

The Purple Land: Being the
Narrative of one Richard Lamb's
Adventures in the Banda Oriental, in
South America, as told by Himself

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT



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AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

It is well worth while to bring out a special edition of the "The Purple Land." I wish that the edition could be extended to include "El Ombu"; and also those delightful books, "Idle Days in Patagonia" and the "Naturalist in La Plata," wherein the birds and small beasts of Argentina are brought before the reader so that ever afterwards he knows them as he knows the familiar living things of Old World song and story. On the whole "El Ombu" is the most noteworthy of all these books, for it gives the very soul of the land; and nowadays the soul is changing as rapidly as the land itself.

Hudson's work is of great and permanent value. He combines the priceless gift of seeing with the priceless gift of so vividly setting forth what he has seen that others likewise may see it. He is one of a very limited number of people—which include Knight, the author of the "Cruise of the Falcon," and Cunningham Graham—who have been able not only to appreciate the wild picturesqueness of the old time South American life, but to portray it as it should be portrayed. His writings come in that very small class of books which deserve the title of literature. To cultivated men who love life in the open, and possess a

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taste for the adventurous and the picturesque, they stand in a place by themselves. Herman Melville did for the South Sea whaling folk, and Ruxton did for the old time Rocky Mountain trappers, much what Hudson has done for the gaucho. He brings before us the wild rider of the pampas as Gogol brings before us the wild rider of the steppes. In addition he portrays the life of bird and beast as in more quiet lands they have been portrayed by White of Selborne and John Burroughs. The men, the horses, the cattle, the birds of the vast seas of grass, all are familiar to him. We see the rough work of the horsemen, and their rough play; the long, low, white house of the great ranch owner, solitary under the solitary ombu tree; and the squalid huts where the mounted laborers live and the squalid drinking booths where they revel. We see also the Indians standing erect on the bare backs of their horses to look across the waving plumes of the tall grass clumps; and we listen to the tremendous choral night-chant of huge bustard-like water fowl, whose kind is unknown in any Northern land. He tells of the fierce and bloody lawlessness of revolutionary strife. Above all, he puts before us the splendor and the vast loneliness of the country where this fervid life is led.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

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