

the leading flag now; now Sweden is undoubtedly the chief and must marshal the force of the North if it is to be marshalled.\*

Björnson thought at this time that the mere sight of the Swedish flag at the head of the Scandinavian armies would have made the German stop; he would "understand"—*men ser han det, forstaar her*. It might have been so, had the union shown energy and vitality, but Bismarck had gauged the situation better than Björnson who was really reasoning from a situation and conditions which no longer existed. Prussia and Sweden no longer stood to each other, in respect of military power, as they had done in the eighteenth century.

*Ibsen on the Failure.*

That other great Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, also wrote at this crisis the most stirring of his lyrics, *A Brother in Need*, in equally vain appeal, though the heart of a Scandinavian mouse might have been stirred by its lines:

Hvert stormsuk som i Norge gaar  
langs li fra Danmarks hav.

Ibsen, who was a deeper man than Björnson, was not so sure of the result as you see from his letters, but he thought it was a case for the North to do or die.

But neither Norway nor Sweden mustered to the aid of Denmark, though a number of volunteers went from both. To the parliament of farmers and pacifist radicals in Norway national existence was mainly an equation between the debit and credit sides of the budget, with due opportunities for public orations on '17th May' day. Ibsen who saw—clearly enough now—that the Scandinavian peoples for the third time had lost the road which led to unity and security, withdrew from his native country, a melancholy and somewhat bitter exile. He writes to Björnson from Rome: "Lies and illusion—that was all it was then" (he means the meetings, conferences, brother-banquets and orations of the Scandinavian movement). "We must strike the pen through our old Viking histories, for the Norwegians of to-day have no more to do with that ancient past than the Greek pirates of to-day with the

---

\**Til Sverige*. Löft du dit gamle gule-blaa. Decem. 1863.