

## THE MEN OF THE NINETIES

the period, it is as well to remember that if Walter Pater and Whistler were its forerunners, so to speak, Oscar Wilde and George Moore were responsible in no small degree for many of the tendencies that afterwards became prevalent.

Wilde himself, in fact, was artistically an influence for evil on his weaker juniors. His social success, his keen persiflage, his indolent pose of greatness, blinded them as much as it did the *οἱ πολλοί* to his real artistic industry and merit. His worst works were, in fact, with one exception, his disciples. Richard Le Gallienne in his *Quest of the Golden Girl* and *Prose Fancies* was watered-down Wilde, and very thin at that. Even John Davidson, in *Baptist Lake* and *Earl Lavender*, strove in vain to overtake the masterly ease with which Wilde's ordered prose periods advance like cohorts of centurions to the sound of a full orchestra. Wilde's best work—his *Prose Poems*, his poem *The Harlot's House*, his one-acter *Salomé*, and one or two of the stories in the *House of Pomegranates*—will, however, remain as some of the finest flowers of the age's art. Yet Wilde, in reality, was senior to the nineties proper, and was much too good an artist to approve of much of the work that was