

# Algernon Blackwood

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**Algernon Henry Blackwood**, CBE (March 14, 1869 – December 10, 1951) was an English writer of tales of the supernatural.

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## Life and work

Although Blackwood wrote a number of horror stories, his most typical work seeks less to frighten than to induce a sense of awe. Good examples are the novels *The Centaur*, which climaxes with a

traveller's sight of a herd of the mythical creatures; and *Julius LeVallon* and its sequel *The Bright Messenger*, which deal with reincarnation and the possibility of a new, mystical evolution in human consciousness. His best stories, such as those collected in the book *Incredible Adventures*, are masterpieces of atmosphere, construction and suggestion.

Born in Shooter's Hill (today part of south-east London, but then part of north-west Kent) and educated at Wellington College, Algernon Blackwood had a varied career, farming in Canada, operating a hotel, and working as a newspaper reporter in New York City. In his late thirties, Blackwood moved back to England and started to write horror stories. He was very successful, writing 10 books of short stories and appearing on both radio and television to tell them. He also wrote fourteen novels and a number of plays, most of which were produced but not published. He was an avid lover of nature, and many of his stories reflect this.

Blackwood wrote an autobiography of his early years, *Episodes Before Thirty* (1923).

There is an extensive critical analysis of

Blackwood's work in Jack Sullivan's book *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story From Le Fanu to Blackwood* (1978). There is a biography by Mike Ashley (ISBN 0-7867-0928-6) and a critical essay on Blackwood's work in S. T. Joshi's *The Weird Tale* (1990). The plot of Caitlin R. Kiernan's novel *Threshold* (2001) draws upon Blackwood's "The Willows", which is quoted several times in the book. Kiernan has cited Blackwood as an important influence on her writing.

## **Selected works**

### **Novels**

- *The Centaur* (1912)

### **Collections**

- *The Empty House* (1906)
- *The Listener and Other Stories* (1907)
- *John Silence* (1908)
- *The Lost Valley and Other Stories* (1910)
- *Pan's Garden: A Volume of Nature Stories* (1912)
- *Incredible Adventures* (1914)

- *Ten Minute Stories* (1914)
- *Day and Night Stories* (1917)
- *Wolves of God and Other Fey Stories*, with Wilfred Wilson (1921)
- *Tongues of Fire and Other Stories* (1924)
- *Ancient Sorceries and Other Tales* (1927?)
- *The Dance of Death and Other Tales* (1928)
- *Short Stories of A. Blackwood* (1930)
- *Strange Stories* (1931)
- *The Willows and Other Queer Tales* (1932)
- *Shocks* (1936)
- *Tales of Algernon Blackwood* (1939)
- *The Doll and One Other* (1946)
- *Selected Tales of Algernon Blackwood* (1948)
- *Tales of the Uncanny and Supernatural* (1949)
- *In the Realm of Terror* (1957)
- *Tales of Terror and the Unknown* (1965)
- *Ancient Sorceries and Other Stories* (1968)
- *Tales of the Mysterious and Macabre.*(1962)

## Short stories

- "The Willows"  
Perhaps his most celebrated story, was influenced heavily by Blackwood's own trips down the Danube River. It tells the story of two campers who

pick the wrong place to sleep for the night, a place where another dimension impinges on our own. H.P. Lovecraft considered this the finest supernatural tale in English literature.

- "The Wendigo"  
Another camper tale, this time set in the Canadian wilderness. A hunting party separates to track moose, and one member is abducted by the Wendigo of legend.
- "A Descent into Egypt"  
A long, carefully constructed story in which a man's soul is gradually subsumed into eternity.
- "The Regeneration of Lord Ernie"  
A listless young aristocrat is transformed into a firebrand through witnessing a mystical ceremony.
- "The Damned"  
A highly original haunted house tale in which the haunting results from the intolerant religious beliefs of a series of previous residents.

- "Ancient Sorceries"

A tourist returning from a trip becomes too enchanted with a strange French town and its people to leave. He is slowly drawn more and more into their realm of secrets and talk of ancient memories.

- "The Insanity of Jones"

A reincarnation story based around the correcting of past wrongs by revenge.

- "The Man Who Found Out"

A researcher goes on an expedition to find "The Tablets of the Gods" which have plagued his dreams since his boyhood. He finds them, and the horrible truth of humanity's true purpose in the universe.

- "Smith: An Episode in a Lodging House"

A man and his strange neighbor's paths meet more often than he would like in this story of a man delving into secrets he should not know.

- "The Glamour of the Snow"

A traveller meets a strange woman late one night at a ski resort and spends the

rest of his vacation searching for her,  
so that they can have one last moment  
together. He almost gets his wish...

- "The Man Whom the Trees Loved"  
A wife is powerless to save her  
husband from the nature he loves and  
its ever growing influence on his life.

## References

- Tuck, Donald H. (1974). *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Chicago: Advent, 47-49. ISBN 0-911682-20-1.

## See also

- Religion and mythology

## External links

- <http://hem.fyrlistorg.com/bd/ab/> A Blackwood Homepage
- Works by Algernon Blackwood at Project Gutenberg
- <http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/authors/Alg>
- Algernon Blackwood Stories

- "The Empty House" Creative Commons Audio Book.

## See also

- List of horror fiction authors

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