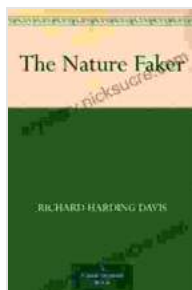


# The Nature Faker: Richard Harding Davis and the Invention of the Vanishing American

Richard Harding Davis was one of the most popular American writers of the late 19th and early 20th century. He was known for his vivid descriptions of exotic locales and his larger-than-life characters. However, Davis was also a master of deception. He frequently fabricated stories and invented characters to create a more exciting narrative. This tendency toward exaggeration reached its peak in his writings about the American West, where he created the myth of the "vanishing American."



## The Nature Faker by Richard Harding Davis

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 61 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 26 pages
Lending	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
X-Ray for textbooks	: Enabled



Davis's writings about the West were enormously popular. His stories appeared in magazines such as *Scribner's* and *Harper's*, and they were collected into several best-selling books. Davis's work helped to shape the public's perception of the West as a land of adventure and danger. He also

helped to create the myth of the "vanishing American," the idea that the Native American population was dying out.

There was some truth to Davis's claims about the decline of the Native American population. In the late 19th century, the Native American population was indeed declining due to disease, warfare, and displacement. However, Davis exaggerated the extent of this decline. He also ignored the fact that the Native American population was beginning to rebound in some areas.

Davis's writings about the West were not simply journalism. They were also works of fiction. Davis invented characters and stories to create a more exciting narrative. For example, in his story "The West from a Car Window," Davis describes a journey through the West in which he encounters a group of Native Americans who are dying of smallpox. However, there is no evidence that this encounter ever actually happened.

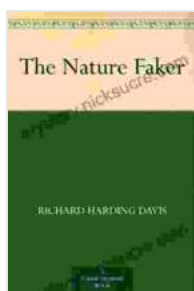
Davis's tendency toward exaggeration and his willingness to invent stories led some critics to accuse him of being a "nature faker." This term was used to describe writers who exaggerated or fabricated stories about the natural world. Davis was not the only nature faker of his time. Other popular writers, such as Jack London and Zane Grey, also exaggerated their stories to make them more exciting.

The nature faker controversy reached its peak in the early 20th century. In 1903, the *New York Times* published an article accusing Davis of fabricating stories about his travels in the West. Davis denied the charges, but the controversy continued to follow him for the rest of his career.

Today, Davis is still remembered as one of the most popular and influential American writers of his time. However, his reputation has been tarnished by the accusations of nature faking. Davis's writings about the West are still read today, but they are now read with a more critical eye.

## Further Reading

\* The Nature Faker by John McPhee \* Richard Harding Davis: A Biography and Legacy by Judith Welikala \* The Legacy of Richard Harding Davis by PBS American Experience



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