

THE MEN OF THE NINETIES

must fix on that memorable day when Beardsley burnt his boats as the date of the opening of the period of the nineties, it must be remembered that this arbitrary limitation of the movement is rather a convenience than a necessity. To divide up anything so continuous as literature and art into sections like a bookcase is uncommonly like damming up a portion of a stream to look at the fish in it. It breaks the contact between what was before and what came after. However, as one must go a long way back to investigate accurately how a new movement in art arises, and as it is tedious to follow up all the clues that lead to the source, it will be perhaps as well not to worry too much over the causes of the movement or over the influences from which it arose. Let us accept the fact so well pointed out by Mr. W. G. Blaikie Murdoch in *The Renaissance of the Nineties*, that the output of the nineties was 'a distinct secession from the art of the previous age . . . , in fact the eighties, if they have a distinct character, were a time of transition, a period of simmering for revolt rather than of actual outbreak; and it was in the succeeding ten years that, thanks to certain young men, an upheaval was really made.'

It is to France if anywhere we can trace the