



Cecil Rhodes: Flawed Colossus

Brian Roberts

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Cecil Rhodes 'lived only for his schemes and enjoyed life only as a cannon ball enjoys space, travelling to its aim blindly and spreading ruin on its way. He was a great man, no doubt — a man who rendered immense service to his country, but humanity is not much indebted to him.'

The time is ripe for a new biography of Cecil Rhodes: the hero of imperialism needs to be seen with the perspective to examine the tremendous changes which have taken place since the British Empire was at its height.

This major re-assessment deals with the man, rather than the politics — and shows Rhodes to be ruthless, energetic, idealistic, and very much a product of his time.

We see him first as a far from amiable child, the son of a country vicar. As a youth he went to South Africa, where he made a fortune diamond mining. This fortune provided the means to pursue his political ambitions - a crazy dream to put as much red on the map as possible. In fact he only achieved what was to become Northern and Southern Rhodesia. His brutality to the native peoples of Africa, his financial chicanery, his involvement in the farcical Jameson Raid, his suppressed homosexuality, his ideas about racial superiority, and his exaggerated respect for an Oxford education which led to his most lasting memorial — the Rhodes Scholarships — are all covered in this frank biography.

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