

## THE MEN OF THE NINETIES

of the mad lusts of Wycherley and the perfumed artificiality of Congreve. Of school life itself he speaks bitterly and with no regret. At sixteen he must have been particularly glad to escape from it and enter, first of all, an architect's office in London, and then, the next year, the Guardian Life and Fire Assurance Office, where his fatal illness unfortunately first began to reveal its presence. Then came his seed-time up till 1891, when he did little but amateur theatricals. But at length Beardsley discovered himself. Many gentlemen have subsequently stated that they discovered him. It may be that they discovered him for themselves, but it was Beardsley and Beardsley alone who found himself. He certainly received, however, a large amount of appreciative sympathy when he started to draw a series of illustrations in his spare time for Congreve's *Way of the World*, and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. He was without art training in the usual sense, though he went of nights in 1892 to Professor Brown's night school at Westminster, but still kept to the Insurance Office stool till August, when, after being recognised by Burne-Jones and Watts with kindness, he left his post to live by his art. What had probably actually permitted