



Heart of a Queen: Queen Victoria's Romantic Attachments

Theo Aronson

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'My nature', wrote Queen Victoria, 'is too passionate, my emotions too fervent, and I am a person who has to cling to someone in order to find peace and comfort.'

It is with this aspect of the Queen's complex character that Theo Aronson's new study is concerned. For never, not even in old age, was Queen Victoria the dour, censorious puritan of popular imagination; within that dumpy, uncompromising-looking figure beat a very susceptible heart. She had, and again the words are her own, 'very violent feelings of affection'.

To Queen Victoria, the love, no less than the guidance, attention and protection of a man, was all but indispensable. In the course of her long life, there were six men with whom her emotions were romantically involved. There were her first prime minister, the urbane Lord Melbourne; her husband, the idealistic Prince Albert; her fellow sovereign, the fascinating Napoleon III; her gillie, the rough-hewn John Brown; another prime minister, the silver-tongued Disraeli; and her Indian servant, the exotic Munshi.

The appeal to Queen Victoria of these six apparently disparate characters was that they were men of distinctive personality: there was something exceptional, something outré about each of them. And they all - and this was probably their greatest attraction in the eyes of Queen Victoria - treated her as a woman first, a queen second.

By focusing on the Queen's romantic associations and by making full use of recently revealed material, Theo Aronson has painted a fresh, intriguing and startlingly different portrait of Queen Victoria. With his talent for narrative and characterization, he has produced one of the most incisive and readable of his many royal biographies.

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