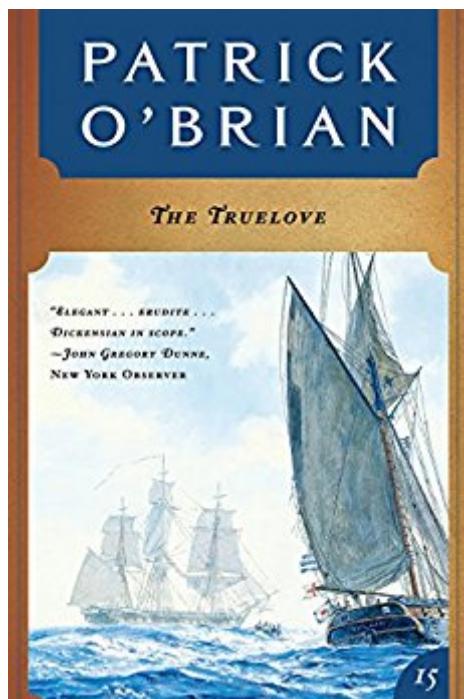


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The Truelove (Vol. Book 15) (Aubrey/Maturin Novels)



Synopsis

The fifteenth installment in Patrick O'Brian's widely claimed series of Aubrey/Maturin novels is in equal parts mystery, adventure, and psychological drama. A British whaler has been captured by an ambitious chief in the sandwich islands at French instigation, and Captain Aubrey, R. N., is dispatched with the Surprise to restore order. But stowed away in the cable-tier is an escaped female convict. To the officers, Clarissa Harvill is an object of awkward courtliness and dangerous jealousies. Aubrey himself is won over and indeed strongly attracted to this woman who will not speak of her past. But only Aubrey's friend, Dr. Stephen Maturin, can fathom Clarissa's secrets: her crime, her personality, and a clue identifying a highly placed English spy in the pay of Napoleon's intelligence service. In a thrilling finale, Patrick O'Brian delivers all the excitement his many readers expect: Aubrey and the crew of the Surprise impose a brutal pax Britannica upon the islanders in a pitched battle against a band of headhunting cannibals.

Book Information

File Size: 1008 KB

Print Length: 264 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1st American ed edition (December 5, 2011)

Publication Date: December 5, 2011

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B006CQQP3C

Text-to-Speech: Not enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #46,825 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #170 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Sea Stories #448 in Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Historical #2418 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction

Customer Reviews

Some critics have referred to the Aubrey/Maturin books as one long novel united not only by their historical setting but also by the central plot element of the Aubrey/Maturin friendship. Having read

these fine books over a period of several years, I decided to evaluate their cumulative integrity by reading them consecutively in order of publication over a period of a few weeks. This turned out to be a rewarding enterprise. For readers unfamiliar with these books, they describe the experiences of a Royal Navy officer and his close friend and traveling companion, a naval surgeon. The experiences cover a broad swath of the Napoleonic Wars and virtually the whole globe. Rereading all the books confirmed that O'Brian is a superb writer and that his ability to evoke the past is outstanding. O'Brian has numerous gifts as a writer. He is the master of the long, careful description, and the short, telling episode. His ability to construct ingenious but creditable plots is first-rate, probably because he based much of the action of his books on actual events. For example, some of the episodes of Jack Aubrey's career are based on the life of the famous frigate captain, Lord Cochrane. O'Brian excels also in his depiction of characters. His ability to develop psychologically creditable characters through a combination of dialogue, comments by other characters, and description is tremendous. O'Brien's interest in psychology went well beyond normal character development, some books contain excellent case studies of anxiety, depression, and mania. Reading O'Brien gives vivid view of the early 19th century. The historian Bernard Bailyn, writing of colonial America, stated once that the 18th century world was not only pre-industrial but also pre-humanitarian (paraphrase).

It was with some trepidation that I started this book because of what other reviewers said but I found it thoroughly enjoyable and moving as events subtly and inexorably moved to the blow up where officers are reprimanded and Surprises are flogged; where the innocent and the guilty worked till they near died under a right Tartar of a Captain who cowed even Killick until we reach this sentence: "When they were assembled in their usual unseemly heap their Captain surveyed them with a benevolence they had not seen this many a weary day and night..." and I and the Surprises breathed a collective sigh of relief. And then they dashed off into battle as the team they always were. Dull and actionless? Hardly. SPOILERS: Clarissa Oakes did not throw a baby down a well. Stephen offered her his protection and she offered up this hypothetical situation to test the genuiness of his offer. He already knew what her crime was and states it at one point in a letter to Blaine. At the start of the novel, it was obvious Jack had contracted hepatitis, an acute, self-limiting illness whose chief symptom is profound exhaustion which Stephen treated by purging and bleeding and admonishing him not to sleep so much as he'll only grow fatter. That he survived this regimen while commanding his ship is a testimony to his fortitude for even a saint would have grown liverish; I believe Jack may be excused for being grumpy and not his usual sanguine self. Also, women, in

Jack's limited experience, were those delightful creatures one dallied with on shore. No one as damaged and poisonous as Clarissa has ever crossed his path, much less dropped into his little wooden world.

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