The RETURN of ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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It was during 1900 that Mr. William Tinsley wrote in *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher*, the following lines: "Mr. Trollope's success as a novelist for the time he was writing was almost wonderful, the more so because, as soon as death stopped his prolific pen, the author and his books died almost at the same time, for no one reads or thinks about Mr. Trollope's novels now. And yet, in his time, those who in society had not read his last novel were out of fashion."

In *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1946, Mr. Ch. Morgan predicted; "Trollope is almost, though not quite, in his niche. He will be mentioned in textbooks of future generations, and sometimes one or two of his many volumes will be read. There is reason to believe that the *Autobiography* may be among its writer's principal titles to such immortality as is recorded to him."

These were not very encouraging forecasts for Trollope. But Mr. Morgan's and Mr. Tinsley's view have proven to be premature. The "rebirth" began about 1953, When Oxford published in *The World's Classics* a complete reset edition of Trollope's works. Today, Trollope is more popular than ever.

How was it that Trollope's works suffered such an eclipse for almost fifty years after his death, and what is the cause of his return?.

About seven years before his death, Trollope completed his *Autobiography*. It was published one year after his death, during 1883. It was the consistent self-depreciation and disarming in his *Autobiography* which became the offence and caused the decline of Trollope's fame within about ten years after his death. The opening sentence of the *Autobiography* introduces the reader to "———so insignificant a person as myself———."

And again, "——I have never fancied myself to be a man of genius——— certain necessary aptitudes and fair average talents for gaining a livelihood from literature——" This is the strain of thought which runs through his last work. This was not a false kind of humility or a sort of pose. He believed himself that that was the real Anthony Trollope.

But the second and more serious element which contributed to his rather sudden decline was his too straightforwardness and sceptical remarks directed to "genius." Mr. Trollope did not, in fact, could not appreciate the loose life-style of some of his contemporary "artists." And they knew it. His critics were not slow to point out that Mr. Trollope's mind was too "pure," too "narrow." His shrewd judgements on his "brother-novelists" in his *Autobiography* left a bitter taste.

1

It was gratifying to learn that in answer to popular demand, Trollope's *Palliser Novels* and *The Tales of Barsetshire* have been republished and reprinted several times since 1950.

In *Time*, May 16, 1977, Mr.G. Clarke writes; "Now nearly a century after his death, Trollope is more popular than ever. Oxford University Press, which publishes the six Palliser volumes, quickly cleaned out its stock——; it ordered a second printing and is selling that as well. The sales have been particular impressive considering the formidable cost of the books, $25 for a boxed set of paperbacks."

Mr. Clarke continues;"The Harvard Coop., which has one of the biggest book departments in the East, reports a dramatic boom in Trollope, and stores in Ann Harbor, Michigan, home of the University of Michigan, say that they cannot stock enough of the books to satisfy customers. In New York City, Brentano's notes a steady sale; Trollope was even one of their best sellers."

"Trollope wrote of the triumph of common sense over the irrational; of order over disorder. And that, 100 years later, is a message that still sells and still satisfies."

The eminent Trollopian scholar, Mr. Hugh Sykes Davies, writes;

"Trollope's biography has kept pace with the recent revival of respect for his novels, and it is now probably one of the most widely read of English autobiographies."

The Tales of Barsetshire took place in a country as genuinely a part of English literary geography as the more heavily-soiled Wessex of Hardy or the pleasant "Lakeland" of Wordsworth. Trollope's countryside cannot alter much. The topography of Barsetshire remains distinct in the map of fancy. The author scoured England for years in the capacity of postal organiser. As a child he dreamed out an imaginary land; and he describes it in his books, with the angles of the village streets, the mileage and the position of the coverts, so that we feel as if we had spent a summer in the place; and he does it all without being dull. From his *Autobiography* we gather these thoughts; "I had it all in my mind——its roads and railroads, its towns and parishes and members of parliament, and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great lords and their castles, the squires and their parks, the rectors and their churches——."

And again he writes; "I have been often asked in what period of my early life I had lived so long in a cathedral city as to have become intimate with the ways of a Close. I never lived in any cathedral city—except London, never knew anything of any Close, and at that time had enjoyed no peculiar intimacy with any clergyman. My archdeacon, who has been said to be life-like, and for whom I confess that I have all a parent's fond affection, was, I think, the simple result of an effort of my moral consciousness. It was as that, in my opinion, that an archdeacon should be——or, at any rate, would be with such advantages as an archdeacon might have; and Io! an archdeacon was produced, who has been declared by competent authorities to be a real archdeacon down to the very ground. And yet, as far as I can remember, I had not then ever spoken to an archdeacon. The archdeacon came whole from my brain———".

Of Trollope's novels, the best are in the Barchester series. This began with *The Warden*, published during 1855, and was followed by Barchester Towers, 1857; Dr. Thorne, 1858; Farmley Parsonage, 1861; The Small House at Allington, 1884; and The Last Chronicles of Barset, 1867. They are perhaps unequalled for the pictures, often satirical,

they give of life in and around an English cathedral city. Trollope's gift for drawing characters true to themselves and to life is seen on every page.

In this Barchester series, we receive a perfect picture of English provincial life with the middle and upper-middle classes as its main figures, the boundaries of the greater world being indicated by the Palace of the Bishop of Barchester and the castle of the Duke of Omnium.

His second series, the *Palliser Novels*, taste of politics, but there is much else as well. The novels are certainly not dominated by political concerns. To be sure, three of the novels, Phineas Finn: Phineas Redux and The Prime Minister, focus largely on parliamentary activities. However, the main emphasis in the *Palliser Novels* as well as in *The Tales of Barsetshire* is not on politics but rather on domestic matters. Trollope takes his audience into the drawing room of the great and the powerful, the clergy and the layman, as well as into the homes of the commoners, more often than into the House of Commons.

It was during 1973–74 that a television version of Trollope's *Palliser Novels*, sponsored by BBC, drew a great deal of criticism. Today it is generally agreed that the television version of the BBC series has not been faithful to Trollope. There are bound to be disagreements about how, or indeed whether, to adapt novels for filming. But something else is at issue in *The Pallisers*——a vision of human life. According to literary critics, Trollope would have been amazed and horrified if he could have witnessed the BBC series.

In the July 5, 1974 issue of *The Times Literary Supplement*, Shirley Letvin, a recognized literary critic, writes; "What appear as characters in the BBC's Pallisers are a different sort of creature. They are bundles of miscellaneous words and acts, some of which, it is true, resemble those assigned by Trollope to a being with the same name. On the strength of this resemblance, these ragbags of attributes are displayed as if they were identical with Trollope's conception of a character. The result is a profound perversion of the novelist's understanding of human personality and of moral conduct."

Nowadays it is possible to forget that the two great series *The Tales of*

Barsetshire and the *Palliser Novels*, though they can be placed in proper order on the bookself and though they should assuredly be read sequentially, actually overlap somewhat in the writing. Forinstance, *Can you Forgive Her?*, was written after *The Small House at Allington* and well in advance of *The Last Chronicle of Barchester* To receive the full flavor, they should be read chronologically.

The *Phineas Finn* novels and *The Prime Minister* of the Palliser series deal with the rise and fall of ministers and with politic fortunes of the Irish aspirant and the English peer; but even in these works there is so much, so very much that leads away from politics as such; the wonderfully well-realized murder, accusations and trial in Phineas Redux; the country pleasures of Palliser in The Prime Minister; and numerous subtle manoevres at social affairs and in drawing rooms.

The novels are as lacking in partisan conviction as Palliser himself. The *Palliser* series begins and ends with books remote from political concern. The three love affairs of *Can You Forgive Her?*, are matched in *The Duke's Children* by the domestic worries of the Prime Minister who must fret over the propensity of his sons to gamble, the determination of his daughter to marry a man who is only a gentleman, but principally over the dreadful prospect of the heir's marriage to an "outsider."

2

Biographical Sketch;

Anthony Trollope (1815–82) was born in London. From his *Autobiography*, published in 1883, we learn about the severe poverty in his family when he was a youth. His father's debts obliged the family to leave England and spent a few years in Belgium. His mother tried to support the family by her writings, of which the best known is, *The Widow Barnaby*.

During 1834 Anthony entered the General Postoffice as a clerk and proved to be an active and valuable public servant. He began writing when he was past thirty. After the publication of his third novel, *The Warden*, (1855), the first of the Barsetshire series, Trollope's flourishing-time had opened. From this point his popularity as a novelist steadily

increased.

His home life and ambitions are recorded in his own *Autobiography*. This final work is a very honest revelation of himself, and an unsentimental confession of his life. It also includes a mild criticism towards writers of his time who indulged in a life-style, which was hardly acceptable. This may well have been the cause of the sudden but temporary drop in sales of all his novels.

However, it is no exaggeration to say that the chapters describing his school life are some of the most touching pages in the whole range of English literature. The helpless despair of a child who feels that his misery is eternal are so vividly portrayed, the reader feels that misery with the author.

Mr. Hugh Walpole in his book; *Anthony Trollope*, writes; "We cannot doubt but that those early school years did leave their mark on the man; the shyness, the sensitiveness to blame, the desire to be loved, the awkwardness and the gruffness, the avoidence of self advertisement and publicity unless some cause in which he firmly believed, these characteristics we cannot doubt came from those years."

Trollope's life divides rather sharply into three distinct periods; the first, from the year of his birth, 1815, to the year of his admission into the Postoffice; the second, from 1834, includes his marriage, his Irish experiences to that day, the 29th of July, 1853, when he began *The Warden*, the novel which opened his accepted literary career; and the third period from 1853 to the 6th of December, 1882, the day of his death. During his third period Trollope contributed a vast amont of literature which was accompanied with every kind of triumph. His literary career was, and still is, thoroughly acknowledged by his *Barsetshire Novels*, and *The Palliser Novels*. The *Manor House Novels* (1862–79) were perhaps received in lesser degree.

3

Trollope's foremost concern is with people, and the people in his novels come to our attention in the natural fashion of acqaintanceship, hardening or mellowing in time. There is almost a frightening power of

character analysis.

The importance of knowing oneself is his central theme. His world is orderly. The order is preserved by moral clarity; but this is something which cannot be reduced to a set of prescribed rules and opinions. Morality, for Trollope consists in understanding one-self and others in a certain manner; what is involved can best be described by that old-fashioned word, "integrity." Forinstance in the character of Plantagenet Palliser, he draws a complicated model of integrity.

He writes in his *Autobiography;*

> "A novel should give a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos. To make that picture worthy of attention, the canvas should be crowded with real portraits, not of individuals known to the world or to the author, but of created personages impregnated with traits of character which are known———." (page 109)

Trollope writes incidentally of God and the Church. In other words, though several of his characters are clergymen, the Church or the preaching of the Word of God is not his main concern in his works. However, Mr. Trollope knows the Word of God thoroughly. His books are sprinkled with Biblical expressions and references. Not for the sake to "color" his writings, but because he believes and he is not ashamed to let his stand on Biblical truth be known. To mention just a few of his Biblical references;

"Man shall not live by bread alone."

(from Matthew 4:4)

"——as a hen thinks of her ducklings."

(from Luke 13: 34, and Matth. 23:37)

"——the great Shibboleth which he had now adopted."

"——that Shibboleth of his——"

"——than his repudiated Shibboleth."

(Shibboleth—a use of language regarded as distinctive of a particular group. The word is found in Judges 12:6.)

"——in sackcloth and ashes——"

(from Esther 4: 1 and Jonah 3:5)

"——to give his coat to the man who took his cloak——."

(from Matth. 5:40 and Luke 6:29)

"——forgive his brother even seven times——"

(from Matth. 18: 21, 22; Luke 17:4, etc.)

"Our Castle was build upon the sand."

(from Luke 6: 49)

"Gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

(from Genesis 42:38; 44:31, etc.)

"As Rebekah had deceived her lord and robbed Esau, the first-born of his birthright, so had she robbed him who was as Esau to her. Did she love Lucius, her babe less than Rebekah had loved Jacob?"

(One needs to know and understand the household difficulties of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob, recorded in Genesis 25—27, in order to understand this refereace to Rebekah in the novel of Orley Farms.)

Allow me also to take two examples from *Barchester Towers;* page 25, where he introduces the reader to the Reverend Slope, who thrives on the subject of," desecration of the Sabbath."

Trollope writes;

"To him (that is Rev. Slope) the revelation of God appears only in that one law given for Jewish observance. To him the mercies of our Saviour speak in vain, to him in vain has been preached that sermon which fell from Divine lips on the mountain ——' Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth—— Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' to him the New Testament is comparatively of little moment——"

And again he writes on page 45 of the same novel;

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth."

(these well known words are taken from 2 Timothy 2:13)

On the last page of *The Last Chronicle of Barchester*, Trollope makes his defense why he has not analyzed the preaching and teaching of the clerical world of Mid-Victorian England. He writes;

> "Before I take my leave of the diocese Barsetshire forever, which I propose to do in the succeeding paragraph, I desire to be allowed to say one word of apology for myself, in answer to those who have accused me——always without bitterness and generally with tenderness——of having forgotten, in writing of clergymen, the first and foremost characteristic of the ordinary English clergyman's life."
>
> "I have described many clergyman, they say, but have spoken of them all as though their professional duties, their high calling, their daily workings for the good of those around them, were matters of no moment either to me or in my opinion, to themselves. I would plead in answer to this, that my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen; and that I have been led to do so, firstly, by a feeling that no men affect more strongly, by their own character, the society of those around than do country clergymen, so, therefor, their social habits have been worth the labour necessary for painting them; and secondly, by a feeling that though I, as a novelist, may feel myself entitled to write of clergymen out of their pulpits, as I may also write of lawyers and doctors, I have no such liberty to write of them in their pulpits——."

Notwithstanding this "defense," nowhere does Trollope show a bolder and surer tragic-comic insight, nowhere does he come nearer to the world of spiritual feeling, than in the character of the Reverend Mr. Josiah Crawley; whose pride and radical integrity, whose confusion of mind approaching madness, whose power of recovery and discomfitting the subtle bishopess, Mrs. Proudie, together with his deep and sincere piety, passion and rusty dignity, make him one of the notable clerics of English fiction. *The Last Chronicle* of the Barsetshire novels is a masterpiece mainly because of the character of the Reverend Mr. Crawley and his reactions to the peculiar

situation in which he finds himself.

The peculiar situation was caused by an affair of right or wrong, law and money, and, as Mr. Oliver Elton writes; "In all its details and with a full analysis of the tremors that it sends flying through sundry otherwise disconnected groups of persons. By Doctor Throne's trust, and by Mr. Crawley's supposed theft of a cheque, no person in their small community is left quite indifferent. Scores of neighbours have their quality tested, and come out well, or are shown up badly, as the case may be; butchers and bakers, the bishop and his circle, the magistrates and attorneys, the Dale ladies, the suitor of Crawley's daughter, and lastly Johnny Eames, who happily clears up the enigma. It is all naturally managed, a difficult feat."

"Let any one who has been close to any such turmoil (as was created by the Reverend Mr. Crawley) sit down with all the facts at hand, and try to let them tell themselves."

(A Survey of English Literature, Trollope, 276)

In the *Autobiography*, Mr. Trollope writes his own idea about his creation of the character of Mr. Crawley; "——I claim to have portrayed the mind of the unfortunate man with great accuracy and great delicacy. The pride, the humility, the manliness, the weakness, the conscientious rectitude and bitter prejudices of Mr. Crawley were, I feel, true to nature and were well described." (Autobiography, 237)

The very opposite characteristics can be observed in the quiet, loving, forgiving, God-fearing, the Reverend Mr. Hardy. But, as Trollope writes;"——my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen."

4

The English girls and the English ladies play very important roles in Trollope's novels. His Mrs. Proudie, the Bishop's wife in Barsetshire, seems to be somewhat of a tyrant character, an intruder into the country social circle. Yet she is an intruder into real life, and the author's rueful assertion of her virtues, seem to be thrown in because he feels the intrusion.

Trollope's young ladies, of whom Lucy Robarts and Grace Crawley were perhaps his favourites, talk the purest feminine English. He was inclined to be in love with his girls. According to a review written in 1867, his contemporaries enjoyed to make a gentle joke about his intimacy with the minds of his heroines. How, they asked, had he managed to "find it all out?" And shortly after his death, Henry James accurately noted the nature of his relation with them;

> "Trollope settled down steadily to the English girl; he took possession of her, and turned her inside out. He never made her the subject of heartless satire——he bestowed upon her the most serious, the most patient, the most tender, the most copious consideration. He is evidently always more or less in love with her. But if he was a lover, he was a paternal lover."

But Trollope does not devote himself entirely with the problems of young lovers, or with characters amiable and admirable. Already, I mentioned the wife of the Barsetshire Bishop, Mrs. Proudie. In *The Barsetshire Chronicles*, Mrs. Proudie appears as the "power" in the Bishop's palace. Indeed, she is the Bishopess. The archdeacon, the Reverend Mr. Grantly, (of whom I will write more later), had coveted the seat in the palace, which his father had filled for many years with very great satisfaction to the people around. But Bishop and Mrs. Proudie appeared upon the quiet scene of the town of Barset. Mrs. Proudie, a very aggressive character, allowed herself to become the arch-enemy of the archdeacon, Mr. Grantly, as well as of many others. But Mrs. Proudie is, "probably the best-known virago in English fiction, above all for her achievements in henpecking her husband." Yet, even to her Trollope developed a real attachment.

From the *Autobiography* we learn that one day, Mr. Trollope, sitting in the long drawing room of the Athenaeum Club in London, could not refrain from eavesdropping to a conversation between two clergymen, each with a magazine in his hand.

"Here," said one of the clergymen, "is that archdeacon whom we have had in every novel he has written." "And here," said the other, "is the old duke whom he has talked about till everybody is tired of him. If I could

not invent new characters, I would not write novels at all." Then the conversation turned to the character of Mrs. Proudie;

"It was impossible for me not to hear their words," writes Mr. Trollope in his *Autobiography*.. "I got up, and standing between them, I acknowledged myself to be the culprit. 'As to Mrs. Proudie,' I said, 'I will go home and kill her before the week is over.' And so I did.

"I have sometimes regretted the deed, so great was my delight in writing about Mrs. Proudie, so thorough was my knowledge of all the little shades of her character. It was not only that she was a tyrant, a bully, a would-be priestess, a very vulgar woman, and one who would send headlong to the nethermost pit all who disagreed with her; but that at the same time she was conscientious, by no means a hypocrite, really believing in the brimstone which she threatened, and anxious to save the souls around her from its horrors. And as her tyranny increased so did the bitterness of the moments of her repentance increase, in that she knew herself to be a tyrant,— till that bitterness killed her." (Autobiography, 238)

And somewhere else, Trollope writes; " It was with many, many misgivings that I killed my old friend Mrs. Proudie. I could not, I think, have done it, but for a resolution taken and declared under circumstances of great momentary pressure." And after her sudden death, Mr. Trollope wrote; "I still live much in company with her ghost."

Indeed, it is with the creation of the women, amiable, lovable or unlovable, as the case may be, that Mr. Trollope's cleverness is noteworthy.

One of the most noticeable qualities of his women is the resemblance to life.

The conversations are remarkably clever; the little warnings women can give one another, and the way each of his female characters follows her own thread of thought, is admirably given.

5

Marriage between equals on the social ladder was a must. Money and social status spoke very loud in Victorian England. When the social customs in this matter were found wanting, the calm family waters became

very turbulent. However, in most cases Trollope presented "commoners" with such high qualities and refinements, that animosity and storms blew over, the doors of the sophisticated nobility, or the rich, were opened and the "commoner" welcomed to enter. This was certainly the case with Dr. Thorne's niece, with Lucy Robarts and Grace Crawley.

In the *Palliser Novels* we are invited to notice a different variation of love and marriage. We are invited to follow Lady Glencora and Violet Effingham, both orphaned heiresses pursued by lovers and both responding in very different ways.

Trollope's Violet thoroughly appreciates the grounds for the conventional fear of Lord Chilton. She takes a long time to consider Chilton's character and to make certain of her own feelings. And having decided that she loves this violent patrician Lord Chilton, she cannot then be persuaded to give him up even by his own frightening tantrums.

By contrast, Lady Glencora thoughtlessly planned to elope with Burgo Fitzgerald, the man she loved, and then a week later accepted Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, the heir to the Duke of Omnium, but a man for whom she cared nothing. We are asked to forgive Glencora for being drawn to Fitzgerald, a forgiveness which is the easier to grant because she is disarmingly impetuous, and he an attractive wastrel. The more difficult forgiveness must be for her acquiescing in the marriage with Palliser. She carelessly made and broke her promise to Burgo because her emotions were as confused as her ideas. And she never did become very clear about what, according to her own lights, was right for her; the depth and strength needed to be steadfast were totally lacking. On the other hand it must be remembered that it must ever be wrong to force a young lady into a marriage with a man she does not love.

Glencora had heavy troubles, but they did not overcome her. She did try to attach herself to Palliser after a certain fashion. The romance of her life is gone, but there remained a reality of which she was fully able to taste the flavour. She loved her rank and became ambitious, first of social and then of political ascendancy. The Duchess of Omnium, when she played the part of Prime Minister's wife, is the same woman as that Lady Glencora who almost longs to go off with Burgo Fitzgerald,

but yet knew that she would never do so. She is "imperfectly" true to Palliser. That is why, although she is generous, sensitive, anxious to do what is right, and very lovable, the Duchess of Omnium, Trollope says; "is by no means a perfect lady."

Trollope saw other possibilities with love and marriage, and if not love, at least marriage. Lady Laura Kennedy in the *Palliser Novels*, came to a tragic end precisely because she elected to run in a groove. She genuinely esteemed Mr. Kennedy, and though she did not love him, she supposed that with him she could lead the sort of life that she preferred. And everyone seemed to agree with her, except her brother. Lady Laura injured herself and Mr. Kennedy deeply by thinking that she could dispense with love and even some form of affection. She wrecked her own life and crushed the spirit of the man with whom she exchanged marriage vows.

In *The Times Literary Supplement*, (1974) Shirley Letvin writes: "Lady Laura is not, as the television serial shows her, an ambitious vixen who scolds like a fishwife and begs like a slut. Nor is she, as the *Radio Times* guide says, 'agitating to play a stronger role in a small-dominated society.' Trollope's Lady Laura was before her marriage highly attractive, disciplined and self-confident. The novelist makes clear that her reasons for marrying Mr. Kennedy were not disguised from him and were plausible. They were the same sort of reasons that persuaded Griselda Grantly (from Framley Parsonage, vol. 2) to take Lord Dumbello, and those two lived happily ever after. But then Lord and Lady Dumbello are people of dim wits and feeble passions who want only comfort and security. No such groove could hold Lady Laura. She badly mistook herself———."

These are only a few examples of Trollope's world of love and marriage. But his world preserves an orderly pattern of "moral clarity." He believed that everyone, man and woman alike, has a soul to make and to keep and must accept full responsibility for making and keeping it. Some do better to stick to the well-trodden trails. Others may be clear-headed and strong enough to break through established patterns to find a way of their own. But no two people and no two dilemmas are the same.

What interests Trollope is the particular fashion in which each person receives the opportunity to make his own life, his own marriage; creates his own way through which he expresses his love even if it should involve a head-on-collision with conventional social norms. And social norms were exceedingly strong in Trollope's England. The "Highly-born" of the aristocracy could not associate with the "commoner." Yet Trollope created possibilities to cross bridges. Trollope's scenes and characters are triumphs of realism.

6

The presentation of Plantagenet Palliser, the "hero" of the *Palliser Novels*, with his wife, Lady Glencora, is in the novel, *Can You Forgive Her*? He had appeared in *The Small House at Allington*, but his birth had not been accompanied by many hopes. He is the nephew of the Duke of Omnium, and later becomes the heir. The elder Duke of Omnium is well known to the readers of *Dr. Thorne* and *Framley Parsonage*. As we have already learned, Plantagenet married the grand heiress, Lady Glencora. Before his marriage he had already captured a seat in the House of Commons.

Planty Pall. (known as such among the students at Eton) was tall, slight and had all the requirements to be called "a goodlooking young man." In society, he was quiet, reserved, awkward, ill at ease even in his own drawing-room. He was not in any obvious way an attractive man. And yet Trollope says;" "I think that Plantagenet Palliser, is a perfect gentleman. What makes him so has nothing to do with his rank or wealth or correctness." (from, Autobiography)

A study of Plantagenet's character, following him through the novels of the Palliser series, we come to know him as a man who never loses sight of the soul that he is shaping for himself, and he scrupulously respects the efforts of others to shape theirs. This means that he recognizes obligations well beyond those respected by ordinary honest men. He expects himself to see how things really are, not to remake reality to suit his convenience or pleasure, but to face difficulties without dodging or complaining.

He explores the implications of his thoughts and actions because he cares about their consistency. He feels bound to take notice of everyone's singularity, including his own. He would never excuse himself for arousing false expectations, however inadvertently, or in any other subtle way using or imposing on others. We see what follows in practice on the many occasions when things go wrong with him.

"Quiet as he always seemed, he knew who he was and who other people were," writes Mr. Ratler in his chapter, *The Duke and Duchess in Town.*

It never enters his head to assert his rights as a husband, because he doesn't think in terms of "rights." The general suspicion of his wife's infidelity finds him deaf because he assumes that others are as honourable as he. When Lady Glencora herself confirms the gossip, his mind turns at once to the unhappiness that inspired her desperation. And The Prime Minister Duke with wounded pride and sore spirit, is he who, for his wife's sake, abandoned his chance of political office in order to take her abroad; he is certain that personal peace matters more to him than his public ambitions.

Plantagenet Palliser's situation is peculiarly unpleasant. He has just discovered in himself a love that previously he had not even imagined, only to realize that it is a feeling which his wife can never return. Nor does Trollope ever improve his lot to that of a blissful husband; he learns to live with his disappointments without either resenting or denying them.

Though Lady Glencora continues to make serious difficulties for him, he never blames her, but neither does he pretend that she is other than she is; he does not let her dominate him, nor does he despise himself as he comes to recognize his own shortcomings. "He remains thoroughly true to her, after his thorough nature, and she, after her less perfect nature, is imperfectly true to him." (Autobiography, 158)

In all this Plantagenet Palliser is the opposite of Mr. Kennedy, who, when thwarted, becomes obsessed and then completely looses "his head." But Mr. Kennedy is a man whose mind dwells on his rights, and on what others think of him. The source of his madness is consuming self-importance. Mr. Palliser, the Duke of Omnium can be as obstinate and severe

as Mr. Kennedy, but he is saved by his fairmindedness. He hands out apologies for being unreasonable at times, and confesses his failures.

The same defects and virtues color his political career. He becomes Prime Minister, a position that he neither likes nor thinks that he can do, and things go just as badly as he feared. But at the lowest point of his career, when he is clinging to power, he still has the detachment to confess his failure and even to recognize that his early "ready-made" Liberalism, of the kind which Phineas Finn continues to find satisfactory, has been too superficial.

And through it all, Palliser comes out as a gentleman, not because he conforms to a code or always does the right thing, but because of the manner in which he thinks about himself and others.

Once more I must refer to the BBC series. Shirley Letvin writes in her analysis of the series; "Plantagenet Palliser comes out of the file (BBC file) marked 'aristocratic-rich-powerfulcorrect and frigid'. He is the opposite of Phineas Finn who is poor and therefore so full of worthy animality that he seduces a simple girl and fights for the oppressed of Ireland at the cost of his career. Phineas comes from the 'wrong' class and therefore does the 'right' things, fornicates and agitates."

However, this is not a true picture of the two main characters in the *Pallisers*. Shirley Letvin continues; "True individuality is as foreign as true morality of the BBC Pallisers;——".

Phineas' last evaluation of the Duke of Omnium rings as clear as a bell; "There was always about him a simple dignity which made it impossible that anyone should slap him on the back; and that of course, remains the same. He is the same Planty Pall, but I doubt whether any man ever ventured to call him Planty Pall, to his face since he left Eton."

7

Trollope's characters stride directly off the pages into our consciousness, a living presence, talking, gossiping, sorrowing, exulting and especially thinking and feeling; he makes us hear them. I briefly discussed one such character from the *Palliser Novels*, Plantagenet Palliser, the Duke of

Omnium. In *The Tales of Barsetshire*, the archdeacon, the Reverend Mr. Grantly, plays a very major role.

In his comments on Trollope, Mr.H.S. Davies writes; "The intense moral realization of his characters gave, once created, a very tenacious hold upon his imagination; so tenacious that he was unwilling, indeed unable, to let them go. One of his notable creations is the character of the archdeacon Grantly."

We meet the archdeacon at the bedside of his aged father, the Bishop of Barsetshire. Ah yes, we did meet him before, but the passing away of his father as Bishop of Barsetshire, became a great crisis in the life of the archdeacon, and the effects of this crisis remained with him for many long years. First came the disappointment that the Bishopric was not extended to him, and secondly, that this Bishopric landed into the hands of a very weak personality, who was indeed nothing more but a tool in the hands of his wife, Mrs. Proudie, who we have met before. This was a constant grievance to the archdeacon. Notwithstanding the many achievements of which the archdeacon was well pleased, when the Bishopric slipped out of his reach, in other words, when he was passed by, this remained a "thorn" in his mind.

The archdeacon was rather coarse in grain, somewhat worldly, quick to anger, but also quick to forget his anger and to forgive those who crossed his path. Above all from beneath that coarseness there was a ray of generosity and sincere warm-heartedness. A strange combination yet so true to realities in life.

The contrasting characters and qualities of the archdeacon and his father-in-law, The Warden, Mr. Hardy, exist side by side through the *Tales of Barsetshire*. It is the contrast of these two characters which gives such a rich flavor to the novels. Of the two, the archdeacon was the more prominent and much more active. Also more akin to Trollope. The father-in-law, when he had been Warden in the first book, "stood at the upper limit of Trollope's moral range." He made the great decision, much against the wishes of the archdeacon, to give up his Wardenship, and when that decision was made, he was content to take care of the music in the cathedral, assist his widowed daughter in whatever way he was allow-

ed to do so, and take care of minor duties in the church. "Yet he did all this in such a way that we are made to feel his virtue, his religious depth, beyond any description that Trollope felt able to give. When the older man came to die, it was through the mouth of the archdeacon that Trollope expressed his estimate both of the dying man, and of the archdeacon;

> 'I feel sure that he never had an impure fancy in his mind, or a faulty wish in his heart. His tenderness has surpassed the tenderness of a woman; and yet when occasion came for showing it, he had all the spirit of a hero. I shall never forget his resignation of the hospital——. The fact is, he never was wrong. He lacked guile, and he feared God,———and a man who does both will never go far astray. I don't think he ever coveted aught in his life, except a new case for his violincello, and somebody to listen to him when he played it.' Then the archdeacon got up, and walked about the room in his enthusiasm; and, perhaps, as he walked some thoughts as to the sterner ambition of his own life passed through his mind. What things had he coveted ? Had he lacked guile? He told himself that he had feared God—, but he was not sure that he was telling himself the truth even in that."

"Nothing is more like Trollope himself than this moment of explosive self-perception," writes Mr. Davies. "The archdeacon, like his creator, had standards by which to measure his fellow men, and he was tolerably sure of their general rightness. But when he came to ask how far he himself measured up to them, he had his awkward moments."

Indeed, the archdeacon had coveted many things, and he knew it. He also had achieved many things, he knew that too. With stern ambition and certainly not without guile, the archdeacon was well pleased with his achievements. Yet, there were these gnawing questions;"——— as he walked some thoughts as to the sterner ambition of his own life passed through his mind. What things had he coveted? Had he lacked guile? He told himself that he had feared God,—but he was not sure that he was telling the truth even in that."

For his family he had been a husband and father with sincere affection

and understanding. And his children had not disappointed the high expectation which the archdeacon demanded. However, in *The Last Chronicle*, he was sorely tried because his heir, the oldest son, Henry, fell in love with a young women, the daughter of the cleric, Mr. Crawley, who was the very opposite of himself, pious, very poor, unworldly, and to make matters even worse, for Mr. Crawley there was a trial awaiting for the stealing of a cheque.

The struggle between father and son was long, bitter and obstinate on both sides. It was brought to its climax, and also its solution, in an interview between the archdeacon and the girl herself, which illustrates as comprehensively as any passage in Trollope both the emotional force of which he was capable, and the moral standards which he accepted without question. The first part of the interview does her great credit, more credit than the archdeacon had expected. She refers to her father's disgrace at the present moment, and gives her promise that unless her father's name is completely cleared she will marry nobody;

> "The archdeacon had now left the rug, and advanced till he was almost close to the chair on which Grace was sitting. 'My dear,' he said, 'what you say does you very much honour—very much honour indeed.' Now that he was close to her, he could look into her eyes, and he could see the exact form of her features, and could understand— could not help understanding— the character of her countenance. It was a noble face, having in it nothing that was poor, nothing that was mean, nothing that was shapeless. It was a face that promised infinite beauty, with a promise that was on the verge of fulfilment. There was a play about her mouth as she spoke, and a curl in her nostrils as the eager words came from her, which almost made the selfish father give way. Why had they not told him that she was a one as this? Why had not Henry himself spoken of the speciality of her beauty? No man in England knew better than the archdeacon the difference between beauty of one kind and the beauty of another kind in a woman's face—the one beauty, which comes from health and youth and animal spirits, and which belongs to the miller's

daughter, and the other beauty, which shows itself in fine lines and a noble spirit—the beauty which comes from breeding. 'What you say does you very much honour indeed,' said the archdeacon.

'I should not mind at all about being poor,' said Grace.

'No;no; no, said the archdeacon.

'Poor as we are—and no clergyman, I think, ever was so poor—I should have done as your son asked me at once, if it had been only that——because I love him.' 'If you love him you will not wish to injure him.?' 'I will not injure him. Sir, there is my promise.'

And now as she spoke she rose from her chair, and standing close to the archdeacon, laid her hand very lightly on the sleeve of his coat.

'There is my promise. As long as people say that Papa stole the money, I will never marry your son. There.!"

The archdeacon was still looking down at her, and feeling the slight touch of her fingers, raised his arm a little as though to welcome the pressure. He looked into her eyes, which were turned eagerly towards his, and when doing so he was sure that the promise would be kept. It would have been sacrilege—he felt that it would have been sacrilege—to doubt such a promise. He almost relented. His soft heart, which was never very well under his own control, gave way so far that he was nearly moved to tell her that, on his son's behalf, he acquited her of the promise..... As he looked down upon her face two tears formed themselves in his eyes and gradually trickled down his nose. 'My dear,' he said, 'if this cloud passes away you, you shall come to us and be my daughter.' And thus he pledged himself."

"There was a dash of generosity about the man, in spite of his selfishness, which always made him desirous of giving largely to those who gave largely to him. He would fain that his gifts should be bigger, if it were possible.....He had contrived that her hand should fall from his arm into his grasp, and now for a

> moment he held it. 'You are a good girl,' he said, 'a dear, dear, good girl. When this cloud has passed away, you shall come to us and be our daughter."

It was thus that Trollope created the most solid of his male characters in the *Barsetshire Chronicles*. As an observer of manners he is one of the most impeccable realists, and he has gone far, in the deeper interpretation of character.

It is impossible that for the reader any character in fiction should live which has not been alive to its creator: so is it with Trollope, who, speaking of his characters, says;

> "I have wandered alone among the rocks and woods, crying at their grief, laughing at their absurdities, and thoroughly enjoying their joy. I have been impregnated with my own creations till it has been my only excitement to sit with the pen in my hand, and drive my team before me at as quick a pace as I could make them travel."

8

Mr. Trollope's work is observation. And his observation is the more efficient that it is hampered by no concomitant purpose. The easy slouch of his literary gait may have become a second nature by this, but it was conscious and cultivated. It served him admirably in his multifarious novels, enabling him to produce a greater number of readable, sensible, sometimes laughable and often memorable pages than many other writers.

Mr. Trollope has often been compared with Thackeray. In style, Thackeray is "slipshod", he is a student of reality in conduct, and yet carried away by romantic possibilities and sentiments. And here, it seems to me, the similarities with Trollope end.

Thackeray is a moralist, a satirist, he tells his story for its lesson; whereas Trollope tells his story wholly for its own sake. Trollope is simply the novelist, not the teacher or preacher.

Both writers display humour, quiet humour. Trollope is not endowed with a great spark of wit. His satire tends towards the obvious and his

humour is mild, almost unconscious, as if he could depict for us what of the humorous came under his observation without himself fully appreciating the humour. Mr. Trollope's merriment is evoked wholly by the actual presence of an oddity; and Thackeray's, although abundantly sympathetic with comedy, by its existence, by its history, by some shadow it casts.

Trollope's greatest value I take to be that he is purely a novelist. The central purpose of a work of fiction is assuredly the portrayal of human passions. To this principle Trollope steadfastly adheres with a constancy which is almost a conviction. His strength lies; "in the firmness of his feet on earth, in the strength and regularity of their tread; in the sense that no tricks are being played on the reader, that the author is not satirizing what he seems to praise or despising what he depicts as admirable, and that he is trying above all else to do two things; to tell the truth about those aspects of men that interest him, and in telling it to be 'readable'."

His *Autobiography* is strong proof that Trollope's strange power of not falsifying anything was ever present. His account of his suffering childhood and youth is neither self-pitying nor a deliberately brave avoidance of self-pity. His account of his success is equally candid, being given in terms of those things which genuinely pleased him, money, comfort at home and at work, the pleasant sense of having become someone.

Trollope's tales give us a sound sense of reality. As Hearns observes;" He was one of the first realistic novelists, in the true sense of the word realism. His aim was to 'reflect' the life of the well-to-do middle classes, 'the respectables', as some writers ironically say. In everything and everywhere and everybody he saw the human first of all, the convention only afterwards, as a matter of secondary consideration. Trollope could always paint the small details of human life without making anybody angry." (A History of English Literature)

It may seem paradoxical to attribute this realism to the rather narrowness of the author's imagination; but we cannot help doing so. His novels are not profoundly imaginative, neither are they aesthetically of the highest order. In other words, his novels are not great mines of literary style.

His immediate successors, to some of whom irregularity of life and "bohemianism" appeared as a necessary part of art, "could not tolerate him" for his virtues. They assumed that books produced as Trollope wrote and produced his,could not be works of art.

However, I take the liberty to disagree. I feel these critics were wrong in condemning him on the ground that his approach to life and art was different from theirs. There always will be a difference of opinion on; What is art? What is aesthetic truth? They failed to observe that the aesthetic truth which they saw, was not the whole truth. Mr. Morgan writes in The Atlantic Monthly;" No theory of art or of life represents the whole truth, but each coterie and sect assumes that it's own theory is a final orthodoxy, and so, in time, is made ridiculous."

"His great, his inestimable merit," said Henry James, "was a complete appreciation of the usual". And George Moore said; "Trollope carried commonplace further than anyone dreamed it could be carried." Indeed, the world of a diocese was a stage broad enough for his tales.

It is interesting to note that serious moral obliquity is rarely his theme, save in *The Eustace Diamonds*, (1873) and in "*The Way We Live Now*, (1875). He displayed the lesser faults and struggles of human nature, such as; the heartburnings of social aspirants, social discrimination among caste and class; the gossip and scandals, jealousy and arrogance among petty people. He talks about all this in a "matter-of-factness" which is convincing.

It was always sound what he wrote and marvelously free from the vices of vagueness and pretensions, however, his meticulousness in detail, his insistence on suggestion to do the work of statement, and drawing in too many" side-plots," all this must be noted as weaknesses and count against his otherwise well established reputation. He accomplished an immense amount of work. Obviously, had he written less, he would probably have written better.

About the permanent value of his work he was over-modest, for Trollope is read today in an ever wider circle. He was so unwilling to be thought preoccupied with his dignity or fame. "I do not think it probable," he wrote in his *Autobiography*, "that my name will remain among those

who in the next century will be known as the writers of England prose fiction." But he has survived.

After a long silence, his works are rolling off the presses in ever greater numbers, and critics of late years are showing a tendency to put Anthony Trollope in his rightful place. They have placed him again among the best of the mid-Victorians.

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