



The Duke's Daughter

Angela Thirkell

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Several of our favourite characters reappear to play sometimes crucial roles: Lady Norton, the Dreadful Dowager; Gradka of the Mixo-Lydians; the obnoxious Harvey siblings; and the appallingly accident prone Mrs Updike. Lady Norton calls upon recently married Lucy Adams after a nine finger exercise determines that congratulations may be in order. Gradka, now Mixo-Lydian Ambassadress is instrumental (with Maria Lufton) in routing Miss Harvey's matrimonial assault on Oliver Marling. She also helps to rescue Tom Grantly from his ill-advised venture into the clutches of Geoffrey Harvey and the Red Tape Office. Oliver is frightened out of his 'habit' of love for Jessica Dean and perennial unclehood into a real attachment for Maria. Charles Belton and Clarissa Graham advance from 'understanding' to engagement, Tom and Emmy Graham, united in 'cow-mindedness', follow suit as do Lady Cora (the Duke's daughter) and Cecil Waring; all within a twenty four hour period.

The Duke's Daughter Details

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Trisha says

Reading one of Angela Thirkell's many novels is to return to Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire and meet the descendents of the families he wrote about a hundred years earlier. So I always enjoy reading Thirkell and Trollope together as I did this time by pairing the *Duke's Daughter* with Trollope's *Framely Parsonage*, two novels that feature many of the same families and settings. But even if I'd never read a single Trollope (which would be a great misfortune) I'd love Thirkell anyway because of the fun I've had trying to keep up with the Pomfrets, Grantleys, Lesliees, Brandons, Grahams, Pallisers, and Marlings, not to mention all the other families, friends, and interesting characters who show up from year to year between 1932 and 1961. Many of them are living in the same country homes, estates and farms as their Trollopian ancestors did – although in some cases they've had to sell portions of their land to keep up with the economy. (Note: It's almost impossible to keep track of the hundreds of people and places that show up in Thirkell's novels without the help of one or two of the reference guides that have been written for that purpose.) In this novel it's 1949 and Lady Cora Palliser plays a central role. She's the daughter of the Duke of Omnium, a descendent of the same duke that shows up in a less than favorable light in *Framely Parsonage* along with the great great grandparents of many of the other characters we find once again in the *Duke's Daughter*. We also meet the current Lady Lufton and her son Ludovic, as well as the Grantleys, Lord Silverbridge and even the descendents of some of Trollope's "scoundrels" and "rascals" like Mssrs. Tozer and Scratcherd who despite their forefathers' shady past end up running a respectable catering business by the time Angela Thirkell gets a hold of them. Of her many characters one of my favorites is Mrs. Morland, a novelist who happily admits that she writes the same story over and over again and is always amazed that people keep reading them. Thirkell was obviously taking a good natured poke at herself since all her books follow the same predictable pattern: people we have come to know quite well go about living their quite ordinary but decidedly comfortable lives in close proximity to other people we know. Babies are born (although children are usually kept out of the action, safely tucked away in their nurseries or in the care of benevolent headmasters at nearby boarding schools) estates are managed or mismanaged, people are invited for lunch or weekends at each other's homes. Just about any crisis – and in a Thirkell novel the crises are usually minor – can be handled by sitting down for a nice cup of tea. And every book ends with at least one engagement or marriage. By the last chapter of this book four of the couples we've been following for quite some time end up getting engaged....as do four couples from *Framely Parsonage* a hundred years earlier. It's just one more similarity between the two novels and another reason I enjoy reading Trollope and Thirkell simultaneously.

Wynne says

A great way to start the summer is to visit an old friend. Since I am slowly working my way through Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles, I chose to revisit Mrs. Thirkell. This book has a copyright of 1951. And my copy is a paperback which could have been printed in 1951. The person who wrote the cover blurb must not have read the book, because it is touted as a romance. In actuality it is social commentary from a Conservative point of view on the post WWII changes in English life. There is still rationing, the landowners are losing property through death duties and other taxes, families can no longer sustain the big houses and the social class system is still strong. Mrs. T is not a sentimental person, but she is quite aware of the impact

of war on the returning soldiers, that recovery is not quick. She also writes with subtly about the quiet pain of loss. At least 3 characters have experienced huge losses due to the war which they do not whine about. This is the first Mrs. T I have read since I started my Barsetshire read and in this particular novel, she is revisiting many of the families which appear in Trollope. Mrs. Belton is a descendant of the Thornes of Ullathorne, the title heroine is Cora Palliser, the current Lord Lufton appears and characters from Dr. Thorne and Framley Parsonage are referred to. In addition, the author seems to have decided to marry off a number of minor characters from other novels: Tom Grantly and Emmy Graham, Cecil Waring gets Lady Cora, Clarissa Graham and Charles Belton. Plus previous heroines are having children and she is so funny about loving the children and the delight of sending them off to school (her own experience for sure). I started reading these novels in my early 30's. Checking back on authors as an older reader often reveals delights one missed when younger. I upped the stars because Trollope and life have contributed to my appreciation.

Avril says

Thirkell is so much fun when she's writing light romances about the county, and so appalling when referring to the Labour Government or, as she puts it, 'Them'. From reading her books one would think that the National Health Service was the worst thing ever to happen, with the possible exception of universal education. But despite this I do enjoy her as a period piece.

Joy says

Cora, the daughter of the Duke of Omnium, has several nice men to choose from, but we are rooting for our old friend Commander Sir Cecil Waring: an admirable man, a war hero learning the responsibilities of his newly inherited estate. Colin's sister Leslie and her husband Phillip need to find a new site for their successful school. We spend time with our old favorites the Beltons and the Leslies. I had missed a crucial book, so it was a delight to find Lucy Marling and the Adamsons happily settled. Thirkell suddenly decided to provide partners for several of her young people so they could get on with their lives. At the end there are 4 engagements in a few days.

The most memorable part for me was a wonderful house called The Lodge owned by Cecil Waring. I wanted to live there as much as Cecil did (except he couldn't because it wasn't big enough to be an institution for boys), and as much as Cora's brother did. I think I also missed a crucial book containing the romance of Cora's brother Lord Silverbridge.

Mandolin says

Though this book isn't the last in Thirkell's Barsetshire series, it serves nicely to bring back many favorite characters (and not-so-favorite ones like the Harvey siblings) in the series and to tidily bring many of their stories to a nice close. The primary plot, if you can call it such in one of Thirkell's books, is the romance between Lady Glencora Palliser, the Duke of Omnium's daughter, and Cecil Waring, the heir to one of the large local estates. Revolving around them are the lesser (but often more interesting) romances of Tom Grantly, Emmy Graham, Charles Belton, Clarissa Graham, Oliver Marling and Maria Lufton. The stories unfold slowly and include other subplots including Tom's unfortunate entry into a government position and

the births of several babies; they aren't full of much action but are full of Thirkell's trademark witty observations of human foibles and follies and her pointed digs at the post-war government. It is this social commentary that makes these books so delightful rather than a truly interesting plot. As usual, I found myself laughing quite a lot as I read the book and, despite the meandering plot, I enjoyed it immensely. I was glad to see many of my favorite characters (especially poor Oliver Marling) finally on their way to settled, bright futures and think that I may use this book as a stopping point in the series. Whatever the case, it is a definite recommendation for any Thirkell fan.

Susan says

This story contains at least FOUR engagements - I guess she got tired of trying to keep track of who is in love with whom. Lady Cora, the duke's daughter of the title, is the principal character, but we meet a lot of old and new friends - Cecil Waring (now Sir Cecil, since his uncle's death, the Winters (Philip and Cecil's sister Leslie), various Grahams, primarily Agnes, Clarissa, and Emmy. A major subplot concerns Tom Grantley, who still doesn't know what he wants to be when he grows up - a farmer at Rushwater or a civil servant with the office of Red Tape and Sealing Wax. We also meet Lord Lufton and his family; his two sisters and his sad dependent mother. Mrs. Morland makes an appearance, as do a large number of others from previous books, not all of whom are necessary to this story, but whom it is nice to meet again.

CLM says

Cora is a great character, and a good bridge between Trollope and Thirkell's worlds.

Polly says

I found this occasionally confusing and not as entertaining as the other Thirkell novels I've read, but it's still a good book! Upon re-reading, I think I like it better, and it's nice that Tom finally gets settled.

Jocelyn says

We've been waiting a long time for some of our favorite Barsetshire characters to get married. Angela Thirkell must have fielded a lot of complaints from anxious readers because in this book FOUR couples get engaged! Meanwhile the summer weather stays cold and dreary and the Labour government keeps undermining the British class system. Every book just the same, and always terribly funny. I just opened this one at random and came across the following sentence: "You don't go chucking false teeth into ponds for fun."

Susan in NC says

Great fun, as always, to revisit old friends in Barsetshire! I can't let so much time elapse between books, or I

have a hard time sorting out and remembering the ever-increasing county characters...

In this outing Thirkell is busy match-making, marrying off the still unattached but eligible latest generation of county families. Three engagements are announced in one day!

Typical of these books, there is really no plot, just everyday life in the Barsetshire countryside several years after WWII. Some characters have moved on after the deprivations and service of the war while others are struggling. Universally acknowledged, however, is the evil of the current government, known as They or Them, as in They take everyone's money, or life is awful because of Them (typified in the last several novels by the aptly named offices of "Red Tape and Sealing Wax" and "General Interference") .

Yes, it's old-fashioned, and the occasional ethnic or snobbish class slur is jarring, but as the back of my Moyers Bell edition says, "Few reading pleasures are as comforting as making the acquaintance of an entire community and charting the progress of its generations through the rituals of romance and the experiments of time. When changes in the cultural and political landscape admit confusion to the traditional world of the British gentry, it does little to dim the allure of local comedies in Barsetshire." Delightful!

Deb says

Ah, Oliver, Oliver. Finally he is caught....

Meg says

Thirkell wrote about 30 books, all of which seem to be about small-town England sometime in the first half of the 20th century. This one takes place in 1951 in post-war England and follows the families and goings-on of this little town.

LDuchess says

Different edition--hardbound.

LOVED this one..... could be titled "4 weddings (and a funeral)"
