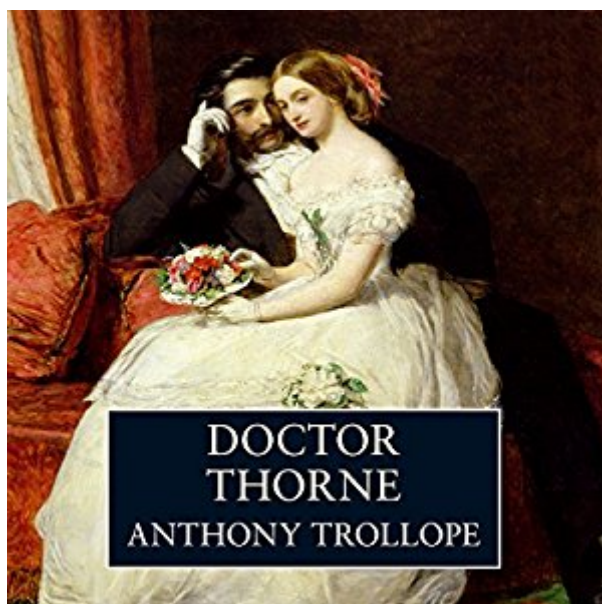


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Doctor Thorne



Synopsis

Mark Twain once famously said "there was but one solitary thing about the past worth remembering, and that was the fact that it is past and can't be restored." Well, over recent years, The British Library, working with Microsoft has embarked on an ambitious programme to digitise its collection of 19th century books. There are now 65,000 titles available (that's an incredible 25 million pages) of material ranging from works by famous names such as Dickens, Trollope and Hardy as well as many forgotten literary gems, all of which can now be printed on demand and purchased right here on . Further information on The British Library and its digitisation programme can be found on The British Library website. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mary Thorne, orphaned (and illegitimate) niece of Dr. Thorne, has long been a favorite at Greshamsbury House--until Lady Arabella Gresham learns that her only son Frank is in love with Mary. The unhappy Mary is banished forthwith, because the Gresham family fortunes are so depleted that Frank must marry money. Frank, however, is one of the few completely honorable young men in Trollope's novels and remains stubbornly true to his love. Well, he does propose to another woman, at the insistence of his mother, but only with the virtual certainty that he will be rejected--as indeed he is. The lady is Miss Dunstable, one of Trollope's most delightful characters, a fabulously wealthy thirtyish heiress of an ointment company. She is a bold, witty woman, not beautiful, but attractive in her way, whose wealth invites countless proposals. After the rather

complicated plot unfolds, the tables are completely turned, and Mary is eagerly welcomed by Lady Arabella (who, of course, has always loved her) as the savior of the family. I concede that "The Last Chronicle of Barset" is the best of the Barsetshire novels, but I dearly love "Dr. Thorne." The character of the doctor himself is strong and sympathetic. Frank, Mary, Miss Dunstable, Lady Arabella, Sir Roger Scatcherd, and such minor characters as Dr. Thorne's rival, Dr. Fillgrave (one of Trollope's punnily named characters), form a superb cast. And the outcome is thoroughly satisfying. I probably enjoyed reading this novel more than any of the others.

"Dr. Thorne" is the third in the series of Barsetshire novels by Anthony Trollope. But unlike the first two, this has little to do with the politics of the Church of England. It is the tale of two lovers from different classes, and their struggle to keep their love alive in spite of social pressures to go their own ways. Unlike the first two novels, the plot starts out very slowly, with long descriptions of the history and conditions of the fictional "Greshamsbury" estate. The author even apologizes about 30 pages in for trying the patience of his readers. While "Dr. Thorne" lacks the crispness and economy of the first two novels ("The Warden" and "Barchester Towers"), it builds to a satisfying conclusion, and the author paints his usual precise characterizations. If you are a fan of Anthony Trollope, be patient with this one. You will be rewarded.

It's impossible to imagine a novel more completely entertaining than DR THORNE. You know from almost the first page how the plot will conclude, but the getting there is delicious. It is not as economically told as THE WARDEN, not as discursive (or laugh-out-loud hilarious) as BARCHESTER TOWERS. Instead it has balance and energy and the characters fairly sparkle, especially the "good" romantic hero and heroine. We are used to allowing the novelist a boring romantic interest, as long as we're given other pleasures along the way; but Frank and Mary may just be the most fun personalities in their own story. No mean feat, as any reader knows, the creation of virtuous characters who are also sharp and amusing enough to carry their weight. Frank's quasi-courtship of Miss Dunstable, the delightful if ugly "oil of Lebanon" heiress, is a brilliant stroke, and the happy ending is (very carefully) not reached until Frank has proven himself worthy of it. You feel in such good hands with Trollope. Nothing too awful will happen to anyone, at least not without much warning, and all the deserving characters will get their heart's desire. It's like sitting down after a good dinner over brandy with a friend who is incomparably witty, candid, and good-natured. It might, literarily speaking, be fluff, after all; but it's fluff raised to an art form.

Volume 3 in Trollope's Barchester series moves away from the intricacies of church politics and focuses on the English caste system in the mid 19th century. The novel is called after a man whom Trollope declares as his hero: a poor country doctor with professional competence and an admirable honest stubbornness, a bachelor who lives with a lovely niece, whom he treats like a daughter. Doc Thorne is a proud man, proud to be a poor man from a high family. The niece might be considered the real heroine. She is an illegitimate child of the Doc's late brother with a woman who emigrated with another man, leaving the girl behind. The girl's social status is that of a pariah, which begins to be relevant when men start seeing her as a woman. She is a proud and smart person, with a mind at war with itself. She fully accepts the social ranking system that condemns her to be an underdog. She knows that she is a superior person in all other respects. Trollope is overdoing his communication with the reader a little here. He insists on telling us that the real hero of the novel is young Frank Gresham, the local squire's only son. Frank is just growing up in the world and needs to find his way in questions of rank and preferences. He finds out that all is not well with the estate and that he better finds a way to marry money if he wants to keep up the life style that he has grown up expecting. Or are emotions more important? One has social duties as well! The ground is thus prepared for a plot with psychological and social depth, all wrapped in satirical fun poked at pretensions and stupidity. Maybe Trollope's most Austenian novel, at least among those that I know so far.

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