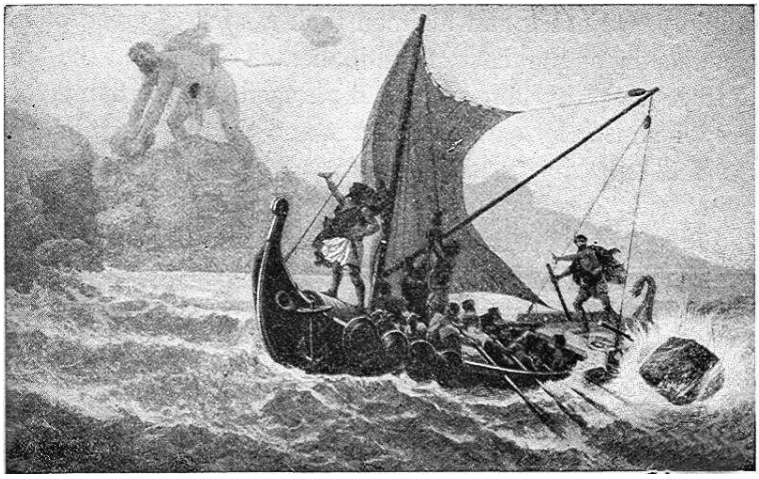
FIFTY FAMOUS
STORIES RETOLD

FIFTY FAMOUS STORIES RETOLD

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.

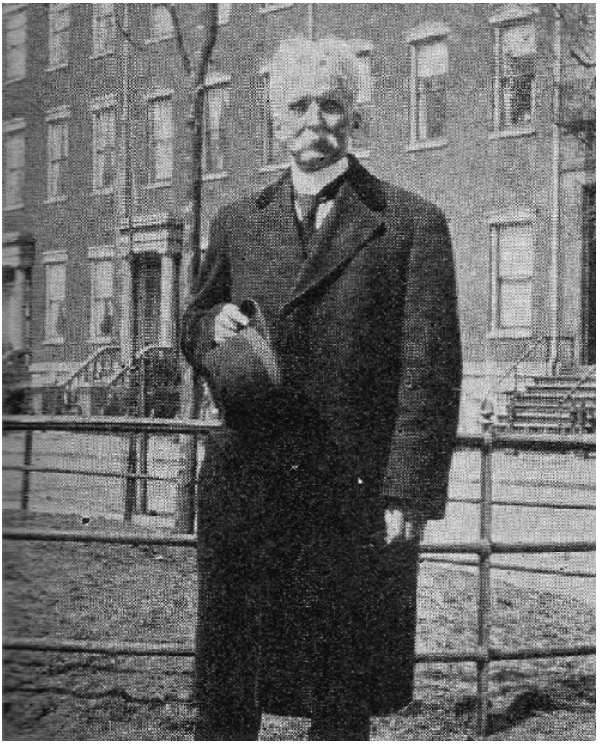
- John G. Whittier

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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 Siegfried	Legends
1883	The Story of Roland	Legends
1887	A Story of the Golden Age of Greek Heroes	Mythology
1895	Fairy Stories and Fables	Readers
1895	Old Greek Sto-	Mythology

	ries	
1896	Fifty Famous Stories Retold	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

* * *

CONCERNING THESE STORIES

THERE are numerous time-honored stories which have become so incorporated into the literature and thought of our race that a knowledge of them is an indispensable part of one's education. These stories are of several different classes. To one class belong the popular fairy tales which have delighted untold generations of children, and will continue to delight them to the end of time. To another class belong the limited number of fables that have come down to us through many channels frorn hoar antiquity. To a third belong the charming stories of olden times that are derived from the literatures of ancient peoples, such as the Greeks and the Hebrews. A fourth class includes the half-legendary tales of a distinctly later origin, which have for their subjects certain romantic episodes in the lives of well-known heroes and famous men, or in the history of a people.

It is to this last class that most of the fifty stories contained in the present volume belong. As a matter of course, some of these stories are better known, and therefore more *famous,* than others. Some have a slight historical value; some are useful as giving point to certain great moral truths; others are products solely of the fancy, and are in-

tended only to amuse. Some are derived from very ancient sources, and are current in the literature of many lands; some have come to us through the ballads and folk tales of the English people; a few are of quite recent origin; nearly all are the subjects of frequent allusions in poetry and prose and in the conversation of educated people. Care has been taken to exclude everything that is not strictly within the limits of probability; hence there is here no trespassing upon the domain of the fairy tale, the fable, or the myth.

That children naturally take a deep interest in such stories, no person can deny; that the reading of them will not only give pleasure, but will help to lay the foundation for broader literary studies, can scarcely be doubted. It is believed, therefore, that the present collection will be found to possess all educative value which will commend it as a supplementary reader in the middle primary grades at school. It is also hoped that the book will prove so attractive that it will be in demand out of school as well as in.

Acknowledgments are due to Mrs. Charles A. Lane, by whom eight or ten of the stories were suggested.

KING ALFRED AND THE CAKES

MANY years ago there lived in England a wise and good king whose name was Alfred. No other man ever did so much for his country as he; and people now, all over the world, speak of him as Alfred the Great.

In those days a king did not have a very easy life. There was war almost all the time, and no one else could lead his army into battle so well as he. And so, between ruling and fighting, he had a busy time of it indeed.

A fierce, rude people, called the Danes, had come from over the sea, and were fighting the English. There were so many of them, and they were so bold and strong, that for a long time they gained every battle. If they kept on, they would soon be the masters of the whole country.

At last, after a great battle, the English army was broken up and scattered. Every man had to save himself in the best way he could. King Alfred fled alone, in great haste, through the woods and swamps.

Late in the day the king came to the hut of a woodcutter. He was very tired and hungry, and he begged the woodcutter's wife to give him something to eat and a place to sleep in her hut.

The woman was baking some cakes upon the hearth, and she looked with pity upon the poor, ragged fellow

who seemed so hungry. She had no thought that he was the king.

"Yes," she said, "I will give you some supper if you will watch these cakes. I want to go out and milk the cow; and you must see that they do not burn while I am gone."

King Alfred was very willing to watch the cakes, but he had far greater things to think about. How was he going to get his army together again? And how was he going to drive the fierce Danes out of the land? He forgot his hunger; he forgot the cakes; he forgot that he was in the woodcutter's hut. His mind was busy making plans for tomorrow.

In a little while the woman came back. The cakes were smoking on the hearth. They were burned to a crisp. Ah, how angry she was!

"You lazy fellow!" she cried. "See what you have done! You want something to eat, but you do not want to work!"

I have been told that she even struck the king with a stick; but I can hardly believe that she was so ill-natured.



The king must have laughed to himself at the thought of being scolded in this way; and he was so hungry that he did not mind the woman's angry words half so much as the loss of the cakes.

I do not know whether he had anything to eat that night, or whether he had to go to bed without his supper. But it was not many days until he had gathered his men together again, and had beaten the Danes in a great battle.

KING ALFRED AND THE BEGGAR

AT one time the Danes drove King Alfred from his kingdom, and he had to lie hidden for a long time on a little island in a river.

One day, all who were on the island, except the king and queen and one servant, went out to fish. It was a very lonely place, and no one could get to it except by a boat. About noon a ragged beggar came to the king's door, and asked for food.

The king called the servant, and asked, "How much food have we in the house?"

"My lord," said the servant, "we have only one loaf and a little wine."

Then the king gave thanks to God, and said, "Give half of the loaf and half of the wine to this poor man."

The servant did as he was bidden. The beggar thanked the king for his kindness, and went on his way.

In the afternoon the men who had gone out to fish came back. They had three boats full of fish, and they said, "We have caught more fish to-day than in all the other days that we have been on this island."

The king was glad, and he and his people were more hopeful than they had ever been before.

When night came, the king lay awake for a long time, and thought about the things that had happened that day. At last he fancied that he saw a great light like the sun; and in the midst of the light there stood an old man with black hair, holding an open book in his hand.

It may all have been a dream, and yet to the king it seemed very real indeed. He looked and wondered, but was not afraid.

"Who are you?" he asked of the old man.

"Alfred, my son, be brave," said the man; "for I am the one to whom you gave this day the half of all the food that you had. Be strong and joyful of heart, and listen to what I say. Rise up early in the morning and blow your horn three times, so loudly that the Danes may hear it. By nine o'clock, five hundred men will be around you ready to be led into battle. Go forth bravely, and within seven days your enemies shall be beaten, and you shall go back to your kingdom to reign in peace."

Then the light went out, and the man was seen no more.

In the morning the king arose early, and crossed over to the mainland. Then he blew his horn three times very loudly; and when his friends heard it they were glad, but the Danes were filled with fear.

At nine o'clock, five hundred of his bravest soldiers stood around him ready for battle. He spoke, and told

them what he had seen and heard in his dream; and when he had finished, they all cheered loudly, and said that they would follow him and fight for him so long as they had strength.

So they went out bravely to battle; and they beat the Danes, and drove them back into their own place. And King Alfred ruled wisely and well over all his people for the rest of his days.

KING CANUTE ON THE SEASHORE

A HUNDRED years or more after the time of Alfred the Great there was a king of England named Canute. King Canute was a Dane; but the Danes were not so fierce and cruel then as they had been when they were at war with King Alfred.

The great men and officers who were around King Canute were always praising him.

"You are the greatest man that ever lived," one would say.

Then another would say, "O king! there can never be another man so mighty as you."

And another would say, "Great Canute, there is nothing in the world that dares to disobey you."

The king was a man of sense, and he grew very tired of hearing such foolish speeches.

One day he was by the seashore, and his officers were with him. They were praising him, as they were in the habit of doing. He thought that now he would teach them a lesson, and so he bade them set his chair on the beach close by the edge of the water.

"Am I the greatest man in the world?" he asked.

"O king!" they cried, "there is no one so mighty as you."

"Do all things obey me?" he asked.

"There is nothing that dares to disobey you, O king!" they said. "The world bows before you, and gives you honor."

"Will the sea obey me?" he asked; and he looked down at the little waves which were lapping the sand at his feet.

The foolish officers were puzzled, but they did not dare to say "No."

"Command it, O king! and it will obey," said one.

"Sea," cried Canute, "I command you to come no farther! Waves, stop your rolling, and do not dare to touch my feet!"

But the tide came in, just as it always did. The water rose higher and higher. It came up around the king's chair, and wet not only his feet, but also his robe. His officers stood about him, alarmed, and wondering whether he was not mad.

Then Canute took off his crown, and threw it down upon the sand.

"I shall never wear it again," he said. "And do you, my men, learn a lesson from what you have seen. There is only one King who is all-powerful; and it is he who rules the sea, and holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand. It is he whom you ought to praise and serve above all others."