FROM PILLAR TO POST

(How a man of letters of one sort became a man of letters of another)

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FROM PILLAR TO POST

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language gives the following definition of the expression "from pillar to post:" "From one predicament to another, usually under harassment."

That could describe the preparation of any paper for the likes of me, or almost any other assignment for that matter. But the selection of the title of this paper is not a description of how it came into being.

A few years ago I was paging through a catalogue from Blackwell's in Oxford. As a rule I limit my looking to theology, but on this occasion I wondered whether peculiar books were being written in other fields as well. There was at least one which piqued my curiosity. It was entitled: The Letter Box, a History of Post Office Pillar and Wall Boxes. Recalling the bright red pillar boxes of Great Britain and the use that I had made of them in an extended stay in Scotland I thought that this should be a fascinating and diverting book.

So I ordered it. That was on 7th of July, 1968. In a letter, air mail, presumably posted in a pillar box, and dated October 24, 1968, I received some information about the order. It was typed on one of Blackwell's "Report on Books Not Supplied" air letter forms. The Message was as follows: "Farrugia: The Letter Box - NYP. Please accept our apologies for the delay in giving you the above information." Consulting the bottom of the pahe I found that NYP meant, "Not yet published."

The whole business was forgotten about until February 25, 1970, when through the post came the book!

The book is worthy of a professor, though it was written by one Jean Young Farrugia, who is employed by the General Post Office in Great Britain with full access to the archives in its Records Department. The reason that it is worthy of a professor is that, at least for me, it tells me a good bit more than I really wanted to know about letter boxes. But there is at least one thing that it doesn't tell. No one knows who had the first letter box.

Of some interest, however remote, there is a connection between the letter box as we know it today and the church. Letter boxes may have evolved from the ecclesiastical tamburi of Florence of the early sixteenth century. These were little drum shaped wooden boxes, provided with a slit, which had been designed for use in the principal churches to receive anonymous letters of denunciation against persons believed to have broken the law, or suspected enemies of the state. So much for the church.

In Great Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century the sending and receiving of letters was increasing in importance. In 1814 all the post offices in London were instructed to have a letter box "convenient for public access." That meant that in order to mail a letter one had to take it to the post office.

Reading on in the book I wondered how long it would take for the familiar pillar box to come into existence, and that came in 1851. Although suggestions had been made for following the example of certain countries on the continent and provide posting boxes

at roadside, since letter receiving houses were few and far between, no action had been taken.

In November, 1851, the suggestion was made yet again, this time by the Surveyor's Clerk who had been sent over to the Channel Islands to study ways of improving, as cheaply as possible, the Islands' postal services.

That Surveyor's Clerk wrote the following:

> There is, at present, no receiving office in St. Heliers, and persons living in distant parts of the town have to send nearly a mile to the principal office. I believe that a plan has obtained in France of fitting up letter boxes in posts fixed at the roadside, and it may perhaps be thought advisable to try the operation of this system in St. Heliers -- postage stamps are sold in every street and, therefore, all that is wanted is a safe receptacle for letters....Iron posts suited for this purpose may be erected at the corners of streets in such situations as may be desirable, or probably it may be found more serviceable to fix iron letter boxes about five feet from the ground, wherever permanently built walls, fir for the purpose, can be found, and I think that the public may safely be invited to use such boxes for depositing their letters....

The proposal received favorable attention. Later in his Autobiography that Surveyor's Clerk wrote of his concerns and accomplishments in the Post Office. Among them was "that the public should have pillar letter boxes set up for them (of which accomodation in the streets and ways of England I was the originator)...." That man's name was Anthony Trollope. Of him the book The Letter Box says, "later to receive fame as a novelist."

Indeed he did receive fame as a novelist, in his own time, and since. There was a revival of interest in Trollope in the days of World War II, and currently there seems to be another. In 1968 The Changing World of Anthony Trollope was published. Within the

past three years two major works about him have been published, one is titled Anthony Trollope by James Pope Hennessy. Another, published by the Ohio University Press, has a title that could be misleading. The title is The Moral Trollope, but it is not the story of a pious prostitute!

It was a matter of curiosity to me as to how this man of letters of one sort became a man of letters of quite another sort. So I began to look into a man named Anthony Trollope, of whom I had heard enough to recognize his name, but little more. He has proved to me to be an interesting man.

Robert M. Polhemus begins his work on Trollope (The Changing World of Anthony Trollope) with the assertion, "Anthony Trollope is a great novelist, but his greatness is not fully recognized or accepted." He goes on to say that, "His fiction can bring us to a deeper understanding of changing Victorian life and of the modern world which has grown out of nineteenth century experience."

If that is so there is surely a tremendous amount of material into which to look. From 1843 when he began writing, until 1883 when his last novel was published after his death, he wrote and had published 47 novels. His death occurred on December 6, 1882.

He did other writing, too. At sometime prior to April, 1876, he finished his Autobiography. He wrote some other things, too. I have run across a reference to something that I should surely like to read. It is a reference to "those trenchant sketches on The Clergymen of the Church of England." His bibliography totals 66 published works.

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Any man who could produce novels at the rate of better than one a year while serving at a full time position in the postal service for 24 of his writing years can scarcely be described as one who was going from pillar to post in the sense that he was going from one predicament to another, usually under harassment.

But that could describe a goodly part of his life, and an important part, his childhood.

Anthony Trollope was born in London, April 24, 1815. He was the fourth son, and fifth child, of Thomas Anthony Trollope and Frances Milton Trollope. Two more children were born after Anthony.

Anthony Trollope's father seems to have been a colossal failure. He couldn't even inherit. He was a barrister, described by Michael Sadleir in Trollope, a Commentary as a "typical intellectual of his time." He was "a Wykehamist, a Fellow of New College and an ambitious barrister."

Of his childhood Anthony Trollope writes: "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 own part of that juvenile manhood which enables some boys to hold up their heads even among the distresses which such a position is sure to produce."

The poverty of the family stemmed in part from the failure of his father to inherit. He had been the recognized and accepted heir of his uncle, a rich old brother of his mother, who was named Adolphus Meetkerke. He and his wife were childless.

Sometimes Mr. and Mrs. Trollope would go to visit the old uncle. Mr. Meetkerke has been described as "an early nineteenth century squire, strident, rustic, hard-drinking, and a convinced Tory. During these visits Mr. Trollope, who was a Whig, would bitterly taunt his uncle, contradicting his Tory views with all a London barrister's skill, until in the end the visits of his nephew and heir became to Mr. Meetkerke nothing but a nuisance."

This tactlessness turned out to be costly. For, without warning, Mrs. Meetkerke died. The robust old man married a young wife who produced six healthy children.

It is recorded by Anthony's older brother that the thus disinherited father bore the blow with fine dignity. But the man had really been the architect of his own misfortune. A wiser man than Anthony's father would have let Adoplhus Meetkerke have his harmless say and changed the subject. But his pride and temper, which got him into other difficulties, also berated the rich uncle. So the rich man turned from his nephew to the more conciliatory company of a young wife. With that the financial hopes of Mr. and Mrs. Trollope crumbled. And since they were both children of clergymen, the immensity of the disaster is immediately apparent.

Compounding all this was the fact that the Trollopes had leased a farm from a Lord Northwick at ruinous rates, and then foolishly built an expensive house on the rented land. He tried to be a gentleman farmer, but failed at that.

He was a barrister. Anthony Trollope said of his father, "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 attorneys from him."

He was an extremely disputatios man, and when he disagreed with his clients on a point of law he would berate them violently, often treating them as though they were to opposing counsel on the other side. It was said by another writer about him that he "would demonstrate the folly of a rich client as eagerly as he would scold a poor one. Verbal nonsense was to him as a rat to a terrier, and he set upon it and worried it whenever and wherever it showed itself. Once having discovered that they could get their work done practically as well elsewhere by counsel not superior to the common courtesies of life, the long enduring soliciters brought their papers to Trollope no more. Every week, ruin, crushing and complete, drew visibly nearer."

But he worked very hard, first at his briefs, later at farming, which he did not understand. Ultimately he found for himself a ceaseless form of personal labor -- the compilation of a universal dictionary of ecclesiastical terms, at which he would work, shut away in his workroom, until far into the night. As far as I know it was never completed. Three of a total of eight parts were published and sent to those who subscribed to the work.

Of his two parents, Anthony spent more time with his father than with his mother. For the most part it was a miserable time.

Anthony Trollope wrote to his friend and biographer Thomas Sweet Escott in 1882, the year of his death: "My mother was much from home or too busy to be bothered. My father was not exactly

the man to invite confidence. I tried to relieve myself by confiding my boyish sorrows to a diary that I have kept since the age of twelve, which I have just destroyed, and which, on referring to it for my autobiography some time since, I found full of a heartsick friendless little chap's exaggeration of his woes."

But he was right in saying that his mother was much from home and busy. She was Frances (Fanny) Trollope who, following a stay in America, achieved fame of differing sorts on both sides of the Atlantic for her first book, The Domestic Manners of the Americans, a book referred to by David Owens in a paper to this club which bore the title "As Others See Us." For those on the other side of the Atlantic that book confirmed their worst ideas about Americans. As for the Americans, they added a new word to their colloquial vocabulary at the time. Since Mrs. Trollope had made so much of the omnipresence of the spitoon in America as being indicative of the crudeness of American life "to Trollope" became a synonym for "to spit" in this country.

Fanny Trollope's oldest son, Tom, who was her favorite and her lifelong companion, wrote of her: " She was the happiest natured person I ever knew, happy in the intense power of enjoyment, happier still in the conscious power of making others happy. "

Anthony, though he felt she neglected him, as indeed she did, described her as an "unselfish and most industrious woman, with great capacity for enjoyment and high physical gifts...But she was neither clear-headed nor accurate; and....she loved society."

It was her love of society that took Fanny Trollope away from her son Anthony, and in all probability what brought her to America. She managed, despite "poverty and gentle standing," to keep some rather good company.

She learned of an opportunity to come to America in the home of Lafayette. Of Lafayette Mrs. Trollope wrote, "Never did I meet a being so perfect in every way."

General Lafayette had come to befriend two orphaned daughters of a rich intellectual merchant of Dundee, Fanny and Camilla Wright. Fanny Wright was an early liberal, said to be ready to discuss the liberation of slaves or birth control with anyone she met. She had been to the United States and upon her return had published a book full of praise about the United States. Lafayette read the book and wrote a letter of congratulation to Fanny Wright. She promptly took her sister off to Paris where they met the old general, and he promptly began to treat them as though they were his own daughters.

Since the Wright sisters were also friends of the Trollopes it was through them that the Trollopes met Lafayette at a dinner party in Paris.

It was Lafayette who told Mrs. Trollope about something called the Nashoba Settlement. The Nashoba Settlement was the brain-child of Fanny Wright and consisted of an estate in the virgin forests of Tennessee outside of Memphis. The object of this establishment was to enable Negroes to work the estate for a regular wage so that, when they had earned their freedom, they could be shipped to Haiti as free men and women. It was described as having an apple orchard

of five acres, fifteen acres of corn, and a nice potato patch. The accomodations were said to be excellent, with log cabins for the white owners, shacks for the Negroes, and a model school for the Negro children. The whole project intrigued Mrs. Trollope.. Later when Fanny Wright was staying with the Trollopes, at a time when the fortunes of the family were falling, she suggested that the whole family should emigrate to America. They could spend as long as they liked at Nashoba and later go to live in Cincinnati and set up a store, a bazaar to sell bric-a-brac and imitation jewelry to the benighted inhabitants of Cincinnati.

A plan was developed. A French painter, close friend of the Trollope family, would accompany Mrs. Trollope and three of the children to America (two of the children had died). Older brother Tom and Mrs. Trollope (by this time a proven failure at everything), were to follow some months later, and they did. Before he left England Mr. Trollope was to raise money to buy stock for the Cincinnati bazaar.

Anthony Trollope had no role to play in this migration. He was simply left in England on his own. He did not see his mother and sisters again for three and a half years. He was twelve years old at the time. One might say that he was left to wander from pillar to post. (He later did come to America, once to help negotiate a postal treaty, and once on his own.)

What was he doing during this time? Part of it was spent in boarding school. That wasn't particularly happy either. His school experience started in Harrow where he achieved the reputation of

being the dirtiest and most slovenly boy in the school. From there for two years he went to a private school at Sunbury, and then went to Winchester, which was the goal. His older brother Tom was already there, and was assigned to be Anthony's prefect.

The prefect system was one by which smaller boys were alloted as pupils to the older boys, who thus became responsible for much of their education.

Anthony Trollope writes of his older prefect brother Tom: "Few brothers have had more of brotherhood....But in those school-days he was, of all my foes, the worst...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 the 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."

As bad as that condition was, at least someone was paying some kind of attention to him as long as older brother Tom was at the same school. When Tom left Winchester, Anthony Trollope found himself alone and without any friends. "I was big an awkward, and ugly, and, I have no doubt, skulked 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 to the top of that college tower, and from thence put an end to everything."

It was just at the time that he has just described that his unpaid bills began to catch up with him (remember he is twelve years old!). The shopkeepers at Winchester who sold boots, blazers, and other articles of apparel would not give him any more credit. The clothing was probably much needed. The father used to write both the boys while Tom was still at Winchester telling them to have their clothes patched and shoes mended rather than to buy anything new.

Not only could this lad not pay his bills, he had no pocket money. The summer holidays brought him no respite that year because there was no home to which he could go. His mother, you recall, had gone to America. She had sent for brother Tom and his father. They had left for Cincinnati. Anthony spent the summer living in his father's unused chambers at Lincoln's Inn, "wandering about among those old deserted buildings and reading Shakespeare." He writes further, "It was not that I had chosen to read Shakespeare but there was nothing else to read." Once before he wondered how many dozen times he had read James Fenimore Cooper;s novel called The Prairie because "other books of the kind there was none."

Anthony Trollope did not know how to play. He wanted to, but says, "Of the cricket-ground or racket-court I was allowed to know nothing. And yet I longed for these things with an exceeding longing." Of amusement, he says of his father, he never

recognized the need. He allowed himself no distraction, and did not seem to think it necessary to a child. Perhaps that's why Anthony took to riding to the hounds in his later and better years. That became almost a passion with him.

Im summarizing his school career he says, "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." Its a wonder that he didn't lick more boys. He was licked enough. "I feel convinced in my mind that I have been flogged oftener than any human being alive. It was possible to obtain five scourgings in one day at Winchester, and I have often boasted that I obtained them all...I am not quite sure whether the boast is true; but if I did not, nobody ever did."

There was a form of play in which Anthony Trollope did engage. It was the kind that nobody could see, which I suspect contributed more to his writing career than all of his horrid childhood experiences could detract from it. This was the kind of exercise which developed his imagination. He writes of it almost apologetically.

"I will mention here another habit which had grown upon me from still earlier years, -- which I myself often regarded with dismay when I thought of the hours devoted to it, but which, I suppose must have tended to make me what I have been. As a boy, even as a child, I was thrown much upon myself. I have explained, when speaking of my school days, how it came to pass that other boys would not play with me, I was therefore alone, and had to form my play within myself. Play of some kind was necessary to me then, as it has always been. Study was not my bent, and I could not

please myself by being all idle. Thus it came to pass that I was always going about with some castle in the air firmly built within my mind. Nor were these efforts in architecture spasmodic, or subject to constant change from day to day. For weeks, for months, if I remember rightly, from year to year, I would carry the same tale, binding myself down to certain laws, to certain proportions, and proprieties, and unities."

He goes on to say that this continued throughout his adolescence, and even into the time when he first began to work at the Post Office. He then summarizes it with mixed feelings. "There can, I imagine, hardly be a more dangerous mental practice; but I have often doubted whether, had it not been my practice, I should ever have written a novel. I learned in this way to maintain an interest in a fictitious story, to dwell on a work created by my own imagination, and to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life."

But I am getting to the second kind of man of letters, the author, before saying much about the first kind of man of letters, the post office employee.

With as little contact as he had with his mother one might wonder whether she ever did anything for him. She did. She got him the contact which resulted in his being employed in the General Post Office. This is described by one writer (Hennessy) as "a piece of cursory, almost absent-minded wire-pulling." Among Mrs. Trollope's many friends and admirers was a Mrs. Clayton Freeling, whose father-in-law, Sir Francis Freeling, was Secretary to the Post Office in its then new headquarters at St. Martins-le-Grand. Much impressed

by Fanny Trollope's sorrows Mrs. Freeling appealed to her father-in-law, Sir Francis Freeling, for a place in the Post Office for Anthony. At the time the Freelings worked within the Civil Service as a family combine.

Anthony Trollope was personally conducted for his interview for a position by one Clayton Freeling, who was secretary at the Stamp Office. The interview itself was conducted by Henry Freeling, who was Sir Francis Freeling's elder son and held the position of assistant secretary, or second in command to his father. There were no competitive examinations for the Civil Service, and that is a goodtthing, for Anthony probably would have failed. He was asked if he knew mathematics, and he did not. He was asked to demonstrate his penmanship by copying a paragraph from The Times with an old quill pen. He "at once made a series of blots and false spellings." The elder Freeling said, "That won't do, you know." Pleading nervousness it was suggested that the copying might be done at home, and the results presented the next day. Aided by his brother Tom, Anthony prepared five pages in his best hand, but when he took this marvel to the office the next day nobody asked, or wanted, to see it, or even mentioned handwriting. Instead he was seated in a room with six or seven junior clerks, was informed that he was another one, and so began his Post Office career.

A junior clerk's duties included the drafting of letters in reply to the public's complaints. But at least as big a chore for him was arriving on time and maintining some sort of adherence to the required number of hours in the office. More than once he was threatened with dismissal. But in the Freelings he had some security.

Then old Sir Francis Freeling died, and the dynasty was broken. A certain Colonel Maberley became Secretary to the Post Office.

While not contributing directly to the ultimate departure of Trollope from the main Post Office, the following incident must have contributed to the mutual hatred which caused Colonel Maberley to wish to exile Anthony Trollope, and caused Anthony Trollope to welcome it.

One of the other tasks of the junior clerks was to open the mail which was addressed to the Secretary of the Post Office. On one occasion Anthony had opened a letter containing banknotes, and had placed it on Colonel Maberley's table. The Colonel left the room some minutes later and when he returned the letter and the banknotes had disappeared. Trollope was summoned and found the Colonel engaged in a frantic speculation with the chief clerk as to the lost letter's fate. Colonel Maberley turned on Trollope in a fury and shouted: "The letter has been taken, and, by God! there has been nobody in the room but you and I." To emphasize his point he banged his fist upon his desk. Thinking himself accused of stealing the banknotes, Trollope lost his temper, too, and yelled: "Then, by God!, you have taken it!" And he, too, banged his fist in a rage; but by accident (or his natural clumsiness), he hit not the table, but the Colonel's portable writing desk, on which sat a full bottle of ink. The ink flew up into the Colonel's face, and drenched his shirt front.

The chief clerk siezed a huge sheet of blotting paper and began to try to clean up the Colonel, who, apparently thinking himself attacked, struck the chief clerk in the stomach. A this point the

the Colonel's private secretary came into the room, holding the missing letter and banknotes in his hand.

Although he had a position he was never really well off financially. A Junior Clerk received ninety pounds per year. But apparently he began to experience something of life while in London. As an unmarried man in an unhappy job, in Queen Victoria's London, which has been described as a city with which no city in Europe could compete in catering to every vice, he learned something of life. Anthony Trollope was alone in London from the age of nineteen to twenty-six.

On one occasion he found himself rummaging through some old records, perhaps some of the same ones through which the authoress of The Letter Box rummaged. He found some old records, and reading them was better than clerking, so he read. He described the effects of this discovery on himself: "As I pieced these fragments together in a continuous story, I found myself, not for the first time, but more unmistakeably than I had ever felt before, realizing that a Post Office clerk's career might be one of profit to himself as well as of usefulness to his fellow creatures in all their concerns and interests, whether as citizens or as family breadwinners. From what I saw had been done in the past, I mentally constructed a scheme of possibilities for the future."

With that the well developed imagination of Anthony Trollope was turned to his work, but he needed freedom to put that imagination to work. Suddenly, after seven years in the main Post Office, what he described as a "way of escape" was found.

In a postal reorganization there were several districts set up in England, Scotland, and Ireland, each one under what was called a Surveyor, and these surveyors were to have clerks, Surveyor's Clerks. They were to travel about the country under the Surveyor's orders. The salary was to be one hundred pounds a year, with an allowance of fifteen shillings a day for every day away from the home base, and sixpence a mile for evey mile travelled on postal business. All of this added up to four hundred pounds a year, which was considerably better than the ninety pounds of a junior clerk. Despite this, none of the junior clerks volunteered.

In August of 1841 a report from Ireland reached the office and was by chance allotted to Anthony Trollope to read. It was a complaint from the Post Office Surveyor at Banagher in the King's County (Ireland) complaining that his new clerk was absurdly incapable, and asking for a replacement. At that moment Anthony Trollope was head over heels in debt, still squabbling with Colonel Maberley, and was of the full conviction that his life style (which he does not describe in detail) was taking him downwards to the lowest depths.

To Colonel Maberley's delight Anthony Trollope volunteered for the vacant post. The Colonel expressed enthusiastic agreement, although he wrote a letter to the Surveyor pointing out all of Anthony's faults. Such friends as he had shook their heads over the decision. Mrs. Trollope was abroad and not consulted. Borrowing two hundred pounds from a dear old cousin, Anthony Trollope set off by sea for Dublin. He landed in Ireland on September 15, 1841. "This," he remarks, "was the first good fortune of my life."

And so it turned out to be. His days of living from Pillar to Post were ended. He found meaning, direction, and life itself. For a while he combined the two different kinds of man of letters, but slowly and surely becoming one in the more accepted sense of the phrase,

7 Trollope began to write in Ireland. His first novel, The Macdermots of Ballycloran, was published in 1847. His second, The Kellys and the O'Kellys: or Landlords and Tenants, was published in 1848. And so it went for about twenty years until 1867 when he was 52 years old. He was not an initial success at writing, but kept at it. Discouragement was not new to him.

He writes about leaving the Post Office: " In 1867 I made up my mind to take a step in life which was not unattended with peril, which many would call rash, and which, when taken, I should be sure at some period to regret. This step was the resignation of my place in the Post Office. I have described how it was contrived to combine the performance of its duties with my other avocations in life. I got up always early; but even this did not suffice. I worked always on Sunday, as to which no scruple of religion made me unhappy, and not infrequently I was driven to work at night.

"The exact time chosen, the autumn of 1867, was selected because I was then about to undertake other literary work in editing a new magazine....But in addition there was another, which was, I think, at last the actuating cause. When Sir Rowland Hill left the Post Office, and my brother-in-law, Mr. Tilley, became Secretary in his place, I applied for the vacant office of Under-Secretary. Had I obtained this I should have given up my hunting, have given up much of my literary work, and would have returned to the habit of my youth

in going daily to the General Post Office. There was very much against such a change in life. The increase in salary would not have amounted to above 400 pounds a year, and I should have lost much more than that in literary remuneration. I should have felt bitterly the slavery of attendance at an office, from which I had then been exempt for five and twenty years. I should, too, have missed greatly the sport which I loved. But I was attached to the department, had imbued myself with a thorough love of letters -- I mean the letters which are carried by the post, -- and was anxious for their welfare as though they were all my own. In short, I wished to continue the connection....

"I applied for the office, but Mr. Scudamore was appointed to it." Evidently the days of nepotism were over in the Post Office! "I think I might have been more useful in regard to the labours and wages of the immense body of men employed by the Post Office. However, Mr. Scudamore was appointed and I made up my mind that I would fall back on my old intention, and leave the department....And so the cord was cut, and I was a free man to run about the world where I would... The day on which I sent the letter was to me most melancholy."

He knew that he could make a living out of writing. Ten years before leaving the Post Office he had received an advance of 100 pounds for the novel Barchester Towers. Of that he wrote, "I am well aware that there are many who think that an author in his authorship should not regard money, -- nor a painter, or sculptor, or composer in his art. I do not know that this unnatural self-sacrifice is supposed to extend itself further. A barrister, a clergyman, a doctor, an

engineer, even actors and architects, may without disgrace allow the bent of human nature, and endeavour to fill their bellies and clothe their backs, and also those of their wives and children as comfortably as they can by the exercise of their abilities and their crafts. They may be as rationally realistic, as may butchers and bakers; but the artists and the author forget the high glories of their calling if they condescend to make money a first object. They who preach this doctrine will be much offended by my theory, and by this book of mine (his Autobiography), if my theory and my book come beneath their notice. They require the practice of a so-called virtue which is contrary to nature, and which, in my eyes, would not be a virtue if it were practiced. They are like clergymen who preach sermons against the love of money, but who know that the love of money is so distinctive a characteristic of humanity that such sermons are mere platitudes called for by customary but unintelligent piety. All material progress has come from man's desire to do the best he can for himself and those about him and civilization and Christianity itself have been made possible by such progress.... The most useful lawyers, as a rule, have been those who have made the greatest incomes, and it is the same with doctors. It would be the same in the Church if they who have the choosing of bishops always chose the best men...."

So there is the immediate incentive. He wanted to make a living, preferably at something that he enjoyed. "My first object," he confesses, "in taking to literature as a profession was that which is common to the barrister when he goes to the bar, or to the baker

when he sets up his oven. I wished to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort."

So the man of letters became a man of letters. I have not said much about what he wrote, other than his Autobiography. Now that I know the man a bit better I must set about reading more of him. And I shall, except that on the back of the dust jacket of the book called The Letter Box, a History of Post Office Pillar and Wall Boxes, there is advertised Chimney Pots and Stacks, an Introduction to Their History, Variety, and Identification, by Valentine Fletcher. I think I shall send to Blackwell's for that!

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