

## THE MEN OF THE NINETIES

lisher of the Rhymers' Club books and as the issuer of John Gray's first volume of poetry, bibliophiles owe a debt of gratitude. In the early days of the nineties Mr. John Lane became associated with him, until the autumn of 1894 witnessed 'Parnassus' divided into two peaks.' Later, after the Wilde débâcle, an extraordinary figure, worthy of a romance, in the person of the late Leonard Smithers, who was at one time in the legal profession at Sheffield, took the field as a publisher by way of H. S. Nichols. He was no mere publisher but a man of considerable scholarship, who not only issued but finished the Sir Richard Burton translation of Catullus. Round him, to a considerable extent, the vanishing group rallied for a little while before Death smote them one by one. Here is no place to pay due justice to this amiable Benvenuto Cellini of book printing himself, but it must be remembered his figure bulks largely in the closing scenes. He kept Dowson from starvation. Beardsley wrote of him as 'our publisher.'<sup>1</sup> He, when others failed, had the courage to

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that in an unpublished letter of Beardsley's to Smithers when the latter was intending to produce *The Peacock*, an unpublished quarterly, Beardsley promises him his best work.