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Booksellers and Bestsellers: British Book Sales as Documented by "The Bookman", 1891-1906

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# BOOKSELLERS AND BESTSELLERS



British Book Sales as Documented by  
*The Bookman*, 1891–1906

Troy J. Bassett and Christina M. Walter

What is being read? This question is best answered by stating what is being sold.  
—“Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade,” *The Bookman*  
(February 1897)

Research on book sales, as Wallace Kirsop has pointed out in this journal, has only recently gained the prominence the subject deserves.<sup>1</sup> Though Simon Eliot’s monograph *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing, 1800–1919* (1994) illustrates the value of compiling statistics and analyzing book production, little has been done to compile and analyze statistics on book sales in Britain. Richard Altick’s appendix to *The English Common Reader* (1957) and its later supplements<sup>2</sup> remain the only attempts to compile sales statistics, and these efforts, in Altick’s own words, “run the whole gamut of authenticity, from the reasonably accurate . . . to the extravagant,” because the figures are drawn from a number of different sources, such as publishers’ histories, letters, and trade journals.<sup>3</sup> In the United States this is not the case: scholars have Alice Payne Hackett’s compilation *80 Years of Bestsellers, 1895–1975* (1977), which offers best-seller lists for each inclusive year, though with only minimal analysis.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, for the years 1895–1912, Hackett collates the bestseller lists

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published in *The Bookman* (New York), and for the years 1913–75 she uses the lists from *Publishers' Weekly*. However, *The Bookman* (New York) was an imitation of *The Bookman* (London), which was founded in 1891 by William Robertson Nicoll. Aimed at “Bookbuyers, Bookreaders and Booksellers,” the journal included literary gossip, features on popular authors, reviews, glossy illustrations, and bestseller lists.<sup>5</sup> These lists, found in the “Sales of Books During the Month” feature, were submitted by bookshops from around the British Isles and have been called the first bestseller lists.<sup>6</sup> But unlike their American cousins, they have been neither compiled nor analyzed.

This essay offers a preliminary analysis of these bestseller lists, which run from 1891 to 1901.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Hackett only compiled yearly lists of bestsellers, we employ our data not only to compose similar lists but also to explore a number of individual English, Scottish, and Irish bookshops, for which few or no sales records remain in existence. Adding this level of analysis goes beyond the bestsellers themselves and into a consideration of the socioeconomic factors affecting book sales during this period as well as their regional variation. In addition, we supplement this analysis by juxtaposing it with another feature of *The Bookman* (London), the “Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade,” which ran from 1894 to 1906. This feature, submitted by leading wholesalers from England and Scotland, included both book trade analysis and bestseller lists. Through it, we are able to monitor the book trade on a national level and to examine what bookshops were stocking in relation to what they were selling. In presenting our compilations, we do not pretend to offer a final word; rather, we intend to open up *The Bookman* (London) as a source for further investigation. Although these two features have particular limitations (as we will discuss below), they do offer a unique source of information about British book sales. Taken together, “Sales of Books During the Month” and the “Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade” provide a dynamic picture of the British book trade at the turn of the century, offering a view of customers, bookshops, wholesalers, and publishers.<sup>8</sup>

## I. “Sales of Books During the Month”

Appearing in the first issue of the journal, “Sales of Books During the Month” proposed “to give from month to month statements by representative and leading booksellers of the volumes they have found most popular during the [previous] month (15th to 15th)” (October 1891).<sup>9</sup> Beyond this statement, *The Bookman*’s editors never offered any further identification

of these “representative and leading” booksellers, nor did they reveal how they selected these particular booksellers (for example, did the editors choose the shops or did the shops volunteer lists? If the former, what method was employed for selecting shops?). Furthermore, neither *The Bookman* nor the booksellers offered any method or criteria for determining the “most popular” volumes of the month. Since the feature rarely mentions actual sales figures, the lists could be the result of careful record keeping, the subjective impressions of the individual bookseller, factual errors, outright deceit, or some combination of these. Perhaps anticipating these concerns, each month the feature ended with the statement “[*The Bookman*] guarantee[s] the authenticity of the above lists as supplied to us by leading booksellers,” indicating the journal’s function as a reporter of the lists rather than an authority on them.<sup>10</sup> Despite these concerns, which should always be kept in mind, the lists nonetheless offer a unique source of information about late Victorian bookselling.

“Sales of Books during the Month” ran from October 1891 (issue 1) to April 1901 (issue 115) without interruption. Each month the feature consisted of anywhere from three to twenty-one lists identified only by city or section of a city (for example, Birmingham or East Central London).<sup>11</sup> For the majority of months the feature consisted of ten to fifteen lists, the average being twelve lists per issue. Each list contained between zero (submitted by East Central London in August 1897)<sup>12</sup> and twenty-four titles (submitted by East Central London in January 1893), but the vast majority of the lists reported a standard six books each. In addition, the style of reportage varied slightly from city to city, ranging from titles alone to authors, titles, publishers, and prices; however, in February 1898 the reporting becomes standardized, and thereafter all shops included authors, titles, publishers, and prices. Over the nearly ten years of the feature, 1,408 lists appeared from thirty-seven cities or areas in cities, including four from London (East Central, West Central, West End, and Central); two from Dublin (not differentiated); and one each from Manchester, Birmingham, Burnley, Sunderland, Bradford, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Glasgow.<sup>13</sup> Year by year, 29 lists appeared covering 1891, 119 covering 1892, 165 covering 1893, 145 covering 1894, 140 covering 1895, 144 covering 1896, 132 covering 1897, 189 covering 1898, 167 covering 1899, 154 covering 1900, and 24 covering 1901.

Taking the lists as a whole, we can produce a rough compilation of the leading titles over the course of the decade. Appendix 1 gives, year by year, the books that appeared most often on the lists. These compilations give only a sense of the most popular books, since the bookshops’ lists offered no actual sales figures. Furthermore, because almost nothing is known about these shops other than what they themselves reported, our compilations

cannot take into account other factors, such as the population served, sales volume generated, or the effects of local competition. In addition, the shops included in the feature over the years do not fully represent all of Britain. In particular, only two cities contribute from Wales and Northern Ireland for a combined fifteen lists. Because we do not weight the lists, they all assume the same weight. Nevertheless, the high-volume titles we list, for example, George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (42 lists in 1895), obviously represent books that appeared on the lists of many cities many times. Still, our compilations here are offered as at best an approximation of actual sales.

In the realm of fiction, four movements dominated the lists—Scottish-themed fiction (the so-called Kailyard school), New Woman fiction, historical romance, and religious fiction. Of the first group, authors and books include J. M. Barrie's *The Little Minister* (19 lists in 1892) and his other works, Robert Louis Stevenson's works, S. R. Crockett's *The Stickit Minister* (5 lists in 1893) and his other works, and Ian Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (59 lists during 1894–95) and his other works.<sup>14</sup> The second group, New Woman authors and books, included Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (28 lists during 1893–94) and *The Beth Book* (8 lists during 1897–98), Beatrice Harraden's *Ships That Pass in the Night* (14 lists during 1893–94), Iota's *A Yellow Aster* (14 lists in 1894), Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (12 lists in 1895), Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (10 lists during 1895–96), and Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (17 lists during 1899–1900). Historical romances included Arthur Conan Doyle's *The White Company* (4 lists in 1892) and *Rodney Stone* (5 lists during 1896–97), Stanley Weyman's *A Gentleman of France* (13 lists in 1894) and *Shrewsbury* (20 lists in 1898), Anthony Hope's *Rupert of Hentzau* (25 lists in 1898) and his other works, and H. S. Merriman's *The Sowers* (18 lists during 1896–97). Much of the Scottish fiction had religious themes, as did Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (32 lists in 1898) and her other works, Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (21 lists during 1895–96) and her other works, and Hall Caine's *The Christian* (30 lists during 1897–98) and his other works. In addition, the deaths of Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1891) and Stevenson (1894) spurred demand for their works.

For nonfiction, religious works, memoirs, biographies, and sociological works predominated. Important religious authors and titles included Henry Drummond's *The Ascent of Man* (27 lists in 1894) and *The Ideal Life* (24 lists during 1897–98), A. J. Balfour's *The Foundations of Belief* (30 lists in 1895), and John Watson's *The Mind of the Master* (20 lists in 1896). Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (42 lists during 1894–95, various editions) spoke to popular interest in both religion and evolution. The top memoir was Lord Roberts's *Forty-One Years in India* (36 lists during

1897–1900, various editions); the top biography was Hallam Tennyson's *Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (26 lists in 1897). In addition, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897), the South African War (1899–1902), and the death of Queen Victoria (1901) spurred nonfiction book sales, once again showing the influence of events on sales.

Sixteen authors out of some fifteen hundred account for more than one-fifth of all the titles listed (1,725 entries out of approximately 8,450): S. R. Crockett (192 lists), Marie Corelli (176), Rudyard Kipling (162), Ian Maclaren [John Watson] (151), Stanley Weyman (104), R. L. Stevenson (104), Arthur Conan Doyle (100), E. T. Fowler (96), J. M. Barrie (97), Mrs. Humphry Ward (97), Anthony Hope (94), Hall Caine (76), Henry Drummond (76), Émile Zola (71), Walter Scott (66), and H. S. Merriman (63). With the exception of all the works of Drummond and some of those of Kipling, Maclaren, Stevenson, Doyle, and Barrie, the works of the top authors are novels. Other than Zola, all of the authors are British, and in general, few foreign authors appeared on the lists at all. The few American authors or titles named on the lists included James Russell Lowell (6 lists in 1891), Mark Twain (18 lists during 1893–1900), Charles Monroe Sheldon's *In His Steps* (18 lists during 1898–99), and Harold Frederic's *Illumination* (7 lists in 1896). Other prominent foreign authors and works included Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* (9 lists in 1898) and Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (11 lists in 1894).

We can also examine each city individually to gain a sense of the individual shops submitting these lists, including the clientele the shops served and any possible bias the shops may have had. A handful of shops—in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Burnley, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dublin—had long runs (over 90 lists submitted) and represented a number of different regions: the metropolis of London; the industrial centers of Manchester, Birmingham, and Burnley; the Scottish cities of Glasgow and Aberdeen; and the Irish city of Dublin. In juxtaposing the lists from each of these cities, what becomes apparent is that each shop, not surprisingly, had a very distinct readership.

## West Central London and East Central London

Of the four shops listed for London, only two had substantial runs: West Central London and East Central London.<sup>15</sup> They catered to very different audiences, judging by their sales: the West Central London shop served liberal and literary tastes, whereas the East Central London shop catered to distinctly religious tastes. Starting in April 1892, West Central London submitted ninety-nine lists over nine years. In 1895 the correspondent began

commenting frequently on the state of the trade and on notable books and demands: the high sales of Rudyard Kipling and Lord Roberts (October 1897), sales of Walter Scott's Waverley novels (November 1897), interest in Richard Wagner's operas (July 1898), and books on the South African War (November 1899, December 1899, and February 1900). The books listed were about 55 percent nonfiction during the years 1892–97, rising to about 60 percent in 1899 and 1900, led by the numerous books about the South African War. Some of the fiction on the lists was nationally popular: Stevenson's works (10 lists during 1892–99), Du Maurier's *Tribby* (8 lists during 1895–96), and Corelli's novels (12 lists during 1895–1901). Notably, however, there were a number of foreign authors as well: Zola (8 lists during 1893–98), Mark Twain (3 lists during 1893–1900), Heinrich Heine (September 1893), Walt Whitman (July 1896), and Max Nordau (March 1895). Naturalism also figured prominently, including not only Zola, but also Israel Zangwill (2 lists in 1893 and 1 list in 1900), George Moore (2 lists in 1893 and 1 in 1900), Hardy (4 lists during 1895–97), and George Gissing (July 1896). Equally notable were the journal *The Yellow Book* (June and August 1894), H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (April 1898), Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (April and May 1898), George Bernard Shaw's plays (June and July 1898), and Joseph Conrad's *Tales of Unrest* (March 1899). On the nonfiction side, science, travel, history, and biography led the way, especially T. H. Huxley's essays on evolution (4 lists during 1892–94), Fridtjof Nansen's Arctic-travel accounts (3 lists in 1897), Lord Roberts's memoir (5 lists during 1896–97), and Hallam Tennyson's memoir of his father (3 lists in 1897). Later in the decade, the lists were filled with books on South Africa and the war, as well as Lord Baden-Powell's *Aids to Scouting* (February and March 1900) and *Fabianism and the Empire* (November 1900). Prices were generally below 7s. 6d., although some popular nonfiction titles exceeded this figure. These titles and prices indicate that West Central London's clientele was well-educated and affluent. A number of authors, such as Conrad and Shaw, appeared only on lists from this shop, suggesting distinctively avant-garde literary tastes.

East Central London submitted 101 lists over nine years starting in July 1892. It commented on such trends in the trade as the sales of Norman Gale (April and June 1893) and Thomas Hardy's popularity among American tourists (August 1896). Whereas West Central London slightly favored nonfiction, East Central London strongly favored nonfiction, ranging year to year from 64 to 81 percent of all titles. Religious books sold well: Frederic Farrar's fiction and nonfiction (11 lists during 1892–1900), A. M. Fairbairn's *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (7 lists in 1893), A. J. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief* (4 lists in 1895), Henry Drummond's *Ascent*

of *Man* (2 lists in 1894), Charles Gore's sermons (11 lists during 1897–99), and John Watson's works (8 lists in 1896). Lent was a major season for this shop, with increased sales of theological works generally and Lenten manuals such as *Lombard Street in Lent* and *Lent in London* specifically (8 lists collectively in 1894 and 1895).<sup>16</sup> Other popular nonfiction titles included Kidd's *Social Evolution* (5 lists during 1894–95), Alexander Whyte's *Bunyan Characters* (4 lists in 1893), and Ruskin's works (6 lists during 1895–1900). With few exceptions, the fiction had a religious emphasis: Ward's novels (4 lists during 1894–95), Maclaren's works (14 lists during 1894–96), Caine's novels (4 lists in 1894 and 1897), and Corelli's novels (10 lists during 1894–1900). However, other notable best-sellers included Zola (November 1893 and October 1894), Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (March 1894), and Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (3 lists in 1895). Because nonfiction tended to be more expensive than fiction, a good portion of the prices listed were above 7s. 6d. Clearly this shop served a clientele of religious middle-class readers, as well as a smaller general audience interested in more popular novels.

## Manchester, Birmingham, and Burnley

Manchester, Birmingham, and Burnley all represent English industrial areas: the first two were large cosmopolitan cities whereas the latter was a smaller mill town.<sup>17</sup> The Manchester and Birmingham shops, judging by their sales, both catered to a middle-class audience, while the Burnley shop served working-class readers.

Manchester commenced in December 1891 and appeared 106 times in the next ten years. The books listed favored nonfiction slightly in 1891–93, shifted decidedly to fiction (about 70 percent) during the years 1894–97, and split evenly between fiction and nonfiction from 1898 to 1901. Cheap editions and popular novels dominated the fiction. Reprint editions of William Black (10 lists during 1892–94) and Thomas Hardy (7 lists during 1893–94) appeared, as well as series such as Cassell's Silver Library (3 lists in 1892). Other popular authors and works included Du Maurier's *Trilby* (11 lists during 1895–96), Maclaren's works (14 lists during 1894–96), Corelli's novels (11 lists during 1894–97; 6 lists in 1900), Guy Boothby's novels (16 lists during 1896–1900), and Zola's novels (15 lists during 1892–1900). New Woman novels also appeared frequently during 1894–95: Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (4 lists in 1894), Iota's *A Yellow Aster* (4 lists in 1894), and Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (2 lists in 1895). Religious, political, educational, and regional works led the nonfiction works listed, for example Drummond's *The Ascent of Man* (6 lists in 1894),



Kidd's *Social Evolution* (9 lists during 1894–95), J. Rowntree's *The Temperance Problem and Social Reform* (3 lists in 1899), James Fitzpatrick's *The Transvaal from Within* (5 lists during 1899–1900), S. P. Thompson's *Dynamo-Electric Machinery* (June 1892), Eugene Sandow's *Strength and How to Obtain It* (5 lists during 1897–99), and Thomas Newbigging's regional studies (11 lists during 1891–1901), including his *Lancashire Characters and Places* (2 lists during 1891–92). The vast majority listed cost less than six shillings, much less than in London. The titles and prices on these lists suggest that this shop served a rising working- and middle-class audience of novel readers and “self-help” learners.

Birmingham began appearing in November 1892 and submitted ninety-five lists over the next nine years. Birmingham differed from Manchester in that it consistently favored nonfiction (60 percent of books listed, sometimes more), except for the years 1894–96, when titles were split more evenly between fiction and nonfiction. The most popular nonfiction subjects were religion, science (especially evolution), empire (especially history and geography), and politics, including R. W. Dale's *Christian Doctrine* (2 lists in 1894), Kidd's *Social Evolution* (5 lists during 1894–95), Huxley's essays (5 lists during 1893–94), Slatin Pasha's *Fire and Sword in the Sudan* (3 lists in 1896), and Ruskin's works (8 lists during 1893–97). Overall, the range of nonfiction was quite broad, much more so than that of Manchester. The popularity of William Watson (5 lists during 1892–93) called for a note from the shop: “The interest in Mr. Watson is still maintained. In Birmingham his books have met with an extensive sale, and quite a ‘Watson School’ has been established” (March 1893). Likewise Norman Gale (3 lists in 1893): “Mr. Gale's reputation is steadily increasing in Birmingham. Many inquiries are made for his prose work, ‘A June Romance,’ copies of which are difficult to obtain” (April 1893). The most popular authors included Corelli (16 lists during 1893–1900), Crockett (14 lists during 1895–98), Kipling (14 lists during 1893–99), and Weyman (13 lists during 1894–1900). Prices in Birmingham were generally below six shillings, much as in Manchester. Seemingly, then, the two shops served a similar audience.

Burnley, a factory town in Lancashire twenty-five miles north of Manchester, began in December 1891 and submitted 103 lists over the next ten years. There were frequent notes on the state of trade: the increased sale of political literature (August 1892); “Business nearly at a standstill through Oldham cotton spinners' strike” (April 1893); “Hundreds of books selling here on Socialism and allied questions” (December 1893); “Science and technical books for the evening schools just coming in demand” (October 1897); the demand for sixpenny novels (June, July, and August 1899); and a “general revival” in Shakespeare (December 1900). The split between

fiction and nonfiction varied dramatically: nonfiction dominated the years 1892–93 and 1897–1900 (about 60 percent of books listed), and fiction dominated the years 1894–96. The fiction was generally inexpensive: Silas Hocking's novels (14 lists during 1891–1900), of which the shop “[s]old over 500 copies [of one title], and over 20,000 of this author's works” (December 1892);<sup>18</sup> Silas's brother Joseph Hocking's novels (22 lists during 1893–1900); Doyle's Sherlock Holmes books (4 lists during 1891–93) and the *Strand Magazine* (3 lists during 1891–93); Annie Swan's novels (11 lists during 1891–1900); Caroline Masters's novels (7 lists during 1895–97); Corelli's novels (10 lists during 1896 and 1900); and Caine's novels (8 lists during 1894–98). Nonfiction centered on politics, especially socialism, such as Sidney Webb's *The Eight Hour Day* (2 lists in 1892), *Fabian Essays* (August 1892), and *Workman's Compensation Act* (August 1898); education, especially works on the textile industry such as *Cotton Spinning* (July 1892) and James Holmes's *Cotton Cloth Designing* (2 lists in 1897); and regional literature, such as J. Marshall Mather's *Lancashire Idylls* (3 lists in 1895) and his other works. Generally, as in Manchester and Birmingham, prices were below six shillings, although some educational books exceeded this figure. Of the three shops, Manchester and Birmingham catered to a more educated and middle-class audience, whereas the Burnley shop catered to a less educated and more working-class audience, as indicated by its sales of socialist and industrial literature as well as its vulnerability to work stoppages.

## Glasgow and Aberdeen

Compared to Aberdeen, Glasgow was far larger and more cosmopolitan, home to a large Irish immigrant population.<sup>19</sup> The Glasgow shop commenced reporting in December 1891 and appeared 103 times over the next nine years. Its correspondent occasionally offered candid entries on trade subjects, most often complaints about slow business and its causes: a recent strike and bad weather have made business “very flat” (December 1891), “bank failures have told on the book-buyers” (June 1893), and “some publishers are doing their utmost to ruin the trade by selling to the drapers, who buy large quantities at reduced prices” (February 1895). Other entries directed suggestions specifically to publishers: “Could you in THE BOOKMAN suggest to publishers that a simple paper wrapper should be on each volume they issue, with the title printed on the back [to help keep stock clean and fresh]?” (February 1892) and “it would be much more satisfactory if more books were published at nett [*sic*] prices; the public would like it better, as well as the bulk of the legitimate booksellers” (June 1893). The

lists themselves were overwhelmingly nonfiction (approximately 75 per cent). The most popular books dealt with religion, Scotland, or both, especially the lives of Scottish religious figures: for example H. H. Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus* (3 lists in 1892), Whyte's *Bunyan Characters* (4 lists during 1893–94), the "Famous Scots" series (6 lists during 1896–98), John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (2 lists in 1898), and G. Matheson's *Studies of the Portrait of Christ* (4 lists during 1899–1900). On the fiction side, there was a similar regional focus: Scottish authors such as S. R. Crockett (15 lists), Ian Maclaren (14 lists), J. M. Barrie (8 lists), Annie Swan (7 lists), and Graham Travers [Dr. Margaret Todd] (6 lists), and novels such as *The Little Minister* (3 lists during 1892–93), *A Colony of Mercy* (3 lists in 1893), and *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (5 lists during 1894–95) were among the most popular. Fiction combining regional and religious themes had a broader national appeal than regional religious nonfiction, whose sales were more limited to Scotland. (Only about half of the books on the Glasgow lists occur multiple times or on multiple city lists.) Both fiction and nonfiction usually sold for less than 7s. 6d., but customers did seem willing to pay more for regional and religious favorites. Judging by the titles and prices appearing on the Glasgow lists, the shop catered to an educated and religion-minded middle-class audience much like that of East Central London.

Aberdeen began in February 1892 and submitted 108 lists.<sup>20</sup> Its correspondent often discussed the popularity of certain works, types of works, and authors: for example, "[G]reat interest is shown in Tennyson and everything about him" (December 1892); "[N]ext to fiction, theology is most popular at present, and laymen are as ready buyers as ministers" (December 1892); G. Eyre-Todd's *Byways of the Scottish Border* is "already out of print, though issued only two weeks or so" (October 1893); "though such books as 'Dodo' [by E. F. Benson] sell rapidly on the principle of a nine days' wonder, the sale does not keep up. But Barrie's works sell to-day as well as ever" (April 1894); and "[S. R. Crockett's] 'The Lilac Sunbonnet,' notwithstanding unfavourable remarks, and other good Scotch stories, are much in demand, and slightly interfere with the sale of ordinary works of fiction; but this business may be overdone" (December 1894). Religion accounted for approximately half of the nonfiction on Aberdeen's list, and about 60 percent of books listed were nonfiction. Popular nonfiction included Robert Chambers's *The Life and Works of Robert Burns* (5 lists during 1896–97), the Famous Scots series (5 lists during 1896–1900), *Church Hymnary* (4 lists during 1898–99), and Matheson's *Studies of the Portrait of Christ* (3 lists during 1899–1900). On the fiction side, Scottish novelists such as Walter Scott (21 lists), S. R. Crockett (15 lists), J. M. Barrie (10 lists), Ian Maclaren (9 lists), and R. L. Stevenson (7 lists) lead in

sales over their English counterparts such as Marie Corelli (8 lists), Hall Caine (5 lists), and E. T. Fowler (4 lists). The Waverley novels (15 lists during 1892–98), *The Little Minister* (4 lists during 1892–94), *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (4 lists during 1894–95), and *Trilby* (4 lists during 1895–96) were particularly popular. Prices in both Aberdeen and Glasgow were usually below 7s. 6d. On the whole, Aberdeen's lists were even more regional in both the fiction and nonfiction categories than Glasgow's (only about a third of the books on the Aberdeen lists appear on other city lists). Both Glasgow and Aberdeen served an educated middle-class audience interested in Scottish and religious subjects, but these interests were more pronounced in the Aberdeen shop, perhaps owing to the city's smaller size and more isolated northern location.

## Dublin

One Dublin bookshop began submitting lists in December 1891, and a second shop joined in October 1893, but unlike the London shops, they were never geographically differentiated.<sup>21</sup> Instead, when only one list appeared, it was labeled "Dublin"; when two lists appeared, they were labeled "Dublin I" and Dublin II." From this point forward, it is unclear whether Dublin I and Dublin II consistently corresponded to the first and second shops to join the feature. Likewise, when only one list appeared, it might have referred to either shop. Over nearly ten years, Dublin shops submitted 166 lists—28 labeled "Dublin" and 69 each labeled "Dublin I" and "Dublin II." The books listed do not suggest any significant difference in the two shops' clientele, so we will consider all of the lists together.<sup>22</sup> Overall, nonfiction averaged each year more than 60 percent of the books listed. The most popular nonfiction subjects were religious, especially Catholicism and religious biography, and regional, especially Irish history and politics. Examples included Nicholas Walsh's *The Comparative Number of the Saved and Lost* (7 lists during 1898–99), Father Wilberforce's *Life of Mother Raphael Drane* (3 lists in 1895), P. W. Joyce's various histories of Ireland (10 lists during 1893–97), P. F. Kavanagh's *A Popular History of the Insurrection of 1798* (4 lists in 1898), Thomas Lough's *England's Wealth, Ireland's Poverty* (3 lists in 1896), and J. R. O'Flanagan's *Annals of the Irish Parliaments, from 1172 to 1800* (3 lists in 1895). Another prominent nonfiction title is Lord Roberts's *Forty-One Years in India* (9 lists in 1897). As for fiction, novels by Irish writers heavily populated the lists; in fact, one of the shops noted, "Irish Language and Literary Societies are awakening renewed interest in their subjects; but as usual cheap novels and religious works are most read" (December 1893). Examples of Irish literature

included P. A. Sheehan's novels *Geoffrey Austin*, *Student* (2 lists in 1895), *The Triumph of Failure* (6 lists in 1899), and *My New Curate* (14 lists during 1900–1901); the novels and poetry of Jane Barlow (12 lists during 1892–97); the novels of Rosa Mulholland (9 lists during 1892–1900); and the novels of Standish O'Grady (8 lists during 1892–98). Some non-Irish authors also fared well in Dublin, especially Corelli (17 lists during 1895–1900), Kipling (17 lists during 1892–1900), Doyle (16 lists during 1892–1901), Stevenson (14 lists during 1892–99), and Caine (11 lists during 1894–99). As was the case with most of the other city lists, cheap editions, particularly of fiction, dominated. However, people were willing to pay more for nonfiction, including 105 shillings for W. Armstrong's *Gainsborough and His Place in English Art* (3 lists in 1898).<sup>23</sup> In general, the Dublin shops catered to a broad middle-class audience interested in religious, political, and Irish subjects, both fiction and nonfiction.

## II. “Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade”

Beginning in February 1894 (issue 29), the “Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade” appeared as a complement to the “Sales of Books During the Month” feature. Composed of a discussion of the month's wholesale trade, a list of bestsellers, and a brief week-by-week breakdown of business, the feature initially covered only the English trade. Starting in February 1898 (issue 77), however, the feature expanded to include a Scottish section, made up of a discussion of wholesale trade and a bestseller list. Much like the “Sales of Books During the Month” feature, *The Bookman* never identified the authors of the reports nor gave its criteria for selecting these authors. The authors never revealed their method for selecting the books on their lists, though they probably relied on a mixture of objective and subjective impressions. For both wholesale reports, the monthly entries covered trade from approximately the twentieth to the twentieth of the preceding months. The discussions followed a fairly basic pattern: usually opening with commentary on supply and demand; moving on to special subjects (for example, new releases, war, death of authors or dignitaries); and ending with a summation of the periodicals and reprints market. The bestseller lists included an average of twenty-six books per month for England and twenty-two books per month for Scotland. The wholesale feature continued without interruption until December 1906 (issue 183), for a total of 155 English reports and 107 Scottish reports.

## England

The English discussion is particularly interesting, and not only because it had a longer run than the Scottish. The English writer portrayed himself as a traditional literary enthusiast and a businessman, incorporating his own entertaining, though certainly slanted, persona into his commentary.<sup>24</sup> Despite his assertions that “the question of the quality of work with which the public is satisfied must be left to the critic” and that his “duty in this column is to state facts only” (July 1894), the correspondent repeatedly fumed that “cheap and inferior literature” should not take over the market and degrade “the popular taste” (February 1894). In October 1901, for instance, he relished the fact that the sale of sixpenny novels had (temporarily) declined, and he hoped that this “will give place to a demand for a more satisfactory class of goods.” Similarly, the writer applauded the sustained popularity of John Wesley’s *Journal*, evidence that “a considerable portion of the community . . . [still] value[s] sterling worth in literature” (November 1902). In addition to fearing cheap (and, in his mind, inferior) literature, the correspondent condemned “grotesque” humor as an affront to Victorian morality. In January 1904 he was quite relieved to note that recently published children’s books, though dangerously full of humor, were not so absurdly grotesque as in past years. Along similar lines, he offered the following anecdote to support his disapproval of *Wisdom While You Wait*, a humorous work that sold over twenty thousand copies in March 1903: “A young lady recently purchased a copy of ‘Wisdom While You Wait,’ and the day following asked to be allowed to return it, being under the impression that it was a *serious* book” (May 1903, emphasis in original).

The correspondent’s personality and bias aside, he did have a number of useful things to say about the changing state of wholesale trade in this period. As can be expected, one of his main concerns centered on the tenuous position of the wholesaler. He writes: “[T]he face of the [wholesale] bookseller is evidently one of continued contending against many odds; the discount system threatened to swamp him, to which burden was added the copious supply of literature to his customers through rate-aided libraries; the daily press usurps his functions, and now he is threatened by a combination of publishers which shall dispense altogether with his services and supply the public needs direct” (June 1905).

The first difficulty mentioned above, the widespread retail use of discounting and the development of net pricing to combat it, is one the wholesaler repeatedly returned to until the net-pricing system was universally

accepted in 1899.<sup>25</sup> Mentioning the practice for the first time in June 1894, the correspondent writes: "The issue of books at a net published price still continues, although there has been some difficulty in inducing all the retail booksellers to sell them without giving discount. This want of unanimity is much to be deplored." By November of that same year, net pricing already seemed to have gained ground. The wholesaler claimed that, though some booksellers remained unconvinced, the public appeared satisfied. With this basic acceptance established, the writer reported that net pricing was extended to schoolbooks by December 1894 and then to magazines by April 1895. Thereafter, the issue slowly faded away, but the increasing number of net-priced books appearing on the appended lists reflected the rapidity of net pricing's acceptance in the trade.

Unfortunately, the final difficulty cited above, the problem of publishers' dealing directly with the public, was not so readily solved. Virtually from the outset of the English wholesale report, the correspondent described a steady decline in the schoolbook season because schools, like many bookshops, were beginning to buy directly from publishers. In April 1894, attempting to inspire guilt in shop owners and school administrators, as well as in the publishers themselves, the reporter writes:

The wholesale bookseller is sometimes called a middleman. This is not a happy expression and it conveys a wrong idea, especially to the public generally. It would simply be impossible for the retail bookseller—the country bookseller especially—to write direct for every line he required, even if he knew where it was published. Then the cost of carriage would be perfectly ruinous. Further, publishers find that their publications, through the so-called middleman, reach remote places in the country, in which the books would otherwise probably never be known, much less stocked. (April 1894)

Similarly defending the position of wholesalers against the encroachment of direct sales, the correspondent went on to write in October 1896: "A whisper is abroad that school books are being procured through other channels than those of the booksellers. This is a great pity, for the hard-working and long-suffering man of business called a bookseller is certainly deserving of all his legitimate business." However, these repeated self-justifications and attempts to inspire guilt apparently produced little effect. Although the wholesaler gradually turned his primary critical attention to other difficulties, his occasional return to the issue of direct sales indicates ongoing encroachment.

A further concern, one economically connected to the previous two, centered on the proliferation of cheap literature. Most obviously, increasing



numbers of cheap reprint editions, particularly sixpenny novels, harmed the sale of higher-priced, new novels and affected the profits of both booksellers and wholesalers. As the wholesaler explained in the December 1901 issue, “[T]he public now expect the latest successes to be supplied [immediately] in [sixpenny form].” Yet “[t]he tendency to issue a class of low-priced books increases ... labour considerably without an augmented return” (November 1898). Now more books, both first editions (six shillings) and reprints (sixpence), had to be sold to make the same profit, quite often flooding the market, and that meant more labor and competition for booksellers. The writer reported in December 1899 that, corresponding to this increase in early issue of cheap editions, “[d]uring the past month new books have been pouring in at the rate of hundreds per week. There are far too many of them, and it means selling, say, 12 each of 100 books instead of, as in the old times, 100 each of 12 books.” This entry is not an isolated occurrence. Month after month the correspondent complained about the inordinately high numbers of new books, both first editions and reprints, entering the market: more than one thousand in October 1895, more than eight hundred in March 1896, one thousand in November 1896, and six hundred in March 1897.<sup>26</sup> By November 1897, the correspondent estimated that fifty to seventy new titles were being issued every day, making it almost impossible for wholesalers to stock and catalogue everything. In addition, with such a short shelf life for most titles, retailers avoided purchasing a substantial quantity of any one book. As the reporter exclaimed, “[W]hat a trade would be done if each [book] justified its existence!” (June 1897).

Despite these overarching concerns of the English wholesaler, both the discussion entries and the bestseller lists suggest a number of major book-selling seasons during the year. According to the correspondent, business improved in the spring months because of Lent and the corresponding demand for religious works: “Of late years Lent Literature is an important feature in the trade” (February 1894). However, beginning in 1896 and progressing thereafter, the correspondent noted a steady decline in the Lenten season. By March 1902 he wrote, “Only a few years ago the Lenten Season was certain to materially affect the sale of novels, and to call forth a corresponding increase in the demand for theological books. Such influence is but little felt at the present time, and the sale of books strictly pertinent to the season is an almost negligible [*sic*] quantity.” The following year the correspondent noted that the Lenten season was being replaced by a spring publishing season, which “is yearly becoming more popular with many of the large publishing houses” (March 1903). The benefit of such a trend, according to the correspondent, is “that a book stands far more chance of claiming special attention [in the spring] than in the whirl and rush of the autumn, when the multitude of publications tends to bewilder



the ordinary reader" (April 1905). Later in the year, despite the decline of the schoolbook season caused by direct buying, autumn remained the busiest publishing season: "[A]mongst the changes which the autumn publishing season has undergone during recent years, perhaps none is more noticeable than the early date at which the productions of many of the most prominent authors are placed before the public. There is, of course, a material advantage in such a procedure, as an early grip upon the public taste frequently ensures the full run of the season's demand" (October 1905). This fall season culminated with Christmas and its attendant book-buying frenzy.

The correspondent noted that the seasonal cycle of the book trade was subject to the influence of social, economic, and political events. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (1897) prompted popular demand for works about the monarch and her empire. From 1899 to 1902 the South African War intermittently encouraged and deflated sales, and the 1904 conflict between Russia and Japan greatly increased sales of literature about the Far East.<sup>27</sup> The deaths of authors and other prominent persons usually spurred a run on books by or about them: for example, the passing of Robert Louis Stevenson (1894), Mrs. Oliphant (1897), Lewis Carroll (1898), William Gladstone (1898), Queen Victoria (1901), Dean Farrar (1903), Edna Lyall (1903), H. S. Merriman (1903), and Guy Boothby (1905).

Turning from the correspondent's discussion to the lists themselves, the increasing dominance of the novel becomes obvious. As the correspondent wrote in May 1894, "[N]ovels! novels! novels! Seems ... to be the insatiable cry of the public." Not surprisingly, the bestsellers in each year of the wholesale report, which are cataloged in Appendix 2, include more than twice as much fiction as nonfiction—almost four times as much in the last couple of years. The most popular books overall were Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (26 lists during 1894–98), Fowler's *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (19 lists during 1898–1900), Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (16 lists during 1894–95), Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* (15 lists during 1896–1900), Roberts's *Forty-One Years in India* (15 lists during 1897–1905), Caine's *The Manxman* (14 lists during 1894–95), Mason's *Four Feathers* (14 lists during 1902), Kidd's *Social Evolution* (12 lists during 1894–95), Weyman's *Under the Red Robe* (11 lists during 1894–97), Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (11 lists during 1895–97), Merriman's *The Sowers* (11 lists during 1896–97), Sandow's *Strength and How to Obtain It* (11 lists during 1897–98), and Caine's *The Eternal City* (11 lists during 1901–3). Of these thirteen, only three are nonfiction: *Forty-One Years in India*, *Social Evolution*, and *Strength and How to Obtain It*. The most popular writers overall were Anthony Hope (79 lists), Marie Corelli (62 lists), S. R. Crockett (60 lists), E. T. Fowler (50 lists), Rudyard Kipling (48 lists),

Stanley Weyman (44 lists), H. S. Merriman (43 lists), Rosa N. Carey (42 lists), E. F. Benson (32 lists), Mrs. Humphry Ward (30 lists), and Ian Maclaren (29 lists). Only one of these authors, Ian Maclaren (under his real name, John Watson), wrote a substantial amount of nonfiction, and even he was probably better known for his fiction.

By the mid-1890s, with the demise of the three-volume format for new fiction, readers seemed quite willing to purchase new fiction in the six-shilling one-volume format. In May 1895 the wholesale correspondent writes: "Six shillings seems to be the fixed price for the popular novel. A few have appeared at 3s. 6d., but owing, probably, to the competition which exists among publishers for the works of an author enjoying the smile of the public, it is impossible to bring them out at the lower figure." The bestseller lists themselves firmly support this assertion. As the correspondent stated in November 1896, the six-shilling novel is "one of the most popular ventures ever recorded in trade annals." Yet barely was this success established when it was challenged by the competition of cheaper sixpenny reprint editions, which were brought out earlier and in increasing numbers as the years went by. In the eyes of the wholesale reporter, as suggested above, six-shilling new fiction and sixpenny reprint fiction were in direct competition for the novel-reading public. In 1898 the correspondent reported a poor time for six-shilling novels, because sixpenny editions with print runs as large as one hundred thousand were taking over (July 1898). From this point forward, the correspondent wondered whether the six-shilling edition or the sixpenny reprint would win the public. In October 1899 and again in November 1903, he named the six-shilling novel the winner. However, he proclaimed sixpenny novels triumphant in July 1901, July 1902, and July 1904. Yet, despite the wholesaler's ongoing description of this struggle, the English lists, because of the way they were compiled, refused to acknowledge the proliferation of sixpenny novels. These cheaper works were only mentioned in passing as pocket editions or reprints, and their prices were not directly stated. The bulk of the list, perhaps in accordance with the wholesaler's financially motivated bias, was reserved for more expensive books, with one shilling to two shillings the lowest price considered. These lists, then, perhaps seriously underrepresent the sales of cheap fiction.

## Scotland

Shifting focus to the Scottish reports, one may note its surface similarities to the English lists. The writer of the Scottish entries imitated the English discussion, beginning with general supply and demand, moving into the

trade of various book genres, and closing with the annuals and periodicals market. The key difference between the two reports is the personality and style of the correspondents. The Scottish wholesaler tended to focus much of his discussion on summary rather than analysis, and the criticism that pervaded the English reports was much abbreviated in the Scottish. As such, we have, in certain respects, a more limited picture of Scotland's wholesale problems and trends.

This is not to say that the Scottish discussion is of little interpretive use. In fact, from the comments the correspondent did make, which significantly had less apparent bias, we see that the Scottish market shared similar concerns with its English counterpart. For instance, in January 1899 the wholesaler reported that "the supply in all departments of literature was large, and perhaps on that account some works deserving of success may have been crowded out by less meritorious publications." Similarly, in April 1906 he wrote: "Year after year this [spring fiction] section of a bookseller's stock requires more serious consideration. Many of these new novels [are] seldom or never asked for after publication, others may linger on for [only] a few weeks." In other words, Scotland, like England, experienced difficulties associated with the oversupply of new books and the resultant market competition. However, in his typically more detached manner, the correspondent observed in his final report: "A writer in one of our contemporaries . . . remark[ed], 'that at least one-half of the six-shilling novels now published could very well be done without.' Yet the question might be asked, should this last-mentioned half not have been issued, would we have been without such novels as say 'The Scarlet Pimpernel,' and 'The Viper of Milan?'" (December 1906).

Perhaps the most common theme discussed throughout the run of the Scottish wholesale report was Scotland itself. The correspondent regularly reported new releases in two Scottish-published lines, the Famous Scots series and Nelson's Sixpenny Classics, and discussed their overwhelmingly positive public reception. As the reports progressed, Scottish books in general, and these two series specifically, were treated as almost a genre unto themselves, mentioned in virtually every entry. For instance, in September 1898 the wholesaler writes: "Scotch literature was represented by two volumes issued by Messrs. Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 'Sir William Wallace' in the 'Famous Scots Series,' and a revised and illustrated edition of 'Memorable Edinburgh Houses,' by W. Harrison. In this connection may also be noticed a work on the 'Place Names of Glengarry and Glenquoich,' which attracted some attention." That same month the correspondent went on to report that "the eccentricities of the 'canny Scot,' so humorously portrayed in 'Penelope's Experiences in Scotland,' brought many requests for that book." A similar reception was given to *Wee Macgregor*,

a novel about Scottish artisans, in March 1903, when the correspondent noted that the book had “attained a circulation of 60,000 copies, and the demand continues as brisk as ever.” Well-known Scottish writers such as Robert Burns, Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, S. R. Crockett, and Ian Maclaren also figured heavily in the reports. Their birthdays or the anniversaries of their deaths frequently caused a temporary increase in the sale of works by or about them.

The Scottish wholesale reports commented on some of the same changes in the seasonal cycle of the book trade as the English reports. Although Lent lacked the influence it had in England, the Scottish correspondent observed that the spring publishing season was becoming increasingly productive. Because of Scotland’s sizable summer tourist trade, largely composed of English visitors, book sales did not seem to suffer as much in the summer months. Light literature, outdoor guides, and magazines—particularly the first two—sold quite heavily at the seaside resorts and in the country. As the correspondent explained in September 1898, “With the usual exodus of families from the cities at this season, the book trade was transferred to the seaside resorts and tourist districts. Those readers on holiday had a large assortment of cheap literature provided by local booksellers.” When the tourist season drew to a close in early fall, the schoolbook season stepped in. Unlike England’s wholesalers, Scotland’s wholesalers did not seem to have such a tenuous relationship with the schools. In fact, in October 1899 the correspondent wrote: “Just as the tourist trade began to decline, there came from all parts of the country a brisk demand for school and college books, which owing to recent movements in Scottish education, is likely to continue for some weeks to come.” Of course, as the schoolbook trade dwindled, the fall publishing season began in preparation for Christmas.

Many of the same events that affected sales in England also influenced sales in Scotland. In January 1900, after extensive preparation for a brisk Christmas season, the correspondent reported disappointing sales due to “the absorbing interest in the war.” The following month he explained that “in consequence of the attention centred in South African affairs, many publishers delayed putting forth new books at Christmastide, and the best booksellers . . . were therefore seriously affected in business done” (February 1900). Even two years later “the prolongation of the South African War, with its consequent increased taxation, told heavily against the book trade and accounted for much of the quietness prevalent on all hands” (February 1902). Although he noted improved business by July of that year, due to the end of the war, the wholesaler again suggested in February 1903 that heavy war taxation had stunted the market. The war between Russia and Japan (1904), as in England, inspired a run on literature about the Far

East. The deaths of Gladstone (1898) and Queen Victoria (1901), as well as events of state such as the coronation of Edward VII (1902), temporarily increased sales of related biographical and illustrated works. A general election, on the other hand, “was considered a black cloud—not infrequently the forerunner of a black year—in publishing” (March 1906). The correspondent also mentions the Printer’s Strike of 1898, which caused delays that resulted in lower sales for several important works.

The bestseller lists show fiction’s dominance of the Scottish market, as was the case in England. Beginning in May 1900, the Scottish correspondent subdivides his list to create a special section for six-shilling novels, and often one for sixpenny reprints as well. Among the most popular bestsellers appearing in each year of the wholesale report, which are given in Appendix 3, there are approximately three times as many fictional works as nonfictional—though with greater variation than on the English lists. The most popular books overall were Nelson’s Sixpenny Classics series (9 lists during 1905–6), Douglas’s *House with the Green Shutters* (9 lists during 1902–5), Fowler’s *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (8 lists during 1898–1901), J. J. B.’s *Wee Macgregor* (8 lists in 1902–3), Fowler’s *A Double Thread* (7 lists during 1899), Doyle’s *The Great Boer War* (7 lists during 1900–1902), Hegan’s *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* (7 lists during 1902–6), Hodgson’s *Trout Fishing* (7 lists during 1904–5), and the Told to the Children series (6 lists during 1905). Of these nine works, only two are nonfiction, *Trout Fishing* and *The Great Boer War*, reflecting two major categories of nonfiction sold in Scotland at the time—outdoor recreation and books about the empire. The ten most popular writers were all novelists who also sold well in England: E. T. Fowler (34 lists), S. R. Crockett (33 lists), Anthony Hope (24 lists), H. S. Merriman (24 lists), Max Pemberton (24 lists), Marie Corelli (22 lists), W. Le Queux (18 lists), Guy Boothby (18 lists), Mrs. Humphry Ward (17 lists), and Percy White (17 lists).

Bestselling nonfiction included S. Rowntree’s *The Temperance Problem* (7 lists during 1899–1902), Dr. G. A. Smith’s *Modern Criticism and the Old Testament* (5 lists during 1901–2), T. P. Dunne’s *Mr. Dooley’s Opinions* (5 lists during 1902–3), H. Vardon’s *The Complete Golfer* (5 lists in 1905), and Rev. D. Smith’s *The Days of His Flesh* (5 lists during 1905–6). As one might expect, religious texts were widely purchased throughout the year, but especially around Easter and Christmas, and outdoor sports sold most readily during the summer months, as did guides for tourists. Biographies, particularly those in the Famous Scots series, were also readily bought by the Scottish public. The key difference, then, between fiction and nonfiction would seem to be staying power: though many works of nonfiction made the bestseller lists, few remained there for more than a

couple of months. The fact that nonfiction tended to be priced from 1s. to 7s. 6d., as opposed to in England, where bestselling books were frequently priced between 10s. and 20s., might also support the conclusion that Scotland's book-buying public tended to focus its purchases on the lower range of prices.

### III. Conclusions

"Sales of Books During the Month" shows the demands of customers as perceived by a number of booksellers from around the British Isles, and in the aggregate, they can be used to approximate national sales of books (that is, the "bestsellers"). In addition, as representations of individual bookshops, the lists reflect both local and regional differences within the book market. By considering each city's lists individually and then comparing across lists, not only can we establish some sense of clientele and readership, but we also see that while a handful of titles sold well everywhere, the majority of them sold well only in a few places. A novel such as Maclaren's *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* attained universal popularity, but Sheehan's novel *My New Curate* only prospered in Ireland. Yet both may lay claim to the term *bestseller*.

The "Monthly Report on the Wholesale Book Trade," by contrast, records the demands of bookshops—that is, what shops are stocking. Because these reports represent shop orders in response to sales, they illustrate longer trends better than do the sales reflected in the bookshop lists. For example, Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* appeared on few lists in "Sales of Books During the Month," but it appeared for twenty-six months in the "Monthly Report on the Wholesale Book Trade." The wholesale reports also reflect, to a limited extent, the national trends of England and Scotland, as well as the differences between the two. Furthermore, in the seven years in which the wholesale reports overlap with the bookshop lists, the two features may be juxtaposed in order to illuminate the complex and often tenuous relationship between customer, bookshop, wholesaler, and publisher.

Employing such a juxtaposition, our data reveal several important tendencies at the national level. First, titles that appeared prominently on only the bookshop lists often sold well only over a short period—such as Corelli's *The Mighty Atom*—and might be better labeled, to use Robert Escarpit's term, "fastsellers." Second, titles that appeared prominently on only the wholesale lists often sold moderately well over a long period—such as Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*—and might be better labeled

“steadysellers.” Third, because the bookshop lists were based on retail sales, and the wholesale reports were based on shops’ orders in anticipation of sales, titles that appeared prominently on both lists generally sold well over a long period, such as Maclaren’s *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. These examples illustrate three different types of bestsellers: those that have large long-term sales, large short-term sales, or moderate sales over a longer term. The data also illustrate the trade cycle as experienced by individual bookshops and wholesalers and show the growing dominance of the six-shilling novel, since the majority of works appearing on our lists are novels. Although books on religion, history, empire, and outdoor recreation were very much in demand, few nonfiction titles had sales to rival those of the top novels. Of course this is not to say that nonfiction did not sell well. In the “Sales of Books During the Month” reports, most bookshops listed more nonfiction titles than fiction, and some shops (such as in East Central London) catered to an almost exclusively nonfiction audience. However, nonfiction seems to have been more of a regional than a national demand. Whereas a number of novels sold well everywhere, most nonfiction titles sold well only in a specific place. In addition, most nonfiction titles did not have the longevity of fiction. Whereas a number of fiction titles remained on the lists for several months, most nonfiction titles stayed for only one or two months. Thus, the lists given in the Appendixes may erroneously suggest that novels dominated total book sales.

On the regional level, the data give us a means of comparing English, Scottish, and Irish sales and demands. Within England itself, the long-running shops represented London and three industrial centers of differing size and trade focus. The London, Manchester, and Birmingham shops served a largely middle-class audience, while the Burnley shop catered to a working-class clientele. Nonetheless, these areas overlapped in demand for some fiction and nonfiction, such as Du Maurier’s *Trilby* and Kidd’s *Social Evolution*. However, the regional differences between Scotland and England appear more marked. Scottish authors, books with regional interest, and Scottish publishers (Nelson and Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier) all appealed to a Scottish audience. Much of the Scottish fiction was also popular in England, such as Maclaren’s works, but some English works were less popular in Scotland, such as *Trilby*. In Ireland, for which we have only the shop lists, the regional difference appears most marked: we see Irish authors and fiction, Catholic religious books, Irish history and politics, and the influence of the Irish literary revival.

Our appendixes include the majority of the titles appearing on Altick’s lists, but also offer many others.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, our analysis does for Britain what Hackett’s work does for the United States. Comparing our data with hers, we find that few American titles appear on the British lists, whereas

a number of British titles—for example, *Trilby*—appear on the American lists. Still, cross-Atlantic bestsellers are few, suggesting once again the importance of region in determining sales.

What these data ultimately suggest, however, is that the notion of a “bestseller” remains highly elastic. As our analysis illustrates, sales in late Victorian Britain depended as much on temporal as spatial considerations—how many copies a title sold, how long sales endured, and where a title sold well. The term *bestseller* could be applied equally to the novels of Silas Hocking, which sold thousands of copies in Burnley, as to the fiction of Ian Maclaren, which sold thousands of copies nearly everywhere in Britain. And, with the exception of a handful, almost all of the titles appearing on our lists are out of print—some have been for decades. This alone shows that the shelf life of most bestsellers is not long.

#### Appendix 1 The Bestsellers of 1891–1901, Based on “Sales of Books During the Month”

The following books appeared on the most lists during each year starting and ending on 15 January. The years 1891 and 1901, however, are incomplete: the year 1891 covers 15 August 1891 to 15 January 1892, and the year 1901 covers 15 January to 15 March 1901. The month count begins inclusive with the first appearance and ends with the last appearance.

##### 1891

1. Elizabeth Gaskell. *Cranford*. Illustrated by Thomson. Macmillan (9 lists in 2 months).
2. Samuel Rolles Driver. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Clark (8 lists in 4 months).
3. Charles Gore. *Lux Mundi (Bampton Lectures)*. Murray (7 lists in 2 months).
3. Earl of Rosebery. *Life of Pitt*. Macmillan (7 lists in 2 months).
4. James Russell Lowell. *Poetical Works*. Macmillan (6 lists in 5 months).
5. Henry Drummond. *Programme of Christianity*. Hodder & Stoughton (5 lists in 2 months).
5. Rudyard Kipling. *Life's Handicap*. Macmillan (5 lists in 5 months).

##### 1892

1. J. M. Barrie. *The Little Minister*. Cassell (19 lists in 11 months; 7 lists in 1893).



2. Alfred, Lord Tennyson. [Various titles]. Macmillan (14 lists in 4 months).
3. Robert Louis Stevenson. *The Wrecker*. Cassell (13 lists in 3 months).
4. Thomas Hardy. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Osgood (12 lists in 4 months).
5. Rudyard Kipling. *Barrack-Room Ballads*. Methuen (10 lists in 6 months).

## 1893

1. Robert Louis Stevenson. *Catriona*. Cassell (21 lists in 5 months).
2. Andrew Fairbairn. *Christ in Modern Theology*. Hodder & Stoughton (15 lists in 8 months).
3. E. F. Benson. *Dodo, a Detail of To-day*. Methuen (14 lists in 2 months; 4 lists in 1894).
4. Rudyard Kipling. *Many Inventions*. Macmillan (14 lists in 4 months).
5. Andrew Lang, ed. *The True Story Book*. Longmans (13 lists in 4 months).
5. Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Refugees*. Longmans (13 lists in 6 months).
5. John Ruskin. *Selections*. George Allen (13 lists in 8 months).

## 1894

1. Hall Caine. *The Manxman*. Heinemann (29 lists in 6 months; 4 lists in 1895).
2. Henry Drummond. *The Ascent of Man*. Hodder & Stoughton (27 lists in 8 months).
3. Sarah Grand. *The Heavenly Twins*. Heinemann (24 lists in 8 months).
4. Benjamin Kidd. *Social Evolution*. Macmillan (23 lists in 11 months).
5. Ian Maclaren. *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. Hodder & Stoughton (20 lists in 4 months).
6. S. R. Crockett. *The Raiders*. Unwin (18 lists in 8 months).

## 1895

1. George Du Maurier. *Trilby*. Osgood (42 lists in 8 months; 9 lists in 1896).
2. Ian Maclaren. *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. Hodder & Stoughton (39 lists in 12 months).
3. A. J. Balfour. *The Foundations of Belief*. Longmans (30 lists in 7 months).
4. Ian Maclaren. *The Days of Auld Lang Syne*. Hodder & Stoughton (28 lists in 3 months; 4 lists in 1896).
5. S. R. Crockett. *Bog-Myrtle and Peat*. Bliss, Sands & Foster (20 lists in 6 months).
6. Benjamin Kidd. *Social Evolution*. Macmillan (19 lists in 7 months; includes both 10s. edition and 5s. edition).

## 1896

1. Marie Corelli. *The Mighty Atom*. Hutchinson (33 lists in 7 months).
2. J. M. Barrie. *Margaret Ogilvy*. Hodder & Stoughton (23 lists in 3 months).

3. John Watson. *The Mind of the Master*. Hodder & Stoughton (20 lists in 5 months).
4. J. M. Barrie. *Sentimental Tommy*. Cassell (19 lists in 3 months).
5. Marie Corelli. *Cameos*. Hutchinson (18 lists in 3 months).
6. H. S. Merriman. *The Sowers*. Smith, Elder (17 lists in 8 months; 1 list in 1897).

## 1897

1. Hall Caine. *The Christian*. Heinemann (28 lists in 6 months; 2 lists in 1898).
2. Hallam Tennyson. *Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*. 2 vols. Macmillan (26 lists in 4 months).
3. Lord Roberts. *Forty-One Years in India*. 2 vols. Bentley (17 lists in 11 months).
4. Ranjitsinhji. *The Jubilee Book of Cricket*. Blackwood (16 lists in 2 months).
5. Fridtjof Nansen. *Farthest North*. 2 vols. Constable (15 lists in 10 months).
6. H. S. Merriman. *In Kedar's Tents*. Smith, Elder (14 lists in 4 months; 1 list in 1898).

## 1898

1. Mrs. Humphry Ward. *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. Smith, Elder (32 lists in 5 months).
2. George Warrington Steevens. *With Kitchener to Khartum*. Blackwood (29 lists in 4 months).
3. Rudyard Kipling. *The Day's Work*. Macmillan (26 lists in 4 months).
4. Anthony Hope. *Rupert of Hentzau*. Arrowsmith (25 lists in 5 months).
5. Émile Zola. *Paris*. Chatto & Windus (23 lists in 3 months).
6. E. T. Fowler. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*. Hodder & Stoughton (22 lists in 9 months).

## 1899

1. E. T. Fowler. *A Double Thread*. Hutchinson (41 lists in 10 months).
2. James Fitzpatrick. *The Transvaal from Within*. Heinemann (27 lists in 4 months).
3. Charles Monroe Sheldon. *In His Steps; or, What Would Jesus Do?* (16 lists in 3 months; includes various editions).
4. James Bryce. *Impressions of South Africa*. New edition. Macmillan (15 lists in 2 months).
4. Rudyard Kipling. *Stalky & Co*. Macmillan (15 lists in 3 months).
5. E. T. Fowler. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*. Hodder & Stoughton (13 lists in 7 months).

## 1900

1. Marie Corelli. *The Master Christian*. Methuen (36 lists in 5 months).
2. Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Great Boer War*. Smith, Elder (28 lists in 3 months).
3. Marie Corelli. *Boy*. Hutchinson (22 lists in 4 months).
4. James Fitzpatrick. *The Transvaal from Within*. Heinemann (20 lists in 9 months).
4. E. T. Fowler. *The Farringdons*. Hutchinson (20 lists in 4 months).
4. George Warrington Steevens. *Capetown to Ladysmith*. Blackwood (20 lists in 3 months).

## 1901

1. *An Englishwoman's Love Letters*. Murray (12 lists in 2 months).
2. Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Great Boer War*. Smith, Elder (7 lists in 2 months).

## Appendix 2

The Bestsellers of 1894–1906, Based on the  
“Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade” (England)

The following books appeared on the most wholesale lists during the year starting and ending on approximately 20 January. The last year is incomplete, covering 20 January to 20 November 1906. Except where noted, no distinction is made between editions.

## 1894

1. Anthony Hope. *The Prisoner of Zenda* (10 lists; 6 lists in 1895; 5 lists in 1896; 5 lists in 1898).
2. Sarah Grand. *The Heavenly Twins* (9 lists; 1 list in 1893).
3. Beatrice Harraden. *Ships That Pass in the Night* (8 lists; 1 list in 1893).
4. Benjamin Kidd. *Social Evolution* (10s. edition) (8 lists).
5. S. R. Crockett. *The Raiders* (6 lists; 3 lists in 1895).

## 1895

1. Ian Maclaren. *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (12 lists; 4 lists in 1894).
2. Hall Caine. *The Manxman* (8 lists; 6 lists in 1894).
3. George Du Maurier. *Trilby* (8 lists; 1 list in 1896).
4. Grant Allen. *The Woman Who Did* (8 lists).

## 1896

1. H. S. Merriman. *The Sowers* (10 lists; 1 list in 1897).
2. Marie Corelli. *The Sorrows of Satan* (6 lists; 3 lists in 1895; 2 lists in 1897).
3. Émile Zola. *Rome* (6 lists; 1 list in 1898).
4. Harold Frederic. *Illumination* (6 lists).

## 1897

1. W. W. Jacobs. *Many Cargos* (8 lists; 1 list in 1896; 1 list in 1898).
2. Flora Anna Steel. *On the Face of the Waters* (7 lists; 3 lists in 1896).
3. Henryk Sienkiewicz. *Quo Vadis* (4s. 6d. edition) (7 lists; 1 list in 1896; 1 list in 1898).
4. Lord Roberts. *Forty-One Years in India* (36s. edition) (7 lists).
5. W. Barrett. *The Sign of the Cross* (6 lists; 2 lists in 1896; 1 list in 1898).

## 1898

1. Rosa N. Carey. [Various novels] (10 lists).
2. E. T. Fowler. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (8 lists; 8 lists in 1899; 3 lists in 1900).
3. Eugene Sandow. *Strength and How to Obtain It* (7 lists; 4 lists in 1897).
4. R. C. Slatin. *Fire and Sword in the Sudan* (6 lists; 1 list in 1897).
5. M. E. Coleridge. *The King with Two Faces* (5 lists; 1 list in 1897).

## 1899

1. E. T. Fowler. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (8 lists; 8 lists in 1898; 3 lists in 1900).
2. E. T. Fowler. *A Double Thread* (8 lists).
2. *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (8 lists).
3. Richard Whiteing. *No. 5 John Street* (7 lists).
4. Beatrice Harraden. *The Fowler* (6 lists).
5. Winston Churchill. *Richard Carvell* (6 lists).

## 1900

1. Marie Corelli. *The Master Christian* (5 lists; 4 lists in 1901).
2. A British Officer. *An Absent-Minded War* (5 lists).
2. Marie Corelli. *Boy* (5 lists).
2. E. T. Fowler. *The Farringdons* (5 lists).
2. Kirk. *Papers on Health* (5 lists).

## 1901

1. Eleanor Glyn. *The Visits of Elizabeth* (6 lists).
2. Lucas Malet. *History of Sir Richard Calmady* (5 lists; 3 lists in 1902).
3. *An Englishwoman's Love Letters* (5 lists; 1 list in 1900).
4. K. D. Wiggin. *Penelope's Irish Experiences* (5 lists).

## 1902

1. Hall Caine. *The Eternal City* (5 lists; 5 lists in 1901; 1 list in 1903).
2. T. P. Dunne. *Mr. Dooley's Opinions* (5 lists).
2. Marie Corelli. *Temporal Power* (5 lists).
2. H. S. Merriman. *The Vultures* (5 lists).
3. Rudyard Kipling. *Kim* (4 lists; 1 list in 1901).

## 1903

1. A. E. W. Mason. *Four Feathers* (10 lists; 3 lists in 1902; 1 list in 1904).
2. A. Hegan Rice. *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* (9 lists).
2. A. Hegan Rice. *Lovey Mary* (9 lists).
3. Mrs. Humphry Ward. *Lady Rose's Daughter* (7 lists).
3. Frank Danby. *Pigs in Clover* (7 lists).

## 1904

1. Marie Corelli. *God's Good Man* (5 lists).
1. K. C. Thurston. *John Chilcote, M.P.* (5 lists).
1. Anthony Hope. *Double Harness* (5 lists).
2. Robert Hichens. *The Garden of Allah* (4 lists; 2 lists in 1905).
3. S. D. Gordon. *Quiet Talks on Power* (4 lists; 1 list in 1905).

## 1905

1. Stanley Weyman. *Starvecrow Farm* (5 lists).
1. E. F. Benson. *The Image in the Sands* (5 lists).
2. H. A. Vachell. *The Hill* (4 lists; 1 list in 1906).
3. A. Marshall. *The House of Merrilees* (4 lists).
3. Mrs. Humphry Ward. *The Marriage of William Ashe* (4 lists).
3. Guy Thorne. *A Lost Cause* (4 lists).
3. Anthony Hope. *A Servant of the Public* (4 lists).
3. H. Rider Haggard. *Ayesha* (4 lists).
3. Lord E. Fitzmaurice. *Earl Granvill's Memoirs* (4 lists).

## 1906

1. Everyman's Library (4 lists).
1. Upton Sinclair. *The Jungle* (4 lists).
1. A. C. Benson. *From a College Window* (4 lists).

1. A. Fogazzaro. *The Saint* (4 lists).
1. Marie Corelli. *The Treasure of Heaven* (4 lists).

### Appendix 3

#### The Bestsellers of 1898–1906, Based on the “Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade” (Scotland)

The following books appeared on the most wholesale lists during each year starting and ending on approximately 20 January. The last year is incomplete, covering 20 January to 20 November 1906. Except where noted, no distinction is made between editions by publisher or price.

#### 1898

1. E. T. Fowler. *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (6s. edition) (5 lists; 2 lists in 1899).
2. K. D. Wiggin. *Penelope's Experience in Scotland* (4 lists; 1 list in 1901).
3. Rudyard Kipling. *The Day's Work* (4 lists; 1 list in 1899).
3. R. A. Carey. *Mollie's Prince* (4 lists; 1 list in 1899).
4. Mrs. Humphry Ward. *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (4 lists).
4. Guy Boothby. *The Lust of Hate* (4 lists).

#### 1899

1. E. T. Fowler. *A Double Thread* (7 lists).
2. Richard Whiteing. *No. 5 John Street* (5 lists).
3. Max Pemberton. *The Garden of Swords* (4 lists).
3. Dr. Matheson. *Studies in the Portrait of Christ* (4 lists).
4. Rowntree and Sherwell. *The Temperance Problem* (6s. edition) (3 lists; 2 lists in 1900).

#### 1900

1. Marie Corelli. *The Master Christian* (5 lists).
2. James Fitzpatrick. *The Transvaal from Within* (10s. net edition) (4 lists; 1 list in 1899).
3. E. T. Fowler. *The Farringdons* (4 lists).
3. Percy White. *The West End* (4 lists).
3. H. S. Merriman. *The Isle of Unrest* (4 lists).

#### 1901

1. Lucas Malet. *Sir Richard Calmady* (5 lists).
2. Max O'Rell. *Her Royal Highness Woman* (4 lists).

2. Rudyard Kipling. *Kim* (4 lists).
3. Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Great Boer War* (7s. 6d. edition) (3 lists; 3 lists in 1900).
3. G. A. Smith. *Modern Criticism and the Old Testament* (3 lists; 2 lists in 1902).

## 1902

1. George Douglas. *House with Green Shutters* (6s. edition) (5 lists; 2 lists in 1901).
2. Mary Johnston. *Audrey* (4 lists).
2. W. S. Crockett. *The Scott Country* (4 lists).
2. Mrs. Henry Wood. *East Lynne* (4 lists).

## 1903

1. J. J. B. *Wee Macgreegor* (7 lists and 1 list in 1902).
2. *Letters from a Self-Made Merchant* (5 lists).
2. H. S. Merriman. *Barlasch of the Guard* (5 lists).
3. A. C. Hegan. *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* (5s. edition) (4 lists; 2 lists in 1902).

## 1904

1. W. Earl Hodgson. *Trout Fishing* (6 lists; 1 list in 1905).
2. Marie Corelli. *God's Good Man* (5 lists).
3. Robert Hichens. *Garden of Allah* (4 lists; 1 list 1905).
3. Mrs. Thurston. *John Chilcote, M.P.* (4 lists; 1 list in 1905).

## 1905

1. Told to the Children series (6 lists)
2. Nelson's Sixpenny Classics (5 lists; 4 lists in 1906).
3. C. Wagner. *The Simple Life* (5 lists).
3. H. Vardon. *The Complete Golfer* (5 lists).

## 1906

1. Collins' Pocket Novels (5 lists).
2. Nelson's Sixpenny Classics (4 lists; 5 lists in 1905).
3. Upton Sinclair. *The Jungle* (4 lists).
3. J. Storer Clouston. *Count Bunker* (4 lists).
3. C. N. Williamson and A. M. Williamson. *Lady Betty Across the Water* (4 lists).
3. Antonio Fogazzaro. *The Saint* (4 lists).
3. Marie Corelli. *The Treasure of Heaven* (4 lists).
3. A. R. H. Moncrieff. *Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (4 lists).

## Notes

1. Wallace Kirsop, "Booksellers and Their Customers: Some Reflections on Recent Research," *Book History* 1 (1998): 284.

2. See Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, 2d ed. (1957; Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1998); "Nineteenth-Century English Best-Sellers: A Further List," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 197-206; and "Nineteenth-Century English Best-Sellers: A Third List," *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 235-41. Earlier attempts include Q. D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932) and Desmond Flower's *A Century of Best Sellers, 1830-1930* (London: National Book Council, 1934).

3. Altick, *English Common Reader*, 381.

4. Alice Payne Hackett and James Henry Burke, *80 Years of Bestsellers, 1895-1975* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977). We should note that neither Hackett or Burke offers any indication of the method of compiling their sources.

5. W. Robertson Nicoll, "Ten Years of 'The Bookman,'" *Bookman* (September 1901): 174.

6. Margaret D. Stetz, *Dickens Studies Annual* 28 (1999): 331-32. For a historical description of the term *bestseller* as it relates to the late Victorian period, see Peter Keating's *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), 439-45.

7. Laura J. Miller has pointed out the problems with defining *bestseller* ("The Best-Seller List as Marketing Tool and Historical Fiction," *Book History* 3 [2000]: 286-304) and it is beyond the scope of the present essay to reinvent terminology. We will adopt Resa L. Dudovitz's definition of *bestseller* as "a book which appears on a list most commonly known as the bestseller list" (*The Myth of Superwoman: Women's Bestsellers in France and the United States* [New York: Routledge, 1990], 25). In addition, we will later utilize Robert Escarpit's distinction between *fastsellers* (books that have high sales for a comparatively short time), *steadysellers* (books that have modest sales for a comparatively long time), and *bestsellers* (books that combine the features of *fastsellers* and *steadysellers*) (*The Book Revolution* [London: George C. Harrap, 1966], 116).

8. Other features of interest, ones that are special rather than standard to the journal, are "The Most Popular Books of 1900," which lists bestselling works and authors in terms of subject or genre (January 1901); "The Most Popular Books of the Season," which lists twenty-four city bookshops' bestselling works and authors, also in terms of subject or genre (December 1902); and "The Bestselling Books: Representative Trade Reports," which breaks down England, Scotland, and Ireland by city or region and lists their bestselling works in four genre categories (December 1905).

9. All references to *The Bookman* will be in text by month and year.

10. For a larger discussion of the function of *bestseller* lists as they relate to the publishing industry, see Miller, "The Best-Seller List." Although her article focuses on twentieth-century American publishing, many of her observations could also apply here, such as the manipulation of *bestseller* lists and their use in advertising.

11. Although the shops are never identified further, "*The Bookman*" *Directory of Booksellers, Publishers, and Authors* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893) offers some possibilities. For example, the directory includes six pages of London bookshops and two bookshops in Burnley.

12. East Central London reports, "The month has been a blank so far as business is concerned" (August 1897).

13. A complete list of cities appearing and the number of lists submitted follows: Aberdeen (108), Manchester (106), Burnley (103), Glasgow (103), East Central London (101),



West Central London (99), Birmingham (95), Bradford (74), Sunderland (74), Dublin I (69), Dublin II (69), Leeds (40), Newcastle upon Tyne (39), Brighton (37), Edinburgh (37), Cambridge (35), Liverpool (30), Dublin (28), York (23), Taunton (16), Bangor (14), Hull (11), Middlesbrough (11), Dundee (10), Nottingham (10), West End Edinburgh (10), Dumfries (8), West End London (7), Central London (6), Oxford (5), Montrose (4), Bristol (3), Alnwick (2), Dublin (R. C.) (2), Scarborough (2), Swansea (2), Belfast (1), Exeter (1), Isle of Man (1), Lancashire (1), Leicester (1), Lincoln (1), and Truro (1).

14. "Ian Maclaren," the pseudonym of John Watson, also wrote religious nonfiction under his real name. Shops sometimes used his two names interchangeably.

15. According to Gareth Stedman Jones's *Outcast London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 222 and 136, Central London had a population of 1,579,261 in 1891 and a population of 1,529,136 in 1901.

16. No other bookshop mentioned Lent or Lenten sales. However, the English wholesaler later commented frequently on the Lenten season and its decline.

17. The population of Manchester in 1891 was 505,000 plus 70,000 in surrounding areas; in 1901 it was 544,000 plus 101,000. The population of Birmingham in 1891 was 478,000 plus 156,000 in surrounding areas; in 1901 it was 523,000 plus 238,000. See B. R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 26–29. The population of Burnley in 1891 was 95,000; in 1901 it was 100,000. See Joseph Whitaker, "County and Municipal Directory of England and Wales," in *Whitaker's Almanack* (London, 1891, 1901).

18. One of the rare reports of actual sales figures and, for this shop, a very large volume.

19. The population of Glasgow in 1891 was 658,000 plus 108,000 in surrounding areas; in 1901 it was 762,000 plus 142,000. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, 26–29.

20. The population of Aberdeen in 1891 was 125,000 and in 1901 was 154,000. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, 26–29.

21. The population of Dublin in 1891 was 269,000 and in 1901 was 291,000. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, 26–29.

22. By considering all 166 lists together for Dublin, the reported number of lists given later may be slightly inflated compared to the other cities.

23. This title is by far the most expensive book to appear on any of the lists.

24. In the 1890s the dominant English book wholesaler was the firm Simpkin, Marshall. The reporter of this feature may well have been a member of this firm.

25. Net pricing (a retail price fixed by the publisher and honored by the bookseller), reintroduced by Frederick Macmillan, gained momentum during the 1890s, culminating in a 1899 agreement between publishers and retailers to make the practice universal. Net pricing took effect on 1 January 1900. For a full treatment of this trade issue, see Macmillan's *The Net Book Agreement 1899 and the Book War 1906–1908* (Glasgow: Robert Maclehose, 1924).

26. Reports appear in the month following those listed.

27. The January 1900 discussion, titled "The War and the Book Trade," is entirely dedicated to the South African War and its effect on the book trade.

28. A future project (and one beyond the scope of the present essay) would be to determine, from publishers records and/or other sources, the sales of the titles given here in order to check the reliability of the reports in *The Bookman*.