

## IBSEN AS I KNEW HIM<sup>1</sup>

### I

IT was in December 1881 that I first met Henrik Ibsen. He was then fifty-three years of age. His romantic plays and his dramas in verse, *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*, already lay far behind him. During the seventies he had written the vast "world-historic drama," *Emperor and Galilean*, and the second and third of his prose plays of modern life, *Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House*. His name was as yet little known outside the three Scandinavian kingdoms, though *A Doll's House* was beginning to make its way on the German stage. He stood, in fact, on the threshold of his world-wide renown, though neither he nor any one else clearly foresaw it.

He was living in Rome, where I, too, had settled down for the winter. The desire to know the creator of *Peer Gynt* was not the least among the motives that had taken me thither. Though I might have procured introductions from Norway, I had somehow not thought of doing so. I trusted to meeting him at the Scandinavian Club, but found that, as a British subject, I was not eligible. The Committee, however, overcame the difficulty by making me an honorary member; and it was, in fact, in the rooms of the Club, in a sombre palazzo on the Via de' Pontefici, hard by the Mausoleum of Augustus, that I first encountered the poet.

The occasion was one of the Saturday evening social

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