



Queen Victoria: A Life of Contradictions

Matthew Dennison

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Queen Victoria is Britain's queen of contradictions. In her combination of deep sentimentality and bombast; cultural imperialism and imperial compassion; fear of intellectualism and excitement at technology; romanticism and prudishness, she became a spirit of the age to which she gave her name.

Victoria embraced photography, railway travel and modern art; she resisted compulsory education for the working classes, recommended for a leading women's rights campaigner 'a good whipping' and detested smoking. She may or may not have been amused.

Meanwhile she reinvented the monarchy and wrestled with personal reinvention. She lived in the shadow of her mother and then under the tutelage of her husband; finally she embraced self-reliance during her long widowhood. Fresh, witty and accessible, Matthew Dennison's *Queen Victoria* is a compelling assessment of Victoria's mercurial character and impact, written with the irony, flourish and insight that this Queen and her rule so richly deserve.

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