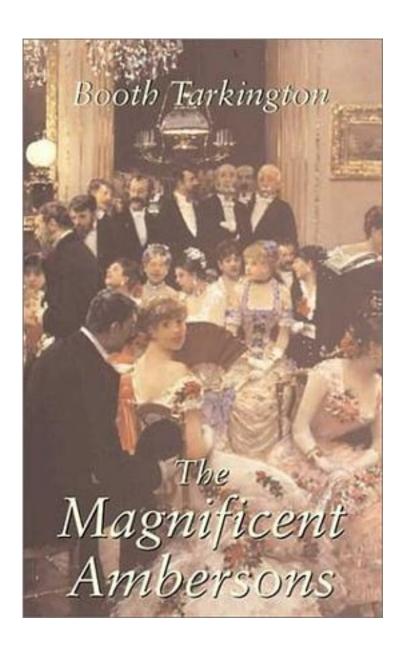
The Magnificent Ambersons



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著者:Perkins, V. F.

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At the age of twenty-five, with "Citizen Kane" (1941), Orson Welles was the author and star of the Greatest Movie Ever Made. Then he persuaded RKO to let him adapt a favorite book, "The Magnificent Ambersons". Booth Tarkington's novel had won the Pulitzer Prize in 1917, and had kept its popularity as a slice of mid-Western Americana. Its tale of dynastic ruin and social change wrought by the rise of the automobile inspired Welles' fond reconstruction of a lost world of leisure and elegance, brought to atmospheric life by a company of his favorite actors, including Joseph Cotten and Agnes Moorehead in their most famous roles.'It was a much better picture than Kane', said Welles 'if they'd just left it as it was'. It was butchered by the studio, but many still prize Ambersons as the finest of all Welles' achievements. V. F. Perkins explores Welles' genius in directing actors, his intricate weaving of his own narration in and around the drama, and his unsurpassed use of the long take to capture the finest nuance of expression and unspoken feeling. For Perkins the film has as many marvellous shots, scenes, ideas, performances as most filmmakers could hope to achieve in an entire career.

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