

EPILOGUE

It all seems a long time ago now since those days when Verlaine was as a lantern for these young men's feet, to guide them through the mazes of Art. Thirty years ago and more Wilde was disclosing 'décadenté spirits of astonishing conversation'; Zola influenced that Byron of pessimism, Thomas Hardy, to beget *Jude the Obscure* (1895), and when the critics assailed him the Wessex giant guarded a 'holy silence' which has denied us up till now an emancipated novel such as the French and Italians have, though James Joyce may yet achieve it for us. It was also the age of youth in hansom cabs looking out on the lights of London's West End which spread out before them as in a 'huge black velvet flower.' Ibsen, Tolstoy, Maeterlinck, Nietzsche, D'Annunzio, and Dostoievsky were beginning to percolate through by means of translations that opened out a new world into which everybody hastily swarmed. It was an age in which young men