

**TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD":
BEING THE MOST FAMOUS SERIES
OF STORIES EVER PUBLISHED
ESPECIALLY SELECTED FROM THAT
CELEBRATED ENGLISH PUBLICATION**

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Tales from "Blackwood": Being the Most Famous Series of Stories Ever Published Especially Selected from That Celebrated English Publication by H. Chalmers Roberts

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H. CHALMERS ROBERTS

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Tales from "Blackwood"



"IT WAS TOO HORRIBLE . . . I SPRANG UP," ETC.
See page 125

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H. CHALMERS ROBERTS



BOSTON
The New England Society
1910

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TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

CHRISTMAS EVE ON A HAUNTED HULK.

BY FRANK COWPER.

I SHALL never forget that night as long as I live. It was during the Christmas vacation 187-. I was staying with an old college friend who had lately been appointed the curate of a country parish, and had asked me to come and cheer him up, since he could not get away at that time.

As we drove along the straight country lane from the little wayside station, it forcibly struck me that a life in such a place must be dreary indeed. I have always been much influenced by local colour; above all things, I am depressed by a dead level, and here was monotony with a vengeance. On each side of the low hedges, lichen-covered and wind-cropped, stretched bare fields, the absolute level of the horizon

being only broken at intervals by some mournful tree that pointed like a decrepit finger-post towards the east, for all its western growth was nipped and blasted by the roaring south-west winds. An occasional black spot, dotted against the grey distance, marked a hay-rick or labourer's cottage, while some two miles ahead of us the stunted spire of my friend's church stood out against the wintry sky, amid the withered branches of a few ragged trees. On our right hand stretched dreary wastes of mud, interspersed here and there with firmer patches of land, but desolate and forlorn, cut off from all communication with the mainland by acres of mud and thin streaks of brown water.

A few sea-birds were piping over the waste, and this was the only sound, except the grit of our own wheels and the steady step of the horse, which broke the silence.

"Not lively is it!" said Jones; and I couldn't say it was. As we drove "up street," as the inhabitants fondly called the small array of low houses which bordered the highroad, I noticed the lack-lustre expression of the few children and untidy women who were loitering about the doors of their houses.

There was an old tumble-down inn, with a dilapidated sign-board, scarcely held up by its rickety iron-work. A daub of yellow and red paint, with a dingy streak of blue, was supposed to represent the Duke's head, although what exalted member of the aris-