictions against Catholics and after the Reform Bill of 1832 which extended the franchise, there was pressure from inside and outside the Church to reform. A relatively small group of clerics at Oxford, centring around the figure of John Henry Newman, became increasingly papist in their views. Hostilities were aroused when Newman published a tract which linked the Thirty-Nine Articles, the foundation of belief in the Church, to Catholicism, implying that the two were compatible. Eventually after Newman left the Church altogether and became a Catholic, the force of the Oxford Movement was much weakened, partly because in losing Newman the Movement lost its spiritual and intellectual guide. Although *Barchester Towers* does not really engage with intricate doctrinal questions (the debate over keeping holy the Sabbath merely provides the occasion for posturing), the positioning of Church factions is significant, and the tensions between the Low Church Proudieites and the High Church Grantleyites permeates practically every page. Reading *Barchester Towers* in the 1990s is especially rich and relevant, since the Church of England is undertaking tremendous changes (especially

with the ordination of women) and since the seams of Church factionalism can often be seen in the public arena.

The novel is full of intriguing characters, but it may be safe to assert that none has captured the imagination of readers and critics more than Mrs Proudie. In response to a clergyman who took issue with the she-bishop, Trollope asks, 'review the spiritual lords and their better halves such as you have known, and tell me whether it is the bishop or the bishop's wife who always takes the lead in magnifying the episcopal office?' As the question implies, the novel is more about domestic politics than Church politics, as *The Times* reviewer notes:

> Perhaps the scenes between the bishop and Mrs Proudie are a little overdrawn, but, although highly coloured, they are not the less amusing delineations of human misery, as experienced by a man who permits himself not only to be henpecked in his private relations, but also to be in his public capacity under female domination.

At the heart of *Barchester Towers* is a complicated debate about gender and power, about how men and women, especially husbands and wives, negotiate their own spheres of influence. Mrs Proudie may be 'the classic killjoy of comedy', as Trollope's recent biographer N. John Hall calls her, but she is not just another fictional female nag. She actively pursues power and influence outside the domestic sphere:

> The truth is, that in matters domestic she rules supreme over her titular lord, and rules with a rod of iron. Nor is this all. Things domestic Dr Proudie might have abandoned to her, if not voluntarily, yet willingly. But Mrs Proudie is not satisfied with such home dominion, and stretches her power over all his movements, and will not even abstain from things spiritual. (Chapter III)

In the public realm of Church affairs, as in Chapter V, 'A Morning Visit', we quickly learn that Mrs Proudie is not content to remain marginalised in the bishop's episcopal affairs and she more than holds her own in discussing with the archdeacon and Mr Grantly the sanctity of the Sabbath. When the bishop's chaplain eventually undertakes to 'lay an axe to the root of the woman's power' (Chapter IV), he finds himself on a slippery slope, indeed.

La Signora Madeline Vesey Neroni – Nata Stanhope, 'the mother of the last of the Neros' (Chapter XXXVII), offers us another memorable Trollopian woman who transgresses the norms of gender definition with her siren-like sexual appeal. Small wonder, then, that one reviewer found her,

> an intrusion upon the stage, utterly out of harmony with the scenes and persons round her, and we cannot but think with the nature of her own sex. It is a pity that such a person should have been allowed to force herself on the reader's acquaintance, or the eminently respectable society of the cathedral city.

Madeline's power over men is her ability to seduce, and having been made lame by her violent husband, she uses this power to exact revenge on all men. Madeline's depiction may leave some readers uncomfortable: why, for instance, is her disability an 'additional attraction' (Chapter XXXIV) for men? (A similar character comes up in an 1869 short story by Trollope, 'Josephine de Montmorenci'.) She exudes sexual potency, but has been punished for her sins. In this light, Madeline is a male creation based on male sexual fantasies of the 'loose woman', but that does not make her any less fascinating within the novel. The overtly sexualised woman finally has no place in the economy of Barchester's rural values; she is simply too transgressive and accordingly must return to the licentious Continent, but not before sealing Mr. Slope's fate and helping to arrange the marriage of Mr Arabin and Eleanor Bold.

It is important to note that readers encountered female characters such as Mrs Proudie and Madeline in the context of numerous public discussions in books, newspapers and periodicals about women's sexuality and the role of women in society generally. In 1857, for example, debates around gender (especially public and private roles for men and women) focused on the Married Women's Property Bill and the Matrimonial Causes Act, both of which brought attention to the legal status of women in marriage. In other ways, feminists were beginning to unite by the late 1850s to address issues such as education and employment. Topics such as these formed the nucleus of what became known as the 'woman question', taken up and debated with vigour in the 1860s. In his fifth novel set in Barsetshire, *The Small House at Allington*, Trollope addresses specifically the plight of the single woman in the character of Lily Dale, and like many other of his contemporary novelists, he was concerned throughout his fiction with questions around women's issues and mid-Victorian sexual politics. *Barchester Towers*, his first major success, introduces us to one of the primary themes of his fiction – gendered social distinctions and the tensions between and among the sexes.

We also have in the novel a quintessentially Trollopian narrator. *The National Review's* verdict in 1858 on the technique of *Barchester Towers* was that,

> in point of lively writing and well-restrained humour, this is perhaps the best of Mr Trollope's novels; and it might have been even better, if he would have refrained from frequently and somewhat offensively coming forward as author to remind us that we are reading a fiction.

The reviewer is, of course, referring to those times in the novel when the narrator speaks directly to the reader, as in Chapter XV when 'the author must beg it to be remembered that Mr Slope was not in all things a bad man'. Later in that chapter, there is an often-cited intervention in which the narrator reveals something about the final resolution:

> But let the gentle-hearted reader be under no apprehension whatsoever. It is not destined that Eleanor shall marry Mr Slope or Bertie Stanhope. And here, perhaps, it may be allowed to the novelist to explain his views on a very important point in the art of telling tales. He ventures to reprobate that system which goes so far to violate all proper confidence between the author and his readers, by maintaining nearly to the end of the third volume a mystery as to the fate of their favourite personage . . . Our doctrine is, that the author and the reader should move along together in full confidence with each other.

This narratorial aside occurs toward the end of the first volume, so already we know the outcome of the Eleanor Bold strand of the plot. Like George Eliot's asides in *Adam Bede* (1859), we learn something about the author's view of the 'art' of writing realism. In such interventions Trollope's interest is in telling *how* events occur, not merely *what* occurs, and certainly a pleasure in *Barchester Towers* is in the telling, in the novelist's delight in the mock-heroic comedy of quotidian events. This mimetic form is, in broad terms, one of the characteristics of Victorian realism: a narrator's voice (seemingly the author's) intrudes to guide our reading, to let us know how to interpret the actions of characters. The conclusion (Chapter LIII) begins, 'the end of a novel, like the end of a children's dinner-party, must be made up of sweetmeats and sugar-plums', and we are reminded a final time of the artificiality of the work of fiction.

Ultimately, *Barchester Towers* is a novel about change. From the very opening scenes when a new bishop is appointed to the eight chapters at Ulathorne when the values of the ancient past are comically undermined, Trollope shows how progress embodies change. Social change, however, does not require a complete rejection of the past in favour of

the present, or the future. Mr Harding's moderate, compassionate values should not automatically be relegated to the rubbish cart. But isn't it better that Mr Quiverful become warden of the hospital, and isn't it also right that Mr Slope leave Barchester? Change in Trollope's fiction does not occur through revolutions, but an acceptance and integration of the new is always part of society's step forward. Today, Trollope is too often read as a comfortable member of our literary heritage industry, a writer whose values represent a conservative nostalgia. However, Trollope's Barsetshire should not be so easily summed up and packaged, for what the novel might represent, for the multi-cultural society of the 1990s, is the need to accept difference and accommodate change.

MARK W. TURNER

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CHAPTER I

Who Will Be the New Bishop?

IN THE LATTER DAYS of July in the year 185–, a most important question was for ten days hourly asked in the cathedral city of Barchester, and answered every hour in various ways – Who was to be the new Bishop?

The death of old Dr Grantly, who had for many years filled that chair with meek authority, took place exactly as the ministry of Lord — was going to give place to that of Lord —. The illness of the good old man was long and lingering and it became at last a matter of intense interest to those concerned whether the new appointment should be made by a Conservative or Liberal government.

It was pretty well understood that the outgoing premier had made his selection, and that if the question rested with him the mitre would descend on the head of Archdeacon Grantly, the old bishop's son. The archdeacon had long managed the affairs of the diocese – and for some months previous to the demise of his father, rumour had confidently assigned to him the reversion of his father's honours.

Bishop Grantly died as he had lived, peaceably, slowly, without pain and without excitement. The breath ebbed from him almost imperceptibly, and for a month before his death, it was a question whether he were alive or dead.

A trying time was this for the archdeacon, for whom was designed the reversion of his father's see by those who then had the giving away of episcopal thrones. I would not be understood to say that the prime minister had in so many words promised the bishopric to Dr Grantly. He was too discreet a man for that. There is a proverb with reference to the killing of cats, and those who know anything either of high or low government places, will be well aware that a promise may be made without positive words, and that an expectant may be put into the highest state of encouragement, though the great man on whose breath he hangs may have done no more than whisper that 'Mr So-and-so is certainly a rising man.'

Such a whisper had been made, and was known by those who heard it to signify that the cures of the diocese of Barchester should not be taken out of the hands of the archdeacon. The then prime minister was all in all at Oxford, and had lately passed a night at the house of the master of Lazarus. Now the master of Lazarus – which is, by the by, in many respects the most comfortable as well as the richest college at Oxford – was the archdeacon's most intimate friend and most trusted counsellor. On the occasion of the prime minister's visit, Dr Grantly was of course present, and the meeting was very gracious. On the following morning Dr Gwynne, the master, told the archdeacon that in his opinion the thing was settled.

At this time the bishop was quite on his last legs; but the ministry also were tottering. Dr Grantly returned from Oxford happy and elated, to resume his place in the palace, and to continue to perform for the father the last duties of a son; which, to give him his due, he performed with more tender care than was to be expected from his usual somewhat worldly manners.

A month since the physicians had named four weeks as the outside period during which breath could be supported within the body of the dying man. At the end of the month the physicians wondered, and named another fortnight. The old man lived on wine alone, but at the end of the fortnight he still lived; and the tidings of the fall of the ministry became more frequent. Sir Lamda Mewnew and Sir Omicron Pie, the two great London doctors, now came down for the fifth time, and declared, shaking their learned heads, that another week of life was impossible; and as they sat down to lunch in the episcopal dining-room, whispered to the archdeacon their own private knowledge that the ministry must fall within five days. The son returned to his father's room, and after administering with his own hands the sustaining modicum of madeira, sat down by the bedside to calculate his chances.

The ministry were to be out within five days: his father was to be dead within – No, he rejected that view of the subject. The ministry were to be out, and the diocese might probably be vacant at the same period. There was much doubt as to the names of the men who were to succeed to power, and a week must elapse before a Cabinet was formed. Would not vacancies be filled by the outgoing men during this week? Dr Grantly had a kind of idea that such would be the case, but did not know; and then he wondered at his own ignorance on such a question.

He tried to keep his mind away from the subject, but he could not. The race was so very close, and the stakes were so very high. He then

looked at the dying man's impassive, placid face. There was no sign there of death or disease; it was something thinner than of yore, somewhat greyer, and the deep lines of age more marked; but, as far as he could judge, life might yet hang there for weeks to come. Sir Lamda Mewnew and Sir Omicron Pie had thrice been wrong, and might yet be wrong thrice again. The old bishop slept during twenty of the twenty-four hours, but during the short periods of his waking moments he knew both his son and his dear old friend, Mr Harding, the archdeacon's father-in-law, and would thank them tenderly for their care and love. Now he lay sleeping like a baby, resting easily on his back, his mouth just open, and his few grey hairs straggling from beneath his cap; his breath was perfectly noiseless, and his thin, wan hand, which lay above the coverlid, never moved. Nothing could be easier than the old man's passage from this world to the next.

But by no means easy were the emotions of him who sat there watching. He knew it must be now or never. He was already over fifty, and there was little chance that his friends who were now leaving office would soon return to it. No probable British prime minister but he who was now in, he who was so soon to be out, would think of making a bishop of Dr Grantly. Thus he thought long and sadly, in deep silence, and then gazed at that still living face, and then at last dared to ask himself whether he really longed for his father's death.

The effort was a salutary one, and the question was answered in a moment. The proud, wishful, worldly man, sank on his knees by the bedside, and taking the bishop's hand within his own, prayed eagerly that his sins might be forgiven him.

His face was still buried in the clothes when the door of the bedroom opened noiselessly, and Mr Harding entered with a velvet step. Mr Harding's attendance at that bedside had been nearly as constant as that of the archdeacon, and his ingress and egress was as much a matter of course as that of his son-in-law. He was standing close beside the archdeacon before he was perceived, and would also have knelt in prayer had he not feared that his doing so might have caused some sudden start, and have disturbed the dying man. Dr Grantly, however instantly perceived him, and rose from his knees. As he did so Mr Harding took both his hands, and pressed them warmly. There was more fellowship between them at that moment than there had ever been before, and it so happened that after circumstances greatly preserved the feeling. As they stood there pressing each other's hands, the tears rolled freely down their cheeks.

'God bless you, my dears,' – said the bishop with feeble voice as he

woke – 'God bless you – may God bless you both, my dear children!' and so he died.

There was no loud rattle in the throat, no dreadful struggle, no palpable sign of death; but the lower jaw fell a little from its place, and the eyes, which had been so constantly closed in sleep, now remained fixed and open. Neither Mr Harding nor Dr Grantly knew that life was gone, though both suspected it.

'I believe it's all over,' said Mr Harding, still pressing the other's hands. 'I think – nay, I hope it is.'

'I will ring the bell,' said the other, speaking all but in a whisper. 'Mrs Phillips should be here.'

Mrs Phillips, the nurse, was soon in the room, and immediately, with practised hand, closed those staring eyes.

'It's all over, Mrs Phillips?' asked Mr Harding.

'My lord's no more,' said Mrs Phillips, turning round and curtsying low with solemn face; 'his lordship's gone more like a sleeping babby than any that I ever saw.'

'It's a great relief, archdeacon,' said Mr Harding, 'a great relief – dear, good, excellent old man. Oh that our last moments may be as innocent and as peaceful as his!'

'Surely,' said Mrs Phillips. 'The Lord be praised for all his mercies; but, for a meek, mild, gentle-spoken Christian, his lordship was – ' and Mrs Phillips, with unaffected easy grief, put up her white apron to her flowing eyes.

'You cannot but rejoice that it is over,' said Mr Harding, still consoling his friend. The archdeacon's mind, however, had already travelled from the death chamber to the closet of the prime minister. He had brought himself to pray for his father's life, but now that that life was done, minutes were too precious to be lost. It was now useless to dally with the fact of the bishop's death – useless to lose perhaps everything for the pretence of a foolish sentiment.

But how was he to act while his father-in-law stood there holding his hand? how, without appearing unfeeling, was he to forget his father in the bishop – to overlook what he had lost, and think only of what he might possibly gain?

'No, I suppose not,' said he at last, in answer to Mr Harding. 'We have all expected it so long.'

Mr Harding took him by the arm and led him from the room. 'We will see him again tomorrow morning,' said he; 'we had better leave the room now to the women.' And so they went downstairs.

It was already evening, and nearly dark. It was most important that

the prime minister should know that night that the diocese was vacant. Everything might depend on it; and so, in answer to Mr Harding's further consolation, the archdeacon suggested that a telegraph message should be immediately sent off to London. Mr Harding, who had really been somewhat surprised to find Dr Grantly, as he thought, so much affected, was rather taken aback; but he made no objection. He knew that the archdeacon had some hope of succeeding to his father's place, though he by no means knew how highly raised that hope had been.

'Yes,' said Dr Grantly, collecting himself and shaking off his weakness, 'we must send a message at once; we don't know what might be the consequence of delay. Will you do it?'

'I! oh yes; certainly: I'll do anything, only I don't know exactly what it is you want.'

Dr Grantly sat down before a writing-table, and, taking pen and ink, wrote on a slip of paper as follows:

By Electric Telegraph.
For the Earl of —, Downing Street, or elsewhere.

"The Bishop of Barchester is dead"

Message sent by the Revd Septimus Harding.

'There,' said he, 'just take that to the telegraph office at the railway-station, and give it in as it is; they'll probably make you copy it on to one of their own slips; that's all you'll have to do; then you'll have to pay them half-a-crown;' and the archdeacon put his hand in his pocket and pulled out the necessary sum.

Mr Harding felt very much like an errand-boy, and also felt that he was called on to perform his duties as such at rather an unseemly time; but he said nothing, and took the slip of paper and the proffered coin.

'But you've put my name into it, archdeacon.'

'Yes,' said the other, 'there should be the name of some clergyman, you know, and what name so proper as that of so old a friend as yourself? The Earl won't look at the name, you may be sure of that; but, my dear Mr Harding, pray don't lose any time.'

Mr Harding got as far as the library door on his way to the station, when he suddenly remembered the news with which he was fraught when he entered the poor bishop's bedroom. He had found the moment so inopportune for any mundane tidings, that he had repressed the words which were on his tongue, and immediately afterwards all