

ance) in London some months before; and he might, not unjustly, have resented my action in the matter. He had, as a matter of fact, heard of the performance, and he took my rather lame explanations in perfectly good part. Of bearishness there was no trace in his manner; on the contrary, it was marked by a ceremonious, old-world courtesy. He invited me to call upon him, and my audience was over. As we parted, I asked him when we might expect his new play. He believed it was that very day to be published in Copenhagen.

The new play was *Gengangere—Ghosts*. At that moment he was as far as I was from foreseeing the storm of obloquy it was to bring down upon his head, and the controversy that was to rage around it all the world over.

I determined not to call upon him until I had read the new play. Day after day, I worried the shopmen at Loescher's book-store in the Corso for the copy I had ordered; but it was close upon Christmas before it arrived. However, I had devoured, if not digested, it before the Christmas-Eve festival at the Club, when my second meeting with the poet took place. Here I will quote from a letter written the following day, merely translating into English the phrases I had reported in Norwegian:

The first thing that met my eyes when I entered the room was the great Henrik, resplendent with all his orders, and looking really leonine. I must say I share a little of Björnson's objection to the orders; but, after all, it is customary to wear them, and too great respect for the powers that be is not, as a rule, his weak point. I sat quite close to him at dinner, but, unfortunately, back to back. At dessert, up got a prosy old Dane and proposed Ibsen's "skool," which was drunk with enormous enthusiasm. (N.B.—I think my copy of *Gengangere* is the only one which has penetrated to Rome, except his own.) Like all the other people round, I had the honour of clinking glasses with him, and then he made a very short reply. He said that it was a great pleasure to him, &c.; that Christmas was usually regarded as a season of peace, but that for him it was often very much the reverse, since his books generally appeared a little before Christmas. But he did not believe that peace was the most desirable condition; on the contrary, he held warfare to be more wholesome for human nature. At the same time, it was always very pleasant to him to find that people, however much their points of view might differ from his, did