



The Purple Land

William Henry Hudson

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William Henry Hudson was a true child of South America, born in Argentina in 1841. His parents had emigrated from the USA to begin sheep farming, and the young William grew up herding stock with local 'gauchos', the freedom-loving cowboys of the pampas, and studying the wildlife of the area. He also began writing, both for scientific journals, and increasingly, books containing his own thoughts and ideas on a wide variety of subjects. 'The Purple Land' is William Hudson's exuberant first novel. Set in the turbulent political times of Uruguay's birth, it tells the tale of European adventurer Richard Lamb, who elopes with the lovely Paquita, thereby earning the undying enmity of her powerful father. Desperate to support his wife, he sets off on a series of increasingly wild adventures that includes horse-stealing, a fight to the death, imprisonment and escape - and culminates in a pitched battle between the two main political parties, 'Whites' and 'Reds', with our hero unfortunately picking the losing side. In between, Richard manages to win the hearts of at least three Latin beauties, all of whom further complicate his already convoluted existence. But 'The Purple Land' is far more than a simple adventure story. Constructed as an early form of 'road novel', Hudson fills its pages with intimate sketches of the people and the customs of mid-nineteenth century pampas life, colourful vignettes set among his masterful depiction of the region's wildlife and its matchless natural beauty.

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