

He had now become a European celebrity, and thousands of tourists have seen him, and hundreds described or depicted him, taking his daily walk down Karl Johans Gade, or sitting at his own particular window in the *café* of the Grand Hotel. He was also the favourite victim of the inventive news monger. Either in Christiania or in Copenhagen—probably in the latter—there was a regular manufactory of Ibsen legends. Whenever other “news” was slack, a telegram about Ibsen’s health, or about his friendships and enmities, or about his next play, or about his “autobiography” would be fabricated and disseminated: to be tardily followed, and never overtaken, by an official contradiction. I would especially warn all Ibsen-biographers against a most circumstantial story of his illness, his “Apologia,” and his relations with Björnson, purporting to be written by Dr. George Brandes, which was circulated in the autumn of 1901, and was pure invention from first to last.

In the spring of 1898 he celebrated his seventieth birthday, and a number of his English admirers, headed by Mr. Edmund Gosse, presented him with a large silver goblet, technically known as a ciborium. This gift, as he told me both by letter and by word of mouth, gave him peculiar pleasure. It occupied a place of honour in his drawing-room when I visited him in August of the same year. In his study, a bright corner-room looking out upon the palace park, I was somewhat surprised to notice, holding a very prominent position, a huge gilt-edged and brass-clasped family Bible. “You keep this close at hand,” I said, pointing to it. “Oh, yes,” he replied, “I often read in it—for the sake of the language.” Among some fine old pictures in his study, was a large and striking modern portrait. “Who is that?” I asked. “That is ———,” he replied, naming a Scandinavian author of some celebrity. “Oh, do you know him?” I asked, a good deal interested. “No, I don’t know him at all,” was the reply, “but I rejoice in that portrait. I think he looks so delightfully mad.”

Of my conversations with Ibsen in these years I have only fragmentary notes. In 1898, my brother, to whom the letters

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