



The Mighty Nimrod: Life of Frederick Courtenay Selous

Stephen Taylor

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This biography is a revision of a book written as a tribute by a close friend. Rather than viewing Selous as a Victorian beau-ideal and wild hunter Taylor discovered that he was in fact a well-educated Bohemian wanderer who, because of his rebelliousness had been allowed to go to Africa by his parents in the hope that it would keep him out of trouble with the law. Later he became a passionate advocate and agent of the British Empire, only to recoil in horror eventually at the voracity of his country's expansionism. Although a Darwinian and a rationalist his experiences in the wilderness left him with strong beliefs in the spirit world. Selous is identified as the man of action who carried out the orders of Cecil John Rhodes, the visionary in the opening up of Central Africa. He was an instigator of British expansion in his own right, that he acted a restraint on Rhodes when he was considering wild schemes to attack the warrior nation of the Matabele and that he provided focus, depth and direction to Rhodes's vague notions about northward expansion and a Cape to Cairo railway. The evidence also reveals that the British South Africa Company later manipulated Selous to misrepresent to the British public the potential of Rhodesia when the new territory was in economic difficulty.

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