

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

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**CHALMERS H. ROBERTS**

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*Selected by*

H. CHALMERS ROBERTS



NEW YORK

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1905

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AT LOS ANGELES

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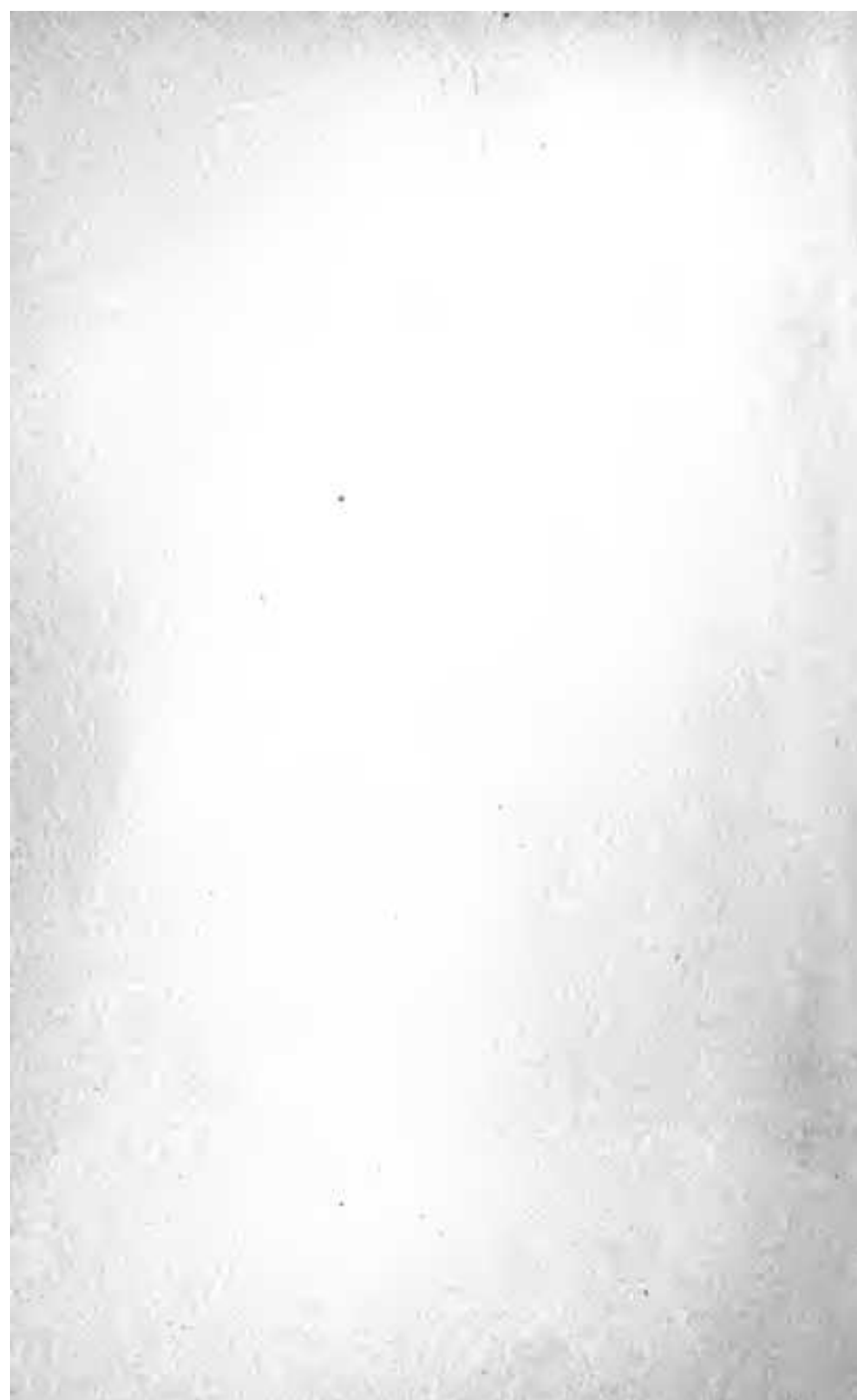
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## TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

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### A MEDIUM OF LAST CENTURY.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL W. G. HAMLEY,  
LATE ROYAL ENGINEERS.

ONE evening last spring my friend Clifton and I found ourselves at his fireside enjoying a bottle of West India Madeira. We had had a pouring wet day with the hounds, no kill, and *such* a ride home! So, there being nothing in the day's adventures to think or talk over with pleasure, we had both been out of sorts since half-past five o'clock, had come in to dinner in anything but high spirits, and had conversed chiefly in monosyllables during the repast. But the nice cosy dinner, and the good wine (Clifton's wines are undeniable), had operated powerfully during three-quarters of an hour, to bring us into something of a genial humour; and by the time the butler had retreated, and we were comfort-

ably arranged flanking the fire, our spirits were raised a little, and our tongues loosed. The rainy day had been followed by a stormy evening. We could hear the hail driven every now and then against the windows with startling violence; the wind roared in the chimneys and howled among the trees, whose branches gave out agonised creaks in the strong gusts. The fireside was decidedly the right place to be in just then. "This is pleasanter than Moscow," said Clifton, with the first attempt at a smile that either of us had made since we sat down. "Decidedly so," I answered; "pleasanter than any other place I can think of at this moment." "Just my idea," replied he. "That row outside—I shall be sure to find some trees down in the morning, but never mind—that row in some way or another greatly enhances the comfort of the hearth. I am glad I told Millett to turn down the lights."

"Yes, the glow of the fire seems the right thing. Lots of shadows and all sorts of unearthly noises. Just the time when one gets into a credulous mood, and can take in tales such as bards

' In sage and solemn tunes have sung  
Of tourneys and of trophies hung;  
Of forests and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant that meets the ear.'"

"By Jove! yes. Do you believe in ghosts? I can't say I don't; and I don't know that I very distinctly do."

"Not a very decided confession of faith," said I. "But, in truth, one must word one's creed carefully nowadays; for there are so many new-fangled ideas about the invisible world that you don't know what you may be assenting to if you make a simple profession of belief."

"Yes; the terrible old sheeted spectre of our boyish days is very nearly exploded. I must say I rather regret it. Spiritualism seems to be the modern form of superstition."

"Oh, it hardly amounts to superstition. Don't call it so, Clifton. It is nothing but the most wretched, shallow charlatanry."

"Well, come, I don't know. Some of its phenomena are surely as well attested as the pranks of our old friends of the churchyard."

"Attested or not, I denounce it because of its utter uselessness. With all the wonderful powers which it professes to bring into action, do we get a bit wiser? I never heard of any of the spirits interfering for any good or reasonable purpose."

"Yes; you may take that ground. Whether there be anything astonishing about it or not, it does not repay the trouble of investigation."

"Of course not. The character of its professors pretty well explains what it is. A parcel of keen, designing fellows make money by it. It would be different if educated, disinterested persons thought it worth their notice."