



Lady Barbara's Dilemma

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When Lord Peter Rushcliffe asks Lady Barbara to be his wife, she doesn't hesitate to accept. But after he forbids her to see an old family friend, and makes light of her devotion to the piano, Barbara is left with only one diversion: Alex Gower, a dangerously attractive rogue, who's intent on introducing Barbara to a few diversions of his own. Original Regency Romance.

Lady Barbara's Dilemma Details

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LemontreeLime says

This was excellent. Unexpectedly sensitive and complex displays of the traps within social dictates are showcased in not one but two star-crossed pairs, Lady Barbara has one tale and her best friend David Treves has the second. It was refreshing to see the stories compared and contrasted. You found yourself rooting for each of the two to find their match and figure it out. Very well done, indeed.

Mirta Ines Trupp says

I am vacillating between awarding this regency novel a 4-star or a 4.5-star rating. Why quibble over such an amount? I'll tell you why. On several occasions I found myself thinking, "She would never have said that!" or "That would never have happened!" Clearly, this is a work of fiction—historical romance, to be exact—and one could expect 'the unexpected.' Allowing the author her artistic license is one thing, however; there are certain levels of speech and comportment that one would assume to witness in a society so preoccupied with proper decorum.

Having said all that, you could have knocked me over with the proverbial feather when I began reading the sections regarding the secondary character of Sir David Treves. As an avid novel reader, I am passionate about partnering my love for historical fiction with Judaica. It is an ongoing hobby of mine to seek out work that showcases Jewish characters in "period" settings. My criteria require the novel not be Holocaust related, nor be of a biblical theme. There is a plethora of work that addresses these subjects. In addition, I will not accept the stereotypical Jewish character of Shakespeare, Dickens, Chaucer or Heyer. I am not looking for a 'frum' (pious) character, nor do I wish to read *Pride and Prejudice* with a cliché cast of Orthodox, New York Jews. My goal is to read a period piece, be it regency, Victorian or Edwardian, where a character or two—or dare I wish it—a family, just SO HAPPEN to be Jewish. Oh yes...one more thing: No Conversions!

Lady Barbara's Dilemma has two storylines to follow, actually three, if you count the attractive Scotsman! While Lady Barbara's subplot did interest me, I was bowled over by Sir David. I was so pleased; I nearly pumped my fist in the air and cried, "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

..."I believe that we do have that in common, Lady Barbara. You, by virtue of being a woman and a lady, will never appear on a concert stage, and I, by virtue of being born a Jew, will never sit in Parliament or even enter a profession."

"But your name is Treves," said Barbara, without thinking.

"You are pronouncing it the English way. Originally it was Spanish."

"Yes, I thought you looked Spanish or Portuguese. But you are every inch the English gentleman," protested Barbara.

"My people have been quite successful in adopting the culture of their host country," he said with a touch of irony. "It is the way we have survived. And I 'am' an English gentleman. The Treveses have been here since Cromwell readmitted the Jews."

This exchange between Barbara and David won me over. Barbara's trials and tribulations of being "on the

shelf” at the ripe old age of twenty-six is a typical narrative of these novels. Her angst at finding a true and passionate love is a common storyline; her frustration at being denied a career as a musician because of her rank and sex, perhaps, is not. The author does a splendid job in conveying how deeply a musician feels connected to her art. I enjoyed this and as a choral performer, I could relate to the depth of emotion. David’s plotline, however, was what held me glued to my seat.

Unlike Mirah in George Elliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, David was not the saintly Jew. As a poor, troubled girl in Victorian England, Mirah was ‘practically perfect in every way.’ David, a Sephardic, assimilated Jew, struggles with his heritage. His father has plans for him, which would entail David marrying a destitute, nobleman’s daughter. This exchange of money for position, would allow David entry into the political arena and once there; he might hope to effect some political reform. He is not so sure of his path when, quite by accident, he meets Miss Deborah Cohen. This young woman is secure in her faith and although not nearly a Mirah, she is sure of her place in the world.

“...We do not attend temple regularly, nor keep to all dietary regulations,” Deborah admitted. “But we observe the high holy days and the Sabbath. And I will always consider myself first a Jewish woman, then an Englishwoman. And although there are many intermarriages in the East End, I would never marry a Christian.”

This book gave me everything (almost everything) I wanted. There are no broad, brush strokes of evil Christians and saintly Jews OR saintly Christians and evil Jews. Both David and the handsome Scotsman speak to the difficulty of knowing “how to balance two identities” and I loved the ongoing theme of being true to oneself. I had my fill of balls and fripperies, teas, rides through Hyde Park, and even a Friday night, ‘oneg Shabbat.’ I enjoyed the romance, but on that note, I must say this is not entirely a Clean Read. It would most certainly pass by today’s standards—not being a ‘bodice ripper’ per se—, but for those sensitive readers; I’m giving you fair warning.

The author wove her research beautifully into the Georgian narrative, sharing the under acknowledged complexities and contributions of Jewish people in England. So, ‘shoyn’, as my grandmother used to say. Enough said! 4.5 stars.

Janet says

How unusual to read a book that is nuanced, thoughtful, and has no villains. I really liked this story--everyone except perhaps Lady Barbara's somewhat smug betrothed thought long and hard about what was important to them--be it religion, music, the place of women in society and what are one's bedrock beliefs.

SM says

3

Not bad, though couldn't connect much.

Liked sir David's Jewish part of story than main romance. Liked hero who understood his heart better than heroine who was confused.

Susannah Carleton says

Wonderful! I've read this book many times, and I love it every time. The main characters all have challenges to overcome, which they do, although it isn't easy for any of them. I also enjoy the fact that two are musicians, which both creates problems for them and helps solve others. Brava, Ms. Farrell!

Peg Hughes says

I thoroughly enjoyed this. I found the book as I was looking for historical fiction that included Jewish characters as I am the product of a mixed marriage whose Jewish ancestors have lived in the UK since the 1860s. That Jewish presence is rarely reflected in historical romance. This dealt with it beautifully as although the secondary character was Jewish we see how the heroine Lady Barbara finds the prejudice of others unacceptable and how both she and Sir David Treves, the Jewish nobleman, realise they can only be happy if they are true to themselves. Lovely .

Rebecca says

Regency romance about three people. Alexander MacLeod is noble, but wants to pursue music. His grandfather, who holds the purse strings, says no, so Alex bets him that if he (Alex) can live off his music for one year, he'll get his trust fund and his music. Lady Barbara is 26, practically on the shelf, wondering what true love means. She thinks she's found it with Lord Wardour, and they're engaged. Then she hears itinerant musician Alex at a festival, and being a passionate musician herself, is drawn to him (you can see where this is going to end up). Lord David Treves, a friend of Lady Barbara's, is Jewish, but mostly associates with non-Jews. When he meets a young Jewish lady of little means but sterling character, it turns his life around.

This was recommended by a friend, but I didn't love it. There was a lot of telling-not-showing, and zero suspense. The bits about how Jews were treated in the Regency period was the most interesting part, though there wasn't any suspense about that relationship, either.
