

Every time he met him Monnypenny shocked Beckett—shocked him with his youth—he could never think of him except as an elder, or at youngest as a contemporary. So it was always a shock to meet the tall, solemn stripling of twenty-eight, whose hair was quite white and whose eyes and eyebrows were black. Beckett was a widower with young children, who, since the death of his lamented Emma, had been under the care of a somewhat wild young governess, Morgan Wells.

Marlingate, with the aid of considerable sums and the absorbed attention and devotion of Monnypenny—who was duly elected Mayor—eventually developed into a high-class watering-place, every detail of which was planned with minute care. Marlingate was, in fact, the passion of Monnypenny's life.

Beckett having guaranteed these large sums towards this object, naturally made Marlingate a second home for his children and young governess. It was in consequence of this that there was a dual conflict in Monnypenny's life—the love of the town to which he was a willing slave, and his unwilling captivity in Morgan's toils.

His municipal life was disturbed, outraged almost, by the spell that she cast over him. Her attraction was at first of an elusive quantity. She is described as having her hair, which was like one of those brown clouds that discharge rain at sunset, untidily lumped into a net. When she poured out tea she slopped it into the saucer, and put two lumps of sugar into Monnypenny's tea without asking him if he took any, which he did not. Morgan was, in fact, of illegitimate birth, and was a relative of Beckett's first wife, who was well connected. The slur of her birth made it an outrage on the undoubted respectability and decorum of Marlingate society, that it should be required to meet the girl at the Assembly dance. It was not the untidy little governess that drew Monnypenny's unwilling admiration as she came up to him with untutored disregard of etiquette.

"He found her a beautiful dancer, light as a cobweb, yet with a warmth and abandonment which his other partners lacked. Sometimes when he held her lightly pliant against his arm he was conscious of that wild woodland thrill surging up under her laces and half startling him with the thought of chasing sunlight. He was at once troubled and enticed by the idea that she might suddenly dart away or be magically transformed into some woodland Cinderella and run off brown and barefoot with dead leaves in her hair." It was at this dance that Monnypenny learned to think of her as Morgan le Fay, after the enchantress, King Arthur's sister.

After a delicious meeting with her in the woods behind the town Monnypenny came to his senses; he told himself that he, the Mayor of Marlingate had an assignation with a little nursery governess. He always called Morgan that when he wanted to escape from her. And yet—he was back under the Gringer, his arms were round her, his mouth closed on the sweetness of her lips. Then anger

possessed him. How dared she? He was hot with fury when he thought how she had brushed away the town, sweeping it carelessly away as if it had been a thing of nought, offering herself in its stead. She had set a price on herself, weighed herself in the balance with Marlingate and tipped the town to the beam. Damn her. She was like a child jauntily offering a bunch of leaves in exchange for all that was settled and solid in his life.

No, he was once again the Mayor. He chose the town. And the little governess went back to London with her charges and eventually married the widower.

If that had been the end of the story it would have still held a more than common share of interest. But in a year or two Morgan le Fay returned to Marlingate as Mrs. Beckett. She was then much more wonderful and more dangerous, and her undisciplined love for Monnypenny took its fateful course.

As for Monnypenny, his heart was at last awake, but even the delirium of his illicit love was not sufficient for him to throw over his ambition for the town and leave it with her for her sake. Once more Morgan is relegated to the second place and her thwarted desire ends in self-destruction.

Monnypenny, in his remorse, sets himself deliberately to destroy the town for which he had sacrificed the happiness of his life.

The methods he adopts are not the least powerful descriptions in the book. Only its utter destruction would avenge her memory.

Every page of this book is of absorbing interest, and we heartily commend it to our readers as a feast of good things.

H. H.

#### A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Yet there never was an age—and I say this with certainty, in which personality was of such supreme significance as it is to-day. For this, after all, is the end to which my thinking has brought me—nationalism is nothing, internationalism is nothing, unless it is an expression of individual aspirations and ideals; for the end of both nationalism and internationalism is the ultimate return to racial character. Cultivate the personal will to righteousness, teach the citizen that he is the State, and the general good may take care of itself."—*David Blackburn* in "The Builders," by *Ellen Glasgow*.

#### COMING EVENTS.

December 13th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. Winter General Meeting, Clinical Theatre, St. Bartholomew's Hospital. 2.30 p.m. Lecture by Mrs. Dickenson Berry, M.D., on "Serbia and Jugo-Slavia—Before the War and After." 3 p.m. Tea will be served in the Nurses' Sitting Room.

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