

**THE BOOKSELLERS'
LEAGUE: A HISTORY OF
ITS FORMATION AND
TEN YEARS OF ITS WORK**

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The Booksellers' League: A history of its formation and ten years of its work by Adolf Growoll

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NEW YORK
THE BOOKSELLERS' LEAGUE

1905

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Prefatory Note

This sketch was written to fulfill a promise made some years ago to trace the history of The Booksellers' League from its beginning to the present time, for the information of those who have associated themselves with our organization within recent years, as well as for those who may contemplate becoming members. May the recital of the early struggles and ambitions of the founders ever inspire the younger candidate to still better work for the League and for the trade which we love and honor.

A. G.

This work is dedicated
to
EVERY BOOKSELLER EVERYWHERE
who believes in good fellowship
and in elevating his calling
to the dignity of a
profession

THE BOOKSELLERS' LEAGUE

THE BEGINNINGS

BEFORE THE BOOKSELLERS' LEAGUE was called into existence, in 1894, the book-trade held a unique position among the trades of the United States in that it lacked organization of any kind. While even its allied branches—the stationers, printers and bookbinders—had combined for defensive as well as offensive action, and to bring its individual members into closer fellowship, socially, the members of the book-trade, with a strange fatality, chose to remain separate individuals, every one for himself; indeed, it almost seemed as though each individual member of the booktrade strove to keep as far as possible apart from his associates. When on the occasion of the death of this or that leading member of the trade, some of his *confrères*, for once deferring to convention, stood about his coffin, it was frequently found that but few of them had ever looked upon his face before.

THE BOOKSELLERS' LEAGUE

To few of those who stood about the departed had he been a companion or comrade; to the rest he was, probably, simply a competitor, a stranger excepting in name. When vital questions confronted the trade, each individual solved them independently—in his own way, or, more often, ignored them altogether until the evils that arose from such neglect threatened to choke the life out of his business; and then only he resorted to a remedy which in almost every case was but feebly effective, because, through his very isolation, he was unable to calculate its effect in the widest sense. It took the booktrade from the spring of 1877, when the American Booktrade Association dwindled into desuetude, until the fall of 1900—nearly a generation—to realize that two men together could lift a load that neither one could move; that the united counsel of a body of masters of any trade would be more certain to devise a mode of action that would prove more effective and cover more points than could possibly occur to the mind of one man; and that a closer acquaintance would often soften a decision, or make unnecessary an act that must seem uncalled for, if not harsh, when committed at long range by strangers not fully acquainted with all the facts bearing on the case. That many golden opportunities for building up and extending and strengthening the booktrade during this period were neglected, or, perforce, allowed to