



Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life

Mike Ashley

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Not only one of the twentieth century's most inventive writers of supernatural fiction and author of such masterpieces as *The Willows* and *The Wendigo*, Algernon Blackwood was also an indefatigable traveler, an extremely popular storyteller on radio and television (he appeared on the first British television program ever), and a secret agent during the First World War. Added to that, it was Algernon Blackwood, not Andrew Lloyd Webber, who originated the *Starlight Express*. A Buddhist and theosophist as well as a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn, Blackwood consorted with mystics and magicians, who knew him as Pan, while those who delighted in his rich storyteller's voice and lively humor affectionately called him Uncle Paul. Some saw him as an ancient child, others as an accomplished athlete. He found time meanwhile to hobnob with the literary establishment—with the likes of Hilaire Belloc, P. G. Wodehouse, Compton Mackenzie, and H. G. Wells—and his work inspired writers as diverse as Henry Miller and Carlos Casteneda. Yet the story of this fascinating, charming, elusive, and enigmatic man's life has never before been told. More than twenty years of research and countless interviews with friends and colleagues of the extraordinary Algernon Blackwood, as well as a close examination of his unpublished papers, stand behind this first full-length biography of a writer who, according to *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, "delivered a greater number of magisterial shudders than more refined writers in the genre ever attempted."

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