

## INTRODUCTION

them ; indeed, I have reason to think that these first serious efforts of mine at telling a story were among my most successful attempts at the art of fiction. Once launched as a professional story-teller by this fortuitous combination of circumstances, I continued at the trade, and wrote a number of tales for the Cornhill and other magazines, up till the year 1884, when I collected a few of them into a volume of *Strange Stories*, under my own name, for the first time casting off the veil of anonymity or the cloak of a pseudonym. In the same year I also began my career as a novelist properly so called, by producing my first long novel, *Philistia*.

From that date forward, I have gone on writing a great many stories, long and short, whose name is Legion. Out of the whole number of shorter ones, I now select the present set, as illustrating best in different keys the various types of tale to which I have devoted myself.

Four of these pieces have already appeared as reprints in the volume entitled *Strange Stories*—namely, ‘*The Reverend John Creedy*,’ from the Cornhill ; ‘*The Child of the Phalanstery*,’ from Belgravia ; and ‘*The Curate of Churnside*’ and ‘*The Backslider*,’ both from the Cornhill. One, ‘*John Cann’s Treasure*,’ also from the Cornhill, has been reprinted in the volume called *The Beckoning Hand*. Two more have been included in the collection entitled *Ivan Greet’s Masterpiece* : namely, ‘*Ivan Greet’s Masterpiece*’ itself, originally issued as a Christmas number of the *Graphic* ; and ‘*The Abbé’s Repentance*,’ which first saw the light in the *Contemporary Review*. The remainder have never appeared before, except in periodicals. The Headpiece, ‘*A Confidential Communication*,’ came out in the *Sketch*. So did ‘*Frasine’s First Communion*.’ ‘*Wolverden Tower*’ formed a Christmas number of the *Illustrated London News*. ‘*Janel’s Nemesis*’ was contributed to the *Pall Mall Magazine*. The Intermezzo, ‘*Langgalula*,’ is from the *Speaker*, as is also the Tailpiece, ‘*A Matter of Standpoint*.’ ‘*Cecca’s Lover*’ made his original bow in *Longman’s Magazine*. Finally, ‘*The*