FIFTY FAMOUS PEOPLE

"A Book of Short Stories"

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"A Book of Short Stories"

James Baldwin



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Oh, dream not helm or harness

The sign of valor true;

Peace hath higher tests of manhood

Than battle ever knew.

- John G. Whittier

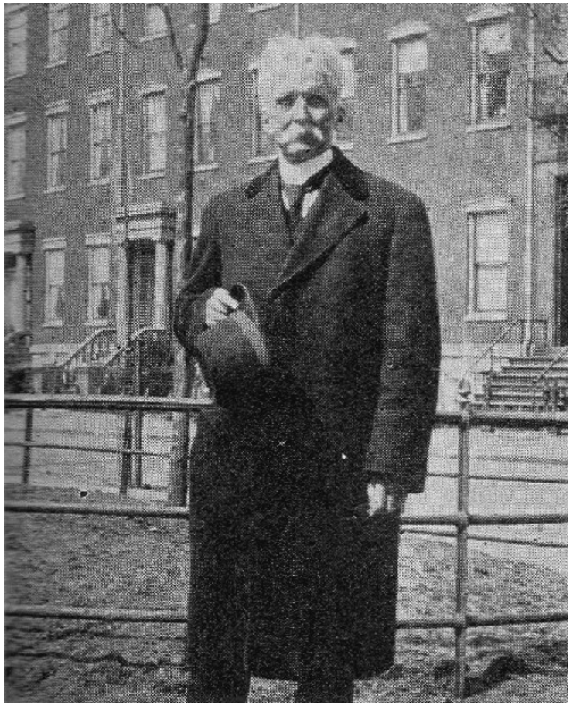
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About the Author:



James Baldwin (1841 - 1925)

According to his biography in the *Junior Book of Authors* (1951), Baldwin, a native of Indiana and largely self-educated, began teaching at the age

of 24. After several years he became superintendent of the graded schools in Indiana, a post he held for 18 years. The last 37 years of his life he worked with publishers, first with Harper and Brothers and later with the American Book Company. In addition to editing school books, he started writing books of his own. After the publication in 1882 of *The Story of Siegfried*, he went on to write more than 50 others.

His influence was widely felt because at one time it was estimated that of all the school books in use in the United States, over half had been written or edited by him. Unfortunately, his works are much less widely known today. So far as known, only some of his books are in print and published today.

Books:

Date	Story	Category
1882	The Story of Sieg-fried	Legends
1883	The Story of Roland	Legends
1887	A Story of the Gol-den Age of Greek Heroes	Mythology
1895	Fairy Sto-ries and Fables	Readers
1895	Old Greek Stories	Mythology
1896	Fifty Fa-mous Sto-ries Re-told	Collective Biography
1897	Four Great Americans	Collective Biography

1903	The Wonder-Book of Horses	Mythology
1904	Abraham Lincoln, A True Life	----
1905	Thirty More Famous Stories Retold	Collective Biography
1905	Robinson Crusoe Written Anew for Children	Adapted Literature
1907	An American Book of Golden Deeds	Ethical Faith Stories
1910	Stories of Don Quixote Written A new for Children	Fiction

1912	The Sampo	Legends
1912	Fifty Famous People	Collective Biography
1914	In My Youth	Individual Biography

* * *

PREFATORY NOTE

ONE of the best things to be said of the stories in this volume is that, although they are not biographical, they are about real persons who actually lived and performed their parts in the great drama of the world's history. Some of these persons were more famous than others, yet all have left enduring "footprints on the sands of time" and their names will not cease to be remembered. In each of the stories there is a basis of truth and an ethical lesson which cannot fail to have a wholesome influence; and each possesses elements of interest which, it is believed, will go far towards proving the fallibility of the doctrine that children find delight only in tales of the imaginative and unreal. The fact that there are a few more than fifty famous people mentioned in the volume may be credited to the author's wish to give good measure.

SAVING THE BIRDS

ONE day in spring four men were riding on horseback along a country road. These men were lawyers, and they were going to the next town to attend court.

There had been a rain, and the ground was very soft. Water was dripping from the trees, and the grass was wet.

The four lawyers rode along, one behind another; for the pathway was narrow, and the mud on each side of it was deep. They rode slowly, and talked and laughed and were very jolly.

As they were passing through a grove of small trees, they heard a great fluttering over their heads and a feeble chirping in the grass by the roadside.

"Stith! stith! stith!" came from the leafy branches above them.

"Cheep! cheep! cheep!" came from the wet grass.

"What is the matter here?" asked the first lawyer, whose name was Speed.

"Oh, it's only some old robins!" said the second lawyer, whose name was Hardin. "The storm has blown two of the little ones out of the nest. They are too young to fly, and the mother bird is making a great fuss about it."

"What a pity! They'll die down there in the grass," said the third lawyer, whose name I forget.

"Oh, well! They're nothing but birds," said Mr. Hardin. "Why should we bother?"

"Yes, why should we?" said Mr. Speed.

The three men, as they passed, looked down and saw the little birds fluttering in the cold, wet grass. They saw the mother robin flying about, and crying to her mate.

Then they rode on, talking and laughing as before. In a few minutes they had forgotten about the birds.

But the fourth lawyer, whose name was Abraham Lincoln, stopped. He got down from his horse and very gently took the little ones up in his big warm hands.

They did not seem frightened, but chirped softly, as if they knew they were safe.

"Never mind, my little fellows," said Mr. Lincoln. "I will put you in your own cozy little bed."

Then he looked up to find the nest from which they had fallen. It was high, much higher than he could reach.



But Mr. Lincoln could climb. He had climbed many a tree when he was a boy.

He put the birds softly, one by one, into their warm little home. Two other baby birds were there, that had not fallen out. All cuddled down together and were very happy.

Soon the three lawyers who had ridden ahead stopped at a spring to give their horses water.

"Where is Lincoln?" asked one.

All were surprised to find that he was not with them.

"Do you remember those birds?" said Mr. Speed. "Very likely he has stopped to take care of them."

In a few minutes Mr. Lincoln joined them. His shoes were covered with mud; he had torn his coat on the thorny tree.

"Hello, Abraham!" said Mr. Hardin. "Where have you been?"

"I stopped a minute to give those birds to their mother," he answered.

"Well, we always thought you were a hero," said Mr. Speed. "Now we know it."

Then all three of them laughed heartily. They thought it so foolish that a strong man should take so much trouble just for some worthless young birds.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Lincoln, "I could not have slept to-night, if I had left those helpless little robins to perish in the wet grass."

Abraham Lincoln afterwards became very famous as a lawyer and statesman. He was elected president. Next to Washington he was the greatest American.

ANOTHER BIRD STORY

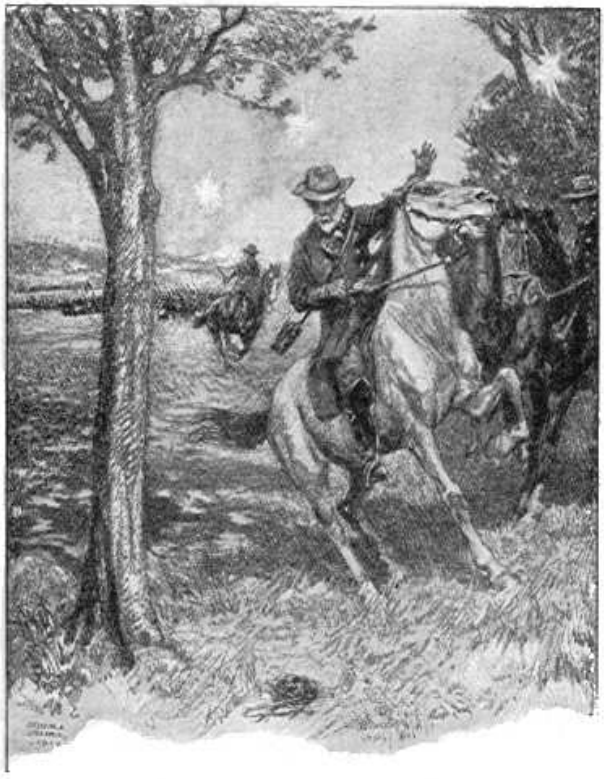
A GREAT battle had begun. Cannon were booming, some far away, some near at hand. Soldiers were marching through the fields. Men on horseback were riding in haste toward the front.

"Whiz!" A cannon ball struck the ground quite near to a company of soldiers. But they marched straight onward. The drums were beating, the fifes were playing.

"Whiz!" Another cannon ball flew through the air and struck a tree near by. A brave general was riding across the field. One ball after another came whizzing near him.

"General, you are in danger here," said an officer who was riding with him. "You had better fall back to a place of safety."

But the general rode on.



Suddenly he stopped at the foot of a tree. "Halt!" he cried to the men who were with him. He leaped from his horse. He stooped and picked up a bird's nest that had fallen upon the ground. In the nest were some tiny, half-fledged birds. Their mouths were open for the food they were expecting their mother to give them.

"I cannot think of leaving these little things here to be trampled upon," said the general.

He lifted the nest gently and put it in a safe place in the forks of the tree.

"Whiz!" Another cannon ball.

He leaped into the saddle, and away he dashed with his officers close behind him.

"Whiz! whiz! whiz!"

He had done one good deed. He would do many more before the war was over.

"Boom! boom! boom!"

The cannon were roaring, the balls were flying, the battle was raging. But amid all the turmoil and danger, the little birds chirped happily in the safe shelter where the great general, Robert E. Lee, had placed them.

"He prayeth best, who loveth best

All things both great and small;

For the dear God who loveth us,

He made and loveth all."

SPEAKING A PIECE

TWO children, brother and sister, were on their way to school. Both were very small. The boy was only four years old, and the girl was not yet six.

"Come, Edward, we must hurry," said the sister. "We must not be late."

With one hand the little boy clung to his sister's arm, and with the other he held his primer.

This primer was his only book, and he loved it. It had a bright blue cover, which he was careful not to soil. And in it were some odd little pictures, which he never grew tired of looking at.

Edward could spell nearly all the words in his primer, and he could read quite well.

The school was more than a mile from their home, and the children trotted along as fast as their short legs could carry them.

At a place where two roads crossed, they saw a tall gentleman coming to meet them. He was dressed in black, and had a very pleasant face.

"Oh, Edward, there is Mr. Harris!" whispered the little girl. "Don't forget your manners."

They were glad to see Mr. Harris, for he was the minister. They stopped by the side of the road and made their manners. Edward bowed very gracefully, and his sister curtsied.

"Good morning, children!" said the minister; and he kindly shook hands with both.



"I have something here for little Edward," he said. Then he took from his pocket a sheet of paper on which some verses were written.

"See! It is a little speech that I have written for him. The teacher will soon ask him to speak a piece at school, and I am sure that he can learn this easily and speak it well"

Edward took the paper and thanked the kind minister.

"Mother will help him learn it," said his sister.

"Yes, I will try to learn it," said Edward.

"Do so, my child," said the Minister; "and I hope that when you grow up you will become a wise man and a great orator."

Then the two children hurried on to school.

The speech was not hard to learn, and Edward soon knew every word of it. When the time came for him to speak, his mother and the minister were both there to hear him.

He spoke so well that everybody was pleased. He pronounced every word plainly, as though he were talking to his schoolmates.

Would you like to read his speech? Here it is:—