
This pleasant and attractively printed collection of essays of observation and stories adequately serves its purpose to restore to some contemporary prominence the writing and person of “Don Roberto.”

Cunninghame Graham—as he is also usually called—was a Scottish laird with a half-Spanish mother, who all his life loved adventuresome travel, Latin America, and horses (probably in that order), and writing about them. Thirty of his strictly South American sketches comprise this collection; they average eight pages in length and deal with gauchos and Indians, renegades and festivals, wild and peaceful places. Sixteen are set in Argentina, four in Uruguay and Paraguay each, and two each in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela. Graham, who lived from 1852 to 1936, apparently published the tales over the years from the 1890s to the year of his death; the editor is not helpful on this point.

Graham wrote easily, carelessly, and often repetitiously in theme and choice of words. W. H. Hudson had nothing to fear as acute observer or prose stylist. But at Graham’s best—as Hudson acknowledged—when he describes what he knew and savored, as in “El Rodeo,” he is vigorous and evocative.

Author and editor between them could have done a better job: a manga of locusts is correctly a “swarm” in the rather poor glossary, but a “sleeve” of locusts in the text (p. 175); even in context, phrases such as “you seem to have not badly of the ‘syrup of the beak’” leave a reader slightly dazed. But if you are despondent over dependency literature, dismayed by accounts of urban guerrilla warfare, and bored by business histories, try riding the range with Don Roberto on one of those unfailing gaucho steeds.

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