

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: November 1, 2018

## **A Tale of Two Murders: Guilt, Innocence, and the Execution of Edith Thompson.**

By Laura Thompson

Nov. 2018. 448p. illus. Pegasus, \$28.95 (9781681778716). 364

London, October 1922. Edith Thompson and her husband, Percy, were on the way home from the theater.

A man, Freddy Bywaters, came out of the shadows and murdered Edith's husband. It turned out that Bywaters was Edith's lover; they were both charged with Percy's murder, and they were both convicted and executed. In this intense and precise account of the case and its aftermath, the author explores the possibility that Edith was unfairly convicted; Freddy claimed several times that Edith wasn't involved, and it is quite possible he was telling the truth, not merely lying to save the life of the woman he loved.

Thompson puts the case in vivid historical context: the early years of the twentieth century were tumultuous in many ways, and the empowerment of women, both politically and sexually, led to widespread changes to the traditional social structure. Was Edith Thompson, an intelligent and ambitious woman, truly guilty of orchestrating her husband's murder? Or did she fall victim to a society and a legal system that refused to accept that a woman who commits adultery might be innocent of murder? A terrific book: compassionate, nuanced, and thought-provoking.

— *David Pitt*