

**TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD";
BEING THE MOST
FAMOUS SERIES OF STORIES
EVER PUBLISHED; VOL. XII**

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Tales from "Blackwood"; being the most famous series of stories ever published; Vol. XII by
Chalmers H. Roberts

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CHALMERS H. ROBERTS

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TALES FROM
"BLACKWOOD"

Being the most Famous Series
of Stories ever Published
Especially Selected from that
Celebrated English Publication

Selected by
H. CHALMERS ROBERTS



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TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

THE HAUNTED ENGHENIO.

SOME years since, I chanced to be in Rio de Janeiro. I had just returned from a trip into the interior, and was idling away the last few days of my stay in South America, enjoying the incomparable beauty of the scenery of that sierra-locked harbour. To avoid the heat and bustle of the town, I had taken up my abode at a small *venda* on the northern shore of the bay; and there one evening I was as usual sitting out in the veranda, enjoying my after-dinner cigar and cup of coffee. I was gradually sinking into a reverie, trying to fancy myself surrounded by the dear ones at home, wishing that they too could with me sit and watch the ever-changing dreamy beauty of the scene. "As the Thames (below Blackwall) is to the Bay of Naples, so is the Bay of Naples to the Harbour of Rio," thought I, when my cogitations were interrupted

by the sounds of a mule's hoofs pounding along the sandy beach-road which passed in front of the venda. In another moment the mule and its rider were in sight, and rather to my disgust I perceived that the latter evidently was bent on patronising the same house as myself. I did not feel in the mood to be disturbed, and the new-comer was of anything but a prepossessing appearance. So coated was he with white dust and dried mud-splashes that it was next to impossible to make him out, but I mentally put him down as some stray Portuguese or *fazendiero* from some neighbouring coffee estate. His mule, though seeming nearly "played out," was a powerful beast, and the saddle certainly English. I saw, too, as he dismounted, that he was well armed, and wore a revolver and knife on his hip, Yankee fashion. There was no bell, and the house blacks having carefully made themselves scarce, the stranger had to lead his own mule off to the stables in rear of the venda. I had almost forgotten the new arrival, and was watching the sunset on the bald peaks of the Sugar-loaf and the Corcovado, when I heard a step in the room behind me, and the stranger came out into the veranda where I was sitting. I should hardly have recognised him, a wash and change of clothes had made such an alteration. Now, though, that the dust and mud were washed from his face and beard, I could see that he looked fearfully worn and ill. He

was a good deal sunburnt, but sallow and colourless, and, though not yet a middle-aged man, stooped considerably. I still took him for a Portuguese, and was fairly startled when he addressed some remark to me in the purest English.

"You will, I trust, excuse me; but I have been living for so long amongst natives and niggers that it is quite a treat to hear one's own language again, and I could not fail to recognise you as a countryman."

"Well," said I, "for my part I confess I did not take *you* for one."

"Not likely; my best friend of six months since would hardly know me now, for I have been 'down' with swamp-fever, and half dead; and besides, I am just 'off' a 150 miles' ride in four days. Not bad work over the sierra this time of year."

We chatted on for some time, and I soon found that he was the manager of a large coffee plantation in the interior belonging to the Visconde de B——. From coffee culture our conversation naturally turned on slavery, and I remember how strongly, whilst listening to him, the idea impressed itself on my mind, that the practical views of one unprejudiced man, who really understood the habits and nature of the blacks, was worth more than all the well-meaning nonsense ever talked in Parliament, or the vindictive cant of a Jamaica Committee assembled in Exeter Hall! After a pause in

the conversation, during which we each puffed away at our respective cigarettes, my new acquaintance abruptly asked, "Did you ever see or ever hear of—a black ghost?"

"Can't say I ever did," replied I, with a laugh; "thought they were always white."

"No, I don't mean *that* exactly; I mean the ghost of a black man. I have seen a good deal of native races myself—natives of every hue and species, from yellow Chinese to black niggers—but till a couple of months ago I never came across anything resembling the ghost of one. I remember once a rabid slave-owner in the Southern States trying to prove that niggers were cattle! and one of his points was that a nigger had no soul! 'for,' says the Southern chap, convincingly, 'there never was a white man yet (or a black one for that matter) who ever set eyes on a nigger's ghost.'

"'Guess not,' struck in one of the crowd; 'a nigger's ghost (if he's got one) must be black, mustn't it? and as you only see ghosts in the night, how the thunder could you see a black ghost in a black night? no, siree. Happen, though, if you could fix up a *white* night you might see—a few.' But if you like I will tell you a rather uncomfortable experience I myself had a short time since; mind I don't say it *was* a ghost, and you need not believe it, but it *was* uncomfortable—*very*."

I expressed my delight at the prospect of a