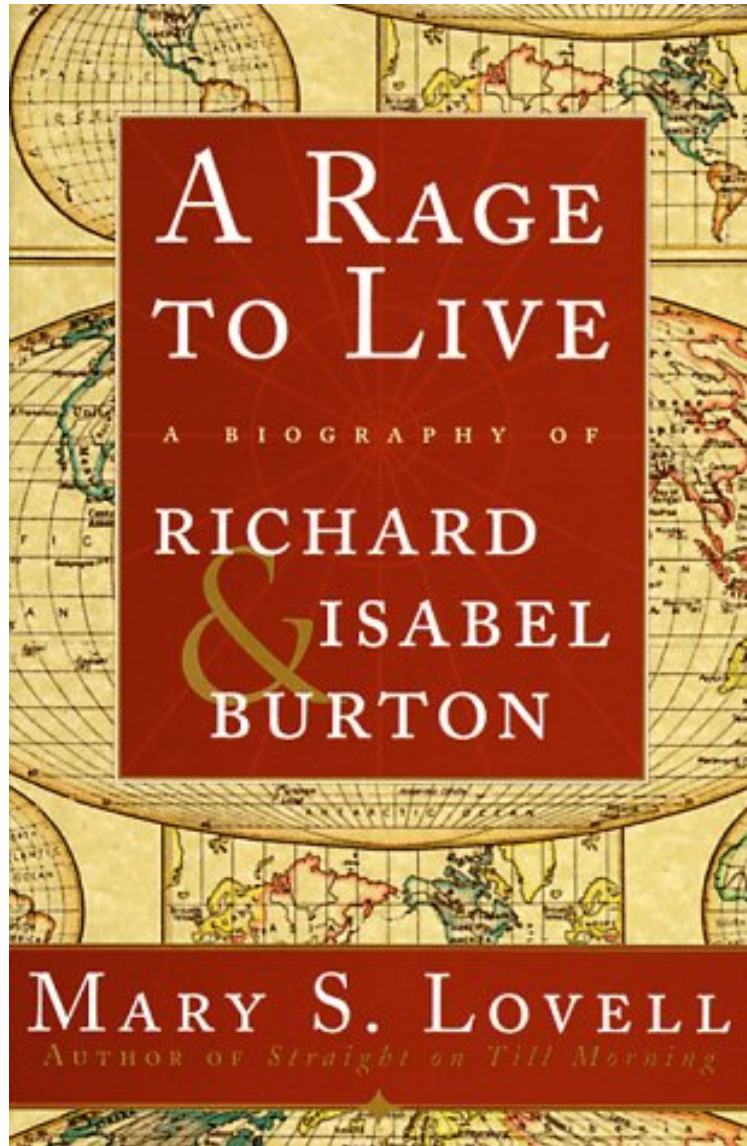


[E-BOOK] A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton

## A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton

Mary S. Lovell

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**Mary S. Lovell : A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Rage to Live: A Biography of Richard and Isabel Burton:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Highly interesting; Thoroughly-researched; Desperately in need of an edit for brevity/missing/imperfect terminologyBy Catherine ElizabethI knew next to nothing about the exploration of the Middle East or Africa during the mid- to late-1800's before I read this book. Obviously, that meant I knew nothing about Richard or Isabel Burton, the primary subjects of the book.I really appreciated the thoroughness of the

authors research. Every single available detail of the Burtons lives from beginning to end is included or at least referenced in the book. Very often, the author includes detailed explanations as to where she acquired the source material, giving the book a true feeling of authenticity which is often lacking in biographies. This book should have been a 5-star book, but by the time I was halfway through it, I was seriously considering stopping, and by the time I was finally finished, I nearly hated it. I normally love to read historical biographies. I am not a historian, so I fully expect to come across terms, names, cities, etc. that I won't be familiar with. As I read, I keep a list of names/terms I don't recognize so I can look them up later. This book gets 3 stars primarily because I had to look up nearly 1,000 terms (I kept my list for reference) while reading the book. The author constantly used archaic, outdated, and obscure terminology; she referenced names of people and places with no follow-up; she threw in hundreds of foreign words without corresponding translations. I was frustrated and irritated with constantly having to stop and Google words like Bashi-bazouk, Biafra, gazetted, Hajji, orchitis, and Sufism. A glossary or explanatory footnotes is sorely needed. The book also gets 3 stars because it is, quite simply, too long. The author should have decided whether she was writing biographies (which would certainly reference adventures), or a detailed description of Richard Burton's explorations. She swings from detailed personal information about Richard or Isabel, to long and overly-specific passages about an individual adventure. The book is really two books in that sense, which makes it too long and added to my frustration when reading it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. At last a good Bio of Sir Richard and his wife  
By Customer  
At last a good Bio of Sir Richard and his wife. As I thought she was truly his friend and companion as he was to her. A solid good marriage that speaks to love that Isabel had for him and her illness and real joy to join her husband in which became their travels. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's ok but a bit long  
By Peter D. Bellone  
I just finished this one and I believe it could have been half the length. Overall it is a good read but I found it lacking regarding the subject of sex and his interest and research into the topic. Does anybody have a recommendation for more a juicier biography of his life?

Describes the accomplishments of the British explorer and scholar, and the relationship between him and his unconventional wife.

.com More than a century after their deaths, Richard and Isabel Burton are legend. Sir Richard Burton was a prolific writer, an insatiable explorer, a linguist, and a translator who pursued controversy and risk as surely as adventure. In 1853, disguised as an Afghani doctor, he became one of the first Europeans to enter the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He later led an expedition to discover the source of the Nile--whether he got there first was later protractedly disputed. He spoke dozens of languages and translated the erotic works *The Arabian Nights*, *The Kama Sutra*, and *The Perfumed Garden* into English, making him fall afoul of the National Vigilance Society and the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Isabel, for her part, defied her upper-crust family to marry Richard and lead the "wild, roving, vagabond life" she had dreamed of as a stifled young lady. She was her husband's collaborator, editor, and most vehement advocate. She defended his oft-besmirched reputation, promoted his writing, successfully campaigned to make him knighted--even arranged a dinner with the queen. After Richard's death, Isabel came under fire for burning his papers, including the *Kama Sutra* translation. This double biography by Mary S. Lovell (biographer, too, of Amelia Earhart, Beryl Markham, and Jane Digby) attempts to dispel many of the myths that have grown up around the pair of famous Victorians. She defends Isabel's burning her husband's papers as an act designed to protect his reputation and privacy. Lovell points out that even after their being burned, more of Richard's papers remained than were left by many of his contemporaries. And she cites them as primary source material for the book. Lovell also strenuously contradicts the long-held belief that Richard was gay--his interest in and writings about male sexuality, she believes, were borne purely of anthropological research. The Burtons, she assures readers, had an ideal marriage in every way, but she offers little supporting material to prove her claim. Lovell's views seem sometimes to be colored by her adoration for her subjects. But the obvious breadth of her research and her narrative skill make *Rage to Live* one of the more distinguished biographies of late.  
From Publishers Weekly  
Celebrated and excoriated during his lifetime, Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) was among the most eminent of Victorians. Soldier, spy, diplomat, linguist, scholar and translator of erotic fiction, he lived several lives at once. Lovell (*Straight on Till Morning*) chronicles his varied life and adds that of his wife, Isabel Arundell (1831-1891), a member of a prominent English Catholic family. By the time Burton married Arundell in 1861, he was famous for traveling alone and in disguise to Mecca (forbidden to non-Muslims) and for his even more spectacular expeditions in East Africa. Though welcome in high society, the Burtons seemed happier abroad, traveling as far afield as Brazil, Syria and Iceland. In the 1880s, Burton pursued an almost obsessive interest in Eastern erotica, translating *1001 Nights*, the *Kama Sutra* and *The Scented Garden*, and thereby earning the censure of respectable countrymen. Lovell contradicts the assumption that Burton was homosexual and his relationship with his wife sexless; and demonstrates how the marriage was marked throughout by an equality rare in Victorian times. A judicious, self-effacing biographer, Lovell generally resists the temptation to intrude into the narrative, but she sometimes speculates where primary material is absent. She is best at recounting the Burtons' lives as history but weaker at explicating character. Perhaps unavoidable given her subjects' guardedness. For all his restless

accomplishment, Burton seems, judging from the evidence here, to have had a void at his center, an inability to connect to others. In this book, the Burtons remain curiously remote, never quite fulfilling the promise of the title. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Lovell, who wrote *Straight On Till Morning* (LJ 9/15/87), the best-selling biography of Beryl Markham, now tackles the dual biography of Victorian explorer/author Richard Burton and his equally adventurous wife, Isabel, using research materials not previously available. Richard is best known for his early explorations of Africa and for entering Mecca disguised as a native, as well as for his translations of the *Kama Sutra* and other erotic writings. After their marriage, Isabel traveled with him whenever possible, at times posing in Arab dress as his son. She was able to compile information for him on the lives of women and acted as his editor, agent, coauthor, advocate, and secretary while also publishing in her own name. Both Burtons, but Richard especially, could be insensitive or arrogant to those in a position to help them, and Lovell paints them in all their glory but with blemishes intact. A fascinating book that is sure to spur interest in earlier works and the Burtons's writings. (Index and photos not seen.) A Julie Still, Rutgers Univ., Camden, NJ Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.