

Our Betters

men have the defects of their qualities. Little men have the qualities of their defects, and they often triumph by their baseness. Their sword is flattery, blackmail is their armour.

From the purely worldly point of view Stockmann had the worst of it—for the time being. But let us hope that in an unwritten last act he got his reward. Of course, it may be said that this hot-headed hero might have gone about his reforming in a more discreet manner. He might have set out to inaugurate a reform movement from the various sections of society that would have profited by his indiscretion. First, he would have set up a rival company, and let in "at par" all those who would support his movement; the contract for putting in the new sanitary machinery would have been given to those who would vote solidly for his cause. He would have proclaimed that the pollution was directly traceable to a Conservative or Liberal source, choosing for his attack whichever party happened to be the more unpopular at the moment. He would have called a meeting of workmen and told them that the bloated councillors who ruled the town were endeavouring to keep the bread out of their mouths, that they were despoiling their potential widows and orphans. All these divergent interests he would have mashed together into a party, and he would have