



Edmund Persuader

Stuart Shotwell

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Edmund Percy has been driven from the hurricane-haunted seas of the Caribbean to the heart of England's tranquil Hampshire in search of the Dark Queen foretold to him. He must unriddle the taunting mystery of her past, if he can; and he must use that discovered secret to win her with his most silver persuasions. It seems that all his efforts avail nothing, and the days and minutes allotted to his quest race away. Then fate or Providence slips a last chance into his hand . . .

An epic, a romance, and a mystery, Edmund Persuader is the tale of a man both blessed and cursed by his powers of persuasion. Those powers seem to perform the greatest wonders when they work him ill, yet fail when he needs them most—until he can emerge from the depths of moral error and climb toward the exaltation of redeeming love.

Note: This novel is complete in two volumes, distinguishable by the roman numeral I and II in the upper right corners.

Edmund Persuader Details

Date : Published 2009 by Mermaid Press of Maine
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Author : Stuart Shotwell
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From Reader Review Edmund Persuader for online ebook

Jeannette says

I think it is safe to call Edmund Persuader a classic even though it was first published in 2009. This historical novel reminds me of the works of Alexandre Dumas, one of my favorite authors. The 1550-page length was a little daunting at first, and indeed it took me several weeks to finish, but it was well worth the time.

Edmund Persuader is well-written and well-organized. The story flows from chapter to chapter and through each of the acts. One of my favorite things about this book was that it was easy to read, yet is not written in journalistic elementary vocabulary. I must have added dozens of new words to my vocabulary during my reading of it.

I found the story quite intriguing. I particularly enjoyed the social and religious aspects of the characters' thoughts and lives. Stuart Shotwell touches on issues of slavery, sexual morality, economic status, charity, animal care and even fox hunting. It was refreshing to see the main character portrayed as a positive role-model, living the lessons of forgiveness and unconditional love.

Edmund Persuader is definitely a keeper. It will live on my bookshelf waiting to be loaned and then re-read... all 1550 pages of it!

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

Erica says

Wow! This is the first book I have entered with NO reviews up; how exciting.

I adored this book.

Edmund Persuader is something of a cross between a grown-up boy's adventure tale and a Jane Austen romance. That does sound impossible, but Mr Shotwell dishes it up to us with passion and detail and intrigue.

I did find the beginning part, on Antigua, to be pretty rough going, but as our stalwart characters persevered, so did I. And really, we all adore Ms Austen but she did write elliptically around most actual suffering and misery.

Edmund Persuader brings a modern eye to historical settings and events; you can think about the class system in England and the brutalities of slavery in the New World with the carefully structured perspectives of his main characters. The characters are also able to unabashedly profess their adherence to and benefits from their Christian faith without the appearances of proselytising. There is even a bit of a modern take on that tiresome romance novel tradition (Mr Dickens?) that the most decent people are also the most attractive.

So, a book for everyone: a romance, history, a little mystery and intrigue, and earnest main characters with qualities to love.

Barb says

I received both volumes of this novel via a Goodreads First Reads giveaway and am so grateful I did! Although this is possibly one of the longest books I've read so far at 1,550 pages, it was well worth the time it took to read.

A wonderful historical novel set in the Regency Period in England, this is the story of Mr. Edmund Percy, or Edmund Persuader as he was dubbed at Oxford for his facility at mediating disputes between his classmates. Edmund is the third son of a wealthy landowner, an unenviable position in a world where strict entitlements bound such properties to be strictly passed to the eldest male relative in the family. Subsequent sons were honor bound to take up professions in the military, clergy, or other professions where a position could be bought or earned, living a life far different from the one lucky son who became lord of the manor after the death of his father.

Edmund is destined for the Church and takes up his calling with determination and fortitude. He never complains of his circumstances, even in the face of the obvious unworthiness of his older brother, Christopher, a selfish, egotistical layabout who wastes no opportunity to lavish their father's money on loutish entertainments for himself, all the while lording it over his younger, more responsible brothers. Edmund remains ever gracious and loving to his family, shouldering responsibilities that should be carried by his father and brother.

While visiting his favorite Aunt Andromeda at her estate, Edmund makes the acquaintance of the local lord of the manor, Cato Esquith de Foye, and his children, Tarquin and Mariah. Percy's fine qualities and noble temperament endear him to the family and he becomes best friend to the heir apparent, Tarquin. Unfortunately, he also falls in love with the lovely Mariah, a lady far above his prospects for marriage as a 3rd son seeking a living as a parrish preacher.

Many lovable and entertaining characters fill the village of Broadbridge where Edmund hopes to be awarded the position of rector when the elderly and ailing current rector, Mr. Maugham, passes away. The author leads us through the many twists and turns of fate that conspire to keep Edmund from obtaining his living, as well as the hand of his lady.

The language and tone of the novel hit the mark historically, and the story of unrequited love is both timeless and eloquently told. For fans of historical romance in the traditional vein, this is your novel. I loved it and highly recommend it.

Chris says

This was a free giveaway on goodreads. I wasn't sure it would be to my liking because I found the description on the book a bit overblown, but what the heck, it's a free book, right? I am surprised and delighted to say that I enjoyed it quite a bit. I don't usually like to read such large novels, but I was entertained enough to keep up to the end and read this massive two volume novel in about 8 days.

The description on the back of the book led me to expect more of the Caribbean tale and more supernatural elements. There really was hardly any supernatural part (unless you want to count the extensive Christianity elements in that category). This is not a complaint, but I fear the back of the book might lead certain readers to be disappointed. The bulk of the book takes place in England in rural homes.

Is our hero too perfect for believability? Yes, but I am willing to forgive him. I enjoyed this mix of little bit

Jane Austen, a wee bit of Wilkie Collins, a pinch of George Gissing and whiff of sex for the modern reader. After so many of those original authors writing from the female perspective, I also liked that this was from the male's point of view.

Christianity is a big part of this book - I suppose not too much of a surprise now that I see the other books by the author - but I would have preferred a bit less. Although the variety of Christianity espoused by our hero is a much more acceptable variety to me than many, I would have enjoyed reading a book where people acted rightly for no other reason than that it is fair and kind, without the need of a religious underpinning. But this is obviously a personal preference....

My main criticism would be that some areas needed trimming and others more elaboration, to tighten up the plot. While it kept my attention, I imagine readers who like more action and less internal dialogue might get frustrated and give up. The fox hunt, for example, went on too long. Our hero resolves to be a bit of a social crusader during the in the Antigua section, and I would have liked him to have continued to work on those issues. Instead, those vows are largely dropped in the bulk of the novel and then get a few sentences at the end for a token wrap up. I would also have liked a bit more added to the resolution of the book.

Regardless of these minor complaints, I whole-heartedly enjoyed the novel. If the author were to publish another in this vein I would definitely be interested.

Claire says

I received Edmund Persuader as part of a Goodreads giveaway.

When a book numbers over 1500 pages and must be split into two (hefty) volumes, one of two responses is likely: dive in or run away. Luckily, huge historical-romantic epics that can double as doorsteps are one of my favorite types of reads, and so I was

It is the story of Edmund Percy, the principled youngest son of a proud and storied family. Sent away in the midst of his studies for the Anglican priesthood to manage the family's property in Antigua, he becomes disgusted with the practice of slavery and involved in a passionate affair with a half-black slave (and daughter of a despised enemy). When his life in the Caribbean falls apart, he returns home heavy hearted. Thrown back into the whirlwind of English society life, he becomes an arbiter of his older brother's romantic life, the soother of his status-obsessed father, all while managing his own status as a young, eligible bachelor.

His life is not all stress and pressure, however. His renewed acquaintance with his Aunt Andromeda brings him into the social circle of Tarquin Esquith de Foy, his sister Mariah, and their friend Evelyn Brownton. While these new relationships bring him much joy, as his feelings for Mariah begins to grow, he becomes aware of a secret she harbors that prevents her from fully embracing their budding love. As Edmund attempts to navigate his own romantic and social lives (and is unwittingly pulled into those of others), he deals with heartache, loss, and sacrifice that risks his own future happiness, all of which climax in a satisfying resolution of the mystery that has plagued his relationship with Mariah.

Put simply, Edmund Persuader is a gorgeous epic novel written in the spirit and style early 19th century British literature (aside from a very few sexual elements). It's a mix of Jane Austen romance mixed with social commentary and Bronte-esque brooding mystery. At times, Edmund seems too good to be true, but it's

a relatively small quibble when compared against the engaging and artfully crafted storyline and cast of colorful characters. 1500 pages might sound daunting, but give it a chance--I gobbled it up in about four days.

Highly recommended.

Julia says

*I received a free copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway in exchange for my honest review.

You know... it's not a good idea to choose a 1500+ page book when you are 5 books behind on your Goodreads challenge... (18 December - make that 10 books behind!)

7 December 2014: I've finished Volume 1! And I'm really enjoying it...

19 December 2014: I finished! It really doesn't seem like a long book when you are reading it. :^)

I think the book is objectively more of a 4-star, but I enjoyed it as a 5-star! I'm sure I'll be reading it again at some point. :^D

Aleen ~Lampshade Reader says

I received Edmund Persuader as a Goodreads giveaway.

There are two volumes to this book. Do not let the number of pages deter you from reading this gem. At first, the novel seemed a bit slow going, especially in the beginning. However, I believe it was needed to set the story up and introduce the main characters. The detail that the author goes into is vast and I got lost into the world of Edmund Persuader. It took me a few pages to get used to the narration style but once you get over that, it's smooth sailing (unlike poor Edmund sailing to Antigua in the beginning). Overall, this novel is very well written and it was hard for me to put this book down.

Maddison says

Before I begin, I would like to note that I received this novel through a Goodreads Giveaway. Many thanks to Mr. Shotwell, Mermaid Press of Maine, and Goodreads for making this giveaway possible.

I must say that I have never adored a book I received through Goodreads as much as I dearly loved "Edmund Persuader." Not only did it top my list of first reads novels, but it has become one of my all-time favorites. Now I can proudly say that a Stuart Shotwell novel sits next to the likes of Jane Austen and Oscar Wilde upon my bookshelf.

Where to begin? It's daunting to compose a review that does "Edmund Persuader" the justice it deserves. I simply can't name anything I disliked about this epic novel - though the list of aspects I enjoyed would undoubtedly go on forever. Rest assured that, if you do choose to read this work (which I highly recommend you do), you will be immensely satisfied in all areas: plot, characters, setting, conflict, intrigue, adventure,

mystery, romance, tragedy, etc. It is a true epic in the craft of impeccable storytelling as much as it is in length and complexity.

That being said, don't let the length of the two roughly 800-page volumes scare you off. I guarantee that once you start this novel, there is no stopping. By the time I finished, I was in denial that I had consumed the entire story - I had come to find reading "Edmund" as a familiar comfort that would always be there for me whenever I wanted to pick it up and continue the journey. Now that I'm done, it will be difficult to find something else that measures up!

I don't want to give anything away in my review, so kindly forgive my reluctance to mention specifics. However, if you are a fan of Jane Austen novels, historical fiction, or any period dramas (whether they be novels or television series), I highly recommend "Edmund Persuader." It was difficult not to see the entire story playing out like a delightfully detailed film in my head; I can assure you that no time will be lost in this epic adventure.

I look forward to familiarizing myself with Mr. Shotwell's future works and sincerely hope that others find reading "Edmund Persuader" as personally satisfying as I have. Happy reading!

Quetzi Fernald says

This is an epic read that will haunt your dreams long after reading it. Edmunds only desire is to become a preacher in a small rural parish. His father asks him to save their sugar plantation before he settles into his ordinary life. Little does Edmund know that his life is about to change forever because of this decision. Edmund begins to question everything around him. This is a story that once you are engrossed in it you will never want it to end. Although the book seems daunting because it comes in two volumes it really is a fast & exciting read. The pages just melt away as Edmunds adventures fly by. You will love every minute of this book. I totally recommend it for everyone.

Nancy says

Hands down one of the best books I have read in a long time. I received this book from Goodreads Firstreads giveaway. An epic historical novel you can submerge yourself in. The two volume set looked very daunting at first but it's well written and the characters are so engaging. You will find the pages fly by especially once Edmund leaves for Antiqua. I feel I can't praise this book too much if you love books that are historical and have romance and mystery this one is for you. I will recommend this book highly and can only hope Stuart Shotwell is working on another great tale.

One more thing, Edmund Persuader was sent out by Mermaid Press Of Maine. I got to say I have never received such beautifully packaged books before. It came in a very lovely box and each book was individually sealed too. A Greetings letter was included letting you know "Your Goodread has arrived!" It also told of the packing material used that you could be assured was biodegradable and could be reused or safely discarded (apparently it dissolves in water). There was a matching Edmund Persuader bookmark too and a business card. I was very impressed and so happy to have been picked in this giveaway.

Laura says

What a delightful love story. It took me a while to truly get into this story, once I was hooked I couldn't put the book(s) down (which considering the length of the book(s) – meant I was reading for a while!)! The writing reminded me a bit of Jane Austen (who is one of my favorites) and while it was certainly a long tale, I enjoyed all of the deep detail and descriptiveness of the writing. It is an epic romance well worthy of that title.

Edmund Percy goes from a sheltered and sweet boy, to a truly impressive and virtuous man in the course of the story. I felt like I really got to know him and was highly invested in the ups and downs he suffered. The heartbreak and struggle he endures is truly humbling. By the end you are desperately hoping that things will work out.

If you enjoy historical fiction, or anything by Jane Austen, I highly recommend this book. Not light reading, but worthy of the time it takes.

*I received this book for free as part of a First Reads promotion. My opinions are purely my own.

Brenda Ayala says

A book this size, I can't discuss it without giving spoilers. Please don't read if you don't want to know what happens. (I'm looking at you, Ashleigh)

Edmund Persuader was a book I have dreaded reading ever since I got it. Because when I first submitted to the GoodReads giveaway, I didn't read the finer points of the book, like that it had 1,500 pages (if you didn't know that by now you clearly ignored all the reviews like I did) and it's so big that it is bound in two separate books, a part 1 and a part 2. So predictably when I got it in the mail, my eyes widened and I sort of backpedaled in my mind about reading it. I kept putting other books first. But I had had a good run of books and really enjoyed the last three I read, and I figured I have to read it eventually anyway because it was a giveaway book. So I settled in, expecting to need to force myself through. I was ecstatic to find that it was the complete opposite.

So the story goes that a third son, Edmund Percy, is destined by society to go into the church. He has accepted his lot in life, and does not ever argue this. He has a racist father, an arrogant eldest brother, and the middle brother whom he loves dearly. The eldest, Christopher, is set to inherit Brackenstrom, the estate they all inhabit. Alex is set to go into the military, as is right of the second-born brother. And so Edmund is left with the least to gain, the least amount of success under his belt. Yet Edmund is a Percy, and never stoops to feel sorry for himself. He agrees with his destiny, and goes along with what is thrown at him. And the first thing thrown at him is eldest brother Christopher's secret engagement to a Welsh woman--and a Welsh woman who was secretly engaged to Alex before he succumbed to fever and died. Christopher introduces Bronwyn Floyd to Edmund, and he is amazed that Christopher would even think of bringing her into their home to face their racist father. He advises that he break off the engagement immediately with no result.

The second kicker? Their plantation in Antigua is out of sorts because their manager took money and ran. When their father summoned Christopher to do it he flatly refused, and Edmund is stuck with it. Edmund is forced (though he is so gracious as to never see it that way) to go for a time frame that is never actually set before he's allowed to begin his career in the Church of England.

There he toils for three years, trying to maintain his morality against the use of slaves (for indeed this keeps him up at night on a regular basis) yet actually gain a profit from his endeavors. And amidst all this, he falls

in love with the worst possible woman to fall in love with: the love child between his abusive neighbor and a slave woman. The woman, Janetta, fled from the plantation and into Edmund's mill to take refuge, since there were (accurate) rumors that her father would want to take her in the same way he took her mother. Rumors fly that she is actually a witch, so she succeeds where Edmund fails in commanding the slaves to work. They work side by side in this way for years, and slowly a sexual awakening occurs. Janetta seems to have always been a primal being so her sexuality follows the same course. Edmund, always so arrested and planned out, takes longer to realize his feelings.

Being that this is the 1800s, though, Edmund fights like hell against it until he can barely stand it anymore. He jumps in fully aware of his actions, and finds just what kind of a release it can be. Janetta's primitive side comes out in a wonderfully virile way, steering Edmund to new heights he never even knew were options.

This is all alluded to of course, never fully mentioned. The expertise of the author is perfect here since we can easily see there's some serious sexual activity going on without it ever getting into the specifics.

Janetta's father finally comes for her, and in his vicious desire to not let her escape he accidentally has her killed. Edmund is devastated, believing he will never find anyone so strong as she. On his way home, when England is wary of dirty yankees taking their ships, their ship is caught by an American ship. When three traitors try to take over the ship to surrender, Edmund promptly throws them overboard, becoming something of an idol to English patriotism.

And so, after three years, he moves back to England. Instead of going back home to Brackenstrom though, he goes to visit his aunt Andromeda in the nearby country village of Hampshire. And there, my friends, is where the real story begins.

In order, Edmund meets: Evelyn, the beautiful girl with a very simple mind and an aversion to ever being touched; Tarquin de Foye, the eldest son to the richest family in the neighborhood; Cato de Foye, who is the master; and finally the inestimably beautiful Mariah de Foye, the heavily distracted daughter of Cato and sister of Tarquin.

From the very beginning, this seems to be the story of how Edmund ingratiates himself in the family simply by being honest and honorable. He truly thinks kindly of almost everyone he meets, and has every hobby under the sun. He can be incredibly competitive and join in a foxhunt, then turn around and play a solid game of chess, then go read a French book about calculus, then go wander the grounds and pick primroses. He's broad-shouldered and well-muscled thanks to his time in the fields in Antigua with the slaves, and has vast knowledge ranging from bee anatomy to classical Pagan poetry. It's staggering, and though I would argue he is a bit too perfect, I loved him for it.

This is where all the love stories mesh together. Christopher and Bronwyn finally enlist Edmund's help in uniting them in marriage. Tarquin suddenly finds himself infatuated with a fellow foxhunter who proves to be quite a catch, and Edmund himself must find his wife-to-be. Predictably, he becomes a shining beacon of hope to everyone around him.

Here's how: Christopher finally tells his father of his non-English betrothed. His father throws him out and tells him he will no longer inherit the estate, the thing he has been working toward his whole life. Devastated and a bit selfish, he wrongfully assumes that Edmund has come home to take the estate from him. Edmund proves him wrong by stalwartly standing besides his brother and his brother's fiancée. And then Edmund lets Bronwyn's impeccable family and personality do the rest of the work. So one love story is concluded, at least in the journey to make it happen.

But the really interesting one is the one between Mariah and Edmund. And holy shit... I am repeatedly impressed with the tones this author can set. There's one scene where Edmund inadvertently walks in on

Mariah in a meadow, completely naked with her clothes strewn everywhere. My first thought was that he would come upon her just after a rape, and save the day. What actually happened was she had just finished intercourse with an unknown someone, and she was still lying in her ecstasy. At one point she eases herself up from the grass, stretches out, and then squeezes her own breasts in her lust-filled state.

Edmund watches all this in a state of shock. I, however, was amazed that the scene could be so erotic. I love my man but I can appreciate a good bit of eroticism and I was blown away by this. There was so much in that scene. Really in their whole courtship.

Slowly, we come to realize that this mystery man seems to have dumped Mariah. She's morose and withdrawn, and doesn't seem to like herself anymore. Edmund, being the perfect guy that he is, delivers a sermon that brings her back from the darkness. She feels as if her weight has lifted somewhat, and Edmund is the cause. And Mariah suddenly realizes just what she was missing all along.

By far the best part of their journey was the inconspicuous flirting. They sit near each other, they discuss matters in a general way that is obviously about themselves, like marriage. There is a palpable tension, emotionally and sexually, when the two are left alone. At one point Mariah surprises Edmund by ordering coffee for him to drink. When he playfully scolds her for not trying it before saying she doesn't like it, she takes a dramatic step. She takes the cup he had just drunk from and sips from it herself. And maybe that isn't a big deal now, but it is absolutely sensual within the pages. She knows she has done something incredibly forward, and both she and Edmund are caught in it. I was a tease in high school, and flirted with everyone. I have been happily in a relationship for going on six years now, and wouldn't have it any other way. Yet I am shocked how much this brought back those feelings. The nervous stomach, the racing heart, the slight quake in the voice right before you say something coquettish. It is unbelievably well done, and I am so impressed that this author captured it so well.

Plus, the mystery was well crafted. Remember Tarquin, Mariah's brother? He and Edmund had gotten so close that they acted as if they were truly brothers. When Tarquin goes off to propose to his lady friend, he suddenly goes missing. And then the tragedy of the book occurs: Tarquin is found dead. Edmund, Tarquin's lady friend, Mariah, their father Cato...everyone is devastated since he was shot. Cato, who already suffers from grout, drastically declines in health until he follows his son a matter of weeks later. Meanwhile, Edmund finds a man dying of gangrene near his parish. Through his sleuthing, he finds that this man is Captain Adam Rove, the man who had been bamboozling his way into every eligible woman's bed in Hampshire, including Mariah. Captain Rove was blackmailing Mariah into giving him money not to tell anyone that she was deceived by him until his death. And how he died: he placed an ad in the newspaper saying he was engaged to Mariah, just to mess with Tarquin. Tarquin found out, challenged him to a duel, and they were both shot. Tarquin died instantly, but Rove lasted just a bit longer with his wound.

And thus, we come to the end of the story. Edmund asks Mariah for her hand in marriage. When Mariah refuses because she believes herself unworthy of him, he reveals all: that he knows of her affair with Rove and that Rove blackmailed her. The biggest thing he reveals, though, is that he fell prey lust before marriage as well, and with a slave no less. We end with a happily ever after for most.

Edmund Persuader is a brilliantly written epic. I believed that this would be in a similar vein as *Pride and Prejudice* or *Wuthering Heights*, but it's infinitely better (and I know that's blasphemy! But it's true!) it is sensual, it is thought-provoking, it is witty. I loved that these characters, like novels of the era, had both brains and beauty to match. It is a magnificent piece of work, and I will be offering it up to everyone.

(I received this in a First Reads giveaway.)

M.R. Graham says

The Premise:

Edmund is a second son of one of England's most prominent families; thus, despite the prestige of his name, there is nothing for him to inherit, and he has spent his life preparing to earn a living as a clergyman. However, management problems at his family's sugar plantation send him to Antigua, where the realities of slavery and a forbidden, stormy love affair shatter his confidence in his own moral fortitude. When he finally must return to England, he is heartbroken and confused, no longer certain he is fit to be a man of God. As he wrestles with his conscience and with the necessity of finding a way to support himself, his troubles are compounded as his eye is caught by the sister of his best friend. The lady is noble, accomplished, wealthy, kind, and completely beyond the reach of a second son. She is also haunted by some grave, secret sin.

The Good:

Everything, goodness me! While the narrative voice occasionally pauses in an aside to acknowledge modernity, on the whole, the book feels more like a classic than a period piece. Without those little asides, and without having done a small amount of research on Shotwell, I would never have guessed that *Persuader* was not, in fact, written behind the leaded windows of a country estate of Regency England. The voice is perfect. The historicity is perfect. The characters' attitudes are perhaps a little more progressive than one might expect of the time, but not outside the realm of possibility, especially if the writer were acquainted with radical theology.

That brings me to the moral lesson of the story. I know a lot of people cringe away from the very idea of a novel with a moral lesson, but the fact is that all fiction comes with morals, and they can be done either well or poorly. *Persuader* is not about a squeaky-clean protagonist endlessly whinging about how hard it is to stay squeaky-clean in this horrible, evil world. It is not about a squeaky-clean protagonist agonizing over all of his tiddly, imagined sins. It is not about a hardened sinner being taught his lesson and transforming into a squeaky-clean evangelist overnight. (Looking at you, Scrooge.) It is about a human being who has to realize that everyone sins, everyone falls, and the only way out of the sin of guilt is self-forgiveness.

I love the characters, too. Edmund, genuine and flawed and human. Tark, with his jovial bombast. The obligatory conniving aunt, Andromeda. Evelyn is particularly fascinating; it's rare to find such sensitively portrayed non-neurotypical characters, most especially in historical fiction.

The Bad:

Being so perfectly modeled on the novels of the period, it does tend to ramble in places. I don't think I really needed fifty pages dedicated to every minute detail of a fox hunt - not that I didn't enjoy it, but I certainly didn't need it. Descriptions get very lengthy in places and actually tedious once or twice, and I am saying this as one who has nearly endless patience for description.

It was also very odd to find such detailed descriptions of sex. Not nastily detailed, and I've certainly encountered much, much more explicit sex in books, but it felt strange and out of character for a book that in other ways mimics classics so closely.

In Conclusion:

Yes, I was able to find some flaws. No, *Persuader* wasn't perfect. But it was still one of the best books I've read in a very long time, a new favorite, and I cannot wait to get my paws on the sequel, *Tomazina's Folly*. I would strongly recommend *Edmund Persuader* for those whose tastes coincide with mine, as I am assuming

they do if you're following this blog.

Pick up a copy. Take it slow. Savor it.

I received a copy of this book from Goodreads FirstReads in exchange for an honest review.

Jeffrey says

Don't let the intimidating length (1,500 pages, a half-million words) of this romantic epic put you off reading it. I count it as one of the five best books I have ever read. The hero, Edmund Percy is the younger son of a landed gentleman and is going into the clergy. Because he is so capable, his father sends him to Antigua to improve their failing sugar plantation. There he falls madly in love with the beautiful mulatto slave Janetta. The plantation thrives under his direction and the torrid love affair lasts for months. All the slaves on the plantation love Edmund's kindness but fear her because they say she uses "magic" and indeed she predicts Edmund will fall under the spell of a 'dark queen' and he certainly does. Janetta is tragically drowned and Edmund returns to England disgraced but his mentor still encourages him to become a clergyman. On his return he prevents an American privateer from capturing the ship he is traveling on and becomes somewhat a hero. He visits his aunt in a neighboring village seeking a living and is severely warned not to become involved with the highly influential and wealthy De Foye family. But he unwittingly does anyway and becomes best friends with Tarkin Esquith De Foye the son and heir to the estate and encounters his sister the ravishingly beautiful and talented 'dark queen' Mariah Esquith De Foye. Edmund has ghostly sins in his past but does not know that Mariah also harbors a secret sin of her own. Mariah's companion, Miss Evelyn Brownton is one of the most fascinating and loveable characters in all of literature. She is also very beautiful but manifests an autism spectrum syndrome in that she despises being touched without her consent, she is bright but socially awkward, has trouble with literacy and remembering and also loves Edmund in her own child-like naive' way. There are fox hunts, chess games, and everyone in the surrounding vicinity falls in love with Edmund. He plays matchmaker to his older brother trying to convince his foolish and proud father to approve and accept his son's marriage to an untitled daughter of a wealthy mine owner. Tragic events threaten Mariah, Miss Brownton, and Edmund as he seeks desperately to uncover what shame Mariah hides that prevents her from marrying him. Not since Jane Eyre have I enjoyed an unconsummated love affair of such torrid passion and intensity as the hero and heroine match wits and feelings. My ultimate tribute would be to say without hesitation that this would make a BBC mini-series to rival Downton Abbey in its scope and grandeur. The book, probably because of its length, simply does not get the recognition it deserves. I HIGHLY recommend it

Jeffrey says

I'm reading it on my Kindle and was astonished that this novel is approximately 1,500 pages and a half-million words. That puts in War & Peace territory for monumental and intimidating longevity. I'm only 1/3 of the way through and will already give this superlative epic 5 stars without even know what the next 2/3rd's are about. I cannot leave my Kindle alone! The story has so captured me that I'm constantly sneaking in and out to see what's happening on the next page. Not since Jane Eyre has a hero and his story so fascinated me. Do I recommend it? Do I ever!

Denise says

Full disclosure: I was chosen a First Reads winner, and received a paperback copy of the five books in two volumes (along with a matching bookmark), Edmund Persuader by Stuart Shotwell, in the mail. That in no way influenced the review that follows.

What a fantastic story and a thoroughly enjoyable book, or should I say books (for the two volumes total 1550 pages), which brought me to tears of both happiness and sadness several times. Especially for those who are fans of the authors from England's Regency period, I heartily recommend it.

Mr. Shotwell, in the preface to Volume I, says that he has "endeavored to reproduce the manner of speaking of the places and times the reader will visit only so far as modern taste could possibly bear....," but he has achieved that marvelously. I could envision the various settings, the several main characters, their mannerisms and behaviors, and their developing relationships all as if I was reading something written in the 1810s. This truly is a splendid story, well crafted and well told. I suspect that it is one I will choose to reread many more times in coming years.

I am so grateful to the author and to Mermaid Press of Maine for the opportunity to read Edmund Persuader. I definitely would encourage others to be persuaded to do so, too.

Melissa says

I received Edmund Persuader as a Goodreads giveaway and I am so delighted that I did. I do not say this lightly, but it is one of the best books I have ever read. Even after having read all 1500 pages, I was disappointed when it was over. The prose of this book is so eloquent that I found myself rereading certain passages that were beautifully written.

This novel is set in the early 19th century with Edmund Percy as the main character. He is the third son of a proud English gentleman and Edmund's older brother Christopher will inherit the family estate. Edmund has studied Theology at Oxford and plans to enter the Church to earn his living. However, just before he takes orders, he is asked by his father to visit the West Indies and straighten out the family's sugar cane plantation which has been abandoned by a corrupt estate manager. While there Edmund has a crisis of faith as he learns about the brutally harsh lives of slaves that are used to work his family's plantation. He also meets, falls in love with, and has a sexual relationship with a mulatto slave. This brings about his second moral crisis because he believes he has committed fornication and can in no way serve in the Church of England after committing such a sin.

When he finally finds his way back to England and takes his order, he finds his way to his Aunt Andromeda in Hampshire who, widowed and childless, serves as a second mother to him. It is in Hampshire that he receives a position in the church, first as curate and then later as rector. While in Hampshire he meets and falls in love with daughter of a local squire. It is evident, as the novel unfolds, that she is deeply in love with Edmund as well but she has a dark secret that keeps her from accepting his offer of marriage. Edmund must find out what this secret is and use his keen powers of persuasion to win over the object of his desires.

There are several themes that this book explores that are seldom explored in novels set in 19th century England. Edmund finds great pleasure in his physical relationship with the mulatto slave in Antigua and he fears that he will never find a proper English woman who will also fulfill his physical needs. The theme of pride and the mistakes and prejudices that are the result of excessive pride are also explored. This book also examines the idea that humans make mistakes but that these mistakes can be overcome through redemption

and the love of others. The most important theme in this book is that, although we may feel at times that it is impossible to affect changes in society at large, it is important that we show kindness, love and understanding to those in our immediate circle on whom we can have a more immediate and positive effect.

Aimee says

I was incredibly impressed with this book, it will go on my list of all time favorites. I was very hesitant to read it just because of the length, over 1500 pages. I could not believe how quickly I did end up getting through it, I found it hard to tear myself away from this book and its delightful characters.

Edmund was a joy to read about. I loved how Shotwell showed all sides of Edmund, the good and the bad. We go on a journey with him that takes us from Antigua to the English countryside and we watch his pain, his struggles, and his joys. A main theme throughout the book is morality and Edmund's constant desire to do the right thing even when it is so difficult at so many different times. This book had me questioning decisions I have made in my own life and I know I will be thinking about this book often when future problems arise that I must face.

The love story is very emotional, I came to care for Edmund through the book and wanted him to find his own happiness very much. There are so many twists and turns and unexpected events by the end I couldn't wait to get to the end to see if Edmund got his happy ending.

This book has wonderful characters, adventure, history, and romance all wrapped up in a great story. Any Austen or Downton Abbey fan would enjoy this one. I highly recommend it!

G.G. says

A lot of fun is had with Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* in this novel set in the same period: there's the hero's name, of course, and mention is made of Sir Thomas Bertram's "neighboring plantation" in the section depicting Edmund's encounter with the evils of slavery in Antigua. Writing in our own time, however, Stuart Shotwell is able to be much more explicit about sex, slavery, and the whys and wherefores of social mores than Austen ever could; I didn't mind the occasional explanatory aside. (See Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* for an historical novel without any didactic asides: frustrating at times, but ultimately very convincing.) At half a million words (according to one reviewer), *Edmund Persuader* has occasional longueurs, but they are not disabling--or at least I didn't find them so.

Avowedly a romance, that Edmund will eventually find and wed his "dark queen" can never be in doubt. The many pleasures of the novel are found in just how he will win her over. To that end, readers are treated to expositions of Christian doctrine in the form of conversations between characters and Edmund's sermons to his congregation. Non-believer though I am, I found these quite the most interesting--dare I say persuasive?--sections of the novel.

Once again, thanks to Stephanie for sending this to me!

Terry Krause says

Loved this book. That said, I'm an unabashed Anglophile and particular fan of Jane Austen. Edmund Percy's journey transports one to Regency England with all its manners and proprieties and yet shows us a man who understands the flaws of the age in which he lives. Much of the novel takes place in Jane's Hampshire, but this is not a "take-off" on any of Austen's novels. I look forward to reading it again. It is available for free download at www.edmundpersuader.com. At 1100+ pages it immerses you into an honorable man's young life.
