

# AN OLD MAN'S LOVE BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE



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As young adult, Trollope endured seven years of poverty in the General Post Office in London before accepting a better - paying position as postal surveyor in Banagher, Ireland in 1841. The years in Ireland formed the basis of his second career delineating clerical life in small cathedral towns.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

The Inner Impulse To Be a Martyr

By Carol Bakker

So you love Jane Austen. You've read all her novels and plan to re-read them with great pleasure the rest of your days. When you come to the end of Austen, you always have an appetite for...more! You start in with the Brontes and read through their works. This is a good thing. There are many, many good books in different genres, true. But there are times you want a nice cup of tea and a little touch of Britain in the night.

It was because Anthony Trollope's name was said in the same sentence as Austen's, and from a friend I trust, that I decided to go exploring.

An Old Man's Love was a sweet romance, a lovely love story. Here's the gist: A young woman, Mary Lawrie (20 something), is left orphaned. A friend of her father's, the 50 year old bachelor, William Whittlestaff decides to take her in and provide for her. He falls in love with her and asks her to marry him. She hesitates and acknowledges to him that her heart is with a young man, John Gordon, from whom she has not heard a word in three years, and with whom no words of love were ever exchanged.

Whittlestaff presses Mary, confident that her infatuation was a childish one and sure that he can give her a good life. She reluctantly agrees and decides to do her duty to the man who has been so kind to her, a man for whom she has genuine affection. Within hours of giving her promise to marry Whittlestaff, John Gordon,

home from the diamond mines, knocks on the door asking for Mary.

The ensuing conflict between Mary's love for Gordon and her promise given to Whittlestaff occupies the rest of the book. A promise is a promise! Trollope portrays so accurately that inner impulse to be a martyr that seems so noble at night, but sticks like a bone in the throat in the daylight. Hearing the tale unfold was like riding a see-saw; it was impossible to guess how it would come out. Each man is so certain that it would be in Mary's best interest to be with himself. There are two Dickensian characters, the housekeeper and the vicar, which add comic relief to the drama.

It isn't the satisfying protein of Austen, but we still need some carbs in our life, and Trollope is a good carb.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A bit tedious and repetitive, but still good

By booker

William Whittlestaff takes in the orphaned Mary Lawrie and, after a year, decides he's in love with her and proposes. She accepts. Unfortunately, Mary's old sweetheart, John Gordon, arrives the next day from the Kimberley diamonds mines, having rectified his poverty. So what's a girl to do? What's the 50-year old, previously-disappointed-in-love-decades-ago Whittlestaff to do?

I've been away from the Victorian authors for a good long while, but I don't think this one is nearly as good as I recall Trollope's other works were. This story was simple, but the framing of it was ponderous and very redundant throughout. Perhaps that was the point of it, however; that a very heavy matter weighed on the minds of all three main characters (Whittlestaff, Mary, and John Gordon) and so it's natural that they should chew over the same facts again and again.

It was a quick read, but it was very tedious in too many spots. So much of it was the internal thoughts of the characters as they tried to work out the problem: what was expected of them (heart vs. duty), what was the "best interests" of the other parties, outside advice and pressure, and so on. The character of Mrs. Baggett and her situation with her drunk sot of an errant, leeching husband brought the whole "marital duty" aspect into the story - once a promise is made to be one's wife, it's mandatory to stick through it, thick or thin, and deny - all the while proclaiming - one's sacrificial martyrdom.

There was a tight cast of characters, each providing some characteristic that crops up so much in Victorian lit - punny names like a groom and gardener called Hayonotes and Thornybush, respectively; and meddling nosybodies like the local soon-to-be married vicar Blake who is a right boor and acts out of self-righteous romantic inclinations but seems to be doomed after marriage. (Trollope certainly implies that his wife will be fed up with him in a matter of months.)

I'm glad it was a short book. I honestly don't think the slim concept of it could have borne too many more pages and revisits to the same thought processes. It ended as one would expect, but I still kept reading because I wasn't entirely certain.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

The Worst Trollope Novel

By ronaldk204

I am a big fan of Trollope and have read most of his 47 novels. Written near the end of his life, this is by far the worst. An old man brings a young woman into his home as a daughter because she has been left alone without any support. Over time, he essentially seduces her, and out of gratitude she agrees to marry him. Before they marry, an old lover of Mary shows up after being away in South Africa for 3 years without any word to her. She still loves him and is not angry that he didn't write to her in 3 years. The old man gives her

up to the old lover, probably out of his guilt that he took her in as her protector, and then proceeded to convince her to become his wife. All of this is quite peculiar even by Victorian standards and lend some support to the Trollope critics that say he is a pulp fiction hack.

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