

**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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CONTENTS

SERIES I

VOLUME II

	PAGE
Shakespeare's Funeral	I
MAJOR-GENERAL E. B. HAMLEY	
A Night with the Volunteers of Strathkinahan .	66
LIEUT.-COLONEL LAWRENCE W. M. LOCKHART	
The Philosopher's Baby	125
The Secret Chamber	138
M. O. W. OLIPHANT	

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

SHAKESPEARE'S FUNERAL.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL E. B. HAMLEY.

Place.—STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

Time.—THE 25TH OF APRIL 1616.

SCENE I.—*The Taproom of the Falcon Tavern in the High Street, kept by Eleanor Comyng.*

HOSTESS and SLY.

Hostess. Kit Sly, Kit Sly, dost thou hear? There be guests alighting in the yard; run thou and help Robin ostler hold their stirrups, and so do somewhat for the ale thou ne'er pay'st for.

Sly. If I do, wilt thou let this one day slip without rating and prating of thy score that I owe thee?

Hostess. Yea, good Kit, if thou run quickly.

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Sly. But wilt thou bid Francis draw me what ale I may chance call for?

Hostess. Nay, that will I not, or thou wouldst empty my great tun. Thou wouldst serve me as thou didst the ale-wife of Wincot,¹ who says, poor soul, that she ne'er had cask in cellar these twelve years but thou wert more fatal to it than a leaking tap. By these ears, I heard her say so when the deputy's men were seizing her goods. Thou shalt not cozen me as thou didst Marian.

Sly. Hold stirrup thyself then. I'll not budge. I'll to sleep again by the chimney till it please God send me drink.

Enter DRAYTON ² *(the poet) and YOUNG RALEIGH* ³
(son of Sir Walter).

Drayton. Sly, said she! Didst thou not hear, Walter, yon varlet's name? but 'twas scarce needful. The sodden face, the shaking nether lip, the

¹ "Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not," says Kit Sly in the "Taming of the Shrew." Wincot is a village about three miles from Stratford.

² Michael Drayton, a Warwickshire poet of great repute in his day, was about a year older than Shakespeare, and had known him long and familiarly.

³ Young Walter Raleigh was Sir Walter's eldest son, and was now twenty-two years old. He accompanied his father, soon after, to South America, as commander of one of the companies that formed the military part of the expedition, to prepare for which was the express condition on which Sir Walter was released from the Tower in January 1616.

eye watery and impudent, the paunch ale-swelled, the doublet liquor-stained, the hat crushed from being much slept in, the apparel ruinous, because the tapster intercepts the fee that should be the tailor's and the cobbler's—hath not the master, without cataloguing one of these things, implied all, in half-a-score of pregnant words, for all the future? What a skill is that can make a poor sot immortal!

Sly. Sot, saidst thou!—but I care not. Will ye stand me, gentles, in a pot of ale?

Raleigh. Wilt thou answer, then, a few questions I would put to thee?

Sly. Ay—but the ale first; and be brief; I love not much question. Say on, and let the world slide.

Raleigh. A pot of ale, drawer, for this worthy man. And now tell me, Sly, is't not thy custom to use that phrase 'let the world slide'?¹

Sly. It may well be; 'tis a maxim I love; 'tis a cure for much. I am cold—let the world slide, for anon I shall be warmer. I am dry—let the world slide, for time will bring ale. I sit, pottle-pot in hand, i' the chimney-nook—let the world slide while I taste it.

Drayton. 'Tis a pretty philosophy, and might serve for greater uses. But, for a further question

¹ A phrase much affected by Sly the Tinker in the prelude to the "Taming of the Shrew."

—Wert thou acquainted with old John Naps of Greece?¹

Sly. John Naps, quotha! what old John! by Jeronimy, I knew him many a year, mended his pots and helped him empty them. 'A had been a sailor, or to say pirate would be to shoot nearer the clout; when sober his fashion was to say nought, but when drunk his talk was of the things 'a had seen in Greece—whereby they called him Naps of Greece.

Drayton. And didst thou know, too, Peter Turf and Henry Pimpernell?

Sly. Yea, as this pot-handle knows these fingers. For Turf, he was deputy-sexton of Wincot, and indeed digged Naps's grave, and was found lying drunk therein, with his spade beside him, at the hour of burial. For Pimpernell, 'twas a half-witted companion, but his grandam kept money in 's purse, and 'a served to pay scores, and 'a could join in a catch on occasion, thof 'a had but a small, cracked voice, and mostly sung his part to psalm-tunes. And now, masters, a question to ye—an ye answer not, faith, I care not—but how should such as ye know Naps and the others?

Drayton. They have been recorded, and thou too,

¹ One of Sly's acquaintances at Wincot.

"Stephen Sly, and Old John Naps of Greece,
And Peter Turf and Henry Pimpernell."

—"Taming of the Shrew."

A manuscript memorandum, in which Stephen Sly is mentioned, written at Stratford in 1614, is still extant.