

Lawless and the Devil of Euston Square by William Sutton

4 stars

Victorian London comes to life.

This book is written in a totally different style from anything I have read before. Maybe that is why, to begin with, I struggled with following the plot as it seemed to bounce about from one plot to another and from various different characters from all layers of Victorian life.

Campbell Lawless is a young Scotsman who has joined the police force in London and who, at the start of the book, has just been summoned to help out Inspector Wardle at Scotland Yard. His first case happens in the middle of the night when an act of sabotage has taken place at Euston Station leaving behind a dead body. Campbell is determined to find the perpetrators of this crime but everyone, including Inspector Wardle, seems to want to gloss over the incident.

From this incident a whole story unfolds revolving around the mysterious Berwick Skelton who is a revolutionary plotting to take revenge on the upper classes and in particular the profligate Prince of Wales who has stolen his former fiancée.

This book really brings Victorian London to life. It is full of characters both fictitious and real, and the plot completely drew me in. Campbell begins to realise how difficult it is to solve crimes when there is a connection to the rich and famous. He mixes with royalty, famous authors and engineers but also with young boys who spend their lives running messages or working in the sewers. He is able to convey how Britain was in this era, an age of the railways, when engineers are revered. He vividly brings to life the distinct class boundaries between the rich and poor and his characterisations are extremely well-drawn.

I loved the dialogue of the various characters which brought them all to life and the solving of the crime was very well explained. After the first 50 pages I found myself getting drawn into the story and wanting to know what had really happened.

The good news for me is that this was the author's first case introducing Campbell Lawless but he has subsequently written two more and I have both of them! I am really looking forward to continuing my acquaintance with Inspector Lawless and reading about his next two cases.

Dexter

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review