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Posted on 26 January 2019 By Ngaio Marsh

[Free] ? A Surfeit of Lampreys ? MOBI eBook or Kindle ePUB free

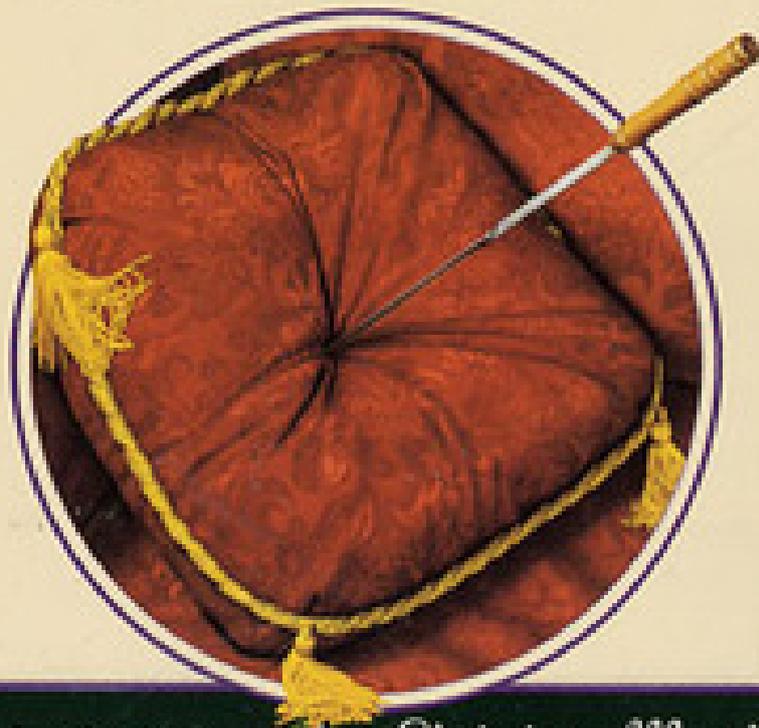
A few years ago New Zealander Roberta Grey met the Lamprey family, a bunch of Micawberish English aristocrats, when she was an adolescent and they were living in her home country. She and Frid Lamprey were schoolmates, and before she knew it she'd fallen in love with the family and they seemingly did so with her. Soon, though, they had to move back to London as yet another of their financial crises overtook them, a financial crisis representing one of those periods when none of their elderly and wealthy relatives had died, leaving them enough money to get through the next few years. The Lampreys are, you see, complete scroungers. Mother and Father are just utterly useless, parasites upon society, while the kids have been expensively educated to ensure that, in the old English aristocratic way, they're quite unemployable. If they were alive today they'd doubtless be eligible for lots of high paid City Wall Street jobs, where they could earn a stack of money for being entirely unproductive. As it is, they're living in the UK immediately before the outbreak of WWII. A few years have gone by and Roberta's parents have fairly recently died in a car crash. She's had to close up the family affairs in New Zealand and take herself on a months long ship journey to Dear Old Blighty, where the plan is that she'll live with a Dear Old Aunt somewhere in deepest Dear Old Mumbleshire. But the aunt takes ill and the Lampreys step forward to say that they'd love to have Roberta come live with them for a month in the double apartment they own in London. When she arrives, though, she discovers the Lampreys are facing the worst financial crisis yet, even though their response to it is to carry on spending as much of other people's money as they always have. Their last hope seems to be to butter up the elder brother of paterfamilias Lord Charles, the immensely wealthy but also immensely tight fisted Gabriel, Marquis of Wutherwood and Rune. So Gabriel and his bonkers wife Violet are invited to the London apartments. The trouble is that Gabriel refuses the family's entreaty for an advance and, as he's waiting crossly in the elevator to depart for home, someone sticks a long metal skewer through his eye and into his brain, thereby quite efficiently offing him. Soon enough, Chief Detective Inspector Alleyn is on the job, alongside his usual stalwart sidekick, Detective Inspector Fox. Up to this point, *Surfeit of Lampreys* is one of the funniest detective novels I've read. Much of the humor and later the drama center around the fact that, even though Roberta may adore her Lampreys, it's quite obvious to anyone with an objective eye that really they're self indulgent freeloaders, their various quirks and quiddities being not so much joyous expressions of eccentricity as a pain in the rear, especially to all those who've seen the Lampreys absorb borrowed money like blotting paper. Marsh achieves this effect by keeping us mostly inside the viewpoint of either Roberta or Alleyn. Roberta is still, despite everything, in love with her witty childhood friends, although even she begins to wonder if she's made a big mistake. It's

she who draws the comparison with the Micawbers that I mentioned above As counterpoint, we have Alleyn's view of them And what the hell, he asks at one point of Fox, have you been telling that collection of certifiable grotesques about me This tension between the two viewpoints of the Lampreys is what gives the novel such great wit is the trusting Roberta right about the family, or is Alleyn's harder headed antagonism a better guide This isn't a perfect detective novel If the reader is to have any hope of working out who did the Dreadful Deed, s he needs to have either a pencil and a stack of graph paper or a photographic memory since I had neither to hand, I adopted the lesser favored yah de yah da technique, whereby I simply assumed the author must have got those bits right Likewise, I felt that the actual murder method was so flipping complicated that the chances of it working out in real life must be next to zero On the other hand, John Dickson Carr. But, but, but, but, but the novel has so much to offer to fans of Golden Age detective fiction It's genuinely very readable and, as I say, intermittently quite funny enough that I was often laughing out loud Yes, I told my wife waspishly than once, I'm just about to turn the light off I love the way that Marsh reveals what she really thinks about the Lampreys while yet letting Roberta's positive assessment of them stay at center stage This is a very skilled satire set at a particular moment in time as the UK awaits the murderous assault from beyond the Channel when the old school of English society was really rather swiftly having to recognize the fact that extinction awaited just a few years down the line unless it could rapidly adapt We suspect that all of the Lampreys with the possible exception of Henry, who's sure to marry Roberta unless she suddenly gets herself a lick of sense aren't going to be able to do that, that they'll emerge out of the other side of WWII just as broke, just as incompetent, just as charmingly parasitic, and just as unemployable as ever they were. Bearing the surface of a straightforward mystery, this is actually a pretty effective social satire while at the same time delivering as the mystery novel it purports to be Marsh isn't everybody's cup of tea, but for me, with this one, she hits the spot just about right. This is a contribution to Rich Westlake's 1941 roundup at his Past Offences site. The pacing of Death of a Peer left me extremely frustrated It took forever for the Peer to get murdered He finally does get murdered and then it takes even longer for the plot to go anywhere Arguably it never does I picked up this book primed to fall in love with the dashing Roderick Alleyn He seemed a brilliant but much less awkward version of Sir Peter Wimsey or Sherlock Holmes or any other detective you may wish to pick The problem is, he is also rather dull The majority of this book is endless interviews going over the same things where the characters were at the moment of the murder I get that this is a chance to give The Astute Reader a chance to find the clue and solve the mystery themselves but I was looking for brilliant deduction Instead I got run of the mill police work The grand reveal, while dramatic, was also fairly predictable Characters act exactly as you would expect them to I might have enjoyed the book if I had liked the romance, but from the start I opposed it I dislike Henry view spoiler I wanted him to be the murderer Also I didn't realize Alleyn was apparently married I totally shipped him with Robin

hide spoiler

Ngaiio
MARSH

*Death of
a Peer*



*"It's time to start comparing Christie to Marsh instead
of the other way around." —New York magazine*

tenth novel in the Roderick Alleyn Series, published in 1941, was also known as, Death as a Peer Roberta Grey first met the Lamprey family in New Zealand, where she grew up When she is orphaned, she goes to England, where the Lampreys had returned, to live with an aunt However, when her aunt is taken ill, the Lampreys come and claim her, whisking her away to stay with them in London There is Lord Charles, his wife Charlotte, the children Henry, Frid, Stephen, Colin, Patricia, Michael and a host of delightfully dotty named servants Roberta had always been a little in love with Lampreys a large, charming, chaotic family, who are always on the verge of financial ruin Indeed, when she stays with them, she discovers they are staying in two apartments, trying to hide from the bailiffs and, as always, under threat of financial ruin It seems that the only thing that can save them is for Lord Wutherwood, brother of Lord Charles, to come and bail them out Gabriel, and his wife, arrive at the apartment block the following day However, never a cheerful man, he has lost patience with his impecunious brother, and his many children, and is unwilling to help them When there is a dreadful murder, almost everyone including our old friend, Nigel Bathgate, attempt to tell Alleyn that the Lampreys are too delightful to ever murder anyone Can Alleyn untangle the myriad of motives and suspects and see whether the Lampreys are, as everyone claims, simply unable to hurt anyone This is an enjoyable addition to the series, which I am really enjoying Without doubt, Ngaio Marsh deserves her reputation as one of the four main Golden Age detective writers her mysteries sit comfortably alongside those of Christie, Sayers and Allingham. There s stuff to like about A Surfeit of Lampreys the character portraits, the commentary on the family, the fact that it brings in Bathgate and ties some of that stuff together but overall, I ve totally lost my motivation to read Ngaio Marsh s books There s a same y feel to them, the characters aren t nearly as brilliant as, say, Dorothy L Sayers , and it comes out feeling a little too heavy and flat, with not enough payoff The mysteries are intricate, but everything just unravels so slowly. I know other people think Ngaio Marsh is amazing, and I did enjoy some of the earlier books, but Inspector Alleyn feels kind of stale now. Originally posted here. [Free] ? A Surfeit of Lampreys ? Murder Becomes A Family Affair The Lampreys Were A Charming, Eccentric Happy Go Lucky Family, Teetering On The Edge Of Financial Ruin Until The Gruesome Murder Of Their Uncle And Unpleasant Marquis, Who Met His Untimely Death While Leaving The Lamprey Flat Left Them With A Fortune Now It S Up To Inspector Roderick Alleyn To Sift Through The Alibis To Discover Which Lamprey Hides A Ruthless Killer Behind An Amiable Facade Sept 2019 reread via my dad s Kindle I read this mystery years ago and found upon rereading that while I remembered the Lampreys, I had no idea who the culprit was I did manage to pick up on the most important clue but failed to see what Alleyn saw about what it meant On another note I find that this book was originally called A Surfeit of Lampreys as with Agatha Christie books, I often believe I have found one that I haven t read before only to discover that it is just that the American edition had a different name So, one book less in this series left unread. 2019 Reread Upon reread, this

was one of the enjoyable non Troy books The Lampreys are charming, so this isn't one of Marsh's mystery novels where everyone is kind of terrible and unlikeable I struggle with those Also, the New Zealand connection is interesting I do think Alleyn shows up a bit late in this, narratively, but at least the Lampreys are entertaining in the interim. And despite insta love, I kinda liked the secondary romance this time around Possibly because I was aware of the impending insta love And at least they knew each other when they were younger. 2016 Went back to this series, because apparently there is one coming up in a couple of books where Alleyn and Troy assess their marriage after being apart for most of the war And I am interested about that There is also something about reading about the time period from a contemporary. A few things, the book about Troy and Alleyn's relationship after the war is somewhat going to suffer from the fact that we actually see shockingly little of it before the war Which is sad The other thing, is that while the Lamprey family is story charming, Ngaio Marsh does seem to like to have the murder not happen until midway through the book, and that seems late If Alleyn doesn't show up until 2/3 of the way through, it doesn't feel like the best detective story. Also, she really likes insta love. It's also one heck of a case of all the likeable people being innocent and the unlikeable ones being guilty. Oh, and this is perfectly fine, but as I was reading it, I was fairly constantly thinking, This is not as good as Dorothy Sayers, which is less than ideal Although, to be fair, I was probably comparing a middly Marsh to my general adoration of Sayers I'm sure it's at least as good as Five Red Herrings, say Not sure that helps matters much though. It's solid it's also entirely skippable. The Lampreys of the title are a charming but impoverished aristocratic family living well beyond their means When ruin threatens, they invite wealthy Uncle Gabriel to visit and put on a party including a game of charades hoping they will have an opportunity to borrow money from him Instead, Uncle Gabriel is brutally murdered and suspicion attaches to the family Inspector Alleyn must dig beneath the frivolous facade and secret conspiracies of the Lamprey family members to find out the truth. Not my favourite Marsh offering the so-called charming antics of the family quickly become tiresome, especially coming from the irresponsible adult members The plot mainly hinges on timings and movements of the suspects, and the questioning of the suspects on these points becomes rather repetitive The final denouement is exciting, but not really very believable Having said that, it's quite a pleasant read, the typical Golden Age setting of huge family homes with their servants and heirlooms is brilliantly depicted and Alleyn's sidekick Fox can always be relied upon for some amusing moments. There was no doubt the Lampreys were charmers who sported the grand style and didn't have a shilling But when Lord Charles Lamprey's rich old brother met an untimely end, the question was raised were they also cold-blooded killers Some words by Shakespeare cue Inspector Alleyn in a case with many strutting players and one star a murderer back cover The famous, beloved mystery writers are famous and beloved for a reason they're outstanding at what they do characterization, description, plotting, wit and skulduggery This book is no exception beautifully limned

characters, an almost closed door plot that had everybody wondering, a chronology where minutes were of the utmost importance but which still left the reader guessing and avidly reading The grand dame of mysteries has done it again. Originally published on my blog here in June 1998. This is one of my least favourite Ngaio Marsh novels The crime is puzzling enough and the solution typically ingenious, and Roderick Alleyn is his usual urbane self the problem is that I find it impossible to have any sympathy for the family at the centre of the story, the Lampreys The Lampreys are an upper class family always suffering from financial crises, yet unable to work or to save because of their frivolous background Marsh keeps on emphasising the point that all who meet them cannot help but love them, because of their charm this didn't come across to me at all Returning to England following some years in New Zealand, they invite the head of the family to their London flat, where they hope to charm him into giving them some money Following a grotesque set of charades and planned supposedly charming and spontaneous appeals from the various members of the family, he has a furious row with Lord Henry and leaves, only to be brutally murdered in the lift on the way down. Under suspicion, the Lampreys show themselves at their worst, speaking French to discuss the crime in front of the PC they patronisingly assume won't be able to understand the identical twin sons refusing to admit to which of them went down in the lift with the victim lying about the refusal to give the money to them and so on. The inability of the Lampreys to do anything of any use to anyone, their total parasitism on the lower classes, and the way in which everyone looks on their egotism as charming because they are from the aristocracy these all amount to good arguments for a socialistic view of the class system I'm fairly sure Marsh didn't mean it that way, and it probably felt different at the time though if I were reading this during the war and had experienced the hardship of the Depression I don't think I'd have felt very charitable towards them It's difficult to read it without projecting 1990s attitudes, but I do hope we have moved on.

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