

FREDERICK COURTENAY SELOUS: Hunter, Explorer and Naturalist

Member of the Boone and Crockett Club, friend of Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Sheldon, Carl Rungius and Henry Fairfield Osborn, Selous is universally acknowledged to have been the greatest of our hunter-riflemen. Indeed, Theodore Roosevelt described him as "The greatest of the world's big game hunters... no other hunter alive has had the experience of Selous; and so far as I can recall, no hunter of anything like his experience has ever possessed his gift of penetrating observation joined to his power of vivid and accurate narration." Roosevelt wrote the foreword to Selous' book *African Nature Notes and Reminiscences* published by McMillan, London, in 1908, in which he commented on Selous' keen power of observation and interest in all phases of natural history. Selous dedicated the book to Roosevelt.

Frederick Selous established his reputation in Africa professionally hunting ivory south of the Zambezi in the country now known as Zimbabwe. His adventures in that area of Africa included an assignment as chief scout for Cecil Rhodes' "Pioneers" who conquered and established Rhodesia. He also commanded a company of soldiers for the Bulawayo Field Force during the Matabele wars. These adventures are described in his book *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia* published by Rowland Ward, London, in 1896.

Although best known for his African adventures, and the arrangements he made for Theodore Roosevelt's African trip, it should also be noted that Selous hunted extensively in North America. He hunted in Wyoming and Montana for wapiti and grizzly, in Ontario and New Brunswick for moose, and in Newfoundland for caribou. In 1904, he hunted in Yukon Territory with Charles Sheldon for moose, caribou, sheep and bear and he returned there to hunt alone in 1906. His North American hunting exploits are detailed in his books *Sport and Travel East and West* published by Longmans,

Green, London, 1900, and *Recent Hunting Trips in North America* published by Witherby, London and Scribner's, N.Y. in 1907.

Selous and Charles Sheldon established a close friendship after hunting together in the Yukon. In the Boone and Crockett Club's archives are copies of many letters that Selous wrote to Sheldon dealing with everything from hunting plans to personal finances. Charles Sheldon, in his book *The Wilderness of Upper Yukon* published by Scribner's, N.Y. in 1911 details much about his experiences hunting with Selous.

When the first World War broke out, Selous offered his services to the military but was rejected since he was already 63 years old. He persisted and because of his superior physical fitness he was finally accepted, given a commission as captain, 25th Royal Fusiliers and returned to Africa for action against the Germans in Tanganyika. After winning the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry, he was killed in action on January 4, 1917, and buried where he fell near Kissaki. Townsend Whelen in his two volume anthology *Hunting Big Game* published by The Mili-

tary Service Publishing Company, Harrisburg, in 1946, wrote "His bones now rest in a lonely grave where of nights hyenas laugh and lions roar, but where a gigantic bronze rhinoceros modeled by Carl Akeley, a last tribute from his sportsmen friends in the United States, stands guard."

In 1918, a year after Selous was killed, J.G. Millais, a prominent hunter, naturalist and author wrote an extensive biography *The Life of Frederick Courtenay Selous, S.D.O.* published by Longmans, Green, London. In the preface Millais wrote "Selous had many friends but none evinced a more keen understanding of his life work than Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Ex-President of the United States, and I feel grateful to him for the attention he has given the following pages and the use he has allowed me to make of his numerous letters." ▲▲▲



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Editor of Specialty Books and Limited Editions Communications, Publications and Marketing Committee

BOOKS WRITTEN BY F.C. SELOUS

A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa, 1881

Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa, 1893

Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia, 1896

Sport and Travel East and West, 1900

Recent Hunting Trips in British North America, 1907

African Nature Notes and Reminiscences, 1908

Plus many contributions to other publications and magazines.

