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Anthony Trollope, A.O.J. Cockshut (Editor)

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In "Miss Mackenzie" Trollope made a deliberate attempt "to prove that a novel may be produced without any love," but as he candidly admits in his "Autobiography," the attempt "breaks down before the conclusion."

In taking for his heroine an middle-aged spinster, his contemporaries of writing about young girls in love. Instead he depicts Margaret Mackenzie, overwhelmed with money troubles, as she tries to assess the worth and motives of four very different suitors.

Although her creator calls her "unattractive," most readers will warm to Miss Mackenzie and admire her modesty, dignity, and shrewdness.

Miss Mackenzie Details

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Author : Anthony Trollope , A.O.J. Cockshut (Editor)

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From Reader Review Miss Mackenzie for online ebook

Dianne says

Never read this, but was seduced by the fact that it was free on the Kindle. What a good find! Really makes you feel how exposed and fragile was the state of women's lives a couple of centuries ago...at the mercy of the inheritance laws and the good will of family to support them. The sheltered existence led by our heroine as she cares for her brother, who then dies, leaves her totally unprepared to deal with the world on her own. Fun to immerse oneself in such an alien world!

Ellie says

A very pleasant read, although the story itself could have easily ended 50 pages sooner. However, the filler created by Trollope was also enjoyable.

It was an interesting portrait of a woman on her own in 19th century England. I became quite attached to Miss Mackenzie and absorbed in her story.

And as always, Trollope's prose is smooth and comforting. There is lots of plot events and the usual range of Victorian characters.

Laura says

'Miss Mackenzie' by Anthony Trollope was the runner-up in Radio 4's 'Neglected Classics' vote. The novel was championed by Joanna Trollope who will be appearing on 'Open Book' to talk about the story in the very same week the Classic Serial begins the broadcast of Part One.

It is indeed a neglected gem of a novel. Miss Mackenzie is a single woman in her mid-thirties who receives a large inheritance when her brother dies. She must then deal with what comes with the fortune, including several suitors, who may, or, may not, simply be after her money.

Margaret decides to rent a small house in Littlebath and takes her surviving brother Tom's daughter with her as her ward. Tom and his wife, Sarah, are horrified that they have been left no money, especially as they find themselves in financial difficulties. Margaret Mackenzie's suitors include: her brother's junior partner, Mr. Rubb, a handsome young man but 'in trade'; her cousin, John Ball, a widowed father of seven. John is a gentle soul, who lives with his ailing father and his supercilious mother, Lady Ball; and the oleaginous Mr. Maguire, a curate in Littlebath. Unfortunately Mr. Maguire has a rather terrifying squint.

Miss Mackenzie has to pick her way through this romantic minefield, not knowing who is the best suitor and whether each man wants to marry her for her fortune rather than love. Her wish is simply to find true love. However, storm clouds gather when it is discovered that the fortune does not belong to Margaret after all but to her cousin, John Ball. The financial assistance she has given to her brother's family can continue no longer and also, what is to become of Miss Mackenzie?

Anthony Trollope has created a wonderful heroine in Miss Mackenzie. Although past the bloom of youth, her modesty, kindness and dignity will endear her to the listener and there is genuine delight when John Ball, against his mother's wishes, declares his love for Margaret and asks her to marry him.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00x8...>

Nente says

Rather sweet, and quite a bit shorter than the usual Trollope novel, with correspondingly fewer characters. Perhaps this may serve as a good place to start and see if you like his style: the writing and atmosphere are essentially the same.

What characters there are, though, are vividly drawn, sometimes brought before our eyes only in a couple of sentences. I especially liked the main topic Trollope considers here: the social and cultural pressures driving women to marriage, even where no romantic feelings and inclinations are present. He could never at any time be considered a feminist thinker, but in the understanding and appreciation of women I think he was very well advanced for his time.

Perhaps the last third of the novel may be a little strung out, but altogether I would recommend this if you like the literature of the period.

Petra X says

Extremely soppy story that would make a stunning costume drama for the BBC as it has all the right elements - nasty dowager duchesses, scamming suitors, impoverished lovers and people dying, romantically, of consumption. At the end everyone's fortunes are reversed - the poor have money, the snotty get their comeuppance, and those who look like they were in love for pecuniary advantage are proved to have been decent joes and in love for all the right reasons, all along. Everyone who deserves to lives Happily Ever After. (And then... the spin-off series).

It's all quite light and frothy unlike Trollope's more major works such as *The Pallisers* or *The Barset Chronicles*. It does share in common with *Dr. Thorne* a use of the media as revenge, which is an interesting device. Really though, it's almost chick-lit! Obviously Trollope was either a softie at heart, or else quite cynical and knew that then as now, the money is in romances.

If you like classics, it would make a good beach or travel book. For die-hard Trollope fans it is one of those overlooked books that are worth reading but don't expect the social commentary and depth of *The Way We Live Now* or the extraordinary, morally outrageous *Orley Farm*.

Finished 15 April 2011, review 14 June 2015

Robyn says

Sadly overlooked in the 21st century, Anthony Trollope is a gem of the British literary establishment whose books, whilst less enduringly popular than Austen or the Brontes, are every bit as witty, intelligent and timeless.

Miss Mackenzie tells the story of a middle-aged woman who, having nursed her sick brother for her entire life, finds herself to be the recipient of his fortune when he dies. As she attempts to navigate the social whirl to which she has never before been exposed, the unexpected heiress is soon being pursued by several men claiming varying degrees of honesty and affection towards our heroine. Miss Mackenzie must learn to identify who cares for her rather than her fortune, exactly where she fits into society, and whom she can trust when everything comes crashing down around her ears.

Considering this book was written in 1865, the language is easy to understand - even surprisingly modern in parts - whilst remaining sharp and succinct. The watertight prose is deliciously acerbic, summing up a character in just a handful of words and painting a scene with a couple of pointed observations. Despite being steeped in the culture and social mores of the time - fashions, habits and expectations are well-documented throughout - the overall theme is relevant and identifiable as it focuses on the misunderstandings between the genders, plus the timeless question of love versus money and right versus wrong.

Miss Mackenzie herself is a likable character, sweet without being saccharine and in possession of a pleasingly tough streak, whilst her fellow cast-members are satisfactorily fleshed out, even if they appear for no more than a few lines. Trollope as a storyteller makes biting, ironic asides and offers helpful hints and opinions, offering us an insight into his delightfully witty mind. At times, it's hard to believe the modernity of his references and assorted backstories, and his accuracy in describing the wide-ranging selection of classes, genders and personalities.

Despite being written well over 100 years ago, Trollope's novel is accessible, familiar (both in emotion and, to any Londoners, the geographical location) and ultimately, very fun. The story is slow, but blessedly so; it's not about the twists and turns, but the character development, and the intriguing insight into a world which, for better or worse, is slowly being forgotten.

Margaret says

This is an overlooked small gem of a novel. Margaret Mackenzie is a spinster in her mid-thirties who receives a large inheritance when her brother dies and must then deal with what comes with the inheritance, including several suitors, who may or may not simply be after her money. Trollope depicts Miss Mackenzie with his usual unsparing honesty, and although in his autobiography he called her "a very unattractive old maid", her modesty, charity, and dignity endear her to the reader. I found myself so sympathizing with her that I found the rather everyday plot quite engrossing.

Bruce says

I never tire of returning to the novels of Anthony Trollope, and *Miss Mackenzie* has proved to be the treat I'd

anticipated. This wonderful Victorian novelist never fails to delight. In this unassuming little novel, the less than attractive spinster, Margaret Mackenzie, unexpectedly inherits a small fortune and decides to expand her horizons, moving from the dreary London neighborhood where she has long nursed her now deceased brother to the modestly genteel town of Littlebath. There she and her fortune are wooed by the mercenary young clergyman, Mr. Maguire, whom she does not find attractive. Nor is she much more than transiently attracted to Mr. Rubb, the crude and somewhat oily son of her other brother's business associate. Her third suitor is her middle-aged, dumpy, poor but kind cousin who, with his nine children, barely keeps his head above water without her fortune, a fortune which was denied him when she inherited it.

Trollope is a master of satire but satire of a kind-hearted and gentle sort. The reader quickly comes to love these flawed and very human characters, each of whom develops as the story progresses. It was Trollope's claim the in the person of Miss Mackenzie he was creating someone whom one could not possibly love, but he was being disingenuous when he said this. In fact, the reader's sympathies are with her throughout the story, despite her mistakes and foibles. Yes, the landscape is peopled with typical Trollope characters – the senior and slimy clergyman and his domineering, manipulative wife, the whiny and demanding relatives, the snobbish and insensitive aristocrats. The common themes of British 19th century novels are all present – class, money, inheritance, marriage. Probably the only thing missing from this Trollope novel is the fox hunt which is usually included in his more than forty novels.

Maybe what makes Trollope's characters so indelible is their humanity. He has the ability to hold a mirror up to our own world and to ourselves. Yet he does this in such a wise and gentle, such a fond manner, that the reader not only tolerates it but becomes an ally with the author in observing the common life of the world around him and in sympathizing with it.

Each time I read one of Trollope's novel I find myself eager to read another. Fortunately, there are many more.

Kat says

This unusually short and uncomplicated Trollope novel was a delicious read; there isn't a single slow spot. And the novel is especially interesting from a feminist perspective. I think I can safely say that it's the most unromantic novel with a marital plot--that is, a plot that ends with marriage--that I have ever read.

Miss Mackenzie spent her youth in a dependent and confined environment, nursing her invalid brother. At his death she finds herself free and well to do, and sets out to discover what life can offer her in these circumstances. The dangers are many, as Miss Mackenzie, though middle aged (at least in Trollope's time), still thinks wistfully of marriage, and her money makes her a target for fortune hunters. She has multiple suitors, but none are young or dashing; even the ultimate victor remains stodgy and querulous, though ethically embraceable.

An excellent comic novel that explores in acute detail the money-marriage tangle and creates a memorable and realistic portrait of a strong woman in the latter half of the nineteenth century--Miss Mackenzie is my favorite Trollope heroine ever. Two more pluses: there are no Semitic moneylenders in this story, and you can download it free at the Gutenberg Project.

Jim says

I can think of no more amiable writer than Anthony Trollope, whose novels can be read again and again without any diminution of their original power. As a member of the Yahoo! Trollope group, I have read approximately three-quarters of his 47 novels, many of them twice, and at least one of them (**The Way We Live Now**) three times.

What is there about Trollope's work that makes it so multiply readable? My answer would have to include such factors as his high moral tone (without appearing to be priggish in the slightest) along with his delight in creating complicated stories with a large cast of characters. Curiously, he tends to fall flat in his short stories, and most of his shorter novels are not among his best. I would have to make an exception, however, of **Miss Mackenzie**, a novel whose heroine is beyond the first flush of youth and who finds herself with a generous inheritance from the brother she had nursed for many years.

Somehow, she approached the middle years with a physical and moral attractiveness which, together with her fortune, make her the target of a number of persistent suitors ranging from an Evangelical clergyman with a demonic squint to the not quite honest son of her brother's partner in trade to an impoverished widower with children, who also happens to be a baronet.

How Trollope weaves his way through these sticky situations is a wonder. I liked **Miss Mackenzie** the first time I read it; but now I would have to say my admiration has increased. Most nineteenth century novels do not concern themselves with the loves of women who have been around the track a few times. That Trollope succeeds in doing so at the same time as he makes us appreciate her many virtues is a rare accomplishment.

Jane says

This is my second reading of the unforgettable **Miss Mackenzie**. I liked it even better than the first go-around. It is really a fine example of Trollope's depth, as well as his inimitable and often humorous character portrayals.

When her brother dies and she is on her own for the very first time, **Miss Mackenzie** struggles to become independent. The world is a mystery to her and it is much like reading about a cloistered nun leaving the nunnery for the first time.

Miss Mackenzie's determination to make her way through an unfamiliar world and its expectations are engrossing. Due to her limited social interactions for so many years, she is careful when arriving in Littlebath to measure whether she should join a group that might limit her once again. She feels she should share her fortune with others less deserving, and is even criticized for that attempt. Yet, she pushes forward, indomitable and courageous.

As she has inherited a small fortune, she is quickly taken up by three gentlemen, all anxious for her hand. How she analyzes their suits and their behavior toward her comprise a good deal of the narrative.

Whether she is choosing whom she should marry or how she should comport herself, Margaret always holds

our interest and our affection.

Mike says

My first Trollope and a pleasant surprise. For a modern reader not much happens but I quickly found myself immersed in the authors world. His delineation of the female characters is particularly strong and there are many humorous touches. Loved the image of the Rev. Maguire moving 'promiscuously' among the tables at Mrs. Stumfolds tea party. Summed the man up in a sentence. Tempted now to try the first Palliser novel.

QNPoohBear says

Miss Margaret Mackenzie, a middle aged spinster, has spent her life in service to her family. First she nursed her aged father through his final illness and now her older brother, Walter. When Walter's will is read, everyone is shocked he left his fortune to Margaret. None is more shocked than her older brother Tom, of Rubb and Mackenzie, tire manufacturers. Tom's wife takes personal offense at this snub. Margaret is finally getting the chance to live her life and she heads to Littlebath to join society there. Her niece, Susanna, comes along to attend school there with Margaret's money. Margaret is soon caught up in the Evangelical Christian Mrs. Strumfold's society where she meets the squint-eyed minister Mr. Maguire. Margaret is forced to choose between the Strumfoldians and her more morally free neighbors. She tries to straddle both worlds as best she can but Mr. Maguire has Margaret in his line of sight to be his rich bride. She's delighted with visits from her brother's business partner, Mr. Rubb, Jr. and promises to loan her brother money for a mortgage. As she discusses business with Mr. Rubb, she comes to enjoy his company very much and if he should propose... but he isn't a gentleman so naturally he's out of the question. A family tragedy brings her into the orbit of her relatives, Sir John and Lady Ball, their grown children and grandchildren. Sir John's son, John, Jr. is as dull as men come but he becomes a rock on which Margaret can lean on. Then, a chance meeting with her lawyer brings shocking news and Margaret's life will never be the same again.

I think Trollope must have read and enjoyed Jane Austen because this book has many similarities with an Austen comedy of manners. It gets a little more melodramatic in the end but it is at heart a witty social commentary a la Austen and Dickens. Trollope's humor isn't quite as overtly funny as Austen's but with characters named Mr. Slow and Mr. Bideawhile and a clergyman with a squint, you know he is playing with his readers the way Dickens did. Indeed many of the characters bear strong resemblances to Austen characters: Lady Ball is a cross between Lady Catherine and Fanny Dashwood and every manipulative, smothering mother you've ever come across. Mr. Maguire at first seems like a Mr. Collins character but he's no buffoon. He's shrewd and cunning and knows what he wants and will stop at nothing to convince the world he's right. Mrs. Mackenzie of Incharrow is like Elizabeth Bennet's aunt Gardiner with a dash of delightful matchmaker like Emma. I really enjoyed her character. She's manipulative in a good way. Miss Baker and Miss Todd are intriguing characters and I wish they were in the story more.

The main characters are Margaret, Mr. Rubb, John Ball and Mr. Maguire. Margaret is around my age but she seems much older and careworn like Anne Elliot. She's had a tough life and has never been loved so it's easy to root for her and want her to find someone to love. I wasn't thrilled with any of her suitors, they're just too dull, but she knew which one she wanted and so I wanted the match for her. She's a character who is easy to sympathize with. Mr. Rubb seems charming. I liked him. I didn't care for John, a 50 year old widower. I

don't see him making a good lover. He's steady and dependable but I would wish for some passion in a relationship. I couldn't figure out who Margaret was going to choose until she did it. The pacing of the novel is quite slow for the first half and then once it gets going, it gets easier to read. I recommend this to fans of Austen, Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

Margaret Mackenzie spent her youth caring for her ill father, only to spend her young womanhood - and beyond - caring for her brother who was also ill. When her brother died, and left Margaret his small fortune, she was 35 years old, had no friends and knew nothing of the world. But that small fortune left her with options! Most middle-class women in Victorian England had to find a husband in order to secure even their most basic needs. Margaret could afford to look around a bit.

Not only did Margaret have her £800 a year, but she was a kind and gentle soul into the bargain. *"Aunt is so kind," Susanna said. "She's always kind. If you wake her up in the middle of the night, she's kind in a moment. And if there's anything good to eat, it will make her eyes quite shine if she sees that anybody else likes it. I have known her sit for half an hour ever so uncomfortable, because she would not disturb the cat."*

As things would have it, though, middle-class men also needed to marry. By finding a woman who had a bit of money, and combining it with their own, a comfortable life might be had. Margaret had options! Perhaps more options than she anticipated!

Trollope gives us much of his usual humor. A butler hired for just an evening was called Mr. Grandairs. Sir John Ball was on the boards of at least two named firms: The Shadrach Fire and the Abednego Life Companies. Margaret's attorney was Mr. Slow, of the oft-mentioned firm of Slow and Bideawhile. Of course, Margaret's many admirers provided their amusement as well.

Although perhaps not my favorite, this is very good, typical Trollope, and a solid 4 stars.

Anna K?avi?a says

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a husband.
