

INTRODUCTION

to recollect) were Dr. Conan Doyle and Mr. Stanley Weyman. Now, under Mr. Leslie Stephen's editorship, I had been accustomed to contribute to the Cornhill occasional papers on scientific subjects: and one morning, by an odd coincidence, I received two notes simultaneously from the new editor. The first of them was addressed to me by my real name; in it, Mr. Payn courteously but briefly informed me that he returned one such scientific article which I had sent for his consideration, as he had determined in future to exclude everything but fiction from the magazine—a decision which he afterwards saw reason to rescind. The second letter, forwarded through Messrs. Chatto and Windus, was addressed to me under my assumed name of J. Arbuthnot Wilson, and begged that unknown person to submit to Mr. Payn a few stories 'like your admirable Mr. Chung.' Now, this Mr. Chung was a tale of a Chinese attaché in England, who fell in love with an English girl: I had first printed it, like the others of that date, in the pages of *Belgravia*. (Later on, it was included in the volume of *Strange Stories*, where any hypothetical explorer may still find it.) Till that moment, I had never regarded my excursions into fiction in any serious light, setting down Mr. Chatto's liking for them to that gentleman's amiability, or else to his well-known scientific penchant. But when a novelist like Mr. James Payn spoke well of my work—nay, more; desired to secure it for his practically new magazine—I began to think there might really be something in my stories worth following up by a more serious effort.

Thus encouraged, I launched out upon what I venture to think was the first voyage ever made in our time into the Romance of the Clash of Races—since so much exploited. I wrote two short stories, 'The Reverend John Creedy' and 'The Curate of Churnside,' both of which I sent to Mr. Payn, in response to his invitation. He was kind enough to like them, and they were duly published in the Cornhill. At the time, their reception was disappointing: but gradually, since then, I have learned from incidental remarks that many people read them and remembered