


All the Tea in China

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The good young Englishwoman knows that her destiny depends upon a good marriage match. But Isabella Goodrich is not your typical good young Englishwoman. After an encounter with those less fortunate than she, witty and fun-loving Isabella makes a shocking decision. Against everyone's advice and wishes, she is going to become a missionary in the Far East. Fighting against cultural expectations, common sense, and a mentor who is not as he seems, Isabella leaves her predictable Oxford life behind and sets sail to a new world fraught with danger. Can she trust the mysterious missionary Phineas Snowe? Or will her adventure end before it even begins? This first novel in the Rollicking Regency series will delight readers who like high adventure, twisting plots, and a fun bit of romance.

All the Tea in China Details

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From Reader Review All the Tea in China for online ebook

(Jen) The Artist Librarian says

["hapa" (half-Asian, half Caucasian) hero in a Christian historical novel? As an Asian American, I admit, it gave me a thrill to

Kelli says

I read this book, funnily enough, in China. It definitely provided some entertainment and the story, at first, is fairly engaging. however, and its a big however, midway thru the story it gets to the point where all of a sudden the lead male is described as having weird slit eyes. Suddenly Oh No! We then discover, after reading about him for half the book, that he is half Chinese! As if no other English characters in the book, would have detected that, by looking at him at first sight. I laughed out loud at these turn of events in the book, and from that time on the book slipped down hill. For that, I have to give it only one star. Bad character development.

Christin says

This book was enjoyable! Fun and lighthearted, it sucked me in pretty quickly. The romance was fun and the characters' growth was fun to watch...but...

The reason for the 3 stars is that 1. Some of the characters' actions didn't seem super logical or fitting with their character (i.e. Phineas' whole story) and 2. The presentation of their Christian faith was SO weird. Phineas did not seem like a Christian at all until magically it is revealed he is. Why would a Christian pretend to be a missionary when they aren't? Why would he arrange for a prostitute to be taken to a foreign country...to continue to be a prostitute (especially when he cannot stand the thought of importing opium...) Also, any book that ends with "we decided to preach the gospel, but only use words when necessary" does NOT understand the gospel. Faith comes from hearing!! And I highly doubt a completely Christ-less culture would understand the substitutionary atonement of Christ's life, death, and resurrection gospel just by randomly washing someone's feet. I know you have to take culture into account when serving as a missionary and she was trying to show growth in her character but only using actions to preach the gospel is just silly. 3. There were several loose ends--like, what did her family ever think of it? Did they just think she died?! Did they get her letter?? How could someone be half-Chinese and you not notice it for like 5 months?

In the end, a fun read. I'll look for more Jane Orcutt novels, but won't expect a theologically accurate lesson.

Rachael says

This is the second time I've read the book, and it still greatly entertained me. It's definitely not one's average Regency romance, since it takes place primarily at sea on the voyage to China, and many of the popular social situations of the Regency era do not apply on an ocean voyage. Isabella is hardly the average Regency

heroine, being not only scholarly but also athletically inclined, and actually desirous of marriage (whereas so many bluestocking spinsters tend to be in denial). For that matter, our hero is far from the suitable, traditional Englishman one comes to expect in the genre.

It's a lively, light-hearted book that nevertheless touches on some serious subjects, such as prejudice and loving those who persecute you, but in a gentle, compassionate way, not sermonizing. And I like the romance, how it kind of creeps up on Isabella and suddenly we see her perspective shift.

I wish the author had lived to write more Rollicking Romances.

Andrea Cox says

by Andrea Renee Cox

What a story! All the Tea in China was a romp across the globe that took twists and turns I could never have seen coming. It will be difficult not to spoil anything for you, but I shall try. This was probably the best-done first-person POV book that I've ever read, though I did get annoyed at the occasional "dear" and "dear friend" comments directed at the reader. It was quite an enjoyable perspective, and I am eager to read another book by this author, who was new to me this time. The characters were delightful, the plot adventurous, and the cultures beautifully shared. I found two or three English words that were overly large and difficult to understand; they seemed plucked from a thesaurus to impress the reader, but the opposite affect was achieved for me. I loved the inclusion of some Chinese words and their meanings. Sometimes the definitions were given in such an obvious way that it felt school-like rather than in a good and natural flow within the story. One question I had after finishing the book was what happened to Uncle Toby and Flora? It seems they were forgotten in the final pages. I was a little disappointed that there were only a couple of really good sword fights, particularly since the lady on the cover wielded a sword. I thought this would be a larger part of the plot. That being said, I enjoyed this story and its adventure enough to consider this book a keeper. I look forward to reading it again soon!

Content notes:

- *drug usage (handled well)
- *woman of loose morals (handled well)
- *loose talk of the devil

I was not compensated for my honest review.

Ron says

Orcutt shows some talent but she lays on the Jane Austin a little too heavily. Improbably shipboard actions, especially how our protagonist *got* shipboard. Would have to try a contemporary work before I could judge either way.

On the other hand, the tale itself is well thought out and engaging.

Dawn says

I truly enjoyed reading this book upon having it recommended to me by a writer-friend of mine. Being that I write historical romance from first person point of view, I am always on the lookout for such books to read. I loved that it was written strictly from the point of view of the heroine, Isabella, and that the reader gets to know Phineas Snow right along with her.

For the first 75% of this book I was COMPLETELY in love with it. I loved the characters, the writing, the plot... but then the last 25% was so much more telling, and mainly about the hero's mother and the heroine. It was still a good story to the end, but it just seemed like a much different book during that last quarter. What I liked most was that it was written in the kind of first person POV that I love best--at least for most of it.

I do wish there were more of this kind of book in the Christian publishing market. All the Tea in China was published back in 2007, and soon after that the author unfortunately passed away. I bought this book (here) because I adored that first 75% so much.

Joy H. says

Added 12/13/2009

1/16/2015 - I read a sample of this book at:
<https://play.google.com/books/reader?...>

I read this book in January 2015. Enjoyed it a lot.

Camy says

I really wanted to like this book because I loved the story premise, especially the setting in China! But for some reason, the hero's personality really rubbed me the wrong way.

The heroine is WONDERFUL--she's strong, feisty, a bit older than a typical Regency heroine, and a bluestocking. And I LOVE that she knows how to fence! How fantastic!

The writing itself was entertaining and witty, although I'm not a huge fan of first person point of view. She made the settings come alive, whether in Oxford, aboard the ship, or in China. I especially liked the chapters in China. The culture as seen through the eyes of the heroine was really intriguing.

The hero's personality got better after a while, but I never really cared that much for him even at the end of the book. I would have liked to like this book more, but he kind of ruined it for me.

Overall, an entertaining story, but I personally didn't care for the hero.

Heather Gilbert says

I truly enjoyed this fast-paced read, esp. the British/Chinese setting--unusual for the CBA. I looked up Mrs. Orcutt, hoping to find more of her books, and was so saddened to learn she has died at a younger age. Truly, she used her talents for the Lord.

Janelle says

I found *All the Tea in China* to be well written but a little boring. I also found the main character, Isabella, somewhat aggravating. For a woman of 26 she made a lot of naive decisions.

Werner says

When I saw this book at a yard sale last summer, the captivating picture of a sword-wielding lady on the cover, coupled with the knowledge that the book is a romance by an evangelical Christian author, convinced me that this read would be right up my wife's alley. I wasn't wrong; she was initially skeptical of the historical setting (being more into modern settings), but once she got into it, she "couldn't put it down." She in turn recommended it to me; and obviously my reaction was positive as well!

The chronological setting here is 1814; the geographical setting moves from Oxford, England to the high seas, and finally to China. So we begin in the milieu of a Jane Austen novel, move in effect to the world of *Hornblower* (the sailing ship carrying our characters to China isn't a naval vessel, but the Napoleonic Wars are going on and it's fair game for French privateers), and winds up in a cultural setting from which the later one in Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* hasn't greatly changed. Broadly speaking, this is a "Regency romance;" but Isabella isn't typical of heroines in that type of literature. Raised by her uncle, a rather unworldly Oxford dean, she's a "bluestocking," just as learned as most Oxford students of that day, and inclined toward blunt directness in speech, in a society that valued neither trait in women. More scandalously, she was humored in a desire to be taught fencing from a very young age, and is quite good at it. So Orcutt departs here somewhat from formula --though she follows it in another respect; it's probably no spoiler to say that when a man and woman in a romance novel begin their acquaintance with a mutual antipathy, you can usually guess that they're made for each other. :-)

This book isn't without its flaws, which cost it a fifth star. Some of Orcutt's plot devices are strained: why Phineas employs some of the subterfuge he does, and what role he expected Julia Whipple to play in his plan --perhaps none; but in that case, confiding it to her would be spectacularly stupid!-- isn't explained effectively (or at all). The logic of Isabella's opposition to his plan, once she knows about it, escapes me; it seems to be so groundlessly stupid as to be out of character. And the verbal sparring between the two when they met had a forced quality, IMO, disproportionate to the situation. While comparisons to Austen and Forester are natural because of the settings, the author's prose skills and ability to evoke a milieu in depth isn't equal to theirs. She uses first-person narration to provide a pretext for a style that's somewhat similar to early 19th-century diction, but not so elegant as Austen's --for instance, she uses contractions, though rarely, which Austen doesn't at all, and constructions like "Did I not?" or "Can you not?" where Austen would have said "Did not I?" or "Can not you?" Also, while she explains nautical terms better than Forester does, she tries to give her writing a period flavor by using undefined archaic terms like "modiste" or "verruca" -- which Austen did not, with the unlikely result that the modern writer is much more apt to send you hunting

for a dictionary than the 19th-century one. (I still don't know what "verruca's" are, and from the context I'm not sure I want to! :-)) In fact, one result of reading the book was to remind me (again) how much I want to read the rest of Austen's novels and the rest of the *Young Hornblower* omnibus, sooner rather than later!

However, there are considerable offsetting strengths here. The major characters are round, and developed well enough to capture the reader's interest and goodwill. Isabella herself is a likable protagonist. She's not perfect and not a super-woman --her impulsiveness can be very ill-advised (the stunt that landed her on the *Dignity* was so irresponsible and hare-brained that I wanted to shake both her and Orcutt, until I recalled that the heroine of my own novel did something just as irresponsible and hare-brained, which provided some perspective :-)); she's not immune to female vanity, and she can get seasick, cry out with fear at times, and whimper when she's drenched with icy rain. But she's got a good heart, she cares about people and shows it, and when the chips are down, she has the guts to fight to protect herself and others. (There's not much in the way of action scenes here, but there are some.) And she takes her Christian faith seriously, but not ostentatiously. Orcutt also deals (where Austen does not) with the darker realities of Regency society: poverty alongside of wealth; prostitution; laudanum addiction --and the monstrous trade in opium, smuggled illegally into China in return for the tea the English market coveted so much. She also makes you feel the stifling atmosphere of the English social world of that day, where Isabella is a 25-year-old spinster just because she has qualities any sane man should have appreciated (and where society women think cattiness is an art form, and turn it against any woman whose willingness to be who she is reminds them of their own artificiality), and the nauseating horror of exactly what Chinese foot-binding did to a woman's foot. There's a strong note of equalitarian feminism here that's refreshing in Christian fiction. I also liked the inter-racial romance (Isabella's love interest proves to be half Chinese, though he conceals the fact), and the cross-cultural theme. So, all in all, a good, rewarding read!

A Busscher says

Typical Rom-com. There were some funny moments, but overall great skim read. I find it hard to believe that Isabella could make it on to the ship without 1) anything bad happening to her since she was unchaperoned, 2) could find the ship in port, 3) make it on the ship without a ticket, 4) stay on the ship (2x) and nobody noticed?! I don't think so. I get that she is stubborn, but on a ship filled with men, and they don't notice a single lady? It was interesting to read about the three-ish interesting facts about the East India trade company and how much tea was exported. Along with the tid-bit about the opium trade.

Beverly says

I have to say that I picked up this book simply because I had finished all the others I had requested from the library and had received no new ones in this past week's delivery of holds.

It fit my historical Christian fiction interest, and the Regency era with China Missions interest, so I picked it up. I must say the first few chapters were almost frustrating. For all her spunk, and book learning, and her no longer secret vice of fencing, she came across as naive, superstitious and impulsive. I was glad I finished the book, for the adventures that her spontaneous and impulsive nature landed her in, combined with her deeply rooted faith and moral convictions ended up helping her to grow and develop as a young woman. She ended up being up for the challenges and proving herself to be brave and committed to seeing her perceived calling through.

I enjoyed the introduction to China and the negative influences that the East India Trade company had on the people in their greed for tea, wealth and power.

Good story over all.

Georgianne says

This is a most unusual story, and could never be perceived as 'predictable' (something I hear readers complain about so often-and find the term rather annoying). At times I felt like I was living in Isabella's dream, because some of the paths she took seemed rather outrageous to me. However, I loved the dialog between characters and thought it to be a very cleverly written story with some laugh out loud moments. I was a little bit disappointed in the ending.... just felt a little flat to me.
