SHORT STORIES IN THE MAKING: A WRITERS' AND STUDENTS' INTRODUCTION TO THE TECHNIQUE AND PRACTICAL COMPOSITION OF SHORT STORIES, INCLUDING AN ADAPTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE STAGE PLOT TO SHORT STORY WRITING

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ROBERT WILSON NEAL

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A WRITERS' AND STUDENTS' INTRODUCTION TO THE TECHNIQUE AND PRACTICAL COMPOSITION OF SHORT STORIES, INCLUDING AN ADAPTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE STAGE PLOT TO SHORT STORY WRITING

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1914

To

My Wife

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THEORY OF THE SHORT STORY TYPE, OR CONTE

I. Fiction Aims at the Interpretation of Life and the Diversion of the Reader, by Means of Concrete Presentation

1. When we ask, what is the purpose of fiction? we find that a complete answer must include two assertions. True, in many discussions concerning fiction, its structure, its methods, and the like, sometimes one of these assertions, sometimes the other, is disregarded. But a complete understanding—one that is philosophically sound—nevertheless cannot be had without including both in the answer.

2. These two purposes of fiction when fiction is typical and at its best, are:

A. To interpret human life, and

B. To interest (amuse, divert, entertain) the reader. "Interpret" must here be understood to mean, produce in the reader a clearer understanding of or a sense of having experienced human life. But much good fiction is produced in which emphasis is laid mainly and even solely on entertainment. This does not, however, mean that such fiction is without interpretive value.

3. We must understand, however, that this interpretive aim is not an immediate, but rather an ultimate and sub-