



The Masterful Mr. Montague

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Montague has devoted his life to managing the wealth of London's elite, but at a huge cost: a family of his own. Then the enticing Miss Violet Matcham seeks his help, and in the puzzle she presents him, he finds an intriguing new challenge professionally ... and personally.

Violet, devoted lady-companion to the aging Lady Halstead, turns to Montague to reassure her ladyship that her affairs are in order. But the famous Montague is not at all what she'd expected - this man is compelling, decisive, supportive, and strong - everything Violet needs in a champion, a position to which Montague rapidly lays claim.

But then Lady Halstead is murdered and Violet and Montague, aided by Barnaby Adair, Inspector Stokes, Penelope, and Griselda, race to expose a cunning and cold-blooded killer who stalks closer and closer. Will Montague and Violet learn the shocking truth too late to seize their chance at enduring love?

The Masterful Mr. Montague Details

Date : Published April 29th 2014 by Avon

ISBN :

Author : Stephanie Laurens

Format : Kindle Edition 593 pages

Genre : Romance, Historical Romance, Historical, Mystery, Historical Fiction, Regency Romance

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From Reader Review The Masterful Mr. Montague for online ebook

Cardyn Brooks says

The Masterful Mr. Montague cements the change of focus from a romantic pursuit in the context of intriguing mystery to criminal investigation procedural set against a backdrop of social classes and manners in S.L.'s novels that began with Stokes and Griselda's story (the only S.L. book that didn't compel me to finish reading it). Adair/Penelope and Stokes/Griselda provide the established emotional intimacy S.L. fans expect and token PG-13 sexual interludes, while Violet and Montague are the token lovers, who spend most of the story apart from each other (although thankfully, not due to any manufactured misunderstandings or laughable conflicts). It's this lack of physical proximity that makes it difficult to accept their sudden declarations of love. Maybe if the pacing of their courtship ran as a developing thread through future Barnaby Adair cases instead of seemingly abrupt declarations at the end, their relationship would feel more credible?

And could more authors, editors, etc. please, please resist the temptation to put a character in jeopardy by making formerly intelligent characters experience sudden amnesia, in which they forget that a person is being guarded for life-threatening reasons (other than plot pivot conveniences)!

This story feels like it's more about the personal and professional interactions between the main characters to establish a complementary team for solving future cases. The preview of Loving Rose suggests that it will offer a more conventional romance framed within mysterious intrigue, which makes me look forward to reading it.

The Masterful Mr. Montague is a sweet historical cozy mystery, but not recommended as a first read as an introduction to Stephanie Laurens; try original Cynster series, Bastion Club or Cynster Sisters.

Got Romance! Reviews says

Genre: Historical, Action/Adventure, Mystery, Romance, Science Fiction, Suspense

Length: Novel

Heat Level: Spicy

Reviewer: Suki

Date: January 24, 2015

First I want to say I am a huge Stephanie Laurens fan. Fell in love with the Cynsters years ago. That said, this is not your typical SL book. When I first started reading it I was confused, where was the love story with Montague and Violet? Wait, why are we in the bedroom of the other two characters, and in their head. None of this fit the usual style. If you have read SL's books you have seen Penelope in a few other books and her story with Adair has already been told in the previous book, Where the Heart Leads, and although I love to catch up with past characters, I do not need to be in their bedroom again. We have seen it and been there; we know their love story...I digress. I was confused enough to finally go to Ms. Laurens website where it states The Masterful Mr. Montague is a mystery with romantic elements. AHHHHHH well that's a horse of a different color isn't it. So now that I am not expecting the typical SL romance I can get down to the mystery. And this is a mystery, in fact it's one of many and it appears that they will now include this whole group

solving them.

I have to say I didn't guess who did it although there were times when I suspected. The story is good and I actually skimmed over the love scenes when they came (see above for why). My biggest complaint about the book is that the love story is shoved into the last few pages of the book and it is not given the time and the space these two characters deserve. I enjoyed these two very much and want to know more about them. Although I love the book, because the publisher is selling it as a romance I can't give it a 5, but because SL does explain on her website that it's a mystery with romantic themes it redeems the book back to a 4.

Lisa Kay says

View of Whitehall (Scotland Yard Headquarters was located in in Great Scotland Yard off the north-eastern end of Whitehall back then. Thanks, Kit★, for finding the following pic.)

★★★½? Fair warning: If you're looking for a ton of romance, you aren't going to find it in this book. It does have a good mystery, though, which I enjoyed. The love scenes in this one are mostly between married couple, Barnaby and Penelope. I would have liked more page time for Montague and Violet. I really believed them as a couple and thought they made an excellent match. Their love was sweet, but not too syrupy sweet for me.

There was a bit of repetition (as usual in a SL book), especially out of Penelope, that drove me a bit batty, but I just skimmed over it. The best scenes were when the six of them (Stokes & Griselda; Barnaby & Penelope; Montague & Violet) were trying to solve the mystery together, so I'll definitely continue with the series, as there looks to be more of that.

Thanks, to ShoSho and Kit★ – my steadfast “buddy readers” in RLftCI – for sharing their Discussion Questions, supplying pics, and providing so much fun.

Nidofito says

I don't know what was worse: the condescending, holier-than-thou attitude that made me hate all characters (the good ones more than the 'bad' ones); the insta-love, which comprised of nothing more than staring and smiling; the fact that the main characters were the ones that the author spent the least amount of time; the bland, repetitive writing; or the below average mystery that, admittedly, only had one nice twist.

If the author's thought was to tease the readers into continuing the series for more information regarding Victoria and Montague, then she's totally missed her mark. I mean, WHY would I read a book about characters in another book when they SHOULD'VE been at the centre stage in a book where they were, supposedly, the main characters.

I should've trusted my instinct to not read the book as I've read another Stephanie Laurens book several years ago that I still cringe at. Needless to say, I've learned my lesson.

Agnieszka says

Ksi??ka troch? za s?aba na cztery gwiazdki, ale zwa?ywszy na to, ?e na tle pozosta?ych przeczytanych przeze mnie pozycji wypada nieco lepiej, to postanowi?am jednak oceni? j? tak wysoko. Samo ?ledztwo raczej by?o nudnawe, ot szukanie po?ród finansów ró?nych wp?at, nie?cis?o?ci i nazwiska mordercy. Podoba?o mi si? to, ?e relacja Heathcote'a i Violet by?a spokojna i wywa?ona. Nie z?y?am si? z nimi jako? specjalnie, ale wzbudzili moj? sympati?. Czyta?o mi si? to ró?nie. Mój zapa? czytelniczy nieco os?ab? w ostatnich tygodniach, ale ostatnie dwie?cie stron ksi??ki poch?on??am do?? szybko i z przyjemno?ci?.

Nymeria says

I might be slightly exaggerating but it felt that this book was 30% about the two "main" characters and 70% about characters from previous books continuing their romance and solving the "mystery". Which makes this book a big WTF?!!?

On the plus side, I read this book amazingly fast. My secret? I skipped/skimmed all the scenes that didn't involve Violet or Montague, our 2 MCs. I don't need everything to be about the MCs but here the screen time given to the other characters was just so ridiculous that I couldn't be bothered with their scenes. I didn't know them, I didn't care about them and the few scenes I read before I started skimming didn't make me curious about them. I did read enough to know that said secondary characters got more action in the bedroom than Violet and Montague. Actually, they spent way more time together (I mean "on page together") than V & M, period. So of course it's a complete romance fail. And since it failed in the mystery department as well, it's 100% fail.

One last warning in case you're brave enough to pick up this book: don't expect Montague to be "masterful". The title is vastly misleading . He doesn't exhibit any alpha tendencies during the book. He had the potential to be a very interesting character. If only the book had actually been about him...

But in the end, since I only wasted about an hour on this book:

Next!

Tiina says

I had some hopes for this book since it promised a murder mystery and a historical romance. I was disappointed. The mystery took just ages to solve, and the romance was written in the sickly sweetest way.

The beginning of the book was much better and it got more and more boring towards the end. Sorry!

Sharyn says

My expectations for this book were very high and sadly, the book did not live up to expectations. Due to the title and the back cover blurb, I assumed this would be a Historical Romance focused on:

- 1) the relationship between Mr. Heathcote Montague and Miss Violet Matcham,
- 2) the murder mystery, and then,
- 3) Barnaby and Penelope Adair, the husband/wife investigators from previous books who work with Inspector Stokes and his wife Griselda.

In fact, I thought most of the book would be taken up with Violet and Heathcote investigating together. Instead, the story plays out with the main focus on:

- 1) the murder mystery
- 2) Barnaby and Penelope and their relationship
- 3) small amount of Heathcote and Violet

Thus, my disappointment. In fact, the majority of sex scenes were between Barnaby and Penelope (FILLED with purple prose by the way. Sometimes I couldn't even figure out if any sex was actually happening).

I would have approached this story in a better mindset if it had been called, perhaps, "The Malicious Murder of Lady Halstead". Then I would have known most of the story was actually about the murder. As to that, I think all of the suspects' names started with a "M" or a "W" and I kept getting confused who was who.

All in all, this was just an okay read for me and I'm not sure I'm going to read any more in the Casebook of Barnaby Adair series.

Kit★ says

3.5 Stars. On with our series reading over in Romance Lovers for the Challenge Impaired. I was looking forward to getting into this one. I'll admit, when it was first announced that Montague was going to have his own story, I wasn't sure about it. I mean, we had been picturing Montague as an older guy ever since he was first introduced in the early Cynster novels, so there was some adjustment in how to imagine him. Reset him to a handsome, virile man in his forties, one who is ready for love, having accomplished many things in his life and attaining a tip-top level in his career. I liked Montague pretty well indeed. He was smart and kind and strong, just like he should be. I only wish more time had been spent getting to know him! The same goes for the heroine, Violet. She seemed lovely, but I wanted to get to spend more time with her, and especially with her and Montague together. Having read some reviews before reading this, I wasn't really surprised by the amount of focus that was on Penelope and Barnaby, and somewhat on Stokes and Griselda too, but I still was left wanting more time with Montague and Violet. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed spending time with the other four characters (especially Stokes, I'm very fond of him), seeing how their families had grown with the addition of the children, seeing how they were handling the change that brought to their lives. However, there were too many love scenes that were not about the main couple. I missed that buildup in the relationship with Heathcote and Violet. I thought their chemistry was good and sweet, but I missed having that simmering tension and time spent getting to know each other that's such a big part of this author's novels.

The mystery though was just fine. I was kept guessing through the story, suspecting one person or another, never being sure. I was surprised by things that I hadn't seen coming, and I liked the way the investigation

played out. I think these characters are a fun team to read about, how each of their personalities contributes to the investigating. The addition of Heathcote and Violet will be welcome in future stories in this series, because I hope to see more of them.

I definitely like the more mysterious direction this series has, and the look into the police work of the times. Other little things I liked were the little visit with the older Cynster ladies (and Lady O), and the rescue of the girls from The Laurels, and their placement with the Athena Agency. That, I liked because of my recent read of the fifth Bastion Club novel, where the heroine of that novel had founded the agency. So I liked seeing it mentioned. It's the little things, lol.

I think next up we are continuing with *The Curious Case of Lady Latimer's Shoes*. Then, after that, we tackle Malcolm and his redemption. That's the one I'm really looking forward to!

Melissa McHugh says

For me, in many ways, this was a step back from the last few books by Stephanie Laurens. I've read all of her books, and the reason I keep going back even when I feel slightly dissatisfied is the woman knows how to write a mystery. That being said, her characters can often leave something to be desired--they rarely deviate from a certain archetype to the point where I feel like she could write a series starring one couple involved in many mysteries.

That particular aspect of her writing was very apparent in *The Masterful Mr. Montague*, an offshoot of her Cynster series, in which she revisits Barnaby Adair and Penelope Ashford from *Where the Heart Leads*, but also brings back Inspector Stokes and his new wife Griselda and the recurring character of Heathcote Montague, the go-to financial management genius in her universe. By juggling these two couples, and attempting to build a romance between Montague and Violet Matcham, the companion to murder victim Lady Agatha Halstead, I think Ms. Laurens takes on too much.

The characters are not different enough to capture my attention and become invested in their separate stories. There is some mention that Penelope is trying to balance her old interests, her new motherhood and her penchant for investigations, but it's never much of a focus. The relationship with her husband is shown only through brief love scenes (much shorter than the norm in Ms. Laurens' previous novels). The relationship between Stokes and Griselda is even more shallow--there are very rare moments of them away from everyone else, and the two couples are so completely similar that there are two instances where Stokes and Adair both enter the same room, and come across their wives with their respective children, and marvel at the newfound awesomeness of their life. The family life is so superficially described that it was nearly the end of the book before I realized which child belonged to which couple.

The book is named for Heathcote Montague, but he remains as much in the background as his mate, Violet. They have maybe a handful of scenes together in their entire relationship, all of which are supremely superficial, and then the reader is supposed to believe in their magical connection. In fact, Violet disappears from the book completely for several chapters. The book description supposes that Montague and Violet lead the murder case, and while they do end up unmasking the culprits, their part in the investigation is never the focus.

Juggling three couples with a murder mystery is not an easy thing to do, but it can be done (Nora Roberts does it supremely well in most of her contemporary novels). This book is not an example of how to do so. Scenes are disjointed, there isn't enough plot to go around, so there are chapters discussing the same thing, as characters discuss the Halstead family with one another, with the Cynster grand dames, and then again with

each other, over and over, until it's so monotonous I fell asleep.

Lest you think I disliked this book entirely, here's what pulls it together: I like the age in which this story is set: the beginning of the Victorian age, where society is beginning to shift in structure and composition. The white-collar class is starting to find itself -- with men like Montague who deal in financial management are rising in power. Industry and trade are replacing the old power structures, and it's not surprising that while this book deals with London society, none of the main characters themselves hold titles, and in fact, only Penelope and Adair are related to aristocratic families.

Additionally, though I don't believe the plot was strong enough to carry as much of the book as it needed to, it was intriguing to see it unfold with red herrings and twists. Had Ms. Laurens eliminated the scenes in which information is repeated and replaced them with more character development (if Penelope's balancing is an issue, maybe seeing her struggle with the balance, leaving things undone, being unavailable or too tired for making love, some sign that it's not just lip service to hire Violet as a secretary) or even focus more on Violet and Heathcote, who were interesting characters that had no depth whatsoever, I think the book would have been so much stronger.

The book was interesting, but it doesn't make my list of favorites, which is sad, because the last few books by Stephanie Laurens were among my favorites published.

Thanks to Edelweiss and Avon for the ARC. The Masterful Mr. Montague will be released April 29, 2014.

Stephanie says

The title of this book is, in my opinion, dreadful and actually a little misleading. To me it conjures up a picture of the very alpha male hero and the little woman heroine, which is not what we get in this novel at all. Yes, the hero is a strong character, but he's actually not as 'alpha' as a lot of other romance heroes and the heroine is a capable, intelligent woman whom he treats as a partner.

Those who have read other books by this author will have encountered Heathcote Montague more than once. He is the man-of-affairs who deals with the financial and business matters of many of the heroes and heroines of previous stories. As the title suggests, this time he gets his own story.

However, this book is also one of the Barnaby Adair Casebook series, which means the way it is written is not the same as some of the others by this author. Typically a Stephanie Laurens romance, indeed any romance, is told through the eyes of the hero and heroine. We do get some of that in this book, but we also get a lot of the story told through the eyes of Barnaby, his wife Penelope, and their friends, the Stokes' as well.

So far as the mystery element of the story is concerned, something which revolves around an elderly lady discovering financial irregularities after a recent review of her estate and then subsequent suspicious deaths, this style of story-telling works reasonably well. I do think though that it might detract a little from the romance element because we are distanced more from the thoughts and emotions of our hero and heroine. This effect is not as severe as in a recent novella, *The Peculiar Case of Lord Finsbury's Diamonds*, in which I frankly wondered why the romance element was there at all as it was so very much sidelined; Heathcote and Violet play an active role in the investigation, so they are more centre stage. But I do wonder if the author might not be better with the 'Casebooks' to simply focus on the mystery instead.

That said, 'Montague' is a solidly written story with well-rounded characters. It was nice to see a different perspective on Society; a lot of Laurens heroes and heroines move in the upper echelons of the *Ton*. Montague, however, is more middle-class and likewise Violet is of good birth, but she's gentry-born, not nobility, and has spent the last decade working as a paid companion. Thus they and the social circles in which they move are somewhat different to those we've seen in the past and this made a pleasant change.

Julie says

The Masterful Mr. Montague by Stephanie Laurens is a 2014 Avon publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

When Lady Halstead notices a discrepancy in her financial statement, she sends for an expert man of business named Heathcote Montague. Violet Matcham is Lady Halstead's ladies maid/ companion and soon becomes very entrenched in the mystery. When Lady Halstead is murdered in her bed, Violet and Montague are aided by Stokes and Adair and their wives in the investigation. The upper classes are up to no good and several shocking and scandalous crimes are uncovered along the way to solving the murders.

It proves to be a tough case to solve. Someone has something to hide and is very desperate and they will kill again to get what need. This leaves everyone on edge wondering who will be next.

Adair and Penelope are adjusting to parenthood and the demands of work and being a mother have Penelope searching for balance, which was clever I think for the time period. Most women didn't have jobs after becoming mothers and it seems like a problem many women face after the birth of their first child and can relate to this issue.

For those who have read Stephanie Lauren's historical romances you will recognize the characters in this book. This particular novel focuses less on romance and more on the mystery than what some may be used to. Montague is a man of business and Violet a ladies companion and I thought it was refreshing have the romance occur between two commoners instead of members of the ton. I would liked to have seen a little more action between this couple because their romance was just budding.

The mystery is a little complex and I confess to having to slow down and re-read a passage or two along the way. I did appreciate the complexity though because it made it hard to figure out what was going on and so I didn't guess who the culprit was.

The story line was a little uneven at times and maybe the book was just a little too long. I still found it an enjoyable enough read, although I wouldn't say this is the best work from Stephanie Laurens. Over all this one is a C+

Sarah says

26/8 - What does a supremely boring mystery plus a fluorescent-purple-worded romance equal? A hot mess of a book. Every time I read a Stephanie Laurens book from the last decade I wonder what the hell happened to her. Her early Cynster books were some of my favourite historical romances, but then something changed when she began to write the spin-offs. *Viscount Breckenridge to the Rescue* was the beginning of the end for me, but no matter how boring the plots get or how bad the sex is I seem to be addicted to the name. I can never go past a Laurens book without picking it up to see if I've read it, and borrowing it if I haven't. I have the next book in the Barnaby Adair series waiting for me on my bedside table and (surprisingly) I am attracted to more than just the name on the cover; the match of the wounded and disfigured older hero returning home to find a widowed mother of two with secrets occupying his home has me intrigued (but I was 'intrigued' by this book, so we shall see...).

I do have to give credit to Laurens for writing a book in the rarely attempted 'financial crime murder mystery' genre, with the amount of detail included here her research must have been exhaustive (I certainly found it exhausting to read). Does anyone know a 'financial crime mystery' (without or without the murder) that **is** thrilling, because I'd be interested in giving it a go?

ETA

I forgot to give credit to Nymeria's review <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...> for giving me the idea of skipping any scenes that neither Montague nor Violet were in (which meant I was able to skip multiple sex scenes that didn't feature the main couple). Because of this great advice I was able to finish it much faster and avoid all the 'non hero/heroine' filler scenes that I wasn't interested in anyway.

Naoms says

I have loved this author for many years. She is the reason I fell in love with Romance. Unfortunately, she has been writing the same love story, over and over and over.

This was boring, because I already knew everything.

Barbara says

I have started this one multiple times...and just never could get into it. I love the idea of Mr. Montague from many other S.L. books, but neither leading character particularly engaged me. So...trying again in 2017. I surely will skim the first third...been there....

2017: Better than I had anticipated after my multiple starts. Definitely deserving of 3 stars.
