



# The Story of Siegfried [Quintessential Classics] [Illustrated]

*James Baldwin*

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## **The Story of Siegfried [Quintessential Classics] [Illustrated]** James Baldwin

At Santen, in the Lowlands, there once lived a young prince named Siegfried. His father, Siegmund, was king of the rich country through which the lazy Rhine winds its way just before reaching the great North Sea; and he was known, both far and near, for his good deeds and his prudent thrift. And Siegfried's mother, the gentle Sigelind, was loved by all for her goodness of heart and her kindly charity to the poor. Neither king nor queen left aught undone that might make the young prince happy, or fit him for life's usefulness. Wise men were brought from far-off lands to be his teachers; and every day something was added to his store of knowledge or his stock of happiness. And very skilful did he become in warlike games and in manly feats of strength. No other youth could throw the spear with so great force, or shoot the arrow with surer aim. No other youth could run more swiftly, or ride with more becoming ease. His gentle mother took delight in adding to the beauty of his matchless form, by clothing him in costly garments decked with the rarest jewels. The old, the young, the rich, the poor, the high, the low, all praised the fearless Siegfried, and all vied in friendly strife to win his favor. One would have thought that the life of the young prince could never be aught but a holiday, and that the birds would sing, and the flowers would bloom, and the sun would shine forever for his sake.

But the business of man's life is not mere pastime; and none knew this truth better than the wise old king, Siegmund.

"All work is noble," said he to Siegfried; "and he who yearns to win fame must not shun toil. Even princes should know how to earn a livelihood by the labor of their hands."

And so, while Siegfried was still a young lad, his father sent him to live with a smith called Mimer, whose smithy was among the hills not far from the great forest. For in those early times the work of the smith was looked upon as the most worthy of all trades,—a trade which the gods themselves were not ashamed to follow. And this smith Mimer was a wonderful master,—the wisest and most cunning that the world had ever seen. Men said that he was akin to the dwarf folk who had ruled the earth in the early days, and who were learned in every lore, and skilled in every craft; and they said that he was so exceeding old that no one could remember the day when he came to dwell in the land of Siegmund's fathers. And some said, too, that he was the keeper of a wonderful well, or flowing spring, the waters of which imparted wisdom and far-seeing knowledge to all who drank of them...

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