

**XX STORIES.
BY XX TELLERS**

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XX Stories. By XX Tellers by Leopold Wagner

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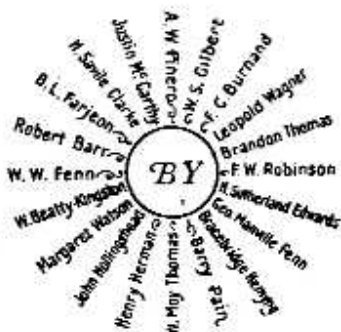
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LEOPOLD WAGNER

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P R E F A C E.

THE object of this volume is to show a certain number of popular modern authors at their best as writers of short stories. Time was when it was said, and generally believed, that the novelists of this country could not write short stories. Most certainly they exercised no inclination to try; or if a few of them did so on occasion, they found their work lying unprofitably on their hands. The three-volume novel was the only kind of fiction that the British reading public cared to welcome. But Mr Rudyard Kipling changed all that. The instant success of his Anglo-Indian stories created a demand for short stories, which has kept on growing to such an extent that we now find authors of the highest reputation turning out volumes of short stories in place of the three-volume novel which formerly represented their average year's work. The direct tendency of this changed state of affairs is towards the gradual disappearance of the three-volume novel altogether. Since the introduction of the short story, the reading public have rightly come to regard "padding" as an article of doubtful value.

The stories here brought together make no pretence to being new. They are reprints. Care has, however, been employed in the selection, so that each story should be representative of the particular style of its author. "Polly," by Margaret Watson, is a good example of the homely-pathetic style of short story. Now that Mr John Hollingshead has forsaken theatrical management, and returned to his old love, we may expect to find him producing his annual volume of short stories; albeit "My Lost Home" will be hard to beat. It is only in strict justice to the author to state that this story preceded Mrs Gaskell's "Manchester Marriage" by a year or two, and, of course, Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." Another prolific story-teller well known in the theatrical world, the late Mr Henry Herman, is here represented by "Two Strokes of the Pen," one of the last and best of all his short stories. This is taken from *The Postman's Daughter and Other Stories*, by permission of the publishers, Messrs Frederick Warne & Co. Though Mr W. Moy Thomas has during recent years been content to fill the position of musical and dramatic critic on the staff of a great daily newspaper, it may not be long before he rejoins the ranks of the story-tellers. His contribution to this volume, "A Guild Clerk's Tale," affords an apt illustration of his style. Mr Barry Pain's "Bill," reprinted

from *In a Canadian Canoe*, by permission of Messrs Henry & Co., is one of those stories which in the Preface to that work he describes as "background" to the humour of which his book is chiefly composed. "Slightly Deaf," by Bracebridge Hemyng, is one of the best of the *Awful Stories* from the pen of this author, published by Messrs Diprose, Bateman & Co. Mr George Manville Fenn's "Breach of Promise of Marriage," from *The New Mistress*, is reproduced in these pages by permission of Messrs Chatto & Windus, in conjunction with the author. Mr H. Sutherland Edwards has worked long and successfully as a war correspondent, leader writer, musical critic, and novelist. Latterly he has commenced to write short stories. His "Marriage of Anna Ivànovna" presents a faithful picture of Russian society of the present day. That such a staid novelist as Mr F. W. Robinson should condescend to write short stories will be a matter of surprise to many of his readers. The times have changed indeed. Already we are promised a volume of short stories in which "An Odd Fix" will be one of the number. "A Champion of England," by Brandon Thomas, suffers nothing from the fact that it is true in every particular. Though best known as a playwright, Mr Thomas has done much good work in the way of short stories for the

magazines in the past. All that need be said concerning "The Romance of a Melody" is that it originated in a dream. "The Episode of the Pilot," by F. C. Burnand, is only one of the many good stories contained in that amusing narrative, *Rather at Sea*, lately issued from the press of Messrs Bradbury, Agnew & Co. "Angela" exhibits the topsy-turvyism of Mr W. S. Gilbert in quite a new light; there is a pathos about the little story for which the numerous admirers of this whimsical writer may not be altogether prepared. As might be expected, "A Fallen Star," by A. W. Pinero, is a story of theatrical life. This was originally contributed to the *Era Almanack* about fifteen years ago. In "The Wearing of the Green," Mr Justin M'Carthy is seen to good advantage as a writer of Irish stories. The late Mr Savile Clarke wrote many excellent stories during his busy lifetime, but none prettier than "The Cigarette," here reproduced by the kindness of Mrs Clark. Most readers of "The Man in Possession" will agree with the critics in the opinion that the mantle of Charles Dickens has fallen on the shoulders of Mr B. L. Farjeon, who now writes so rarely. This homely tale is extracted from *Bread-and-Cheese and Kisses*, perhaps the most successful of his Christmas Annuals. "The Purser's Story," by Robert Barr, is not the least diverting of the stories comprising the volume entitled, *In a*

Preface.

ix

Steamer Chair, recently published by Messrs Chatto & Windus. "A Silent Sacrifice," by W. W. Fenn, inculcates the potent lesson that self-abnegation is the true secret of human happiness. Lastly, "The Chumplebunnys on the Ocean Wave" illustrates the versatility of Mr W. Beatty-Kingston, whose pen is more generally employed upon humorous verse. This story is an extract from his book *The Chumplebunnys and other Oddities*, published by Messrs Chapman & Hall.

To all those authors and publishers who have so courteously granted him permission to reprint the foregoing copyright stories, the Editor's thanks are due, and hereby tendered.

L. W.

LONDON, *August* 1895.