

# COUSIN HENRY

BY  
ANTHONY TROLLOPE



*Geoffrey Cumberlege*  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
*London New York Toronto*

# The World's Classics

343

COUSIN HENRY

*Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, E.C.4*

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS CAPE TOWN

*Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University*

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Born, Keppel Street, Bloomsbury 24 April 1815

Died, 34 Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square  
6 December 1882

Cousin Henry *was first published in 1879. In The World's Classics it was first published in 1929 and reprinted in 1951.*

Printed in Great Britain

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# COUSIN HENRY

## CHAPTER I

### UNCLE INDEFER

‘I HAVE a conscience, my dear, on this matter,’ said an old gentleman to a young lady, as the two were sitting in the breakfast parlour of a country house which looked down from the cliffs over the sea on the coast of Carmarthen-shire.

‘And so have I, Uncle Indefar; and as my conscience is backed by my inclination, whereas yours is not—’

‘You think that I shall give way?’

‘I did not mean that.’

‘What then?’

‘If I could only make you understand how very strong is my inclination, or disinclination—how impossible to be conquered, then—’

‘What next?’

‘Then you would know that I could never give way, as you call it, and you would go to work with your own conscience to see whether it be imperative with you or not. You may be sure of this,—I shall never say a word to you in opposition to your conscience. If there be a word to be spoken it must come from yourself.’

There was a long pause in the conversation, a

silence for an hour, during which the girl went in and out of the room and settled herself down at her work. Then the old man went back abruptly to the subject they had discussed. 'I shall obey my conscience.'

'You ought to do so, Uncle Indefer. What should a man obey but his conscience?'

'Though it will break my heart.'

'No; no, no!'

'And will ruin you.'

'That is a flea's bite. I can brave my ruin easily, but not your broken heart.'

'Why should there be either, Isabel?'

'Nay, sir; have you not said but now, because of our consciences? Not to save your heart from breaking,—though I think your heart is dearer to me than anything else in the world,—could I marry my cousin Henry. We must die together, both of us, you and I, or live broken-hearted, or what not, sooner than that. Would I not do anything possible at your bidding?'

'I used to think so.'

'But it is impossible for a young woman with a respect for herself such as I have to submit herself to a man that she loathes. Do as your conscience bids you with the old house. Shall I be less tender to you while you live because I shall have to leave the place when you are dead? Shall I accuse you of injustice or unkindness in my heart? Never! All that is only an outside circumstance to me, comparatively of little mo-



ment. But to be the wife of a man I despise!' Then she got up and left the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

A month passed by before the old man returned to the subject, which he did seated in the same room, at the same hour of the day,—at about four o'clock, when the dinner things had been removed.

'Isabel,' he said, 'I cannot help myself.'

'As to what, Uncle Indefers?' She knew very well what was the matter in which, as he said, he could not help himself. Had there been anything in which his age had wanted assistance from her youth there would have been no hesitation between them; no daughter was ever more tender; no father was ever more trusting. But on this subject it was necessary that he should speak more plainly before she could reply to him.

'As to your cousin and the property.'

'Then in God's name do not trouble yourself further in looking for help where there is none to be had. You mean that the estate ought to go to a man and not to a woman?'

'It ought to go to a Jones.'

'I am not a Jones, nor likely to become a Jones.'

'You are as near to me as he is,—and so much dearer!'

'But not on that account a Jones. My name is Isabel Brodrick. A woman not born to be a Jones

may have the luck to become one by marriage, but that will never be the case with me.'

'You should not laugh at that which is to me a duty.'

'Dear, dear uncle!' she said, caressing him, 'if I seemed to laugh'—and she certainly had laughed when she spoke of the luck of becoming a Jones—'it is only that you may feel how little importance I attach to it all on my own account.'

'But it is important,—terribly important!'

'Very well. Then go to work with two things in your mind fixed as fate. One is that you must leave Llanfeare to your nephew Henry Jones, and the other that I will not marry your nephew Henry Jones. When it is all settled it will be just as though the old place were entailed, as it used to be.'

'I wish it were.'

'So do I, if it would save you trouble.'

'But it isn't the same;—it can't be the same. In getting back the land your grandfather sold I have spent the money I had saved for you.'

'It shall be all the same to me, and I will take pleasure in thinking that the old family place shall remain as you would have it. I can be proud of the family though I can never bear the name.'

'You do not care a straw for the family.'

'You should not say that, Uncle Indefer. It is not true. I care enough for the family to sympathize with you altogether in what you are doing,

but not enough for the property to sacrifice myself in order that I might have a share in it.'

'I do not know why you should think so much evil of Henry.'

'Do you know any reason why I should think well enough of him to become his wife? I do not. In marrying a man a woman should be able to love every little trick belonging to him. The parings of his nails should be dear to her. Every little wish of his should be a care to her. It should be pleasant to her to serve him in things most menial. Would it be so to me, do you think, with Henry Jones?'

'You are always full of poetry and books.'

'I should be full of something very bad if I were to allow myself to stand at the altar with him. Drop it, Uncle Indefar. Get it out of your mind as a thing quite impossible. It is the one thing I can't and won't do, even for you. It is the one thing that you ought not to ask me to do. Do as you like with the property,—as you think right.'

'It is not as I like.'

'As your conscience bids you, then; and I with myself, which is the only little thing that I have in the world, will do as I like, or as my conscience bids me.'

These last words she spoke almost roughly, and as she said them she left him, walking out of the room with an air of offended pride. But in this there was a purpose. If she were hard to

him, hard and obstinate in her determination, then would he be enabled to be so also to her in his determination, with less of pain to himself. She felt it to be her duty to teach him that he was justified in doing what he liked with his property, because she intended to do what she liked with herself. Not only would she not say a word towards dissuading him from this change in his old intentions, but she would make the change as little painful to him as possible by teaching him to think that it was justified by her own manner to him.

For there was a change, not only in his mind, but in his declared intentions. Llanfeare had belonged to Indefar Joneses for many generations. When the late Squire had died, now twenty years ago, there had been remaining out of ten children only one, the eldest, to whom the property now belonged. Four or five coming in succession after him had died without issue. Then there had been a Henry Jones, who had gone away and married, had become the father of the Henry Jones above mentioned, and had then also departed. The youngest, a daughter, had married an attorney named Brodrick, and she also had died, having no other child but Isabel. Mr. Brodrick had married again, and was now the father of a large family, living at Hereford, where he carried on his business. He was not very 'well-to-do' in the world. The new Mrs. Brodrick had preferred her own babies to

Isabel, and Isabel when she was fifteen years of age had gone to her bachelor uncle at Llanfeare. There she had lived for the last ten years, making occasional visits to her father at Hereford.

Mr. Indefar Jones, who was now between seventy and eighty years old, was a gentleman who through his whole life had been disturbed by reflections, fears, and hopes as to the family property on which he had been born, on which he had always lived, in possession of which he would certainly die, and as to the future disposition of which it was his lot in life to be altogether responsible. It had been entailed upon him before his birth in his grandfather's time, when his father was about to be married. But the entail had not been carried on. There had come no time in which this Indefar Jones had been about to be married, and the former old man having been given to extravagance, and been generally in want of money, had felt it more comfortable to be without an entail. His son had occasionally been induced to join with him in raising money. Thus not only since he had himself owned the estate, but before his father's death, there had been forced upon him reflections as to the destination of Llanfeare. At fifty he had found himself unmarried, and unlikely to marry. His brother Henry was then alive; but Henry had disgraced the family,—had run away with a married woman whom he had married after a divorce, had taken to race-

courses and billiard-rooms, and had been altogether odious to his brother Indefer. Nevertheless the boy which had come from this marriage, a younger Henry, had been educated at his expense, and had occasionally been received at Llanfeare. He had been popular with no one there, having been found to be a sly boy, given to lying, and, as even the servants said about the place, unlike a Jones of Llanfeare. Then had come the time in which Isabel had been brought to Llanfeare. Henry had been sent away from Oxford for some offence not altogether trivial, and the Squire had declared to himself and others that Llanfeare should never fall into his hands.

Isabel had so endeared herself to him that before she had been two years in the house she was the young mistress of the place. Everything that she did was right in his eyes. She might have anything that she would ask, only that she would ask for nothing. At this time the cousin had been taken into an office in London, and had become,—so it was said of him,—a steady young man of business. But still, when allowed to show himself at Llanfeare, he was unpalatable to them all—unless it might be to the old Squire. It was certainly the case that in his office in London he made himself useful, and it seemed that he had abandoned that practice of running into debt and having the bills sent down to Llanfeare which he had adopted early in his career.

During all this time the old Squire was terribly troubled about the property. His will was always close at his hand. Till Isabel was twenty-one this will had always been in Henry's favour,—with a clause, however, that a certain sum of money which the Squire possessed should go to her. Then in his disgust towards his nephew he changed his purpose, and made another will in Isabel's favour. This remained in existence as his last resolution for three years; but they had been three years of misery to him. He had endured but badly the idea that the place should pass away out of what he regarded as the proper male line. To his thinking it was simply an accident that the power of disposing of the property should be in his hands. It was a religion to him that a landed estate in Britain should go from father to eldest son, and in default of a son to the first male heir. Britain would not be ruined because Llanfeare should be allowed to go out of the proper order. But Britain would be ruined if Britons did not do their duty in that sphere of life to which it had pleased God to call them; and in this case his duty was to maintain the old order of things.

And during this time an additional trouble added itself to those existing. Having made up his mind to act in opposition to his own principles, and to indulge his own heart; having declared both to his nephew and to his niece that Isabel should be his heir, there came to

him, as a consolation in his misery, the power of repurchasing a certain fragment of the property which his father, with his assistance, had sold. The loss of these acres had been always a sore wound to him, not because of his lessened income, but from a feeling that no owner of an estate should allow it to be diminished during his holding of it. He never saw those separated fields estranged from Llanfeare, but he grieved in his heart. That he might get them back again he had saved money since Llanfeare had first become his own. Then had come upon him the necessity of providing for Isabel. But when with many groans he had decided that Isabel should be the heir, the money could be allowed to go for its intended purpose. It had so gone, and then his conscience had become too strong for him, and another will was made.

It will be seen how he had endeavoured to reconcile things. When it was found that Henry Jones was working like a steady man at the London office to which he was attached, that he had sown his wild oats, then Uncle Indefer began to ask himself why all his dearest wishes should not be carried out together by a marriage between the cousins. 'I don't care a bit for his wild oats,' Isabel had said, almost playfully, when the idea had first been mooted to her. 'His oats are too tame for me rather than too wild. Why can't he look any one in the face?' Then her uncle had been angry with her, think-



ing that she was allowing a foolish idea to interfere with the happiness of them all.

But his anger with her was never enduring; and, indeed, before the time at which our story commenced he had begun to acknowledge to himself that he might rather be afraid of her anger than she of his. There was a courage about her which nothing could dash. She had grown up under his eyes strong, brave, sometimes almost bold, with a dash of humour, but always quite determined in her own ideas of wrong or right. He had in truth been all but afraid of her when he found himself compelled to tell her of the decision to which his conscience compelled him. But the will was made,—the third, perhaps the fourth or fifth, which had seemed to him to be necessary since his mind had been exercised in this matter. He made this will, which he assured himself should be the last, leaving Llanfeare to his nephew on condition that he should prefix the name of Indefer to that of Jones, and adding certain stipulations as to further entail. Then everything of which he might die possessed, except Llanfeare itself and the furniture in the house, he left to his niece Isabel.

‘We must get rid of the horses,’ he said to her about a fortnight after the conversation last recorded.

‘Why that?’

‘My will has been made, and there will be