

not let that interfere with their kindness of feeling towards him. That was the substance of his speech, and it did not consist of many more words.

After dinner, as the tables were being cleared away, I stood in the lobby talking to Fröken (Miss) R——, who had been Ibsen's table-companion. She declares that she has the distinction of being the only lady he ever danced with—in Bergen, many years ago. I suggested that perhaps the honour was greater than the pleasure, and she admitted that there was a good deal in that. Just then Ibsen came up and shook hands with me. The conversation turned on smoking, as he was smoking a cigar, and offered Fröken R—— one. He said he couldn't work without smoking—not cigars, but a short pipe, so that you didn't know you were smoking until it was done and you had to refill it. Then he said people talked as if some special things were poisons, and some not; but in fact there is no such thing as poison. Certain substances, under certain conditions and in certain quantities, do more or less harm, and that you could say of everything. For instance, cold water, if you come plump into it from a height, will kill you. I thought of *Peer Gynt*, and his plunge from the Gendin Edge.

Afterwards I talked a good deal with Fröken R—— about him. She said that people were very unjust to his character, and that he himself had more than once said to her: "You mustn't think that I am entirely heartless and unfeeling." She said, too, that he hated to talk about his books; that he carried his reluctance to the point of a mania. Consequently, I was rather surprised when, further on in the evening, Ibsen came up to me, and, after we had discussed the Ring Theatre fire, said: "You would scarcely believe what a sensation my new play is making in the North." He asked if I had read it, and told me that he was getting heaps of letters every day about it. I told him a villain in the *Berlingske Tidende* had anticipated the very thing I was looking forward to saying about it some day or other, namely, that he had made good his promise of placing "a torpedo under the Ark." He then said he doubted whether it would be acted just yet, on account of its tendency. It was always the same; when he wrote *Love's Comedy* there was a great outcry, another when he wrote *Peer Gynt*, another over *Pillars of Society*; but little by little people got accustomed to the pieces. Just then I was called away, and as we parted Ibsen apologised for not having been to see me. I told him I did not for a moment expect it, but hoped he would let me call upon him. He said I should be heartily welcome, we shook hands, *und damit basta*.

My remark about the torpedo referred to a poem, "To my Friend the Revolutionary Orator," in which Ibsen said that the only thorough-going revolution recorded in history was the Flood. But even that remained incomplete, for Noah