

## INTRODUCTION

*aright), wishing to contribute an article to Belgravia on the improbability of a man's being able to recognise a ghost as such, even if he saw one, and the impossibility of his being able to apply any test of credibility to an apparition's statements, I ventured for the better development of my subject to throw the argument into the form of a narrative. I did not regard this narrative as a story: I looked upon it merely as a convenient method of displaying a scientific truth. However, the gods and Mr. Chatto thought otherwise. For, a month or two later, Mr. Chatto wrote to ask me if I could supply Belgravia with 'another story.' Not a little surprised at this request, I sat down, like an obedient workman, and tried to write one at my employer's bidding. I distrusted my own ability to do so, it is true: but Mr. Chatto, I thought, being a dealer in the article, must know better than I; and I was far too poor a craftsman at that time to refuse any reasonable offer of employment. So I did my best, crassa Minerva. To my great astonishment, my second story was accepted and printed like my first: the curious in such matters (if there be any) will find them both in the volume entitled Strange Stories (published by Messrs. Chatto and Windus) under the headings of 'Our Scientific Observations on a Ghost,' and 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies.'*

*From that day forward for some years I continued at Mr. Chatto's request to supply short stories from time to time to Belgravia, a magazine which he then edited. But I did not regard these my tentative tales in any serious light: and, fearing that they might stand in the way of such little scientific reputation as I possessed, I published them all under the prudent pseudonym of J. Arbuthnot Wilson. I do not know that I should have got much further on the downward path which leads to fiction, had it not been for the intervention of my good friend the late Mr. James Payn. When he undertook the editorship of the Cornhill, he determined at first to turn it into a magazine of stories only, and began to look about him for fresh blood to press into the service. Among the writers he then secured (I seem*