

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, ‘Lungalula,’ 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