

FOREWORD

IT seems to be necessary either on the one hand, to apologise for, or defend, a volume of short stories, or, on the other, to resort to some ruse for selling it—and yet perhaps there is another way ; when there appears to be only a choice of two evils there may be also (as Nance Holdaway said) a good choice as well. I have seen a volume of short stories that looked like a novel by reason of the stories being called chapters, and each title being set under the ostensible chapter number ; and that method does not appeal. A certain writer collecting his own magazine stories a year or two ago, wrote a little preliminary treatise on the short story in which he mentioned the names of many other short story writers, his contemporaries, and gave his views on them ; and that proceeding did not appeal to some of them ; nor does it appeal to me.

Nobody can tell me why short stories require a preliminary spoof, or at least a spiel—such as I am writing just now ; but evidently they do, which vexes me, for though one or two of the stories in this book are doubtless just so-so compared with certain classic examples, there are others that I can re-read myself ; and I don't like to resort to anything at all in the nature of subterfuge (or what Americans call " throwing the con ") to get people to read what