

Anthony Trollope Biographical Paper
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April 5, 2022

Anthony Trollope(b. 1815, d. 1882) was born in London and grew up in Harrow, where his father, a barrister, ruined himself in an unsuccessful attempt to be a gentleman-farmer. After miserable school days at Winchester and Harrow, Anthony became an unsatisfactory clerk in the Post Office. Although his mother, Frances Trollope, restored the family's fortunes with a late-flowering career as a novelist and travel-writer, it was not until 1841, when he went to work for the Post Office in Ireland, that Anthony found his feet. Thereafter, he combined success as a public official with a remarkable career as a writer, publishing 47 novels and numerous books of other kinds between 1847 and 1884, some of the posthumously. One critic has been quoted as declaring that Trollope produced "more novels of lasting value than any other writer in English." Among Trollope's "books of other kinds" is a substantial autobiography, which along with miscellaneous secondary sources has provided the main structure and content of this paper.

One feature that struck me in perusing Trollope's autobiography was his inclination (reminiscent of

Benjamin Franklin's autobiography) to share with his readers information on how he achieved his successes. Additionally, besides his advice on success, Trollope's autobiography includes accounts of his various writings and writing processes and his opinions on various political and critical issues of his time.

The autobiography itself comprises twenty chapters and runs to around 200 pages; a brief summary of its contents follows.

Chapter One, "My Education," tells of Anthony's misery at school, where he describes himself as having been poor, unpopular, ugly, ill-dressed, and ill-groomed. His conclusion to this chapter asserts that "From first to last there was nothing satisfactory in my school career—except the way in which I licked [a] boy who had to be taken home to be cured."

However, a later interesting remark (appearing in Chapter 3) relevant to his school days is Trollope's suggestion that his first experience of creating plots for fictional stories developed during his school days when he would imagine stories in which he himself was the handsome, popular hero. This reader presumes he did this as a way of balancing the misery of his real life during that period.

Chapter Two, “My Mother,” begins by saying he does not intend the autobiography to be a family history, but cannot omit some respectful and admiring comments about his mother’s contributions to his upbringing. The chapter does give considerable detail about the family’s early years, including much illness and the deaths of several siblings and their father.

Chapter Three, The General Post Office, 1834-1841, tells of Anthony’s first regular job as a Post Office clerk, which was another unhappy phase of his life. Regarding this phase the autobiography concludes, “I must certainly acknowledge that the first seven years of my official life were neither creditable to myself nor useful to the public service.”

The next autobiography segment, **Chapter Four, Ireland—My First Two Novels,** opens thus: “in the preceding pages I have given a short record of the first twenty-six years of my life—years of suffering, disgrace, and inward remorse. I fear that my telling will have left an idea simply of their absurdities, but in truth I was wretched—almost to death.”

Chapter Four explain show Anthony volunteers for a reputedly undesirable Post Office transfer to Ireland. He gets the job, likely because his present boss wants to get rid of him, but ironically that transfer turns out in

retrospect to be “**the first good fortune of my life.**”

While in Ireland, among other things he meets the woman who becomes his wife (an English woman, which displeases his Irish acquaintances, but that seems unimportant to him); and it is around this time that he decides the only career he can reasonably pursue is that of a writer. He knows that can be done because several members of his family have already earned money from their writing, so he sets himself to the task. He has written only one volume by the time of his marriage in 1844—but it’s a start...

By **Chapter 5**, “My First Success,” the autobiography is able to report Anthony’s being able to sell his writings, and it goes on to explain some details of how he increases his writing income, eventually to the point of receiving substantial advances for works in progress.

The **Autobiography’s middle Chapters** bear titles mostly of the particular works published during those middle years (beginning with Chapter Six, which includes Barchester Towers, our present work.). Chapters seven through eleven also bear titles of various mid-career writings; Chapter twelve addresses “Novels and the art of writing them”; Chapter Thirteen, “English Novelists of the Present Day, and Chapter Fourteen is “On Criticism”.

Later Chapters: On non-literary Topics:

Trollope pursued other interests besides novel writing. He remained interested in the businesses of running post offices and selling novels, and even ran (though unsuccessfully) for Parliament. So, the later, non-literary chapter topics include Leaving the Post Office, The American Postal Treaty, and The Question of Copyright in America.

Possibly the most famous chapter is Chapter 15, which contains the celebrated account of how he managed to write three thousand words before breakfast every day, by having a servant wake him with a cup of coffee at 5:30 a.m. It ends with the tabulation of the money made from each of his publications between 1847 and 1879. A reviewer of the autobiography felt that Trollope had “done his literary reputation much harm by the revelation of his method of work,” and by taking “almost savage pleasure in demolishing the theory of inspiration” as a source of artistic success.

Trollope’s own Conclusion of his autobiography offers the following remarks:

“So I end the record of my literary performances—which are more in amount than the works of any other living English author. It will not, I am sure, be thought that in making my boast as to quantity, I have endeavored to lay claim to any literary excellence...but I do lay claim to

whatever merit may be accorded to me for persevering diligence in my profession. And I make the claim, not with a view to my own glory, but for the benefit of those who may intend to follow the same career.”