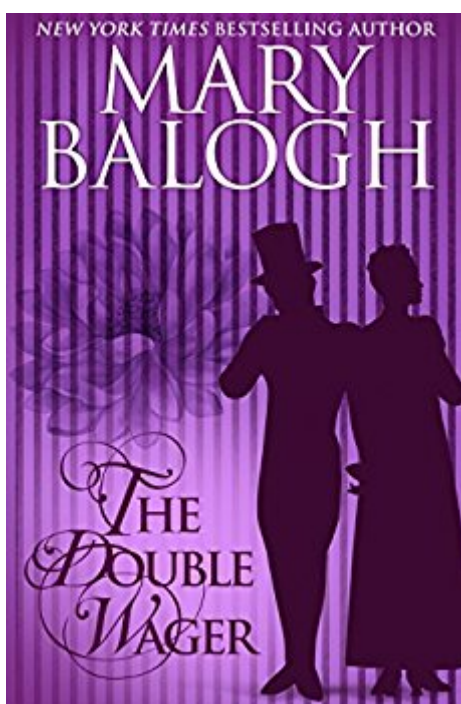


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The Double Wager



Synopsis

"The Double Wager is the digital reissue of a previously published and long out-of-print novel by New York Times Bestselling author Mary Balogh. Henrietta Tallant has always preferred the company of her brother and his rough-and-tumble friends to that of other ladies. She rebels at the prospect of making her debut into London society and the great marriage mart. However, when her brother's friends challenge her to entice the toplofty, unattainable Duke of Eversleigh into offering her marriage within six weeks, she recklessly accepts and wagers her beloved horse. The Duke of Eversleigh, who has always adamantly proclaimed his determination never to marry, is beginning to feel the pull of duty and the need to produce an heir. His friends do not believe he will give in so easily, however, and wager with him that he will not make a marriage offer within a month. When Henrietta deliberately collides with the duke in a London ballroom, then, each is intent upon winning a wager--without any thought to what will happen after it is won."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had the opportunity recently to read two of Mary Balogh's earliest books - A MASKED DECEPTION and THE DOUBLE WAGER. Compared to her later books, I have to say that both were kind-of disappointing. The books were not badly written, the characters were more or less

rounded (but not completely fleshed out in the characteristic Balogh style that develops later), and the plots were slightly unusual. However, *THE DOUBLE WAGER* in particular troubled me, perhaps because of the similarity it bears to a much better book (in my opinion) Heyer's *THE CONVENIENT MARRIAGE*, where the hero, heroine and villain(s) are all more interesting. Balogh does not completely rip off Heyer, in the style of some particularly shameless writers. She introduces some twists to the story - firstly the notion of a double wager, one made in London by the hero the Duke of Eversleigh, and the other made in the country by the heroine Henrietta Tallant, who prefers to be known as Henry. The Duke, a member of a group of friends who are trying to avoid matrimony, is nevertheless persuaded to wager on the point, when he determines to marry - simply to cut out his unsatisfactory cousin and heir presumptive. [Actually there is a story behind the Duke's dislike of his cousin, of course]. In the country, young Henry Tallant wagers with a group of friends that she, who hates being a girl and despises the idea of a London Season, can nevertheless catch the most elusive man, the Duke of Eversleigh. Her friends think that her loss is a foregone conclusion, given that Henry is so hoydenish and the Duke is notoriously determined to remain a bachelor (besides being rather elegant).

If I am correct, this was Mary Balogh's second regency, published in 1985. I've read nearly all of her books now including her novellas and short stories. Like any author, some books were a bit of a let-down (I could not finish *The Trysting Place* as I was so irritated by it) but, overall, she is a five star writer, unique in the romance genre and top of my auto-buy list. I admire her style very much indeed. I read the thoughts posted here by Bookjunkiereviews before I decided to go ahead and spend a lot of money to get a copy of *The Double Wager* as her reviews are careful, considered and always worth reading. In the end I located a copy, purely by accident, in a UBS and went home delighted to have found a copy at half the 1985 cover price - obviously the shop owner hadn't a clue about what he had in stock! Well, it was worth 10 times what I paid. I think this book is a great read for anyone who admires this author because in it you will find all of the seeds of her later work, the origins of the Duke of Bewcastle, her homage to Heyer and the firm beginnings of her inimitable and stylish prose. This book owes something to *These Old Shades*, *The Convenient Marriage*, *Frederica*, etc. That's quite clear. However it is not a pastiche but a carefully written and highly entertaining story of two people who, despite themselves, fall deeply and physically in love. The double wager of the book wherein each makes a bet about snagging a spouse is skilfully handled by the author and is an excellent and amusing plot device. The heroine, the very young Henrietta "Henry" Tallant has an amusing and interesting family including a pair of mischief making twins and some wacky pets.

FINAL DECISION: I went back and forth on this one. At times I loved the story, especially the hero and the secondary characters. The heroine seriously annoyed me at times, but then I liked how her and hero came together. Mixed bag that ended well.

THE STORY: Miss Henrietta "Henry" Tallant is a tomboy who has spent most of her life with her brothers and his friends disdaining the "feminine arts". Now to be brought out into society, her brother and his friends believe that Henry will be a failure. Indeed, they bet her that she cannot get a marriage proposal in six weeks from the unattainable Duke of Eversleigh. At the same time, the duke who was determined never to marry has been thinking about obtaining an heir. Disbelieving, his friends wager that he won't make a marriage offer in a month. Then Henry and the duke run into one another.

OPINION: I loved almost everything about this book. The hero is adorable. He is quiet and supportive and caring. The supporting cast of the heroine's family are funny and irreverent. The heroine, on the other hand, drove me crazy. Her immature behavior causes all the problems in this book. Her inability to be reasonable, to see reality as others see it and her jumping to conclusions made me annoyed for significant portions of the book. But then, I would see her youth and how much she cares for others and I would like the story again. It's hard for me to give a good rating for a book where I had a problem with the heroine, but on the whole, this book was worth reading. The premise was cute and executed in an interesting and unexpected way. I loved, loved, loved the hero who persevered despite Henry's nutty behavior. He was kind and generous and worked to help her despite herself.

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