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Mapmaking in Barsetshire

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Mapmaking in Barsetshire

LANCE O. TINGAY

... the new shire which I had added to the English counties. I had it all in my mind—its members of Parliament, and the different hunts which rode over it. I knew all the great lords and their castles, the squires and their parks, the rectors and their churches. This ["Framley Parsonage"] was the fourth novel of which I had placed the scene in Barsetshire, and as I wrote it I made a map of the dear county.

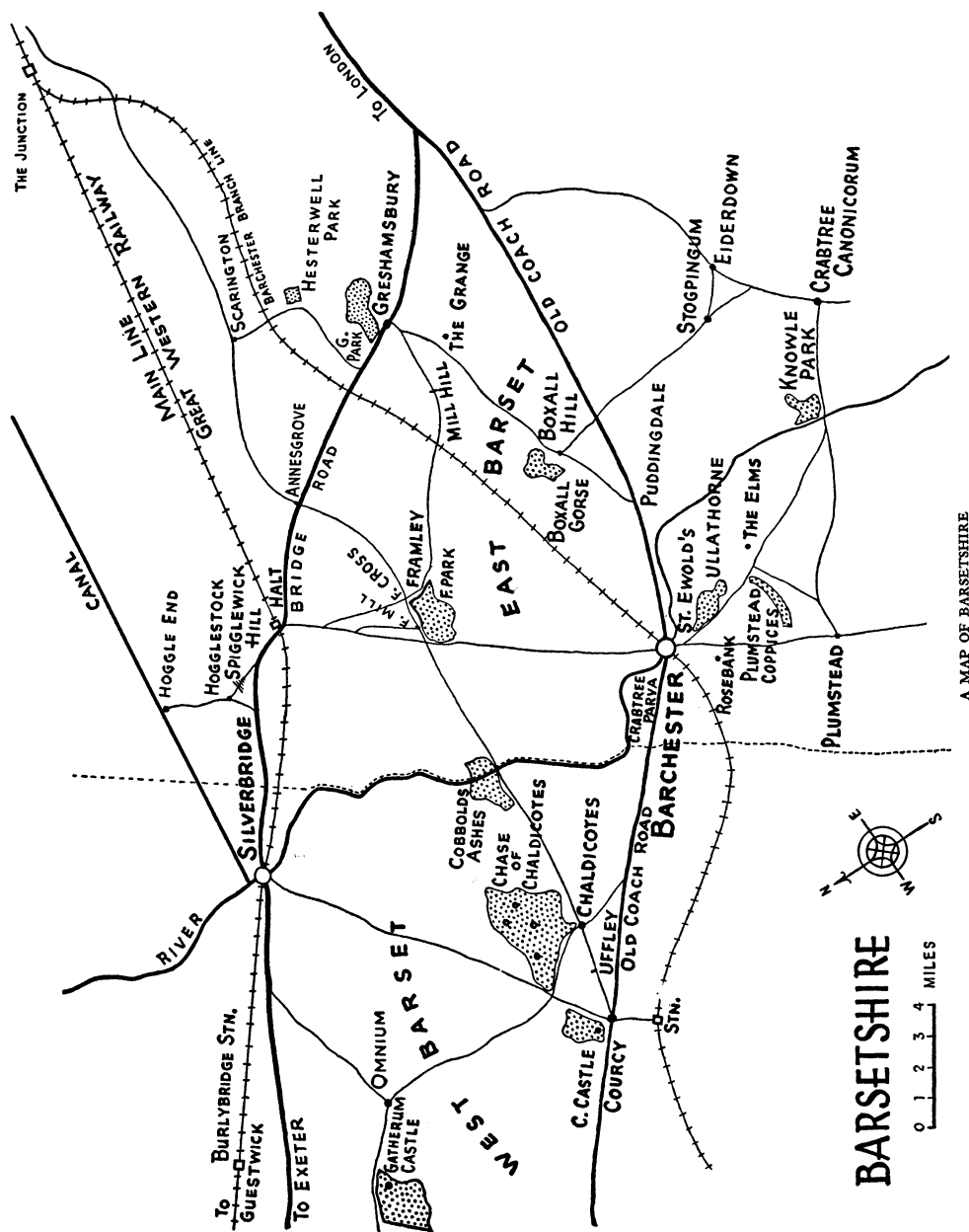
ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *Autobiography*

AN AUTHORITATIVE map of Barsetshire has long been needed. That England's fairest county should have been neglected by the ordnance survey is not, under the circumstances, to be wondered at, and, in any case, who would wish to see those leafy woods and hallowed lanes profaned by the clink of measuring chains and the harsh tramp of unimaginative surveyors?

Prior to 1927 the subject had engaged the attention of two expert Trollopians, Mr. Spencer van Bokkelen Nichols, a distinguished American enthusiast, and Monsignor Ronald Knox, both of whom reconstructed the county from the internal evidence of the novels. In that year Mr. Michael Sadleir brought out his incomparable *Trollope: A Commentary* and reproduced not only the excellent work of Mr. Nichols and Monsignor Knox but the map which every Barset explorer had long wanted to see. This was Trollope's own sketch of the county.

A glance at these three maps makes it at once apparent that the efforts of the two cartographers have been superseded, for while they agree in many essentials with Trollope's sketch, there are differences impossible to reconcile with the necessarily authoritative

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A MAP OF BARSETSHIRE

work of the master's hand. For instance, Greshamsbury, where the Gresham estates were so timely relieved of their difficulties by the charming and steadfast Mary Thorne, is clearly indicated as lying to the east of Barchester. Yet internal evidence led both Mr. Nichols and Monsignor Knox to the false conclusion that it lies to the north-west of the cathedral city. Clearly Trollope is right, and the two mapmakers wrong; it can hardly be suggested that Trollope did not know what he was about when he drew his map of Barset.

Yet Trollope's rough sketch—and, precious document though it be, it is no more than that—is not altogether satisfactory. There is no attempt at scale, and it needs a host of additional details if it is to serve the rambler along those beloved Barset roads. There is, then, every reason for the mapmaker to approach Barsetshire anew—and surprising that no one appears to have done so since Trollope's map saw the light of day in 1927, for it provides a sure and solid foundation on which an accurate reconstruction of the county can be built.

In his essay on the subject Monsignor Knox was at some pains to point out that Trollope, like Homer, sometimes nodded, and was not always as accurate in his descriptions as the enthusiast might imagine from the wealth of geographical detail that is constantly presented. I hope to show, however, that Trollope is less erring than Monsignor Knox would wish us to believe. Only once can he be found guilty of downright error. The rest of his apparently contradictory statements can be reasonably and plausibly explained.

Trollope's own map clearly indicates the broad outlines of Barsetshire. Barchester is, of course, the focal point, and to the east lie Puddingdale, Boxall Hill, and Greshamsbury. Plumstead is to the south, whilst Chaldicotes, Uffley, and Courcy lie to the west. To the north there is Framley, with Hoggstock still further away. Silverbridge is in the same quarter, but is more westerly; it is, indeed, in the western division of the county. The main-line railway runs eastward from Silverbridge toward London, and is joined by the branch line from Barchester running northeast from that city.

All this provides a valuable and vital outline, but of the location of the various roads and the precise distances from the one place to another Trollope's sketch tells us little. The "old coach road" is marked, running from Courcy eastward to Barchester and continuing through Puddingdale on to London. At the top of the map Trollope gives us two factual statements. The one is that Hogglesstock is 15 miles from Barchester; the other, that Barchester is 20 miles from Silverbridge.

That, then, is the most important of Trollope's purely cartographical data. The rest of our map must be deduced from the evidence of the novels, and is not always so easy as it might seem.

Hogglesstock to Barchester.—It will be found convenient to take as starting point the road from Hogglesstock to Barchester. The distance, as we have seen from Trollope's map, is 15 miles, and this is supported by further evidence. The fact is stressed in *The Last Chronicle*—indeed, it might be said that the dramatic focus of the novel depends upon it. It was along that road that the proud, unfortunate Josiah Crawley trudged to the palace, where, with the immortal words, "Peace, woman," he humbled Mrs. Proudie as she had never been humbled before. It is true Crawley did not tramp all the way there, for he was cajoled into accepting a lift in Farmer Mangle's cart as far as Framley Mill, at which point he was halfway there, but he footed it all the way back, forbearing, in his pride, to turn off the road to Framley Mill where the faithful Mangle waited vainly until six o'clock.

The distance, we are told, is 15 miles.¹ Yet evidence in *Framley Parsonage* is in apparent contradiction. When Mrs. Crawley was stricken with typhus, Mark Robarts at once set forth to help his sorely pressed brother cleric, and whilst on the road met Dean Arabin on a like errand. Arabin, we are told, had, in his concern for his old friend, undertaken a journey of 40 miles.² The facile deduction from this is that Barchester is 20 miles from Hogglesstock.

¹ *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, chapter xvii.

² *Framley Parsonage*, chap. xxxvi.

What, then, of the weighty evidence elsewhere? Fortunately the seeming discrepancy is easily explained. The fact is, the conclusion is wrong because the premise is wrong. Trollope in no wise states that Arabin had come from his Barchester deanery, and it is by no means unreasonable to surmise that he was, at that time, staying with his brother-in-law, Archdeacon Grantly, at Plumstead. This place, as I shall show later, is 5 miles from Barchester, and it may be recalled that Major Henry Grantly, V.C., some years later undertook a journey of similar length from Plumstead when he repaired to Hoggstock with the news that all was well in the matter of the stolen cheque.³

The Framley Puzzle.—The location of Framley at first gives rise to some difficulty. Silverbridge, as we have seen, is 20 miles from Barchester and lies in the western division; Hoggstock is 6 miles away in the northern extremity of the eastern division.⁴ These facts are not to be challenged. Now Framley is known to lie a little off the Barchester-Hoggstock road, for taking in Framley on the way increases the journey by one mile⁵—that is, 16 miles. Since Framley is certainly 7 miles from Hoggstock,⁶ then obviously Framley is 9 miles from Barchester.

All this is helpful in fixing the location of Framley, 7 miles from Hoggstock, 9 from Barchester. How far from Silverbridge? Chapter x of *Framley Parsonage* states that Framley is 4 miles from that town, and it would seem that Framley, with three “fixes,” has been as accurately located as could be wished.

Then comes a snag. Why does not the traveler from Barchester to Silverbridge go, first, to Framley (9 miles) and then on to Silverbridge (4 miles), making a journey of 13 miles in all? But Barchester to Silverbridge is, as we have seen, 20 miles. We have the undeniable evidence of Trollope’s map, and the distance is mentioned in *The Last Chronicle*.⁷ It can hardly be pleaded, with any

³ *Last Chronicle*, chap. lxxiii.

⁴ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. xiv; *Last Chronicle*, chap. xii.

⁵ *Last Chronicle*, chap. lxxiv.

⁶ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. xiv.

⁷ *Last Chronicle*, chap. xi.

hope of conviction, that a longer route was invariably preferred. Even if the roads to Framley are “deep” (as Trollope puts it), they are hardly likely to be so bad that wayfarers consistently go seven miles out of their way to avoid them.

A closer examination of the evidence renders unnecessary any such stretching of our credulity, and a whole host of cartographical difficulties are swept aside if we assume a simple and not improbable clerical error. If it has remained uncorrected it is because Trollope, as is well known, took little notice of his work after publication. It will be remembered, too, that *Framley Parsonage* was written with *Castle Richmond* still in the stocks, so that Trollope was doubtless unusually pressed for time.

He wrote of Mark Robarts dashing off to Exeter upon the news of the death of his father. It was, we are told, 4 miles to Silverbridge, and there Robarts was on the direct road to the west. I think what Trollope really meant to say was that it was 4 miles to the *Silverbridge Road*, and there Robarts was on the direct route to the west. It is not a big error in itself—just the result of a bit of hasty writing,—but highly misleading.

Framley is no mere pinpoint on the map, for it extends along a mile and a half of winding road.⁸ Framley Mill lies half a mile off the Barchester-Hogglestock road,⁹ but since Farmer Mangle dropped Crawley at the mill and not on the main highway it is clear he must have turned off the road some distance before. Framley Cross, it seems, lies still further from the highway, with the church and parsonage a quarter of a mile distant.¹⁰

It is clear, therefore, that a triangle based on the Barchester-Hogglestock road, with the two sides together one mile longer than the base, will have Framley Cross at its apex. The scattered houses of the village obviously lie mainly between the Cross and the Mill.

Although 4 miles from the Silverbridge Road, it will be found, as the map is drawn, that it is a further 8 miles into Silverbridge itself, and that Framley is in reality 12 miles from that town.

⁸ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. ii.

¹⁰ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. ii.

⁹ *Last Chronicle*, chap. xvii.

Silverbridge.—We already know the Silverbridge-Barchester road to be 20 miles long, but the problem now is to determine its precise location. The rough outline of our map so far constructed, as well as Trollope's sketch, shows a direct route to be out of the question, and a circuitous route offers a host of possible alternatives.

Luckily, Trollope has furnished us with two items of indirect evidence that enable us to plot the road with certainty. When the clerical commission, convened by Dr. Tempest to inquire into the Crawley affair, broke up after its first and only meeting, it will be remembered that Thumble and Quiverful departed at once for Barchester. Robarts and Oriel left Silverbridge a little later but, being possessed of a faster equipage, soon passed their colleagues on the road.¹¹ Robarts and Oriel were on their way to Framley, so the Silverbridge-Barchester road must be coincidental, for at least part of the way, with the Silverbridge-Framley route.

It is further known that this latter road passes fairly close to Hoggstock Parsonage,¹² so it is obvious that Thumble and Quiverful, trailing behind their speedier brethren, must have subsequently joined the Hoggstock-Barchester highway in order to reach the cathedral city. The requirements of the distance—20 miles—enable us to sketch in the road with accuracy.

We can now see that the Silverbridge Road runs east from Silverbridge for 5 miles, where there is a turning north for Hoggstock, is joined a mile and a half further along by the Hoggstock-Barchester road, and, then, 4 miles short of Framley, branches eastwards again. Later deductions make it clear that it runs on to Greshamsbury and eventually joins the old coach road from Barchester on the way to London.

Greshamsbury.—This pleasant Barset village is, upon the initial inspection of the evidence, located with the utmost simplicity. *Doctor Thorne* has it as being 8 miles from Silverbridge,¹³ and 15 from Barchester.¹⁴ What could be clearer than that? Yet a moment's

¹¹ *Last Chronicle*, chap. liv.

¹² *Ibid.*, chap. xx.

¹³ *Doctor Thorne*, chap. iii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

reflection on these figures makes it obvious that something is amiss. If only 8 miles from Silverbridge, is it not extraordinary that the Greshamburians, without exception, should use the railway station at Barchester, 15 miles distant, rather than the one at Silverbridge, 7 miles nearer? On all counts the best way to get to London must be via Silverbridge, which, in any case, is obviously better served with main-line trains than the cathedral city on the branch.

Resource to Trollope's map indicates this figure of 8 miles to be an error. Greshamsbury lies to the south of the branch line well to the east of Barchester. Even by making all allowances for Trollope's lack of scale, no amount of ingenuity will make it fit—unless, indeed, the branch line twists in the most extraordinary series of loops and arcs. This is clearly unnecessary, for we must take into account the good sense of the honest inhabitants of Greshamsbury in not making journeys of needless length. Furthermore, if so near Silverbridge, why did Caleb Oriel find it necessary to spend the night with Mark Robarts after the meeting of the ecclesiastical commission in Silverbridge?

Eight miles is clearly an error. Then comes the problem, what is the true figure? Here an examination of the circumstances under which *Doctor Thorne* was written makes it clear that such a slip of the pen on the part of our author is by no means surprising. The novel was written amidst the difficulties of a journey to Egypt, and Trollope himself has recorded that more than once he was forced to put down his pen to go away and be sick. Surely a novel—and such a good one—was never composed in more onerous conditions! What is more probable, then, than that the chronicler should write “eight” when what he really intended to say was “eighteen”? A sudden wave, a feeling of nausea, a slurring of the pen, and all is accounted for.

We can only assume that this is so, and with the figure settled as 18 miles the anomalies vanish. Neatly and snugly Greshamsbury appears lying to the south of the Barchester branch line in accordance with Trollope's map.

All evidence points to the cultural ties of Greshamsbury as being with Barchester, but commercially they are more closely connected with Silverbridge. The postal center was the latter town, as is shown when Mary Thorne, quite ignorant of the G.P.O. procedure, fondly imagined that her epistle to Frank Gresham had only to be sent by the postmistress straight up to the Hall. Instead, it had to be dispatched all the way into Silverbridge and back again, by which time her beloved had departed for London.

Here I might say in parenthesis that, although Mary Thorne might well have been ignorant of postal matters, Trollope, of all people in the world, most certainly was not. It is odd, then, that Monsignor Knox should have expressed doubt about the route taken by the Courcy mails, which, we are told, were sent by coach via Uffley and Chaldicotes into Barchester.¹⁵ He inferred, because of this, that Trollope was in error in stating that Courcy was a mile and a half from a railway station.¹⁶ Yet the existence of a wayside station—and on a branch line at that—does not mean the posts will take advantage of it, especially if the train service is inadequate.

The Courcy District.—The location of Courcy, to the west of Barchester on the old coach road, is simple. So precise and informed a person as Plantagenet Palliser, who obviously never made an error in a matter of fact in the whole of his life, affirms that it lies 12 miles from Silverbridge.¹⁷ It was his slight banter on the subject with Lady Dumbello that gave rise to the grave *scandale* which led to the old Duke's threatening to cut his nephew off with a beggarly few thousand a year.

Between Courcy and Barchester lie Uffley and Chaldicotes, where once was the home of the rascally and unfortunate Nat Sowerby. Chaldicotes, we know, is 10 miles from Barchester.¹⁸ It will be remembered that Mark Robarts had a nervous ride of that distance on the Sunday morning following Harold Smith's lecture on Papua to the wondering Barcastrians and the fervent Christian

¹⁵ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. v.

¹⁶ *Doctor Thorne*, chap. xv.

¹⁷ *The Small House at Allington*, chap. xxiii.

¹⁸ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. iii.

spirit of Mrs. Proudie. Robarts was in an agony of apprehension for the entire ten miles lest he be late for his sermon. Having located Chaldicotes, and then fixed Courcy in its proper relation to both that place and Silverbridge—here Trollope's map is of assistance again,—we find the distance Courcy to Barchester to be about twelve miles.

The peregrinations of Mark Robarts about the county have afforded us such aid that it is a matter of regret that I have to record that one of his journeys gives another indication of hasty writing by Trollope. It is stated, when Robarts was preparing for his original trip to Chaldicotes—a trip that was fraught with such dire financial consequences,—that he had 24 miles of Barset roads before him.¹⁹ Yet with our map so far constructed such a distance is obviously impossible. Even if Robarts traveled round via Barchester the distance is no more than 19 miles—9 miles into the city, and 10 miles out again.

It is here that our map proves helpful. Measurement with the dividers elucidates the fact that a direct road between Framley and Chaldicotes is 12 miles. Twelve miles! Just half the distance! The explanation is obvious. What Trollope had in mind was the return journey, and in his haste failed to make this clear.

Plumstead Episcopi and Others.—So far I have said nothing of Plumstead Episcopi, a place of no little import in Barsetshire. It was from that solid, comfortable rectory that the great Archdeacon Grantly exercised such mighty influence in Barset affairs, ecclesiastical, social, and, we cannot doubt, political. Much as I hate to have to admit it, Trollope, in this case, slips in a way that can only be explained as downright error, without benefit of seasickness, miscalculation, or confusion of nomenclature.

Barchester Towers has it that Plumstead is 9 miles from the city,²⁰ but this is nowhere in accord with the rest of the evidence. When at Plumstead, Dr. Fillgrave is reckoned as being five or six miles from home,²¹ and, since the worthy doctor's precise abode in Barchester is

¹⁹ *Framley Parsonage*, chap. ii.

²¹ *Doctor Thorne*, chap. xii.

²⁰ *Barchester Towers*, chap. xxv.

not known, this may be taken as being in accord with the statement in *The Last Chronicle* that the return journey is just under the 10 miles.²²

We can only assume that the later evidence is correct, and that Plumstead is 5 miles from Barchester to the south. It must be remembered, of course, that Trollope, in chronicling *Barchester Towers*, was much less familiar with the county than he afterward became.

No further problems present themselves. Puddingdale, the home of the Quiverfuls before their induction to more prosperous surroundings at Hiram's Hospital, lies 4 miles to the east of Barchester on the London road.²³ Boxall Hill is halfway to Greshamsbury.²⁴ Crabtree Parva, the living of which was held by Septimus Harding—it is odd his activities as a pluralist never seemed to trouble his conscience,—is a mile and a half to the west.²⁵ For Stoppingum, Eiderdown, and Crabtree Canonicorum—the latter on no account to be confused with Crabtree Parva,—where the rich glebes were so extravagantly swallowed up by the Stanhopes in distant Italy, we have the authority of Trollope's sketch.

Spigglewick Hill, where Mr. Thumble's borrowed cob broke its knees, lies a little to the south of Hoggstock. Hogg End, by the canal, is 2 miles to the north of that village.²⁶

The site of Gatherum Castle is marked on Trollope's map, and internal evidence makes it clear that this lavish pile is more than six miles from Courcy. Frank Gresham, offended by the Duke's manifest imperfections as a host, had walked that distance before he was overtaken by the Hon. George, hiccuping his appreciation of the Gatherum cellars, in the gig. Omnium, from which the Duke took his title, must evidently lie hard by the castle.

The master's own sketch is again resorted to for the siting of Scarington, but for the locations of places mentioned in *Doctor*

²² *Last Chronicle*, chap. lxxiii.

²³ *Barchester Towers*, chap. xxv.

²⁴ *Doctor Thorne*, chap. iii.

²⁵ *The Warden*, chap. xvi.

²⁶ *Last Chronicle*, chap. xii.

Thorne—Annesgrove, Hesterwell Park, Mill Hill, and The Grange—we must be arbitrary. They are clearly in the Greshamsbury region. So with Cosby Lodge, Major Henry Grantly's home in *The Last Chronicle*, which nearly came beneath the auctioneer's hammer; it obviously lies near Silverbridge. Similarly the evidence in *Barchester Towers* points to Knowle Park, The Elms, and Rosebank as being in the neighbourhood of Ullathorne, which the same book tells us to be about a mile from Barchester, a little off the Plumstead road.²⁷ The parish church, of course, is St. Ewold's.

The Railways.—The railways present no problems of any kind. Silverbridge is on the main line—the Great Western (can one imagine Barset being served by any other?)—and Barchester on the branch. To the west of Silverbridge is Burleybridge station. Beyond that the railway penetrates to the next county, where Guestwick serves as the stepping-off place for Allington. For all this we have the confirmation of Trollope's map.

An additional detail is Courcy station, already shown to be a mile and a half from the village and lying on the extension of the branch line from Barchester. Then, too, there is clearly another station within reach of both Framley and Hogglestock. It will be recalled that when Crawley went to London to lay his cause *in forma pauperis* before Mr. Toogood he found it unnecessary to go all the way into Silverbridge. Instead, he avoided the night mail (which stopped only at Silverbridge) and was able to get a third-class return ticket at single fare.²⁸ Doubtless when Robarts had occasion to go into Silverbridge by train²⁹ he traveled first. This station, probably no more than a halt, must lie where the railway crossed the Hogglestock-Barchester road.

The rail journey from Silverbridge to Barchester is circuitous, more than 40 miles, in fact, as compared with 20 by road.³⁰ The route, of course, is via the junction, where Doctor Thorne thought so little of the tea. It may be wondered, therefore, why Adolplus

²⁷ *Barchester Towers*, chap. xxi.

²⁸ *Last Chronicle*, chap. xxxii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. lxviii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. xi.

Crosbie elected to go to Courcy all the way round to Barchester, instead of alighting at Silverbridge, the same distance away. Crosbie, however, had left Allington unnecessarily early and, even in Barchester, had time to kill.³¹ Possibly, too, it was “not done” to arrive at Courcy Castle from so unaristocratic a spot as Silverbridge. The train service to Courcy station was obviously quite impossible. There is no record of anyone’s using the railway there. It is to be doubted if the service is much better today.

Woods and Rivers.—Barset roads are not good. Trollope invariably wrote of their being “deep” and “muddy,” and the Countess de Courcy specifically complained of them when she arrived so indecently late for the Ullathorne sports. Not that her remarks are to be trusted, but the roads can hardly have been very good, or else she would have invented some other excuse.

The largest stretch of woodland is the Chase of Chaldicotes, once crown property but subsequently bought by the Thornes—of Chaldicotes, not of Ullathorne,—despite the efforts of the Duke of Omnium to add it to his already vast estates. This once extended all the way to Silverbridge, and of this vast forest Cobbolds Ashes, where Mark Robarts’ hunting prowess brought disapproval from old Lady Lufton, is evidently a surviving remnant. Cobbolds Ashes lies two parishes distant from Framley.³² Plumstead Coppices marks the boundary between the lands of Archdeacon Grantly and the estates owned by Thorne of Ullathorne. It was here that a fox was once trapped—the most dreadful crime Trollope ever had occasion to write about.

Barset is no fisherman’s paradise—Lord Lufton found it necessary to go all the way to Norway for his salmon fishing,—and the only river mentioned by Trollope is the one skirting Hiram’s Hospital in Barchester. The nomenclature of Silverbridge clearly indicates a river there, and it is not unreasonable to assume it to be the same. Part of its course between the two places obviously forms the boundary between the eastern and western divisions of the county.

³¹ *Small House*, chap. xvi.

³² *Framley Parsonage*, chap. xiv.

The canal at Hoggle End—where Crawley received the immortal advice, “It’s dogged as does it!”—leads in one direction to Bristol and London.³⁸ In the other it can only join the river at Silverbridge.

In surveying our completed map of Barssetshire we cannot help but reflect on the differing character of the county from one region to another. The barren, inhospitable nature of the Hogglestock area—its southern limits can be taken as the Silverbridge Road—makes it a spot rather to be avoided. As Trollope has recorded, it really should be in another county, and its forbidding nature taints even the town of Silverbridge, a place of business and moneymaking with few attractions for the tourist.

Courcy, too, 12 miles to the south, does not share the full richness of Barset. It has the air of slight decay, of shabby tinsel, from which even the wealth of Gatherum Castle is not entirely free. There are many broken fences, and many tenant farmers hard pressed to pay their rent, in West Barset.

Not so in the other division. The fat glebe lands of Plumstead, the age-old oaks of Ullathorne, the rich pastures of Greshamsbury, the fertile cornlands of Framley—all these indicate prosperity rooted deep in good English earth. And in Barchester itself, the shady nooks, the quiet corners, the hallowed cloisters, and the sacred, time-weathered stones of the cathedral, all mutely express to God the humble gratitude of those worthy folk who live and work and play in the dearest of English counties. Long may they endure!

³⁸ *Last Chronicle*, chap. xii.