

touched by their being a "greeting from Norway." After another hour we had dinner, coffee, and cigars. Then I thought the "Old Man" would want to take his siesta, so I proposed to go for a walk in the forest and return in an hour or two. So said, so done. . . . But on my way back I lost myself in the forest, and did not reach Sæby till six o'clock. Then we had tea, or supper, and at eight I set off to walk back to Frederikshavn.

Now for a few Ibseniana. I must say, in the first place, that the "Old Man" was really charming throughout—perfectly frank and friendly, without the least assumption, or affectation, or stiffness of any sort. . . . Unfortunately, I have a morbid shrinking from talking to people about their own works, so that our conversation was, on the whole, far too much devoted to mere small-talk and (strange to say) politics, Norwegian, Danish, and Irish. However, I shall jot down a few of the things that turned up in the course of the talk.

He said that Fru Ibsen and he had first come to Frederikshavn, which he himself liked very much—he could knock about all day among the shipping, talking to the sailors, and so forth. Besides, he found the neighbourhood of the sea favourable to contemplation and constructive thought. Here, at Sæby, the sea was not so easily accessible. But Fru Ibsen didn't like Frederikshavn because of the absence of pleasant walks about it; so Sæby was a sort of compromise between him and her. Fru Ibsen afterwards added that the Norwegian steamers at Frederikshavn were a source of perpetual temptation to her.

For the present Ibsen is not writing anything, and hasn't been all last winter, because his time has been greatly taken up with business connected with the production of his plays in Germany. He told me, what I had already read in the Norwegian papers, that there had been a regular Ibsen controversy in Berlin—that a certain set of critics had taken to exalting him to the skies and flinging him at the head of their own poets. They won't hear even of Spielhagen and Paul Heyse, being (Ibsen says) very unjust to the latter—which is particularly unpleasant for him (Ibsen), as he now lives near Heyse in Munich, and they are very good friends. Ibsen's account of Heyse is that he values himself on his plays, which are weak, while he despises his stories, many of which Ibsen holds to be masterpieces. It is this increase of business in connection with his plays that now forces him to live north of the Alps—besides the fact that the S.P.Q.R. have pulled down his house in the Via Capo le Case.¹ There has been a whole literature of pamphlets in the Ibsen controversy, of which he gave me one and promised to send me others.

Little did I foresee at that time how, two years later, the "Ibsen controversy" was destined to spread to England and America, and to rage for the next ten years with a virulence worthy rather of the Byzantium he had depicted in *Emperor*

¹ There must have been some mistake about this. When I was last in Rome (1904) the house was very slightly altered. It had become a hotel—the Hotel Suez, if I remember rightly.