

and Galilean than of the western world and the nineteenth century. He went on to tell me of the reception his plays had met with in Germany and of the repeated suppression of *Gengangere* by the police; but as all this is now matter of history, I omit the details. Meanwhile, he said, he was revolving plans, and hoped to have "noget galskab færdigt til næste aar"—"some tomfoolery ready for next year." The "tomfoolery" in question proved to be *The Lady from the Sea*. It was evident from all his talk that he was himself at this time fascinated by that wonder and glory of the sea which was to be the motive of his next creation. I remember straining, and overstraining, the resources of my Norwegian in an attempt to convey to him some conception of the greatness of Mr. Swinburne as a poet of the sea, and, in so far, a kindred spirit.

I tried [the letter continues] to get at the genesis of a piece in his head, but the fear of seeming to cross-examine him prevented me from obtaining any very explicit answer. It seems that the *idea* of a piece generally presents itself before the characters and incidents, though, when I put this to him flatly, he denied it. It seems to follow, however, from his saying that there is a certain stage in the incubation of a play when it might as easily turn into an essay as into a drama. He has to incarnate the ideas as it were, in character and incident, before the actual work of creation can be said to have fairly begun. Different plans and ideas, he admits, often flow together, and the play he ultimately produces is sometimes very unlike the intention with which he set out. He writes and re-writes, scribbles and destroys, an enormous amount, before he makes the exquisite fair copy he sends to Copenhagen.

As for symbolism, he says that life is full of it, and that, consequently, his plays are full of it, though critics insist on discovering all sorts of esoteric meanings in his work of which he is entirely innocent. He was particularly amused by a sapient person in *Aftenposten* who had discovered that Manders in *Ghosts* was a symbol for mankind in general or the average man, and, therefore, called *Manders*. He also spoke of some critic who had found the keynote of *Emperor and Galilean* in Makrina, a character of no importance whatever, introduced simply because it happened that Basilios had, as a matter of fact, a sister of that name.

In politics [the letter continues] he came out very strong against the "compact majority."

Here, unfortunately, I ceased to report, and branched off into discussions foreign to the present purpose. One remark, however, I may be pardoned for quoting. Speaking of Ibsen