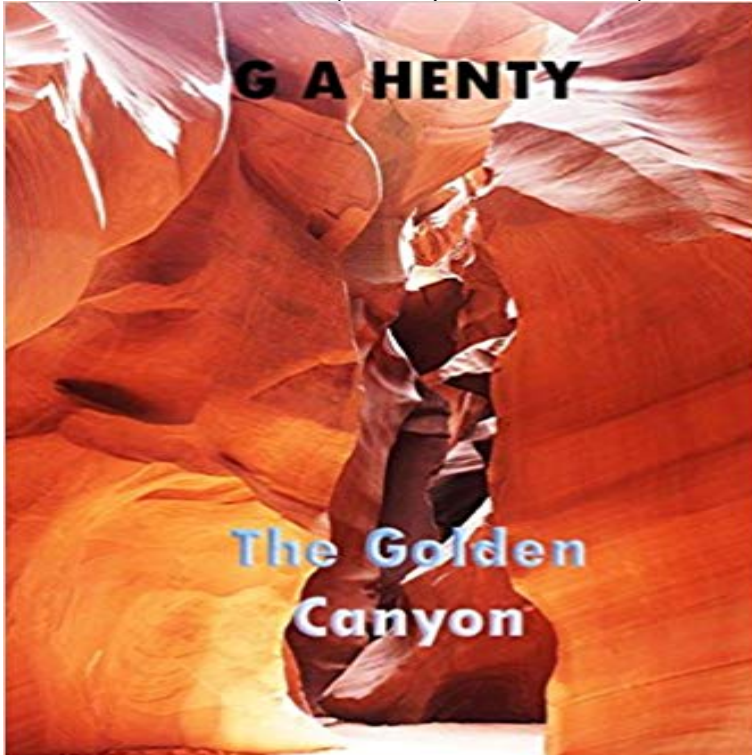


The Golden Canyon: (G A Henty Masterpiece Collection)



George Alfred Henty has been called The Prince of Story-Tellers. To call him The Boys Own Historian would perhaps be a more appropriate title, for time has proved that he is more than a story-teller; he is a preserver and propagator of history amongst boys. How Mr. Henty has risen to be worthy of these enviable titles is a story which will doubtless possess some amount of interest for all his readers. Henty may be said to have begun his preliminary training for his life-work when a boy attending school at Westminster. Even then the germ of his story-telling propensity seems to have evinced itself, for he was always awarded the highest marks in English composition. From Westminster he went to Cambridge, where he was enrolled as a student at Caius College. It is a decided change of scenery and circumstances from Cambridge to the Crimea, but such was the change which took place in Mr. Hentys career at the age of twenty-one. An appointment in connection with the commissariat department of the British army, took him from the scenes of student life into the excitement of the Muscovite war. Previous to this, however, he had written his first novel, which he has characterized as Very bad, no doubt, and was, of course, never published, but the plot was certainly a good one. Whilst engaged with his duties at the Crimea he sent home several descriptive letters of the places, people, and circumstances passing under his notice. His father, thinking some of those letters were of more than private interest, took a selection of them to the editor of the Morning Advertiser, who, after perusal of them, was so well pleased with their contents that he at once appointed young Henty as war correspondent to the paper in the Crimea. The ability with which he discharged his duties in the commissariat department at that time soon found for him another sphere of similar work in connection with

the hospital of the Italian forces. After a short time this was relinquished for engagement in mining work, which he first entered into at Wales, and then in Italy. Ten years after his Crimean correspondence to the Morning Advertiser he again took to writing, and at this time obtained the position of special correspondent to the Standard. While holding this post, he contributed letters and articles on the wars in Italy and Abyssinia, and on the expedition to Khiva. Two novels came from his pen during this time, but his attention was mostly devoted to miscellaneous letters and articles. It is a specially interesting incident in the career of Mr. Henty how he came to turn his attention to writing for boys. When at home, after dinner, it was his habit to spend an hour or so with his children in telling them stories, and generally amusing them. A story begun one day would be so framed as to be continued in the next, and so the same story would run on for a few days, each days portion forming a sort of chapter, until the whole was completed. Some of the stories continued for weeks. Mr. Henty, seeing the fascination and interest which these stories had for his own children, bethought himself that others might receive from them the same delight and interest if they were put into book form. He at once acted upon the suggestion and wrote out a chapter of his story for each day, and instead of telling it to his children in an extempore fashion, read what he had written. When the story was completed, the various chapters were placed together and dispatched to a publisher, who at once accepted and published it. It was in this way the long series of historical stories which has come from his powerful pen was inaugurated, and G.A. Henty was awarded the title of The Prince of Story-Tellers. There is in this incident a glimpse of the character of our author which endears him to us all. The story of his kindly interest in his own children surely creates a liking for him in the hearts of the children of others.

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