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# **In the Heart of the Rockies**

G. A. (George Alfred) Henty

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

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Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany  
ISBN: 978-3-8424-6564-0

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## PREFACE

MY DEAR LADS,

Until comparatively lately that portion of the United States in which I have laid this story was wholly unexplored. The marvellous cañons of the Colorado River extend through a country absolutely bare and waterless, and save the tales told by a few hunters or gold-seekers who, pressed by Indians, made the descent of some of them, but little was known regarding this region. It was not until 1869 that a thorough exploration of the cañons was made by a government expedition under the command of Major Powell. This expedition passed through the whole of the cañons, from those high up on the Green River to the point where the Colorado issues out on to the plains. Four years were occupied by the party in making a detailed survey of the course of the main river and its tributaries. These explorations took place some eight or nine years after the date of my story. The country in which the Big Wind River has its source, and the mountain chains contained in it, were almost unknown until, after the completion of the railway to California, the United States government was forced to send an expedition into it to punish the Indians for their raids upon settlers in the plains. For details of the geography and scenery I have relied upon the narrative of Mr. Bailie-Grohman, who paid several visits to the country in 1878 and the following years in quest of sport, and was the first white man to penetrate the recesses of the higher mountains. At that time the Indians had almost entirely deserted the country. For the details of the dangers and difficulties of the passage through the cañons I am indebted to the official report of Major Powell, published by the United States government.

Yours sincerely,

G. A. HENTY



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## CHAPTER I

### TOM'S CHOICE

"I can be of no use here, Carry. What am I good for? Why, I could not earn money enough to pay for my own food, even if we knew anyone who would help me to get a clerkship. I am too young for it yet. I would rather go before the mast than take a place in a shop. I am too young even to enlist. I know just about as much as other boys at school, and I certainly have no talent anyway, as far as I can see at present. I can sail a boat, and I won the swimming prize a month ago, and the sergeant who gives us lessons in single-stick and boxing says that he considers me his best pupil with the gloves, but all these things put together would not bring me in sixpence a week. I don't want to go away, and nothing would induce me to do so if I could be of the slightest use to you here. But can I be of any use? What is there for me to look forward to if I stay? I am sure that you would be always worrying over me if I did get some sort of situation that you would know father and mother would not have liked to see me in, and would seem to offer no chance for the future, whereas if I went out there it would not matter what I did, and anything I earned I could send home to you."

The speaker was a lad of sixteen. He and his sister, who was two years his senior, were both dressed in deep mourning, and were sitting on a bench near Southsea Castle looking across to Spithead, and the Isle of Wight stretching away behind. They had three days before followed their mother to the grave, and laid her beside their father, a lieutenant of the navy, who had died two years before. This was the first time they had left the house, where remained their four sisters—Janet, who came between Carry and Tom; Blanche, who was fourteen; Lucie, twelve; and Harriet, eight. Tom had proposed the walk.

"Come out for some fresh air, Carry," he had said. "You have been shut up for a month. Let us two go together;" and Carry had understood that he wanted a talk alone with her. There was need, indeed, that they should look the future in the face. Since Lieutenant Wade's death their means had been very straitened. Their mother had received a small pension as his widow, and on this, eked out by drafts reluctantly drawn upon the thousand pounds she had brought him on her marriage, which had been left untouched during his lifetime, they had lived since his death. Two hundred pounds had been drawn from their little capital, and the balance was all that now remained. It had long been arranged that Carry and Janet should go out as governesses as soon as they each reached the age of eighteen, but it was now clear that Carry must remain at home in charge of the young ones.

That morning the two girls had had a talk together, and had settled that, as Janet was too young to take even the humblest place as a governess, they would endeavour to open a little school, and so, for the present at any rate, keep the home together. Carry could give music lessons, for she was already an excellent pianist, having been well taught by her mother, who was an accomplished performer, and Janet was sufficiently advanced to teach young girls. She had communicated their decision to Tom, who had heartily agreed with it.

"The rent is only twenty pounds a year," he said, "and, as you say, the eight hundred pounds bring in thirty-two pounds a year, which will pay the rent and leave something over. If you don't get many pupils at first it will help, and you can draw a little from the capital till the school gets big enough to pay all your expenses. It is horrible to me that I don't seem to be able to help, but at any rate I don't intend to remain a drag upon you. If mother had only allowed me to go to sea after father's death I should be off your hands now, and I might even have been able to help a little. As it is, what is there for me to do here?" And then he pointed out how hopeless the prospect seemed at Portsmouth.

Carry was silent for a minute or two when he ceased speaking, and sat looking out over the sea.

"Certainly, we should not wish you to go into a shop, Tom, and what you say about going into an office is also right enough. We have no sort of interest, and the sort of clerkship you would be likely to get here would not lead to anything. I know what you are thinking about—that letter of Uncle Harry's; but you know that mother could not bear the thought of it, and it would be dreadful for us if you were to go away."

"I would not think of going, Carry, if I could see any chance of helping you here, and I don't want to go as I did when the letter first came. It seems such a cowardly thing to run away and leave all the burden upon your shoulders, yours and Janet's, though I know it will be principally on yours; but what else is there to do? It was not for my own sake that I wanted before to go, but I did not see what there was for me to do here even when I grew up. Still, as mother said it would break her heart if I went away, of course there was an end of it for the time, though I have always thought it would be something to fall back upon if, when I got to eighteen or nineteen, nothing else turned up, which seemed to me very likely would be the case. Certainly, if it came to a choice between that and enlisting, I should choose that: and now it seems to me the only thing to be done."

"It is such a long way off, Tom," the girl said in a tone of deep pain; "and you know when people get away so far they seem to forget those at home and give up writing. We had not heard from uncle for ten years when that letter came."

"There would be no fear of my forgetting you, Carry. I would write to you whenever I got a chance."

"But even going out there does not seem to lead to anything, Tom. Uncle has been away twenty-five years, and he does not seem to have made any money at all."

"Oh, but then he owned in his letter, Carry, that it was principally his own fault. He said he had made a good sum several times at mining, and chucked it away; but that next time he strikes a good thing he was determined to keep what he made and to come home to live upon it. I sha'n't chuck it away if I make it, but shall send every penny home that I can spare."

"But uncle will not expect you, Tom, mother refused so positively to let you go. Perhaps he has gone away from the part of the country he wrote from, and you may not be able to find him."

"I shall be able to find him," Tom said confidently. "When that letter went, I sent one of my own to him, and said that though mother would not hear of my going now, I might come out to him when I got older if I could get nothing to do here, and asked him to send me a few words directed to the post-office telling me how I might find him. He wrote back saying that if I called at the Empire Saloon at a small town called Denver, in Colorado, I should be likely to hear whereabouts he was, and that he would sometimes send a line there with instructions if he should be long away."

"I see you have set your mind on going, Tom," Carry said sadly.

"No, I have not set my mind on it, Carry. I am perfectly ready to stop here if you can see any way for me to earn money, but I cannot stop here idle, eating and drinking, while you girls are working for us all."

"If you were but three or four years older, Tom, I should not so much mind, and though it would be a terrible blow to part with you, I do not see that you could do anything better; but you are only sixteen."

"Yes, but I am strong and big for my age; I am quite as strong as a good many men. Of course I don't mean the boatmen and the dock-yard maties, but men who don't do hard work. Anyhow, there are lots of men who go out to America who are no stronger than I am, and of course I shall get stronger every month. I can walk thirty miles a day easy, and I have never had a day's illness."

"It is not your strength, Tom; I shall have no fears about your breaking down; on the contrary, I should say that a life such as uncle wrote about, must be wonderfully healthy. But you seem so young to make such a long journey, and you may have to travel about in such rough places and among such rough men before you can find Uncle Harry."

"I expect that I shall get on a great deal easier than a man would," Tom said confidently. "Fellows might play tricks with a grown-up fellow who they see is a stranger and not up to things, and might

get into quarrels with him, but no one is likely to interfere with a boy. No, I don't think that there is anything in that, Carry,—the only real difficulty is in going away so far from you, and perhaps being away for a long time."

"Well, Tom," the girl said after another pause, "it seems very terrible, but I own that I can see nothing better for you. There is no way that you can earn money here, and I am sure we would rather think of you as mining and hunting with uncle, than as sitting as a sort of boy-clerk in some dark little office in London or Portsmouth. It is no worse than going to sea anyhow, and after all you may, as uncle says, hit on a rich mine and come back with a fortune. Let us be going home. I can hardly bear to think of it now, but I will tell Janet, and will talk about it again this evening after the little ones have gone to bed."

Tom had the good sense to avoid any expression of satisfaction. He gave Carry's hand a silent squeeze, and as they walked across the common talked over their plans for setting to work to get pupils, and said no word that would give her a hint of the excitement he felt at the thought of the life of adventure in a wild country that lay before him. He had in his blood a large share of the restless spirit of enterprise that has been the main factor in making the Anglo-Saxons the dominant race of the world. His father and his grandfather had both been officers in the royal navy, and a great-uncle had commanded a merchantman that traded in the Eastern seas, and had never come back from one of its voyages; there had been little doubt that all on board had been massacred and the ship burned by Malay pirates. His Uncle Harry had gone away when little more than a boy to seek a fortune in America, and had, a few years after his landing there, crossed the plains with one of the first parties that started out at news of the discovery of gold in California.

Tom himself had longed above all things to be a sailor. His father had not sufficient interest to get him into the royal navy, but had intended to obtain for him a berth as apprentice in the merchant service; but his sudden death had cut that project short, and his mother, who had always been opposed to it, would not hear of his going to sea. But the life that now seemed open to him was in the boy's eyes even preferable to that he had longed for. The excitement

of voyages to India or China and back was as nothing to that of a gold-seeker and hunter in the West, where there were bears and Indians and all sorts of adventures to be encountered. He soon calmed down, however, on reaching home. The empty chair, the black dresses and pale faces of the girls, brought back in its full force the sense of loss.

In a short time he went up to his room, and sat there thinking it all over again, and asking himself whether it was fair of him to leave his sisters, and whether he was not acting selfishly in thus choosing his own life. He had gone over this ground again and again in the last few days, and he now came to the same conclusion, namely, that he could do no better for the girls by stopping at home, and that he had not decided upon accepting his uncle's invitation because the life was just what he would have chosen, but because he could see nothing that offered equal chances of his being able permanently to aid them at home.

When he came downstairs again Carry said:

"The others have gone out, Tom; you had better go round and see some of your school-fellows. You look fagged and worn out. You cannot help me here, and I shall go about my work more cheerfully if I know that you are out and about."

Tom nodded, put on his cap and went out; but he felt far too restless to follow her advice and call on some of his friends, so he walked across the common and lay down on the beach and went all over it again, until at last he went off to sleep, and did not wake up until, glancing at his watch, he found that it was time to return to tea. He felt fresher and better for his rest, for indeed he had slept but little for the past fortnight, and Carry nodded approvingly as she saw that his eyes were brighter, and the lines of fatigue and sleeplessness less strongly marked on his face.

Two hours later, when the younger girls had gone to bed, Carry said: "Now we will have a family council. I have told Janet about our talk, Tom, and she is altogether on your side, and only regrets that she is not a boy and able to go out with you. We need not go over the ground again, we are quite agreed with you that there seems no prospect here of your obtaining work such as we should like to see you at, or that would lead to anything. There are only

two things open to you, the one is to go to sea, the other to go out to Uncle Harry. You are old to go as an apprentice, but not too old, and that plan could be carried out; still, we both think that the other is better. You would be almost as much separated from us if you went to sea as you would be if you went out to America. But before you quite decide I will read uncle's letter, which I have found this afternoon among some other papers."

She took out the letter and opened it.

"My dear Jack,—I am afraid it is a very long time since I wrote last; I don't like to think how long. I have been intending to do so a score of times, but you know I always hated writing, and I have been waiting to tell you that I had hit upon something good at last. Even now I can only tell you that I have been knocking about and getting older, but so far I cannot say I have been getting richer. As I told you when I wrote last I have several times made good hauls and struck it rich, but somehow the money has always slipped through my fingers. Sometimes I have put it into things that looked well enough but turned out worthless; sometimes I have chucked it away in the fool's manner men do here. I have just come back from a prospecting tour in the country of the Utes, where I found two or three things that seemed good; one of them first-rate, the best thing, I think, I have seen since I came out here.

"Unfortunately I cannot do anything with them at present, for the Utes are getting troublesome, and it would be as much as one's life is worth to go back there with a small party; so that matter must rest for a bit, and I must look out in another quarter until the Utes settle down again. I am going to join a hunting party that starts for the mountains next week. I have done pretty nearly as much hunting as mining since I came out, and though there is no big pile to be made at it, it is a pretty certain living. How are you all getting on? I hope some day to drop in on your quiet quarters at Southsea with some big bags of gold-dust, and to end my days in a nook by your fire-side; which I know you will give me, old fellow, with or without the gold bags."

[Illustration: CARRY READS UNCLE HARRY'S LETTER.]

"I suppose your boy is thirteen or fourteen years old by this time. That is too young for him to come out here, but if in two or three

years you don't see any opening for him at home, send him out to me, and I will make a man of him; and even if he does not make a fortune in gold-seeking, there are plenty of things a young fellow can turn his hand to in this country with a good certainty of making his way, if he is but steady. You may think that my example is not likely to be of much benefit to him, but I should do for an object lesson, and seriously, would do my very best to set him in a straight path. Anyhow, three or four years' knocking about with me would enable him to cut his eye-teeth, and hold his own in the world. At the end of that time he could look round and see what line he would take up, and I need not say that I would help him to the utmost of my power, and though I have not done any good for myself I might do good for him.

"In the first place, I know pretty well every one in Colorado, Montana, and Idaho; in the next place, in my wanderings I have come across a score of bits of land in out-of-the-way places where a young fellow could set up a ranche and breed cattle and horses and make a good thing of it; or if he has a turn for mechanics, I could show him places where he could set up saw-mills for lumber, with water-power all the year round, and with markets not far away. Of course, he is too young yet, but unless he is going to walk in your steps and turn sailor he might do worse than come out to me in three or four years' time. Rough as the life is, it is a man's life, and a week of it is worth more than a year's quill-driving in an office. It is a pity your family have run to girls, for if one boy had made up his mind for the sea you might have spared me another."

"That is all. You know mother sent an answer saying that dear father had gone, and that she should never be able to let you go so far away and take up such a rough and dangerous life. However, Tom, as you wrote to uncle, her refusal would not matter, and by his sending you instructions how to find him, it is evident that he will not be surprised at your turning up. In the first place, are you sure that you would prefer this to the sea?"

"Quite sure, Carry; I should like it much better. But the principal thing is that I may soon be able to help you from there, while it would be years before I should get pay enough at sea to enable me to do so."

"Then that is settled, Tom. And now, I suppose," and her voice quivered a little, "you will want to be off as soon as you can?"

"I think so," Tom replied. "If I am to go, it seems to me the sooner I go the better; there is nothing that I can do here, and we shall all be restless and unsettled until I am off."

Carry nodded. "I think you are right, Tom; we shall never be able to settle to our work here when we are thinking of your going away. The first thing to do will be to draw some money from the bank. There will be your outfit to get and your passage to pay to America, and a supply of money to take you out West, and keep you until you join uncle."

"That is what I hate," Tom said gloomily. "It seems beastly that when I want to help you I must begin by taking some of your money."

"That can't be helped," Carry said cheerfully. "One must not grudge a sprat to catch a whale, and besides it would cost ever so much more if we had to apprentice you to the sea, and get your outfit. You will not want many clothes now. You have enough for the voyage and journey, and I should think it would be much better for you to get what you want out there, when you will have uncle to advise what is necessary. I should really think some flannel shirts and a rough suit for the voyage will be the principal things."

"I should think so, certainly," Tom agreed. "The less baggage one travels with the better, for when I leave the railway I shall only want what I can carry with me or pack on horses. Anything else would only be a nuisance. As to a rough suit for the voyage, the clothes I had before I put these on" (and he glanced at his black suit) "will do capitally. Of course I shall go steerage. I can get out for four or five pounds that way, and I shall be quite as well off as I should be as an apprentice. I know I must have some money, but I won't take more than is absolutely necessary. I am all right as far as I can see for everything, except three or four flannel shirts. I don't see that another thing will be required except a small trunk to hold them and the clothes I have on, which I don't suppose I shall ever wear again, and a few other things. You know I would only allow you to have this one black suit made. I was thinking of this, and it would have been throwing away money to have got more. Of course, I

don't know what I shall want out there. I know it is a long way to travel by rail, and I may have to keep myself for a month before I find uncle. I should think five-and-twenty pounds when I land would be enough for everything."

"I shall draw fifty pounds," Carry said positively. "As you say, your outfit will really cost nothing; ten pounds will pay for your journey to Liverpool and your passage; that will leave you forty pounds in your pocket when you land. That is the very least you could do with, for you may find you will have to buy a horse, and though I believe they are very cheap out there, I suppose you could not get one under ten pounds; and then there would be the saddle and bridle and food for the journey, and all sorts of things. I don't think forty pounds will be enough."

"I won't have a penny more, anyhow," Tom said. "If I find a horse too expensive I can tramp on foot."

"And you must be sure not to get robbed," Janet said, breaking in for the first time. "Just fancy your finding yourself without money in such a place as that. I will make you a belt to wear under your things, with pockets for the money."

"I hope I should not be such a fool as that, Janet, but anyhow I will be as careful as I can. I shall be very glad of the belt. One does not know what the fellows might be up to, and I would certainly rather not have my money loose in my pocket; but even if I were robbed I don't think it would be as desperate as you think. I expect a boy could always find something to do to earn his living, and I should try and work my way along somehow, but as that would not be pleasant at all I shall take good care of my money, you may be sure."

For an hour they sat talking, and before the council broke up it was agreed that they should look in the newspaper in the morning for a list of vessels sailing for America, and should at once write and take a passage.

There was no time lost. Carry felt that it would be best for them all that the parting should be got over as soon as possible. Letters were written the next morning to two steamship companies and to the owners of two sailing vessels asking the prices of steerage pas-