

## INTRODUCTION

My first acquaintance with Mr. Merrick's engaging and stimulating muse was made in the pages of *Violet Moses*, an early work, which appeared, I remember, in three volumes. Reading it again in the light of my appreciation of what its author has done since, I think of it now as I felt of it then. It has great promise, and though its texture is slight its fibres are of steel. It shows the light hand, which has grown no heavier, though it has grown surer, the little effervescence of cynicism, with never a hiccough in it, the underlying, deeply-funded sympathy with real things, great things and fine things, and the seriousness of aim which, tantalisingly, stops short just where you want it to go on, and provokes the reader to get every book of Mr. Merrick's as it appears, just to see him let himself go—which he never does. He is one of the most discreet dissectors of the human heart we have.

In *Violet Moses* Mr. Merrick avoided the great issue after coming up against it more than once. So did he in *The Quaint Companions*, a maturer but less ambitious study. I don't know why he avoided it in *Violet's* case, unless it was because he