

INTRODUCTION

*THE existence of this volume is due, not to my own initiative, but to that of my enterprising kinsman and publisher, Mr. Grant Richards. He it was who first suggested to me the idea that it might be worth while to collect in one volume such of my scattered short stories as I judged to possess most permanent value. In order for us to carry out his plan, however, it became necessary to obtain the friendly co-operation of Messrs. Chatto and Windus, to whom belong the copyrights of my three previous volumes of *Collected Tales*, published respectively under the titles of *Strange Stories*, *The Beckoning Hand*, and *Ivan Greet's Masterpiece*, some pieces from each of which series I desired to include in the present selection. Fortunately, Messrs. Chatto and Windus fell in with our scheme with that kindness which I have learned to expect from them in all their dealings; and an arrangement was thus effected by which I am enabled to present here certain stories from their three volumes. Together with these I have arranged an equal number of tales from other sources—most of which have hitherto appeared in periodicals only, while one is entirely new, never having been before printed.*

I may perhaps be permitted, without blame, to seize the occasion of this selected edition in order to offer a few bibliographical remarks on the origin and inception of my short stories. For many years after I took to the trade of author, I confined my writings to scientific or quasi-scientific subjects, having indeed little or no idea that I possessed in the germ the faculty of story-telling. But on one occasion, about the year 1880 (if I recollect