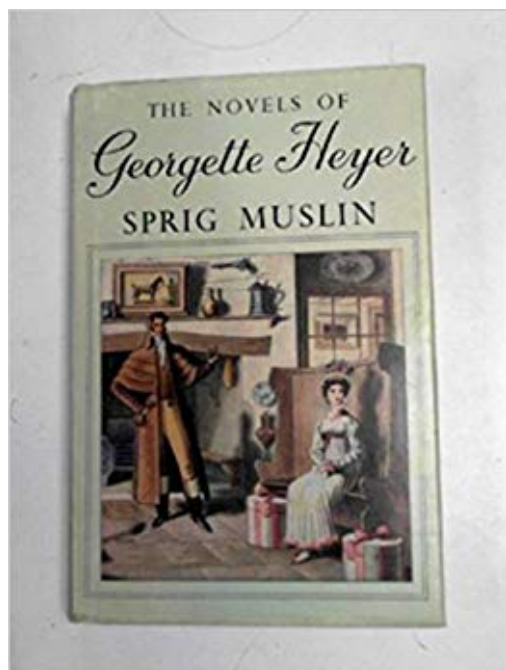


Sprig Muslin (The Uniform Edition, Volume 23) by Georgette Heyer



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Set at the height of the Regency period, this tale of thwarted love is by one of the leading writers of historical romantic fiction.



Reviews of the **Sprig Muslin (The Uniform Edition, Volume 23)** by Georgette Heyer

Dreladred

Sprig Muslin is enchanting, as enchanting as every Georgette Heyer I've yet read has been. That's about sixteen of them now, I think. If you enjoy an actual visit to the Regency, as if you had a time machine, you'll find it enchanting, too. I hate to take her down one star, but on this I must. Georgette Heyer is a master of history, period dialog, and the quick character sketch. As a rule, she doesn't wallow in the dynamics of a love story, with love scenes or endless romantic dialog. However, in my favorite Heyer books, like *Venetia*, she gives you a deep love story and rich characters, backed by wonderful sketch characters to round things out. But principles shouldn't be sketched. On very rare occasions she has main characters who aren't fully-formed. And the story suffers for it.

Sprig Muslin follows a story structure that modern romances rarely use. In a modern historical romance, you know precisely who's going to end up with whom. It's tattooed on their foreheads. This story leaves you in more suspense on that score, far more. I love that. We meet Sir Gareth Ludlow at the open, the beloved Uncle Gary to his tribe of nieces and nephews he adores. He is that rare, rare creature in romance heroes - a nice guy. He was deeply in love with his fiancé, who was killed seven years before. He's never gotten over it. Now, believing he never really will love again, not that way, he's decided to bow to pressure and marry, this time to a friend. I do wish we had seen a bit more of that friendship. Strike one. His sister has an absolute fit when she discovers that her handsome and highborn brother is going to throw himself away on a dowd like Lady Hester Theale. Sir Gareth isn't exactly outraged over the somewhat cruel things she says about Lady Hester. Strike two. He also says, sort of touching, that at least he wants to marry someone he can help, and that Hester is too fine a person to be living so intolerably, in the sort of uncomfortable spinster situation common then, with a family that marginalizes her.

And so it kicks off, and moves pretty quickly. Sir Gareth sets off to ask Lady Hester's hand, and on the way encounters a runaway young lady of obvious birth named, well, at least named Amanda. She won't tell him much, and what she does tell him is one whopper of a lie after another. Amanda would say she was improving reality. The tangle of events Ms. Heyer does so well unfolds, when Gareth ends up taking Amanda with him to Lady Hester's family home, unable to abandon a very young and pretty girl clearly set on mischief. Yes, Amanda is an absolute flake, and a real handful. It's far more believable than it sounds here. She's been fed on romance, is more than a little flighty, and ready for adventure. She's stubbornly set on marrying her childhood sweetheart, an officer on the Peninsula who's been sent home to recover from a wound. She does seem to adore him, while Gareth seems at least drawn to her, since she reminds him of Clarissa, the headstrong girl he was engaged to. Poor Hester is left to do what she does best, which is remaining kind and gracious in a lousy situation. Gareth does find a private moment to propose. The scene is rather brief, and Hester refuses. The reader is really left wondering whether it's because she loves Gareth and believes he doesn't love her, or because she herself is more drawn to another character, the vicar who obviously adores her. As Heyer leads you back and forth, implying one potential outcome, then perhaps another, you're not quite certain who to root for, and for me, Amanda has all the color and life. This is my strike three. Hester really needed to be a great character too. Subtle is not boring. Spinster is not undesirable. Shy is not stupid. Hester badly needed to be fleshed out, with more wit and wisdom. Perhaps a second reading would change my mind about this, but it won't about the ending.

I'm dangerously close to a spoiler alert, and I won't go there. Suffice it to say the end shifts and shifts again, and at the close, it's not satisfying, not because it's a surprise, but because too much is left unspoken, unexpressed. How I wanted to know more! I wanted the ending I got and was still disappointed. This is a very, VERY abrupt ending on that account. One love story gets its fair amount of attention. The other leaves you hungry for more. It's maddening when I think of the terrific characters she's done, for *Venetia*, which I mentioned, *Faro's Daughter* and *Devil's Cub* and so many others. For me, the ending was a let-down to a really sweet and fun story. It's worth taking the ride, but I wouldn't make it my first Georgette Heyer.

Hasirri

Sprig Muslin has now replaced The Grand Sophy as my favourite Heyer regency. Humour and wit throughout.

The characters are so well-drawn. An ensemble cast, if you will, rather than one prominent main character (like Sophy). We have Sir Gareth Ludlow, a gallant Corinthian, who decides it's his duty to marry. Although there are innumerable eligible females eyeing him, he offers for Lady Hester, a mild, sensible spinster. (Don't you love the descriptor "sensible" -- guaranteed to attract the likes of staid clergymen or widowers with children.) Throw in Amanda, a spirited runaway with a lively imagination, whom, to be honest, I was prepared not to like (I've read too many stories with precocious young ladies who are obnoxious rather than charming), but I found her delightful. Even the secondary characters are funny and have their moments.

A very well-paced, enjoyable, fun story that is more comedy than romance. The whole book had me laughing, and the ending, inexplicably, reminded me of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

Buge

Let me preface the review by saying I am a long-time fan of Georgette Heyer and regency romance. That being said I found this a really fun read. I liked practical and sensible Hester and the handsome dashing hero Gareth Ludlow who has decided to marry Hester in a marriage of convenience. Much to his surprise she turns him down but before he can work on changing her mind he needs to enlist her aid with a beautiful headstrong runaway -- Amanda. The comedy is provided by the escapades of this young lady as she carefully spins her lies and stories as she searches for her true love. As both Hester and Gareth get caught up in her schemes, they find that love can be found in the most surprising ways. If you like an Austen type read with brilliant conversation and happy endings, then you should enjoy this.

lolike

I've heard that Georgette Heyer is similar to Jane Austen, which is why I've since purchased several Heyer books when they were on sale. This is the first I have read/listened to. I loved it. It reminded me of Sense and Sensibility but was funnier and less tragic. If you like Jane Austen, I recommend Heyer. However, I have also read that Heyer books are very clean. This is true, but there's a lot of sexual innuendo in this particular book, with references to "natural" siblings, mistresses and petticoat lines.

The narrator was outstanding. I'm almost afraid to listen to a Heyer book that is NOT read by Sian Phillips. It was PERFECT. She reminds me of Juliet Stevenson. Highly recommended to traditional Regency fans and fans of Jane Austen.

Cargahibe

Georgette Heyer creates characters you want to know and places them in predicaments that are amusing and captivating. She joins Jane Austen and Mary Stewart as authors I read again and again. No only do these ladies create greater characters and plots, but their command of the English language is formidable. Perhaps I should add Daphne Du Murier to that group. Georgette Heyer is perhaps the wittiest of the group. Since I first found "Devil's Cub" in the Birmingham public library when I was 12 I have been hooked. Somehow all my battered copies became misplaced and I moved on to other, more current authors. I read a couple of "Romance" novels by some popular authors and found them to be poorly written, depending on sex to carry the story. I gave up on that genre and moved to Tom Clancy and Dick Francis. I have read mostly mysteries and so forth for several years. Then about two years ago one of Georgette Heyer's regencies was on Kindle deal of the day and I paid \$3.79 to download it. Once again I was transported to Regency England where wit and manners were the order of the day. No insipid heroines here! I had forgotten how clever Ms Heyer was. I now have an iPad Kindle app filled with delightful reading and I have read every title at least twice. Sitting in a waiting room? No old magazines for me. I can whip out my iPad and be at Lady whoever's ball in seconds. What fun.

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