

# An Autobiography



An Autobiography

by

Anthony Trollope

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## Contents

PREFACE	1
CHAPTER I. MY EDUCATION	4
CHAPTER II. MY MOTHER	13
CHAPTER III. THE GENERAL POST OFFICE	20
CHAPTER IV. IRELAND—MY FIRST TWO NOVELS	32
CHAPTER V. MY FIRST SUCCESS	43
CHAPTER VI. "BARCHESTER TOWERS" AND THE "THREE CLERKS"	53
CHAPTER VII. "DOCTOR THORNE"—"THE BERTRAMS"—"THE WEST INDIES" AND "THE SPANISH MAIN"	62
CHAPTER VIII. THE "CORNHILL MAGAZINE" AND "FRAMLEY PARSONAGE"	69
CHAPTER IX. "CASTLE RICHMOND;" "BROWN, JONES, AND ROBINSON;" "NORTH AMERICA;" "ORLEY FARM"	80
CHAPTER X. "THE SMALL HOUSE AT ALLINGTON," "CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?" "RACHEL RAY," AND THE "FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW"	89

CHAPTER XI. "THE CLAVERINGS," THE "PALL MALL GAZETTE," "NINA BALATKA," AND "LINDA TRESSEL"	100
CHAPTER XII. ON NOVELS AND THE ART OF WRITING THEM	109
CHAPTER XIII. ON ENGLISH NOVELISTS OF THE PRESENT DAY	123
CHAPTER XIV. ON CRITICISM	132
CHAPTER XV. "THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET"—"LEAVING THE POST OFFICE"—"ST. PAUL'S MAGAZINE"	137
CHAPTER XVI. BEVERLEY	147
CHAPTER XVII. THE AMERICAN POSTAL TREATY—THE QUESTION OF COPYRIGHT WITH AMERICA—FOUR MORE NOVELS	154
CHAPTER XVIII. "THE VICAR OF BULLHAMPTON"—"SIR HARRY HOTSPUR"—"AN EDITOR'S TALES"—"CAESAR"	163
CHAPTER XIX. "RALPH THE HEIR"—"THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS"—"LADY ANNA"—"AUSTRALIA"	171
CHAPTER XX. "THE WAY WE LIVE NOW" AND "THE PRIME MINISTER"—	
CONCLUSION	178





## PREFACE

It may be well that I should put a short preface to this book. In the summer of 1878 my father told me that he had written a memoir of his own life. He did not speak about it at length, but said that he had written me a letter, not to be opened until after his death, containing instructions for publication.

This letter was dated 30th April, 1876. I will give here as much of it as concerns the public: "I wish you to accept as a gift from me, given you now, the accompanying pages which contain a memoir of my life. My intention is that they shall be published after my death, and be edited by you. But I leave it altogether to your discretion whether to publish or to suppress the work;—and also to your discretion whether any part or what part shall be omitted. But I would not wish that anything should be added to the memoir. If you wish to say any word as from yourself, let it be done in the shape of a preface or introductory chapter." At the end there is a postscript: "The publication, if made at all, should be effected as soon as possible after my death." My father died on the 6th of December, 1882.

It will be seen, therefore, that my duty has been merely to pass the book through the press conformably to the above instructions. I have placed headings to the right-hand pages throughout the book, and I do not conceive that I was precluded from so doing. Additions of any other sort there have been none; the few footnotes are my father's own additions or corrections. And I have made no alterations. I have suppressed some few passages, but not more than would amount to two printed pages has been omitted. My father has not given any of his own letters, nor was it his wish that any should be published.

So much I would say by way of preface. And I think I may also give in a few words the main incidents in my father's life after he completed his autobiography.

He has said that he had given up hunting; but he still kept two horses for such riding as may be had in or about the immediate neighborhood of London. He continued to ride to the end of his life: he liked the exercise, and I think it would have distressed him not to have had a horse in his stable. But he never spoke willingly on hunting matters. He had at last resolved to give up his favourite amusement, and that as far as he was concerned there should be an end of it. In the spring of 1877 he went to South Africa, and returned early in the following year with a book on the colony already written. In the summer of 1878, he was one of a party of ladies and gentlemen who made an expedition to Iceland in the "Mastiff," one of Mr. John Burns' steam-ships. The journey lasted altogether sixteen days, and during that time Mr. and Mrs. Burns were the hospitable entertainers. When

my father returned, he wrote a short account of How the "Mastiffs" went to Iceland. The book was printed, but was intended only for private circulation.

Every day, until his last illness, my father continued his work. He would not otherwise have been happy. He demanded from himself less than he had done ten years previously, but his daily task was always done. I will mention now the titles of his books that were published after the last included in the list which he himself has given at the end of the second volume:—

An Eye for an Eye,.....	1879
Cousin Henry,.....	1879
Thackeray,.....	1879
The Duke's Children,.....	1880
Life of Cicero,.....	1880
Ayala's Angel,.....	1881
Doctor Wortle's School,.....	1881
Frau Frohmann and other Stories,.....	1882
Lord Palmerston,.....	1882
The Fixed Period,.....	1882
Kept in the Dark,.....	1882
Marion Fay,.....	1882
Mr. Scarborough's Family,.....	1883

At the time of his death he had written four-fifths of an Irish story, called The Landleaguers, shortly about to be published; and he left in manuscript a completed novel, called An Old Man's Love, which will be published by Messrs. Blackwood & Sons in 1884.

In the summer of 1880 my father left London, and went to live at Harting, a village in Sussex, but on the confines of Hampshire. I think he chose that spot because he found there a house that suited him, and because of the prettiness of the neighborhood. His last long journey was a trip to Italy in the late winter and spring of 1881; but he went to Ireland twice in 1882. He went there in May of that year, and was then absent nearly a month. This journey did him much good, for he found that the softer atmosphere relieved his asthma, from which he had been suffering

for nearly eighteen months. In August following he made another trip to Ireland, but from this journey he derived less benefit. He was much interested in, and was very much distressed by, the unhappy condition of the country. Few men know Ireland better than he did. He had lived there for sixteen years, and his Post Office word had taken him into every part of the island. In the summer of 1882 he began his last novel, *The Landleaguers*, which, as stated above, was unfinished when he died. This book was a cause of anxiety to him. He could not rid his mind of the fact that he had a story already in the course of publication, but which he had not yet completed. In no other case, except *Framley Parsonage*, did my father publish even the first number of any novel before he had fully completed the whole tale.

On the evening of the 3rd of November, 1882, he was seized with paralysis on the right side, accompanied by loss of speech. His mind had also failed, though at intervals his thoughts would return to him. After the first three weeks these lucid intervals became rarer, but it was always very difficult to tell how far his mind was sound or how far astray. He died on the evening of the 6th of December following, nearly five weeks from the night of his attack.

I have been led to say these few words, not at all from a desire to supplement my father's biography of himself, but to mention the main incidents in his life after he had finished his own record. In what I have here said I do not think I have exceeded his instructions.

Henry M. Trollope. September, 1883.

## CHAPTER I. MY EDUCATION

1815-1834

In writing these pages, which, for the want of a better name, I shall be fain to call the autobiography of so insignificant a person as myself, it will not be so much my intention to speak of the little details of my private life, as of what I, and perhaps others round me, have done in literature; of my failures and successes such as they have been, and their causes; and of the opening which a literary career offers to men and women for the earning of their bread. And yet the garrulity of old age, and the aptitude of a man's mind to recur to the passages of his own life, will, I know, tempt me to say something of myself;—nor, without doing so, should I know how to throw my matter into any recognised and intelligible form. That I, or any man, should tell everything of himself, I hold to be impossible. Who could endure to own the doing of a mean thing? Who is there that has done none? But this I protest:—that nothing that I say shall be untrue. I will set down naught in malice; nor will I give to myself, or others, honour which I do not believe to have been fairly won. My boyhood was, I think, as unhappy as that of a young gentleman could well be, my misfortunes arising from a mixture of poverty and gentle standing on the part of my father, and from an utter want on my part of the juvenile manhood which enables some boys to hold up their heads even among the distresses which such a position is sure to produce.

I was born in 1815, in Keppel Street, Russell Square; and while a baby, was carried down to Harrow, where my father had built a house on a large farm which, in an evil hour he took on a long lease from Lord Northwick. That farm was the grave of all my father's hopes, ambition, and prosperity, the cause of my mother's sufferings, and of those of her children, and perhaps the director of her destiny and of ours. My father had been a Wykamist and a fellow of New College, and Winchester was the destination of my brothers and myself; but as he had friends among the masters at Harrow, and as the school offered an education almost gratuitous to children living in the parish, he, with a certain aptitude to do things differently from others, which accompanied him throughout his life, determined to use that august seminary as "t'other school" for Winchester, and sent three of us there, one after the other, at the age of seven. My father at this time was a Chancery barrister practising in London, occupying dingy, almost suicidal chambers, at No. 23 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn,—chambers which on one melancholy occasion did become absolutely suicidal.<sup>1</sup> He was, as I have been informed by those quite competent to know, an excellent and most conscientious

lawyer, but plagued with so bad a temper, that he drove the attorneys from him. In his early days he was a man of some small fortune and of higher hopes. These stood so high at the time of my birth, that he was felt to be entitled to a country house, as well as to that in Keppel Street; and in order that he might build such a residence, he took the farm. This place he called Julians, and the land runs up to the foot of the hill on which the school and the church stand,—on the side towards London. Things there went much against him; the farm was ruinous, and I remember that we all regarded the Lord Northwick of those days as a cormorant who was eating us up. My father's clients deserted him. He purchased various dark gloomy chambers in and about Chancery Lane, and his purchases always went wrong. Then, as a final crushing blow, and old uncle, whose heir he was to have been, married and had a family! The house in London was let; and also the house he built at Harrow, from which he descended to a farmhouse on the land, which I have endeavoured to make known to some readers under the name of Orley Farm. This place, just as it was when we lived there, is to be seen in the frontispiece to the first edition of that novel, having the good fortune to be delineated by no less a pencil than that of John Millais.

My two elder brothers had been sent as day-boarders to Harrow School from the bigger house, and may probably have been received among the aristocratic crowd,—not on equal terms, because a day-boarder at Harrow in those days was never so received,—but at any rate as other day-boarders. I do not suppose that they were well treated, but I doubt whether they were subjected to the ignominy which I endured. I was only seven, and I think that boys at seven are now spared among their more considerate seniors. I was never spared; and was not even allowed to run to and fro between our house and the school without a daily purgatory. No doubt my appearance was against me. I remember well, when I was still the junior boy in the school, Dr. Butler, the head-master, stopping me in the street, and asking me, with all the clouds of Jove upon his brow and the thunder in his voice, whether it was possible that Harrow School was disgraced by so disreputably dirty a boy as I! Oh, what I felt at that moment! But I could not look my feelings. I do not doubt that I was dirty;—but I think that he was cruel. He must have known me had he seen me as he was wont to see me, for he was in the habit of flogging me constantly. Perhaps he did not recognise me by my face.

At this time I was three years at Harrow; and, as far as I can remember, I was the junior boy in the school when I left it.

Then I was sent to a private school at Sunbury, kept by Arthur Drury. This, I think, must have been done in accordance with the advice of Henry Drury, who was my tutor at Harrow School, and my father's friend, and who may probably have expressed an opinion that my juvenile career was not proceeding in a satisfactory manner at Harrow. To Sunbury I went, and during the two years I was there,

though I never had any pocket-money, and seldom had much in the way of clothes, I lived more nearly on terms of equality with other boys than at any other period during my very prolonged school-days. Even here, I was always in disgrace. I remember well how, on one occasion, four boys were selected as having been the perpetrators of some nameless horror. What it was, to this day I cannot even guess; but I was one of the four, innocent as a babe, but adjudged to have been the guiltiest of the guilty. We each had to write out a sermon, and my sermon was the longest of the four. During the whole of one term-time we were helped last at every meal. We were not allowed to visit the playground till the sermon was finished. Mine was only done a day or two before the holidays. Mrs. Drury, when she saw us, shook her head with pitying horror. There were ever so many other punishments accumulated on our heads. It broke my heart, knowing myself to be innocent, and suffering also under the almost equally painful feeling that the other three—no doubt wicked boys—were the curled darlings of the school, who would never have selected me to share their wickedness with them. I contrived to learn, from words that fell from Mr. Drury, that he condemned me because I, having come from a public school, might be supposed to be the leader of wickedness! On the first day of the next term he whispered to me half a word that perhaps he had been wrong. With all a stupid boy's slowness, I said nothing; and he had not the courage to carry reparation further. All that was fifty years ago, and it burns me now as though it were yesterday. What lily-livered curs those boys must have been not to have told the truth!—at any rate as far as I was concerned. I remember their names well, and almost wish to write them here.

When I was twelve there came the vacancy at Winchester College which I was destined to fill. My two elder brothers had gone there, and the younger had been taken away, being already supposed to have lost his chance of New College. It had been one of the great ambitions of my father's life that his three sons, who lived to go to Winchester, should all become fellows of New College. But that suffering man was never destined to have an ambition gratified. We all lost the prize which he struggled with infinite labour to put within our reach. My eldest brother all but achieved it, and afterwards went to Oxford, taking three exhibitions from the school, though he lost the great glory of a Wykamist. He has since made himself well known to the public as a writer in connection with all Italian subjects. He is still living as I now write. But my other brother died early.

While I was at Winchester my father's affairs went from bad to worse. He gave up his practice at the bar, and, unfortunate that he was, took another farm. It is odd that a man should conceive,—and in this case a highly educated and a very clever man,—that farming should be a business in which he might make money without any special education or apprenticeship. Perhaps of all trades it is the one in which an accurate knowledge of what things should be done, and the best manner of

doing them, is most necessary. And it is one also for success in which a sufficient capital is indispensable. He had no knowledge, and, when he took this second farm, no capital. This was the last step preparatory to his final ruin.

Soon after I had been sent to Winchester my mother went to America, taking with her my brother Henry and my two sisters, who were then no more than children. This was, I think, in 1827. I have no clear knowledge of her object, or of my father's; but I believe that he had an idea that money might be made by sending goods,—little goods, such as pin-cushions, pepper-boxes, and pocket-knives,—out to the still unfurnished States; and that she conceived that an opening might be made for my brother Henry by erecting some bazaar or extended shop in one of the Western cities. Whence the money came I do not know, but the pocket-knives and the pepper-boxes were bought and the bazaar built. I have seen it since in the town of Cincinnati,—a sorry building! But I have been told that in those days it was an imposing edifice. My mother went first, with my sisters and second brother. Then my father followed them, taking my elder brother before he went to Oxford. But there was an interval of some year and a half during which he and I were in Winchester together.

Over a period of forty years, since I began my manhood at a desk in the Post Office, I and my brother, Thomas Adolphus, have been fast friends. There have been hot words between us, for perfect friendship bears and allows hot words. Few brothers have had more of brotherhood. But in those schooldays he was, of all my foes, the worst. In accordance with the practice of the college, which submits, or did then submit, much of the tuition of the younger boys from the elder, he was my tutor; and in his capacity of teacher and ruler, he had studied the theories of Draco. I remember well how he used to exact obedience after the manner of that lawgiver. Hang a little boy for stealing apples, he used to say, and other little boys will not steal apples. The doctrine was already exploded elsewhere, but he stuck to it with conservative energy. The result was that, as a part of his daily exercise, he thrashed me with a big stick. That such thrashings should have been possible at a school as a continual part of one's daily life, seems to me to argue a very ill condition of school discipline.

At this period I remember to have passed one set of holidays—the midsummer holidays—in my father's chambers in Lincoln's Inn. There was often a difficulty about the holidays,—as to what should be done with me. On this occasion my amusement consisted in wandering about among those old deserted buildings, and in reading Shakespeare out of a bi-columned edition, which is still among my books. It was not that I had chosen Shakespeare, but that there was nothing else to read.

After a while my brother left Winchester and accompanied my father to America. Then another and a different horror fell to my fate. My college bills had not been paid, and the school tradesmen who administered to the wants of the boys were told not to extend their credit to me. Boots, waistcoats, and pocket-handkerchiefs, which, with some slight surveillance, were at the command of other scholars, were closed luxuries to me. My schoolfellows of course knew that it was so, and I became a Pariah. It is the nature of boys to be cruel. I have sometimes doubted whether among each other they do usually suffer much, one from the other's cruelty; but I suffered horribly! I could make no stand against it. I had no friend to whom I could pour out my sorrows. I was big, and awkward, and ugly, and, I have no doubt, sulked about in a most unattractive manner. Of course I was ill-dressed and dirty. But ah! how well I remember all the agonies of my young heart; how I considered whether I should always be alone; whether I could not find my way up to the top of that college tower, and from thence put an end to everything? And a worse thing came than the stoppage of the supplies from the shopkeepers. Every boy had a shilling a week pocket-money, which we called battels, and which was advanced to us out of the pocket of the second master. On one awful day the second master announced to me that my battels would be stopped. He told me the reason,—the battels for the last half-year had not been repaid; and he urged his own unwillingness to advance the money. The loss of a shilling a week would not have been much,—even though pocket-money from other sources never reached me,—but that the other boys all knew it! Every now and again, perhaps three or four times in a half-year, these weekly shillings were given to certain servants of the college, in payment, it may be presumed, for some extra services. And now, when it came to the turn of any servant, he received sixty-nine shillings instead of seventy, and the cause of the defalcation was explained to him. I never saw one of those servants without feeling I had picked his pocket.

When I had been at Winchester something over three years, my father returned to England and took me away. Whether this was done because of the expense, or because my chance of New College was supposed to have passed away, I do not know. As a fact, I should, I believe, have gained the prize, as there occurred in my year an exceptional number of vacancies. But it would have served me nothing, as there would have been no funds for my maintenance at the University till I should have entered in upon the fruition of the founder's endowment, and my career at Oxford must have been unfortunate.

When I left Winchester, I had three more years of school before me, having as yet endured nine. My father at this time having left my mother and sisters with my younger brother in America, took himself to live at a wretched tumble-down farmhouse on the second farm he had hired! And I was taken there with him. It was nearly three miles from Harrow, at Harrow Weald, but in the parish; and from this

house I was again sent to that school as a day-boarder. Let those who know what is the usual appearance and what the usual appurtenances of a boy at such a school, consider what must have been my condition among them, with a daily walk of twelve miles through the lanes, added to the other little troubles and labours of a school life!

Perhaps the eighteen months which I passed in this condition, walking to and fro on those miserably dirty lanes, was the worst period of my life. I was now over fifteen, and had come to an age at which I could appreciate at its full the misery of expulsion from all social intercourse. I had not only no friends, but was despised by all my companions. The farmhouse was not only no more than a farmhouse, but was one of those farmhouses which seem always to be in danger of falling into the neighbouring horse-pond. As it crept downwards from house to stables, from stables to barns, from barns to cowsheds, and from cowsheds to dungheaps, one could hardly tell where one began and the other ended! There was a parlour in which my father lived, shut up among big books; but I passed my most jocund hours in the kitchen, making innocent love to the bailiff's daughter. The farm kitchen might be very well through the evening, when the horrors of the school were over; but it all added to the cruelty of the days. A sizar at a Cambridge college, or a Bible-clerk at Oxford, has not pleasant days, or used not to have them half a century ago; but his position was recognised, and the misery was measured. I was a sizar at a fashionable school, a condition never premeditated. What right had a wretched farmer's boy, reeking from a dunghill, to sit next to the sons of peers,—or much worse still, next to the sons of big tradesmen who made their ten thousand a year? The indignities I endured are not to be described. As I look back it seems to me that all hands were turned against me,—those of masters as well as boys. I was allowed to join in no plays. Nor did I learn anything,—for I was taught nothing. The only expense, except that of books, to which a house-boarder was then subject, was the fee to a tutor, amounting, I think, to ten guineas. My tutor took me without the fee; but when I heard him declare the fact in the pupil-room before the boys, I hardly felt grateful for the charity. I was never a coward, and cared for a thrashing as little as any boy, but one cannot make a stand against the acerbities of three hundred tyrants without a moral courage of which at that time I possessed none. I know that I skulked, and was odious to the eyes of those I admired and envied. At last I was driven to rebellion, and there came a great fight,—at the end of which my opponent had to be taken home for a while. If these words be ever printed, I trust that some schoolfellow of those days may still be left alive who will be able to say that, in claiming this solitary glory of my school-days, I am not making a false boast.

I wish I could give some adequate picture of the gloom of that farmhouse. My elder brother—Tom as I must call him in my narrative, though the world, I think,

knows him best as Adolphus—was at Oxford. My father and I lived together, he having no means of living except what came from the farm. My memory tells me that he was always in debt to his landlord and to the tradesmen he employed. Of self-indulgence no one could accuse him. Our table was poorer, I think, than that of the bailiff who still hung on to our shattered fortunes. The furniture was mean and scanty. There was a large rambling kitchen-garden, but no gardener; and many times verbal incentives were made to me,—generally, I fear, in vain,—to get me to lend a hand at digging and planting. Into the hayfields on holidays I was often compelled to go,—not, I fear, with much profit. My father's health was very bad. During the last ten years of his life, he spent nearly the half of his time in bed, suffering agony from sick headaches. But he was never idle unless when suffering. He had at this time commenced a work,—an *Encyclopedia Ecclesiastica*, as he called it,—on which he laboured to the moment of his death. It was his ambition to describe all ecclesiastical terms, including the denominations of every fraternity of monks and every convent of nuns, with all their orders and subdivisions. Under crushing disadvantages, with few or no books of reference, with immediate access to no library, he worked at his most ungrateful task with unflagging industry. When he died, three numbers out of eight had been published by subscription; and are now, I fear, unknown, and buried in the midst of that huge pile of futile literature, the building up of which has broken so many hearts.

And my father, though he would try, as it were by a side wind, to get a useful spurt of work out of me, either in the garden or in the hay-field, had constantly an eye to my scholastic improvement. From my very babyhood, before those first days at Harrow, I had to take my place alongside of him as he shaved at six o'clock in the morning, and say my early rules from the Latin Grammar, or repeat the Greek alphabet; and was obliged at these early lessons to hold my head inclined towards him, so that in the event of guilty fault, he might be able to pull my hair without stopping his razor or dropping his shaving-brush. No father was ever more anxious for the education of his children, though I think none ever knew less how to go about the work. Of amusement, as far as I can remember, he never recognised the need. He allowed himself no distraction, and did not seem to think it was necessary to a child. I cannot bethink me of aught that he ever did for my gratification; but for my welfare,—for the welfare of us all,—he was willing to make any sacrifice. At this time, in the farmhouse at Harrow Weald, he could not give his time to teach me, for every hour that he was not in the fields was devoted to his monks and nuns; but he would require me to sit at a table with *Lexicon* and *Gradus* before me. As I look back on my resolute idleness and fixed determination to make no use whatever of the books thus thrust upon me, or of the hours, and as I bear in mind the consciousness of great energy in after-life, I am in doubt whether my nature is wholly altered, or whether his plan was wholly bad. In those days he never punished me, though I think I grieved him much by my idleness; but in passion he

knew not what he did, and he has knocked me down with the great folio Bible which he always used. In the old house were the two first volumes of Cooper's novel, called *The Prairie*, a relic—probably a dishonest relic—of some subscription to Hookham's library. Other books of the kind there was none. I wonder how many dozen times I read those two first volumes.

It was the horror of those dreadful walks backwards and forwards which made my life so bad. What so pleasant, what so sweet, as a walk along an English lane, when the air is sweet and the weather fine, and when there is a charm in walking? But here were the same lanes four times a day, in wet and dry, in heat and summer, with all the accompanying mud and dust, and with disordered clothes. I might have been known among all the boys at a hundred yards' distance by my boots and trousers,—and was conscious at all times that I was so known. I remembered constantly that address from Dr. Butler when I was a little boy. Dr. Longley might with equal justice have said the same thing any day,—only that Dr. Longley never in his life was able to say an ill-natured word. Dr. Butler only became Dean of Peterborough, but his successor lived to be Archbishop of Canterbury.

I think it was in the autumn of 1831 that my mother, with the rest of the family, returned from America. She lived at first at the farmhouse, but it was only for a short time. She came back with a book written about the United States, and the immediate pecuniary success which that work obtained enabled her to take us all back to the house at Harrow,—not to the first house, which would still have been beyond her means, but to that which has since been called Orley Farm, and which was an Eden as compared to our abode at Harrow Weald. Here my schooling went on under somewhat improved circumstances. The three miles became half a mile, and probably some salutary changes were made in my wardrobe. My mother and my sisters, too, were there. And a great element of happiness was added to us all in the affectionate and life-enduring friendship of the family of our close neighbour Colonel Grant. But I was never able to overcome—or even to attempt to overcome—the absolute isolation of my school position. Of the cricket-ground or racket-court I was allowed to know nothing. And yet I longed for these things with an exceeding longing. I coveted popularity with a covetousness that was almost mean. It seemed to me that there would be an Elysium in the intimacy of those very boys whom I was bound to hate because they hated me. Something of the disgrace of my school-days has clung to me all through life. Not that I have ever shunned to speak of them as openly as I am writing now, but that when I have been claimed as schoolfellow by some of those many hundreds who were with me either at Harrow or at Winchester, I have felt that I had no right to talk of things from most of which I was kept in estrangement.

Through all my father's troubles he still desired to send me either to Oxford or Cambridge. My elder brother went to Oxford, and Henry to Cambridge. It all

depended on my ability to get some scholarship that would help me to live at the University. I had many chances. There were exhibitions from Harrow—which I never got. Twice I tried for a sizarship at Clare Hall,—but in vain. Once I made a futile attempt for a scholarship at Trinity, Oxford,—but failed again. Then the idea of a university career was abandoned. And very fortunate it was that I did not succeed, for my career with such assistance only as a scholarship would have given me, would have ended in debt and ignominy.

When I left Harrow I was all but nineteen, and I had at first gone there at seven. During the whole of those twelve years no attempt had been made to teach me anything but Latin and Greek, and very little attempt to teach me those languages. I do not remember any lessons either in writing or arithmetic. French and German I certainly was not taught. The assertion will scarcely be credited, but I do assert that I have no recollection of other tuition except that in the dead languages. At the school at Sunbury there was certainly a writing master and a French master. The latter was an extra, and I never had extras. I suppose I must have been in the writing master's class, but though I can call to mind the man, I cannot call to mind his ferule. It was by their ferules that I always knew them, and they me. I feel convinced in my mind that I have been flogged oftener than any human being alive. It was just possible to obtain five scourgings in one day at Winchester, and I have often boasted that I obtained them all. Looking back over half a century, I am not quite sure whether the boast is true; but if I did not, nobody ever did.

And yet when I think how little I knew of Latin or Greek on leaving Harrow at nineteen, I am astonished at the possibility of such waste of time. I am now a fair Latin scholar,—that is to say, I read and enjoy the Latin classics, and could probably make myself understood in Latin prose. But the knowledge which I have, I have acquired since I left school,—no doubt aided much by that groundwork of the language which will in the process of years make its way slowly, even through the skin. There were twelve years of tuition in which I do not remember that I ever knew a lesson! When I left Harrow I was nearly at the top of the school, being a monitor, and, I think, the seventh boy. This position I achieved by gravitation upwards. I bear in mind well with how prodigal a hand prizes used to be showered about; but I never got a prize. From the first to the last there was nothing satisfactory in my school career,—except the way in which I licked the boy who had to be taken home to be cured.

## CHAPTER II. MY MOTHER

Though I do not wish in these pages to go back to the origin of all the Trollopes, I must say a few words of my mother,—partly because filial duty will not allow me to be silent as to a parent who made for herself a considerable name in the literature of her day, and partly because there were circumstances in her career well worthy of notice. She was the daughter of the Rev. William Milton, vicar of Heckfield, who, as well as my father, had been a fellow of New College. She was nearly thirty when, in 1809, she married my father. Six or seven years ago a bundle of love-letters from her to him fell into my hand in a very singular way, having been found in the house of a stranger, who, with much courtesy, sent them to me. They were then about sixty years old, and had been written some before and some after her marriage, over the space of perhaps a year. In no novel of Richardson's or Miss Burney's have I seen a correspondence at the same time so sweet, so graceful, and so well expressed. But the marvel of these letters was in the strange difference they bore to the love-letters of the present day. They are, all of them, on square paper, folded and sealed, and addressed to my father on circuit; but the language in each, though it almost borders on the romantic, is beautifully chosen, and fit, without change of a syllable, for the most critical eye. What girl now studies the words with which she shall address her lover, or seeks to charm him with grace of diction? She dearly likes a little slang, and revels in the luxury of entire familiarity with a new and strange being. There is something in that, too, pleasant to our thoughts, but I fear that this phase of life does not conduce to a taste for poetry among our girls. Though my mother was a writer of prose, and revelled in satire, the poetic feeling clung to her to the last.

In the first ten years of her married life she became the mother of six children, four of whom died of consumption at different ages. My elder sister married, and had children, of whom one still lives; but she was one of the four who followed each other at intervals during my mother's lifetime. Then my brother Tom and I were left to her,—with the destiny before us three of writing more books than were probably ever before produced by a single family.<sup>2</sup> My married sister added to the number by one little anonymous high church story, called Chollerton.

From the date of their marriage up to 1827, when my mother went to America, my father's affairs had always been going down in the world. She had loved society, affecting a somewhat liberal role and professing an emotional dislike to tyrants, which sprung from the wrongs of would-be regicides and the poverty of patriot exiles. An Italian marquis who had escaped with only a second shirt from the

clutches of some archduke whom he had wished to exterminate, or a French proletarian with distant ideas of sacrificing himself to the cause of liberty, were always welcome to the modest hospitality of her house. In after years, when marquises of another caste had been gracious to her, she became a strong Tory, and thought that archduchesses were sweet. But with her politics were always an affair of the heart,—as, indeed, were all her convictions. Of reasoning from causes, I think that she knew nothing. Her heart was in every way so perfect, her desire to do good to all around her so thorough, and her power of self-sacrifice so complete, that she generally got herself right in spite of her want of logic; but it must be acknowledged that she was emotional. I can remember now her books, and can see her at her pursuits. The poets she loved best were Dante and Spenser. But she raved also of him of whom all such ladies were raving then, and rejoiced in the popularity and wept over the persecution of Lord Byron. She was among those who seized with avidity on the novels, as they came out, of the then unknown Scott, and who could still talk of the triumphs of Miss Edgeworth. With the literature of the day she was familiar, and with the poets of the past. Of other reading I do not think she had mastered much. Her life, I take it, though latterly clouded by many troubles, was easy, luxurious, and idle, till my father's affairs and her own aspirations sent her to America. She had dear friends among literary people, of whom I remember Mathias, Henry Milman, and Miss Landon; but till long after middle life she never herself wrote a line for publication.

In 1827 she went to America, having been partly instigated by the social and communistic ideas of a lady whom I well remember,—a certain Miss Wright,—who was, I think, the first of the American female lecturers. Her chief desire, however, was to establish my brother Henry; and perhaps joined with that was the additional object of breaking up her English home without pleading broken fortunes to all the world. At Cincinnati, in the State of Ohio, she built a bazaar, and I fancy lost all the money which may have been embarked in that speculation. It could not have been much, and I think that others also must have suffered. But she looked about her, at her American cousins, and resolved to write a book about them. This book she brought back with her in 1831, and published it early in 1832. When she did this she was already fifty. When doing this she was aware that unless she could so succeed in making money, there was no money for any of the family. She had never before earned a shilling. She almost immediately received a considerable sum from the publishers,—if I remember rightly, amounting to two sums of £400 each within a few months; and from that moment till nearly the time of her death, at any rate for more than twenty years, she was in the receipt of a considerable income from her writings. It was a late age at which to begin such a career.

The *Domestic Manners of the Americans* was the first of a series of books of travels, of which it was probably the best, and was certainly the best known. It will not be too much to say of it that it had a material effect upon the manners of the Americans of the day, and that that effect has been fully appreciated by them. No observer was certainly ever less qualified to judge of the prospects or even of the happiness of a young people. No one could have been worse adapted by nature for the task of learning whether a nation was in a way to thrive. Whatever she saw she judged, as most women do, from her own standing-point. If a thing were ugly to her eyes, it ought to be ugly to all eyes,—and if ugly, it must be bad. What though people had plenty to eat and clothes to wear, if they put their feet upon the tables and did not reverence their betters? The Americans were to her rough, uncouth, and vulgar,—and she told them so. Those communistic and social ideas, which had been so pretty in a drawing-room, were scattered to the winds. Her volumes were very bitter; but they were very clever, and they saved the family from ruin.

Book followed book immediately,—first two novels, and then a book on Belgium and Western Germany. She refurnished the house which I have called Orley Farm, and surrounded us again with moderate comforts. Of the mixture of joviality and industry which formed her character, it is almost impossible to speak with exaggeration. The industry was a thing apart, kept to herself. It was not necessary that any one who lived with her should see it. She was at her table at four in the morning, and had finished her work before the world had begun to be aroused. But the joviality was all for others. She could dance with other people's legs, eat and drink with other people's palates, be proud with the lustre of other people's finery. Every mother can do that for her own daughters; but she could do it for any girl whose look, and voice, and manners pleased her. Even when she was at work, the laughter of those she loved was a pleasure to her. She had much, very much, to suffer. Work sometimes came hard to her, so much being required,—for she was extravagant, and liked to have money to spend; but of all people I have known she was the most joyous, or, at any rate, the most capable of joy.

We continued this renewed life at Harrow for nearly two years, during which I was still at the school, and at the end of which I was nearly nineteen. Then there came a great catastrophe. My father, who, when he was well, lived a sad life among his monks and nuns, still kept a horse and gig. One day in March, 1834, just as it had been decided that I should leave the school then, instead of remaining, as had been intended, till midsummer, I was summoned very early in the morning, to drive him up to London. He had been ill, and must still have been very ill indeed when he submitted to be driven by any one. It was not till we had started that he told me that I was to put him on board the Ostend boat. This I did, driving him through the city down to the docks. It was not within his nature to be communicative, and to the last he never told me why he was going to Ostend. Something of a general flitting

abroad I had heard before, but why he should have flown first, and flown so suddenly, I did not in the least know till I returned. When I got back with the gig, the house and furniture were all in the charge of the sheriff's officers.

The gardener who had been with us in former days stopped me as I drove up the road, and with gestures, signs, and whispered words, gave me to understand that the whole affair—horse, gig, and barness—would be made prize of if I went but a few yards farther. Why they should not have been made prize of I do not know. The little piece of dishonest business which I at once took in hand and carried through successfully was of no special service to any of us. I drove the gig into the village, and sold the entire equipage to the ironmonger for £17, the exact sum which he claimed as being due to himself. I was much complimented by the gardener, who seemed to think that so much had been rescued out of the fire. I fancy that the ironmonger was the only gainer by my smartness.

When I got back to the house a scene of devastation was in progress, which still was not without its amusement. My mother, through her various troubles, had contrived to keep a certain number of pretty-pretties which were dear to her heart. They were not much, for in those days the ornamentation of houses was not lavish as it is now; but there was some china, and a little glass, a few books, and a very moderate supply of household silver. These things, and things like them, were being carried down surreptitiously, through a gap between the two gardens, on to the premises of our friend Colonel Grant. My two sisters, then sixteen and seventeen, and the Grant girls, who were just younger, were the chief marauders. To such forces I was happy to add myself for any enterprise, and between us we cheated the creditors to the extent of our powers, amidst the anathemas, but good-humoured abstinence from personal violence, of the men in charge of the property. I still own a few books that were thus purloined.

For a few days the whole family bivouacked under the Colonel's hospitable roof, cared for and comforted by that dearest of all women, his wife. Then we followed my father to Belgium, and established ourselves in a large house just outside the walls of Bruges. At this time, and till my father's death, everything was done with money earned by my mother. She now again furnished the house,—this being the third that she had put in order since she came back from America two years and a half ago.

There were six of us went into this new banishment. My brother Henry had left Cambridge and was ill. My younger sister was ill. And though as yet we hardly told each other that it was so, we began to feel that that desolating fiend, consumption, was among us. My father was broken-hearted as well as ill, but whenever he could sit at his table he still worked at his ecclesiastical records. My elder sister and I were in good health, but I was an idle, desolate hanger-on, that

most hopeless of human beings, a hobbledehoy of nineteen, without any idea of a career, or a profession, or a trade. As well as I can remember I was fairly happy, for there were pretty girls at Bruges with whom I could fancy that I was in love; and I had been removed from the real misery of school. But as to my future life I had not even an aspiration. Now and again there would arise a feeling that it was hard upon my mother that she should have to do so much for us, that we should be idle while she was forced to work so constantly; but we should probably have thought more of that had she not taken to work as though it were the recognised condition of life for an old lady of fifty-five.

Then, by degrees, an established sorrow was at home among us. My brother was an invalid, and the horrid word, which of all words were for some years after the most dreadful to us, had been pronounced. It was no longer a delicate chest, and some temporary necessity for peculiar care,—but consumption! The Bruges doctor had said so, and we knew that he was right. From that time forth my mother's most visible occupation was that of nursing. There were two sick men in the house, and hers were the hands that tended them. The novels went on, of course. We had already learned to know that they would be forthcoming at stated intervals,—and they always were forthcoming. The doctor's vials and the ink-bottle held equal places in my mother's rooms. I have written many novels under many circumstances; but I doubt much whether I could write one when my whole heart was by the bedside of a dying son. Her power of dividing herself into two parts, and keeping her intellect by itself clear from the troubles of the world, and fit for the duty it had to do, I never saw equalled. I do not think that the writing of a novel is the most difficult task which a man may be called upon to do; but it is a task that may be supposed to demand a spirit fairly at ease. The work of doing it with a troubled spirit killed Sir Walter Scott. My mother went through it unscathed in strength, though she performed all the work of day-nurse and night-nurse to a sick household;—for there were soon three of them dying.

At this time there came from some quarter an offer to me of a commission in an Austrian cavalry regiment; and so it was apparently my destiny to be a soldier. But I must first learn German and French, of which languages I knew almost nothing. For this a year was allowed me, and in order that it might be accomplished without expense, I undertook the duties of a classical usher to a school then kept by William Drury at Brussels. Mr. Drury had been one of the masters at Harrow when I went there at seven years old, and is now, after an interval of fifty-three years, even yet officiating as clergyman at that place.<sup>3</sup> To Brussels I went, and my heart still sinks within me as I reflect that any one should have intrusted to me the tuition of thirty boys. I can only hope that those boys went there to learn French, and that their parents were not particular as to their classical acquirements. I remember that on two occasions I was sent to take the school out for a walk; but that after the

second attempt Mrs. Drury declared that the boys' clothes would not stand any further experiments of that kind. I cannot call to mind any learning by me of other languages; but as I only remained in that position for six weeks, perhaps the return lessons had not been as yet commenced. At the end of the six weeks a letter reached me, offering me a clerkship in the General Post Office, and I accepted it. Among my mother's dearest friends she reckoned Mrs. Freeling, the wife of Clayton Freeling, whose father, Sir Francis Freeling, then ruled the Post Office. She had heard of my desolate position, and had begged from her father-in-law the offer of a berth in his own office.

I hurried back from Brussels to Bruges on my way to London, and found that the number of invalids had been increased. My younger sister, Emily, who, when I had left the house, was trembling on the balance,—who had been pronounced to be delicate, but with that false-tongued hope which knows the truth, but will lie lest the heart should faint, had been called delicate, but only delicate,—was now ill. Of course she was doomed. I knew it of both of them, though I had never heard the word spoken, or had spoken it to any one. And my father was very ill,—ill to dying, though I did not know it. And my mother had decreed to send my elder sister away to England, thinking that the vicinity of so much sickness might be injurious to her. All this happened late in the autumn of 1834, in the spring of which year we had come to Bruges; and then my mother was left alone in a big house outside the town, with two Belgian women-servants, to nurse these dying patients—the patients being her husband and children—and to write novels for the sustenance of the family! It was about this period of her career that her best novels were written.

To my own initiation at the Post Office I will return in the next chapter. Just before Christmas my brother died, and was buried at Bruges. In the following February my father died, and was buried alongside of him,—and with him died that tedious task of his, which I can only hope may have solaced many of his latter hours. I sometimes look back, meditating for hours together, on his adverse fate. He was a man, finely educated, of great parts, with immense capacity for work, physically strong very much beyond the average of men, addicted to no vices, carried off by no pleasures, affectionate by nature, most anxious for the welfare of his children, born to fair fortunes,—who, when he started in the world, may be said to have had everything at his feet. But everything went wrong with him. The touch of his hand seemed to create failure. He embarked in one hopeless enterprise after another, spending on each all the money he could at the time command. But the worse curse to him of all was a temper so irritable that even those whom he loved the best could not endure it. We were all estranged from him, and yet I believe that he would have given his heart's blood for any of us. His life as I knew it was one long tragedy.

After his death my mother moved to England, and took and furnished a small house at Hadley, near Barnet. I was then a clerk in the London Post Office, and I remember well how gay she made the place with little dinners, little dances, and little picnics, while she herself was at work every morning long before others had left their beds. But she did not stay at Hadley much above a year. She went up to London, where she again took and furnished a house, from which my remaining sister was married and carried away into Cumberland. My mother soon followed her, and on this occasion did more than take a house. She bought a bit of land,—a field of three acres near the town,—and built a residence for herself. This, I think, was in 1841, and she had thus established and re-established herself six times in ten years. But in Cumberland she found the climate too severe, and in 1844 she moved herself to Florence, where she remained till her death in 1863. She continued writing up to 1856, when she was seventy-six years old,—and had at that time produced 114 volumes, of which the first was not written till she was fifty. Her career offers great encouragement to those who have not begun early in life, but are still ambitious to do something before they depart hence.

She was an unselfish, affectionate, and most industrious woman, with great capacity for enjoyment and high physical gifts. She was endowed too, with much creative power, with considerable humour, and a genuine feeling for romance. But she was neither clear-sighted nor accurate; and in her attempts to describe morals, manners, and even facts, was unable to avoid the pitfalls of exaggeration.

### CHAPTER III. THE GENERAL POST OFFICE

1834-1841

While I was still learning my duty as an usher at Mr. Drury's school at Brussels, I was summoned to my clerkship in the London Post Office, and on my way passed through Bruges. I then saw my father and my brother Henry for the last time. A sadder household never was held together. They were all dying; except my mother, who would sit up night after night nursing the dying ones and writing novels the while,—so that there might be a decent roof for them to die under. Had she failed to write the novels, I do not know where the roof would have been found. It is now more than forty years ago, and looking back over so long a lapse of time I can tell the story, though it be the story of my own father and mother, of my own brother and sister, almost as coldly as I have often done some scene of intended pathos in fiction; but that scene was indeed full of pathos. I was then becoming alive to the blighted ambition of my father's life, and becoming alive also to the violence of the strain which my mother was enduring. But I could do nothing but go and leave them. There was something that comforted me in the idea that I need no longer be a burden,—a fallacious idea, as it soon proved. My salary was to be £90 a year, and on that I was to live in London, keep up my character as a gentleman, and be happy. That I should have thought this possible at the age of nineteen, and should have been delighted at being able to make the attempt, does not surprise me now; but that others should have thought it possible, friends who knew something of the world, does astonish me. A lad might have done so, no doubt, or might do so even in these days, who was properly looked after and kept under control,—on whose behalf some law of life had been laid down. Let him pay so much a week for his board and lodging, so much for his clothes, so much for his washing, and then let him understand that he has—shall we say?—sixpence a day left for pocket-money and omnibuses. Any one making the calculation will find the sixpence far too much. No such calculation was made for me or by me. It was supposed that a sufficient income had been secured to me, and that I should live upon it as other clerks lived.

But as yet the £90 a year was not secured to me. On reaching London I went to my friend Clayton Freeling, who was then secretary at the Stamp Office, and was taken by him to the scene of my future labours in St. Martin's le Grand. Sir Francis Freeling was the secretary, but he was greatly too high an official to be seen at first by a new junior clerk. I was taken, therefore, to his eldest son Henry Freeling, who was the assistant secretary, and by him I was examined as to my fitness. The story

of that examination is given accurately in one of the opening chapters of a novel written by me, called *The Three Clerks*. If any reader of this memoir would refer to that chapter and see how Charley Tudor was supposed to have been admitted into the Internal Navigation Office, that reader will learn how Anthony Trollope was actually admitted into the Secretary's office of the General Post Office in 1834. I was asked to copy some lines from the *Times* newspaper with an old quill pen, and at once made a series of blots and false spellings. "That won't do, you know," said Henry Freeling to his brother Clayton. Clayton, who was my friend, urged that I was nervous, and asked that I might be allowed to do a bit of writing at home and bring it as a sample on the next day. I was then asked whether I was a proficient in arithmetic. What could I say? I had never learned the multiplication table, and had no more idea of the rule of three than of conic sections. "I know a little of it," I said humbly, whereupon I was sternly assured that on the morrow, should I succeed in showing that my handwriting was all that it ought to be, I should be examined as to that little of arithmetic. If that little should not be found to comprise a thorough knowledge of all the ordinary rules, together with practised and quick skill, my career in life could not be made at the Post Office. Going down the main stairs of the building,—stairs which have I believe been now pulled down to make room for sorters and stampers,—Clayton Freeling told me not to be too down-hearted. I was myself inclined to think that I had better go back to the school in Brussels. But nevertheless I went to work, and under the surveillance of my elder brother made a beautiful transcript of four or five pages of Gibbon. With a faltering heart I took these on the next day to the office. With my calligraphy I was contented, but was certain that I should come to the ground among the figures. But when I got to "The Grand," as we used to call our office in those days, from its site in St. Martin's le Grand, I was seated at a desk without any further reference to my competency. No one condescended even to look at my beautiful penmanship.

That was the way in which candidates for the Civil Service were examined in my young days. It was at any rate the way in which I was examined. Since that time there has been a very great change indeed;—and in some respects a great improvement. But in regard to the absolute fitness of the young men selected for the public service, I doubt whether more harm has not been done than good. And I think that good might have been done without the harm. The rule of the present day is, that every place shall be open to public competition, and that it shall be given to the best among the comers. I object to this, that at present there exists no known mode of learning who is best, and that the method employed has no tendency to elicit the best. That method pretends only to decide who among a certain number of lads will best answer a string of questions, for the answering of which they are prepared by tutors, who have sprung up for the purpose since this fashion of election has been adopted. When it is decided in a family that a boy shall "try the Civil Service," he is made to undergo a certain amount of cramming. But such

treatment has, I maintain, no connection whatever with education. The lad is no better fitted after it than he was before for the future work of his life. But his very success fills him with false ideas of his own educational standing, and so far unfits him. And, by the plan now in vogue, it has come to pass that no one is in truth responsible either for the conduct, the manners, or even for the character of the youth. The responsibility was perhaps slight before; but existed, and was on the increase.

There might have been,—in some future time of still increased wisdom, there yet may be,—a department established to test the fitness of acolytes without recourse to the dangerous optimism of competitive choice. I will not say but that there should have been some one to reject me,—though I will have the hardihood to say that, had I been so rejected, the Civil Service would have lost a valuable public servant. This is a statement that will not, I think, be denied by those who, after I am gone, may remember anything of my work. Lads, no doubt, should not be admitted who have none of the small acquirements that are wanted. Our offices should not be schools in which writing and early lessons in geography, arithmetic, or French should be learned. But all that could be ascertained without the perils of competitive examination.

The desire to insure the efficiency of the young men selected, has not been the only object—perhaps not the chief object—of those who have yielded in this matter to the arguments of the reformers. There had arisen in England a system of patronage, under which it had become gradually necessary for politicians to use their influence for the purchase of political support. A member of the House of Commons, holding office, who might chance to have five clerkships to give away in a year, found himself compelled to distribute them among those who sent him to the House. In this there was nothing pleasant to the distributor of patronage. Do away with the system altogether, and he would have as much chance of support as another. He bartered his patronage only because another did so also. The beggings, the refusings, the jealousies, the correspondence, were simply troublesome. Gentlemen in office were not therefore indisposed to rid themselves of the care of patronage. I have no doubt their hands are the cleaner and their hearts are the lighter; but I do doubt whether the offices are on the whole better manned.

As what I now write will certainly never be read till I am dead, I may dare to say what no one now does dare to say in print,—though some of us whisper it occasionally into our friends' ears. There are places in life which can hardly be well filled except by "Gentlemen." The word is one the use of which almost subjects one to ignominy. If I say that a judge should be a gentleman, or a bishop, I am met with a scornful allusion to "Nature's Gentlemen." Were I to make such an assertion with reference to the House of Commons, nothing that I ever said again would receive the slightest attention. A man in public life could not do himself a greater