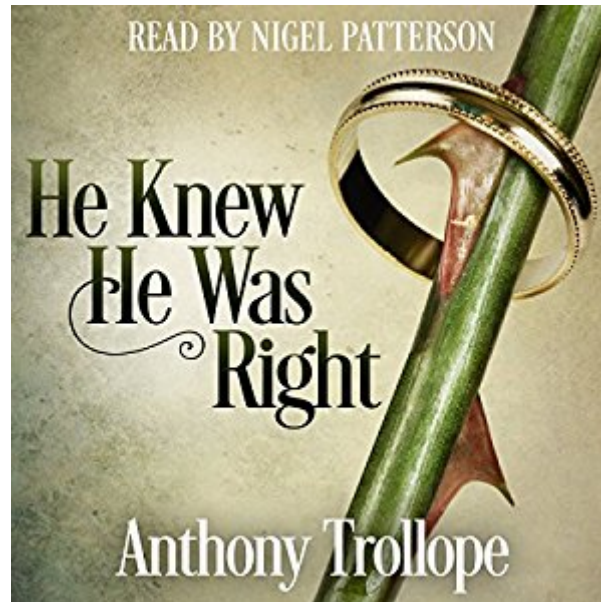




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He Knew He Was Right



Synopsis

When Louis Trevelyan's young wife meets an old family acquaintance, his unreasonable jealousy of their friendship sparks a quarrel that leads to a brutal and tragic estrangement. Often considered to be his masterpiece, Anthony Trollope's 1869 novel explores the themes of marriage, love, and the rights of women in 19th-century England. With a cast of independent, forceful characters and lively subplots, Trollope creates a penetrating and often comic dissection of the mores of Victorian society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fascinating glimpse into another era.

The first time I encountered Anthony Trollope's most popular work, *He Knew He Was Right*, was in a BBC production. My teen aged children and I enjoyed it. I had not read the book that the mini-series was based on. When I was offered the opportunity to review the book narrated by Nigel Patterson, I was happy to finally get a chance at the source. *He Knew He Was Right* was written in 1869. It is very important that the listener keep that in mind. It was a very different world, especially for women. The book follows Louis Trevelyan, a wealthy gentleman, who while traveling in one of the Empire's colonies (it is a fictitious colony) meets the girl of his dreams, Emily Rowley. Although Emily has been raised outside of England, she does come from a good family as her father is the governor of the colony. Emily and her family travel back to England for the wedding. The first two years of marriage are wonderful complete with a baby boy.

Then Louis begins to take exception to an old family friend, a man her father's age, visiting Emily. He demands she no longer see the man because he suspects infidelity. Emily digs her heels in and refuses to end her harmless friendship. Louis takes it as proof that his wife is not faithful. There are several subplots to this book, which is over 300 pages in print and 30 hours in audio. The subplots involve other couples including Emily's sister, Nora. Each couple has their own challenges to overcome, several involving social standing or economic position. While the subplots are interesting, it is Louis and Emily's story that is the main attraction. I did have to keep reminding myself of the 1869 publication date because I had a persistent and overwhelming need to slap Louis. Emily never, in deed or word, gives him cause to doubt her but he is so insecure he cannot trust her. It is a combination of Emily's stubbornness and Louis's insecurity that cause this to blow up into a major disaster involving both families and dividing friends. That being said, it really is a great book and worth the impulse to slap Louis. Mr. Patterson does a great job narrating this book. He captures the characters and their emotions. He also handles the language well. Sometimes narrators can allow the more formal language of the 19th century to sound stilted but Mr. Patterson does not. He makes the language flow naturally. I have not had a disappointing listen from Mr. Patterson yet. If you are going to invest in *He Knew He Was Right* as an audiobook, get the right one with Nigel Patterson as the narrator.

While it can seem bloated and repetitive at times, Trollope has a masterful way of illustrating the vagaries of all types of social rank and the weaknesses of human spirit. I'm particularly amazed at how well Trollope's story illustrates the political struggles over women's rights which raged during the 19th century. In the central struggle between the jealous Louis Trevelyan and his prideful but loyal wife Emily, *He Knew He Was Right* explores male authority and women's rights within marriage--core issues in arguments over married women's property. As documented by Wendy Jones, the novel was written during the height of the debate in British parliament about these issues. Jones makes explicit the nature of Trollope's contribution to this debate by showing how *He Knew He Was Right* intersects with the broader cultural discourse of contract, which informs Victorian Feminist arguments, and which was central to an ideal of married love. Trollope also has a wonderfully entertaining way of exploring the pitfalls of both conforming to or rebelling against social conformity and authority. Human psychology is illuminated as much as social authority. Each way of being is shown to have its weaknesses. No one side of an argument or single character is ever all right or all wrong (save, perhaps Camilla French). At some point each inhabitant of Trollope's finely

drawn universe appears intractable to his or her detriment, as if *he knew he was right*. Pride and ego are relentlessly laid bare. Sticking steadfastly to that position is almost universally the most problematic position. I found He Knew He Was Right thoroughly addictive and thought provoking.

Always a Trollope fan (about 42 books, Barster Towers a favorite), there is no better ride for me than dipping into his farces and satire. Trollope was paid by the word, and serialized. Publishers wanted lots of words. Yes, he could be edited and reduced. The reply to that is a shocking, "WHERE?" His fans do not want him to sound like the usual schlock out there.

i found this story long but very difficult to put down. the author introduced many characters from that era. i highly recommend this book.

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