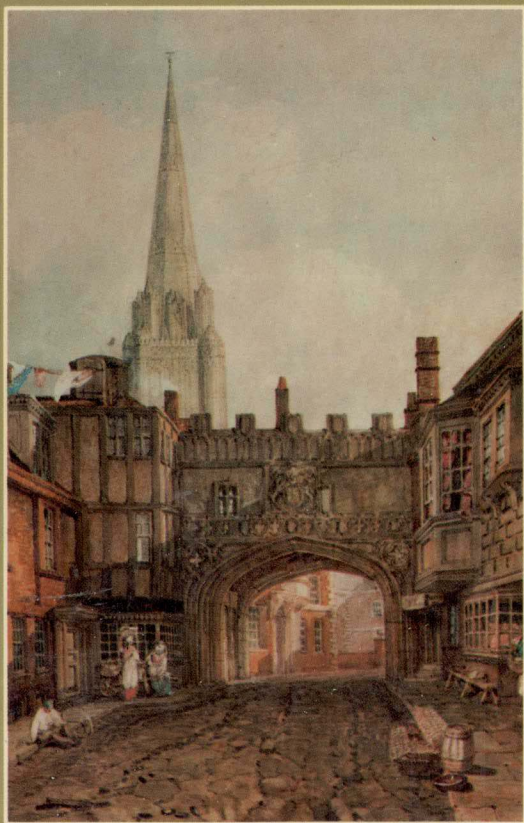


THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



ANTHONY TROLLOPE THE WARDEN



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ANTHONY TROLLOPE

The Warden



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INTRODUCTION

The Warden is often not treated as a truly important Victorian novel. For one thing it is not one of those huge books with a cast of hundreds and half-a-dozen interweaving plots—like *Bleak House*, *Middlemarch*, or Trollope's own long novels—so that it has been easy to regard it as a charming but insignificant early work. For another it concerns clergymen of the Church of England, without depicting religious faith or Victorian anxiety at the loss of it.

Trollope's apologists have usually maintained that *The Warden* is valuable because—like the whole series of six *Chronicles of Barsetshire* of which it is the first—it concerns only the social life of the clergy, and is therefore interesting because it is 'about people'. If this is so it is something, but not very much: for we are dealing here with a very special class of people. A contemporary of Trollope's, J. R. McCulloch, explains: 'The clergy may be considered in two characters:—1, in regard to their sacred duties as ministers of religion; and 2, as members of an establishment of human institution, deriving its rights and privileges from municipal law.' (*Account of the British Empire*, 4th edition, 1854.) It is in this latter role that Trollope views his churchmen, as custodians of the vast wealth and influence of the most richly endowed social insti-

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tution in the country. In the least tedious sense possible, *The Warden* is a profoundly political novel, which sharply analyses its own period, while raising questions of social morality which resonate beyond the narrow bounds of a small cathedral city in the south-west of England at the beginning of the 1850s. It examines the moral position of an individual holder of a socially responsible office, so that it can ask disturbing questions about the connection between private virtue and public wrong, and raise doubts as to the adequacy of personal integrity in a corrupt system.

The clerical part of Trollope's formula certainly worked with his contemporary readers, but only very belatedly, when he had followed *The Warden* with his other books about Barsetshire. This, his fourth novel, came out when he was nearly 40, and sold so slowly that it brought him only £20 3s. 9d. in two years. 'Indeed,' he records in his *Autobiography*, 'as regarded remuneration for the time, stone-breaking would have done better.' Later he was to become one of the financially most successful of Victorian novelists.

The germ of the story for *The Warden* came to him at Salisbury, he says, 'while wandering there on a mid-summer evening round the purlieus of the cathedral', and the kind of nostalgic sympathy the scene produced is evoked in Chapter 5 of the novel: 'Who could be hard upon a dean while wandering round the sweet close of Hereford . . . Who could lie basking in the cloisters of Salisbury, and gaze on Jewel's library and

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that unequalled spire, without feeling that bishops should sometimes be rich!' Yet at the same time he was aware of 'the possession by the Church of certain funds and endowments which had been intended for charitable purposes, but which had been allowed to become incomes for idle Church dignitaries'.

One of the scandals of the day was the enjoyment by the cathedral chapter of Rochester of revenues originally pertaining to the scholars of the cathedral school, and the reaction of the chapter to the headmaster's attacks on them may have served Trollope as a model of the sort of behaviour to expect from the protectors of a corrupt but threatened privilege. While he was engaged on *The Warden*, the not dissimilar case of Dulwich College came before the Charity Commissioners; but the *cause célèbre* of the forties and fifties was that of the Hospital of St Cross at Winchester, where the Reverend Francis North, 5th Earl of Guilford, was enjoying from the Mastership an income considerably greater than the revenue applied to the charitable purposes of the hospital, as well as holding, with doubtful legality, a Canonry at Winchester and two parish livings besides. A wealthy man in his own right, he had been appointed by his father, the Bishop, who in turn had been preferred by his brother, the Prime Minister, and had proceeded to pack the diocese with his family and their nominees. Trollope frequently mentions the case in *The Warden* (always misspelling Guilford's name, incidentally), and in the novel it represents an extreme form of the

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evil which taints Barchester comparatively lightly.

As his offender in *The Warden*, Trollope chooses a man quite unlike Lord Guilford. Mr Harding is the most innocent possible wrong-doer—a man of great personal integrity, who has merely lacked vigilance in allowing himself to accept one of the customary ‘perks’ of his job from his friend, the Bishop. Besides, he has been conscientious in his post, which he has held since before the days when such things as the disproportionate size of a warden’s income were considered abuses; and he has filled the office with dignity and grace, as becomes a clergyman and a gentleman whose duty it is to be an example to his neighbours. Trollope’s purpose is to present the dilemma of the just man involved in an inequitable system, and in the process to illuminate whole areas of public and private life, rather than merely to expose a few corrupt individuals. Unlike Lord Guilford, Mr. Harding is unwilling to defend himself when convinced he is in the wrong. He is caught between the justice of the complaint against him, and the demands for loyalty from the defenders of Church privilege, with his life and conscience the battleground between them. His resignation is the only way out of a situation which, although not involving a life-and-death struggle, displays a classic tragic pattern.

Trollope’s mind was deeply divided on the question of reform, but in a way which gave him a decided advantage as a novelist (though it later hampered him in practice in his efforts to enter political life). He sin-

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cerely believed that the country required reform: immediately after completing *The Warden*, he turned to a vigorous and not always cool-tempered attack on the evils of the age. But he could just as honestly write a loving defence of the picturesque obsolescence of certain aspects of an institution like the Church of England. And whenever he heard a political case made out for change, his sympathies were immediately enlisted on the side of the individuals whom the politicians seemed to be planning to distress. He presents the three conflicting parts of his consciousness through his three principal male characters in *The Warden*: John Bold the reformer, Archdeacon Grantly the conservative, and Septimus Harding the 'apolitical' man who suffers in the conflict.

This divided sympathy structures the novel. The strongest and most enduring sympathy is accorded to Mr. Harding, the man in the middle, and the greatest comic gusto reserved for Dr. Grantly, the violent Tory of the old-fashioned High Church party, determined to retain control against the Whig power of the State by any means at its disposal. But the case of John Bold, the young general practitioner, shows one of the major movements in the story. At first he is gently mocked for his reformist naïvety in believing that in the real world of power and interest a local wrong will be remedied rather than aggravated by central interference. The 'Jupiter', as Trollope dubs *The Times* (a reforming newspaper in those days), takes up the case of Hiram's Hospital, as do the leading social critic and

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leading novelist of the day, with violent personal attacks on the Warden, for whom Bold has the highest regard, besides wanting to marry his daughter. Bold can no longer control the machinery he has set in motion, and becomes in his turn a victim of more powerful forces, thereby earning for himself a large share of authorial sympathy: for Trollope is always particularly sensitive to the sufferings his characters cause themselves by their own misdeeds or miscalculations. Bold's feelings and actions over the Hiram's Hospital affair are intimately linked with his love for Eleanor Harding, so that their love is not so much a secondary plot as part of one unified action, and Eleanor is given her chance to play the self-sacrificing daughter, in renouncing her lover for her father's sake. The grand tragic poses of Bold as the Barchester Brutus, and Eleanor as Iphigenia or Jephtha's daughter, are good-naturedly shown to be comic in the end because no tragic sacrifice is demanded of them. In contrast, Mr. Harding's complete lack of self-dramatization reveals all the more clearly his conscientious rectitude, which is even more markedly unlike the party-interests of the warring factions exemplified by Dr. Grantly and the 'Jupiter'.

One of Trollope's special dislikes was the apparently tyrannical power of the press—and *The Times* in particular—over political opinion in the country. In his *Autobiography* he writes that he was misguided to attack both charitable abuses and the power of the press in the same novel, and suggests that he would

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have done well to espouse one cause alone. As so often when assessing his own strengths and weaknesses, he is wrong: the resulting novel is a satisfying story of a man caught in a complex moral situation, and far superior to any straightforward novelistic tract for or against Church reform.

Much of the greatest Victorian fiction achieves a general relevance through a concentration of particulars, so that the more carefully a detailed examination of one specific problem is set in an exactly defined historical moment, the more effectively it raises ethical and human considerations which far transcend the limits of the case under review. *The Warden* is a good example, speaking to readers who care nothing for the charitable reforms of the 1850s, or for the Church of England, for that matter; yet this investigation of a general question of social morality is set in a most specific historical context. It was indeed intensely topical, placed in almost the exact years in which it was written—the years of Aberdeen's coalition government of 1852–5. (Palmerston came to power in 1855, and this occurs in fictional analogue near the beginning of *Barchester Towers*, which Trollope wrote in 1855–6 to follow *The Warden*.) Lord John Russell's ecclesiastical reforms have come into effect, but most of the Church institutions and dignitaries are as yet unchanged by them. Mr. Harding's wardenship is typical of the anomalies that are only now coming under public scrutiny. Trollope is very exact in his satire on contemporary Parliamentary tactics: his

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Convent Custody Bill, with its provision for the searching of nuns by aged clergymen of the Church of England for Jesuitical symbols, is scarcely more hilarious or unscrupulous than the real Recovery of Personal Liberty in Certain Cases Bill, which sought to appoint commissioners to search the rooms, out-houses, cellars, etc. of religious houses to ensure that no female was held there against her will. (See Chapter 7, notes to pp. 94 and 95).

By sticking so closely to topical events, or rather to the mentality and motives he detected at work in them, Trollope aimed at what he would have called complete 'truth' and freedom from exaggeration, and though an early novel, *The Warden* clearly exemplifies his mode of realism, with its concentration on the ordinary human meaning of unsensational events. The strangest episode Trollope allows himself is Mr. Harding's dream over coffee during his London visit in Chapter 16, when his worries mingle surrealistically with his half-conscious awareness of the sinful associations of the supper-house he has just visited, and the exotic suggestions of the cigar-divan. This is the culmination of a picture of the metropolis as fantastic and alarming to Barsetshire innocence, and through the London scenes runs a half-concealed vein of urban squalor and experience, with the Thames awash with untreated sewage and flowing past chambers suitable for illicit amours. The only discordant elements in the book are the rather heavy and unnecessary satire on three celebrated bishops in Chapter 8, and the mock-

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heroic description of the Warden's tea-party in Chapter 6, which by putting most of the characters' concerns into an unflattering Lilliputian perspective, unfortunately distances the reader from their consciousness—a central subject of Trollopian fiction. Such lapses are uncharacteristic of Trollope at his best. They became less frequent over the years, as public approval gave him confidence and the kind of fiction he excelled in came thoroughly into fashion.

The Trollopian mode of writing about contemporary life can be put into relief by contrasting it with its alternatives, as Trollope does in *The Warden* by explicitly rejecting the claims of certain other literature to factual and moral fidelity. By his attacks on Carlyle and Dickens, under the names of Dr. Pessimist Anticant and Mr. Popular Sentiment, he is alerting us to the kind of book he is *not* writing. These two attacks are introduced perfectly realistically. John Bold encounters the pamphlet 'Modern Charity' and the first number of the new novel, *The Almshouse*, when in London, and they are instrumental in deepening his distress at the vilification he has brought down on Mr. Harding. Trollope writes some effective pastiche to further his own aesthetic ends, and if these attacks are unique in his fiction, it is not because they are an unfortunate excrescence he later lops away, but because once his kind of novel becomes firmly established he no longer needs to write such obvious polemic in defence of his methods.

The common ground for his two literary attacks is

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his belief that the writers in question deal in moral blacks and whites, whereas he himself denies the existence of perfect heroes or total villains. Indeed, the nearest he comes in his own work to a character of unimpaired virtue is Mr. Harding himself; and he is after all, on one scale of values, a principal wrongdoer in the novel. Dr. Pessimist Anticant has not recognized, the narrator tells us, 'that in this world no good is unalloyed, and that there is but little evil that has not in it some seed of what is goodly'. Writing to his mother in 1851, Trollope explains his attitude to Carlyle: 'I have read—nay, I have bought!—Carlyle's *'Latter Day Pamphlets,'* and look on my eight shillings as very much thrown away.' Although he 'used to swear by some of his earlier works', he now thinks Carlyle has gone 'mad in literature': 'He has one idea—a hatred of spoken and acted falsehood; and on that he harps through the whole eight pamphlets.'

Trollope mistakes Carlyle's method: in a characteristically Victorian way he assumes him to be attacking individuals as such, whereas Carlyle is in fact exposing the bourgeois ideology he hates, and denouncing individuals as exemplifications of some version of it. If Trollope's assumptions about Carlyle had been valid, so would his objections have been also. Trollope is psychologically sure that nobody can act totally virtuously or villainously in real life, whatever his or her intentions; and it therefore follows that he refuses to ascribe social evils to a definable number of totally malign individuals. For Trollope it is impor-

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tant to recognize that malversation of charitable trusts exists even though a man in the Warden's position may be kindly, god-fearing, and useful, and not a glutton triumphing in the oppression of the poor. Dr. Anticant's position is too simple for Trollope.

The case against Dickens is somewhat similar, for by Trollope's standards, the moral pictures Dickens has presented up to this time have been simplistic in the extreme, with many characters either as good as gold or melodramatically evil, and the ills of society apparently attributable in large part to individual villains. Trollope's reading of Dickens is very partial, since like many of his contemporaries he can perceive moral situations only in terms of one character at a time, missing the significant patterns into which they fall. Mr. Sentiment's warden in *The Almshouse* is fairly close to the picture of Mr. Creakle in the recent *David Copperfield*, in which Dickens still seems to be subscribing to an 'ogre-theory' of evil.

Trollope did not believe in ogres, yet saw the press turning Lord Guilford into one, in a campaign which gave the impression that the body politic could be purged simply by the expulsion of certain prominently corrupt individuals. The implications of Trollope's analysis are more far-reaching. 'What story was ever written without a demon?' he asks. The answer is, *The Warden*, where the ills of society cannot be glibly ascribed to one or more malicious individuals. Instead, a resignation to mankind's patchy moral success seems indicated. And the answer could also be, the forty or

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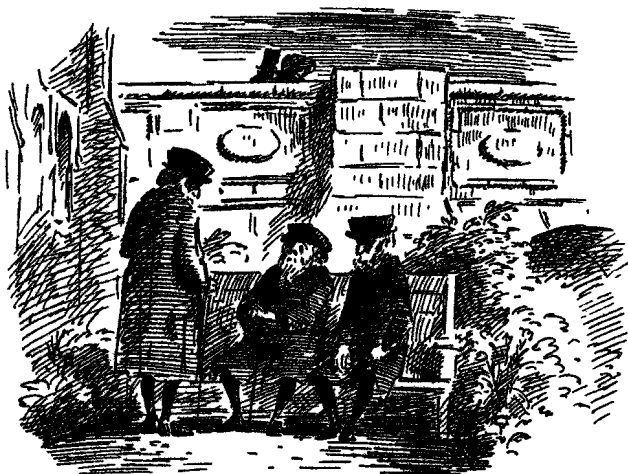
more novels in which Trollope further developed his own brand of psychological, social, and moral realism.

He wrote five more novels about Barsetshire, with less of *The Warden's* topicality, which he pursued instead in another great sequence of six novels, linked by the marital and political career of Plantagenet Palliser. Though on a far larger scale than *The Warden*, extending as they do over the whole country and spanning two decades, these Palliser novels are a logical development of its political concerns. Despite its unpretentiousness, *The Warden* occupies a special place in Trollope's *oeuvre* as both the opening of the Barsetshire series and the germ of the Palliser novels, which, taken together, present an unparalleled picture of the middle- and upper-class life of the day.

David Skilton

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The present text was first published in the Oxford Illustrated Edition of Trollope's novels in 1952. Previous editions were notoriously inaccurate, for Trollope's handwriting lent itself to misreadings and he was not a careful proof-reader. Under the general editorship of Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page, the text for each novel in the Oxford Illustrated Edition was established by collating the most authoritative editions printed in Trollope's lifetime and correcting obvious mistakes.



CHAPTER I

Hiram's Hospital

THE Rev. Septimus Harding was, a few years since, a beneficed clergyman residing in the cathedral town of —; let us call it Barchester. Were we to name Wells or Salisbury, Exeter, Hereford, or Gloucester, it might be presumed that something personal was intended; and as this tale will refer mainly to the cathedral dignitaries of the town in question, we are anxious that no personality may be suspected. Let us presume that Barchester is a quiet town in the West of England, more remarkable for the beauty of its cathedral and the antiquity of its monuments, than for any commercial prosperity; that the west end of Barchester is the

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cathedral close, and that the aristocracy of Barchester are the bishop, dean, and canons, with their respective wives and daughters.

Early in life Mr. Harding found himself located at Barchester. A fine voice and a taste for sacred music had decided the position in which he was to exercise his calling, and for many years he performed the easy but not highly paid duties of a minor canon. At the age of forty a small living in the close vicinity of the town increased both his work and his income, and at the age of fifty he became precentor of the cathedral.

Mr. Harding had married early in life, and was the father of two daughters. The eldest, Susan, was born soon after his marriage; the other, Eleanor, not till ten years later. At the time at which we introduce him to our readers he was living as precentor at Barchester with his youngest daughter, then twenty-four years of age; having been many years a widower, and having married his eldest daughter to a son of the bishop, a very short time before his installation to the office of precentor.

Scandal at Barchester affirmed that had it not been for the beauty of his daughter, Mr. Harding would have remained a minor canon; but here probably Scandal lied, as she so often does; for even as a minor canon no one had been more popular among his reverend brethren in the close, than Mr. Harding; and Scandal, before she had reprobated Mr. Harding for being made precentor by his friend the bishop, had loudly blamed the bishop for having so long omitted to do something for his