

**AN OLD MAN'S
LOVE, VOL. II**

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An old man's love, Vol. II by Anthony Trollope

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ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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AN OLD MAN'S LOVE.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT LITTLE ALBESFORD.

MR HALL was a pleasant English gentleman, now verging upon seventy years of age, who had "never had a headache in his life," as he was wont to boast, but who lived very carefully, as one who did not intend to have many headaches. He certainly did not intend to make his headache by the cares of the work of the world. He was very well off;—that is to say, that with so many thousands a year, he managed to live upon half. This he had done for

very many years, because the estate was entailed on a distant relative, and because he had not chosen to leave his children paupers. When the girls came he immediately resolved that he would never go up to London,—and kept his resolve. Not above once in three or four years was it supposed to be necessary that he showed his head to a London hairdresser. He was quite content to have a practitioner out from Alresford, and to pay him one shilling, including the journey. His tenants in these bad times had always paid their rents, but they had done so because their rents had not been raised since the squire had come to the throne. Mr Hall knew well that if he was anxious to save himself from headaches in that line, he had better let his lands on easy terms. He was very hospitable, but he never gave turtle from London, or fish from Southampton, or strawberries or peas on the first of April. He could give a dinner without champagne, and thought forty shillings a dozen price enough for

port or sherry, or even claret. He kept a carriage for his four daughters, and did not tell all the world that the horses spent a fair proportion of their time at the plough. The four daughters had two saddle-horses between them, and the father had another for his own use. He did not hunt,—and living in that part of Hampshire, I think he was right. He did shoot after the manner of our forefathers;—would go out, for instance, with Mr Blake, and perhaps Mr Whittlestaff, and would bring home three pheasants, four partridges, a hare, and any quantity of rabbits that the cook might have ordered. He was a man determined on no account to live beyond his means; and was not very anxious to seem to be rich. He was a man of no strong affections, or peculiarly generous feelings. Those who knew him, and did not like him, said that he was selfish. They who were partial to him declared that he never owed a shilling that he could not pay, and that his daughters were very happy in having such

a father. He was a good-looking man, with well-formed features, but one whom you had to see often before you could remember him. And as I have said before, he "never had a headache in his life." "When your father wasn't doing quite so well with the bank as his friends wished, he asked me to do something for him. Well; I didn't see my way."

"I was a boy then, and I heard nothing of my father's business."

"I dare say not; but I cannot help telling you. He thought I was unkind. I thought that he would go on from one trouble to another;—and he did. He quarrelled with me, and for years we never spoke. Indeed I never saw him again. But for the sake of old friendship, I am very glad to meet you." This he said, as he was walking across the hall to the drawing-room.

There Gordon met the young ladies with the clergyman, and had to undergo the necessary

introductions. He thought that he could perceive at once that his story, as it regarded Mary Lawrie, had been told to all of them. Gordon was quick, and could learn from the manners of his companions what had been said about him, and could perceive that they were aware of something of his story. Blake had no such quickness, and could attribute none of it to another. "I am very proud to have the pleasure of making you acquainted with these five young ladies." As he said this he had just paused in his narrative of Mr Whittlestaff's love, and was certain that he had changed the conversation with great effect. But the young ladies were unable not to look as young ladies would have looked when hearing the story of an unfortunate gentleman's love. And Mr Blake would certainly have been unable to keep such a secret.

"This is Miss Hall, and this is Miss Augusta Hall," said the father. "People do think that they are alike."