

temperate of potations. This I have observed day after day and week after week; for the amiable gossip that was current in Norway could not but make me keep my eyes open. In Germany, in Denmark, in Norway I have been with him repeatedly, have seen him evidently pursuing his daily habit in the matter of spirituous liquors, and have always noted the moderation of that habit. On one public occasion, when it was afterwards spread abroad that he had conspicuously exceeded, I both walked and talked with him, and can positively assert that there was no truth whatever in the scandal. He was certainly no teetotaler, and it is even possible that he relied on the stimulus of stimulants more than strict hygienists may consider wise; but that he was in any serious sense of the word intemperate I utterly disbelieve.

It may be said, once for all, in this connection, that, like most small communities, Norway is a hot-bed of tittle-tattle. Everybody knows everybody, and everybody knows a great deal more about everybody else than they know themselves. One has only to read Ibsen's plays to realise the prevalence and power of personal gossip. Ibsen was at one time violently unpopular in his own country; and though in his old age his fame was looked upon as a national possession, the habit of malicious and mendacious chatter about his concerns still held its ground. My brother was one day going to call upon him in Christiania, and remarked to a friend resident in the town, that if Ibsen was not at home, he hoped he might see Fru (Mrs.) Ibsen. "Oh no," said his friend, "you won't see her; she hasn't been able to live with him for years." My brother paid his call, and the first person he saw on crossing the threshold was Fru Ibsen. The incident was typical.

III

After leaving Rome, I did not again meet Ibsen for five years. In the summer of 1887 I spent some weeks in the south of Norway, and determined to return to England by an untried route—crossing to Frederikshavn in Jutland, and then proceeding by rail to Hamburg and Flushing. On the day