



Steam and Stratagem

Christopher Hoare

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Welcome to the Steampunk World of Regency...

...where the power of steam has already passed from the age of unsatisfactory experiments to the first country-spanning railways and ships that no longer sail at the whims of weather. Roberta Stephenson is the daughter of the 'Father of Railways'...a girl almost raised in the engine works and through her experience, and education in the most advanced halls of Miss Mather's Academy for Girls, is fit to become manager and designer at her father's steamship yard on the Clyde.

And Britain needs Roberta's expertise, for fate in this world has dealt more kindly with Napoleon, allowing him to extricate most of his army from Moscow in 1812, and granting him at least a draw at Leipzig in 1813. With developments of the steamships begun in France in 1783 he is ready to take one more gamble to rid himself of the interference of Perfidious Albion, and the island's safety may depend on the steam powered rams Roberta is offering to their lordships of the Admiralty.

Complicating Roberta's professional life are her romantic suitors: Lord Julian Bond, man about town and Admiralty spy; the enigmatic Symington Holmes; and Engineer Lieutenant Alfred Worthington RN. It seems that Roberta is destined to choose one of these gentlemen, but will she choose wisely?

Steam and Stratagem Details

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Author : Christopher Hoare

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Sherry Ramsey says

Christopher Hoare presents an intriguing take on steampunk/Regency in Steam & Stratagem, one where alternate history and the relationships of the characters share center stage. I fell in love with the feisty and independent Roberta Stephenson immediately, and eagerly followed her into the world of early steamships, Napoleonic plots, and eligible gentlemen who each have their own charms to recommend them.

The pace is nicely balanced as plots and intrigue unfold, and Roberta is drawn into the world of intelligence-gathering--a world she'd frankly rather avoid--in the name of supplying her country with ships that will stand up to the newest technology employed by the enemy. It was fun to see her slyly surprising the unsuspecting men of the Navy with her intelligence and breadth of knowledge, but refreshingly, she always kept her dignity, which was part of what made her a very believable character for me.

The book does leave many questions unanswered, but the Tyche website promises another installment in Roberta's story, Spies and Subterfuge, coming in 2015. If you are a historical/alternate history/Regency fan I highly recommend this book!

NVTony says

Avid Steampunk fan and this more than satisfied my expectations. Hoare knows how to write and capture genre. Non Steampunk readers will find enough mystery to seek more from this author.

Danielle says

I won this book from Goodreads giveaways!

I was so disappointed in this book. First off this is not Steampunk this is just a book about a steam powered ship, which did exist nothing exciting or unexpected there. Aside from that it was so slow from start to finish, it never captured me, entirely too much detail about the ships on every page it was ridiculous. I would have given the book one star if it wasn't for the characters, I loved Roberta, Holmes and Worthington. I wish there was a conclusion. Don't know if there is a sequel, though based on the lack of ending there should be, but sadly even my adoration for the characters will not make me read it.

Anita says

Very enjoyable. A Steampunk Regency book, set in 1813 era , with steamships and espionage as a main plot. I picked up this book(and it's sequel) at calgary fan expo, thought the general background looked interesting . It follows the adventures of a female steamship engineer. I'm now starting the second book: Spies and Subterfuge.

Dee says

While I personally found this book fairly slow and serious, I believe that a lot of people will really enjoy it. It's steampunk, but in a real Master and Commander feel - there is very little light and airy about it. Lots of detail about ships and steam engines which I could have done without - but it was well written and deserves a good audience.

2 stars for my own enjoyment, but an extra star because it is decent quality.

L.T. Getty says

The novel takes place during the Napoleonic Wars, where Englishwoman Roberta Stephenson, having no marriage prospects, quickly turns down a proposal that would lead to her security although it would be loveless, and she quickly sees through the arrangement as a means for the individual to accumulate wealth through her family name. Having no brothers but a proper education, she becomes an engineer and works under her father, creating ships to fight against Bonaparte's navies. Her romantic life becomes the focus, even for an at the time spinster, three men seemingly take an interest in the beautiful and crafty engineer.

I'm not usually much for the regency era - I adore historical fiction, but I've always found in terms of general fiction, the regency era was very class-specific. This was probably always one of my issues with Jane Austen's novels; as I have a hard time relating to women trying to retain their class (or rise) whereas my people would probably be lowly servant girls the rake would be disposing of, filthy toothless street workers, or pirates.

Regardless, I found for the most part I really enjoyed this novel. It focuses on the ships and quiet strategies as a woman bound by class and gender tries to serve her country. Usually dialogue and prose with a more flowery, structured style doesn't do it for me - however, I really enjoyed it because it didn't seem forced or stilted or focus on the things that would annoy me. Granted, there were times where I had to google words because I didn't know what they were, but for the most part, the story flowed along.

I think if you're looking for the die-hard steampunk aspects, this novel won't be what you're looking for. However, if you're looking for a historical novel with a splash of the steampunk elements that is character-focused, I highly recommend it. Granted, there's no answer in sight as to which of the beaus is right for Roberta, so I guess I'll kick myself for not picking up the sequel at the conference.

Plus, the covers are gorgeous.

Billie Milholland says

This book has promise but is a little too stiff and formal for my liking.

Cheryl Malandrinos says

Steam and Stratagem by Christopher Hoare blends steampunk and romance in one fascinating story. Hoare's trademark for crafting strong heroines serves him well in this story set in 1814 during the Napoleonic Wars.

A chance encounter between Roberta Stephenson and Lord Bond leads to the Stephenson Engine Works being considered to build steam powered rams for the Admiralty. Roberta is soon drawn into the world of intrigue, while her personal life gets more complicated by the attention of three suitors.

Having never read steampunk fiction before, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. In some ways, Steam and Stratagem is a Victorian era Tom Clancy book. It's filled with details of ships, cannons, iron plates, and more. The romance aspect of the novel takes a back seat to the intrigue and ship engineering. This might shift a bit in future novels of the series, but in this first book, I was seventy percent into the novel before Roberta began considering these potential suitors. There are hints of the romance prior to that, but not much.

While I don't think steampunk fiction will ever be a favorite of mine, Hoare's writing--which I've enjoyed in the past--remains solid and his female characters sharp. I can't say I cared for Lord Bond, much, but perhaps there are some surprises coming in future installments. Holmes and Worthington were entertaining, and I would like to see more of them.

If you're a steampunk fiction fan, you'll want to check out Steam and Stratagem.

Alejandra says

Very fun adventure set during the Napoleonic wars, in an alternate timeline. Its main strength is the main character, Roberta, a strong, smart and independent convention defying female engineer. Good fun historical adventure, slightly reminiscent of the first few books in the Captain Alatriste series and the works of Alexandre Dumas.

Jayne says

Started off very promising, but lost me in the latter half, which was all buildup to the next book rather than the sound conclusion to this one.

Li Jung says

So this thing came in the mail unexpectedly today and I was SO CONFUSED lol. {I thought BWB had gotten my order mixed up!} I'll be giving it a read and review as soon as possible, though, because it looks absolutely gorgeous! I've already got an unboxing video filmed for this; I'll be editing and posting that tonight, just because my reaction is hilarious.

Pat Flewwelling says

Audiobook version Good book for people who like Regency or highly detailed military history. Unfortunately, I found the audiobook narration very stilted, forced, and in some places mispronounced. I

may have to read the paperback so as to get a better impression of the story itself.

Elaine says

Here was a real Steampunk adventure for all genre fans. Non stop action from start to finish. Have recommended to friends interested in becoming acquainted with genre. Received as winner at Goodreads which did not influence my review.

Jacksomber1 says

I really loved this book, it wasn't heavy into the romance bit as I thought it be but it really got my attention throughout the whole thing. I didn't really much liked Lord Bond, seemed like one of those smooth-talking types that makes everything a game and stuff.

It's my first time actually reading a book of steam-punk and I had to say I'd recommend it to others. Be warned though, it has a lot of techno-babble about steam-powered machinery so you're probably going to have to look up some terms to get what's going on.

Other than that, I seriously recommend it to others and to all those who're new to the genre, like me, and to those that already like steam-punk. :D(less)
