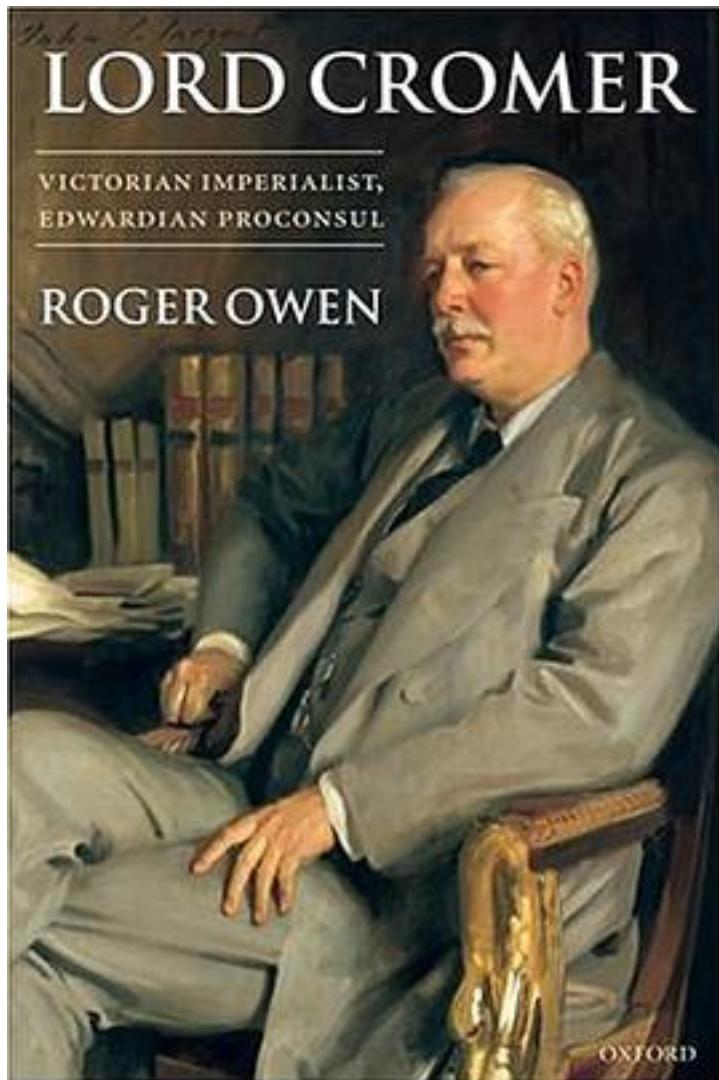


Lord Cromer



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著者:Roger Owen

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In the heyday of Empire just before the First World War, Lord Cromer was second only to Lord Curzon in fame and public esteem. In the days when Cairo and Calcutta represented the twin poles of British power in Asia and Africa, Cromer's commanding presence seemed to radiate the essential spirit of imperial rule. In this first modern biography Roger Owen charts the life of the man revered by the British and hated by today's Egyptians, the real ruler of Egypt for nearly a quarter of a century. A member of the famous City banking family of Baring Brothers, Cromer in his youth seemed to be distinguished mainly by lack of academic ability and a taste for the fashionable pursuits of his day. His first military posting, to Corfu, was welcomed by him on account of the excellent shooting to be had in the region. Roger Owen shows how, almost imperceptibly, his commitment to public service grew, due in part at least to his relationship with Ethel Errington who, after long delay, became his first wife. From the island outposts of the old British Empire, to India, the jewel in its crown, and finally to the new Empire in Africa, Cromer represented the might of Britain's Empire. Few imperial administrators had either his range of experience or his long practice of ruling different non-European peoples, at a time when the whole notion of Empire itself entered more and more into the metropolitan political debate. Roger Owen makes extensive use of Cromer's official correspondence, family papers, memoirs, and the personal letters of his friends and colleagues to explore all aspects of Cromer's life in imperial government. He examines his innovative role in international finance and his energetic re-engagement with Britain's troubled political life following his formal retirement in 1907. Finally, he assesses the sometimes-bitter legacy of imperial rule left by Cromer.

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