

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

Henry Ibsen  
A Revolt against the Conventions

Some ten years ago in a volume of "Studies of Northern Literature" by Mr. Edmund Gosse, I first saw the name of Henrik Ibsen. Everything that Mr. Gosse writes is interesting, and as a result one is apt frequently to attribute any special impression made by the subject of his writing to the scale of the reviewers rather than to any inherent worth of the reviewed. In other words Henrik Ibsen remained in my mind for a number of years more clearly identified as an interesting essay by Edmund Gosse than as the greatest of Norwegian poets. One does not feel the same interest in the poetry of a language that he can never hope to read in the original, as he does in its prose, and I never was so optimistic as to expect to learn the Norse tongue.

At that time Ibsen's position was based on his work as a poet. It is true that he had written a number of prose dramas of great power, but it can hardly be gainsaid that it was his three poetic satires, *Love's Comedy*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt* that made his name best known. These three plays of which Mr. Gosse gives a very complete summary, formed, to quote his words, "a great satire trilogy, – perhaps for sustained vigor of expression, for affluence of execution, and for brilliance of dialogue, the greatest of modern times. They form at present (1873) Ibsen's principal and foremost claims to immortality. Their influence over thought in the North has been boundless and sooner or later they will win for their author the homage of Europe."

It is interesting to note that the author of these satiric works has won the homage of Europe and of the world, not by reason, however, of the three poems but by reason of a series of plays, all of which were written after the date of the essay I have quoted. It is true that *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* have become more and more admired as they have become better known (through the medium of foreign translations mainly) but the nature of poetic writing renders all translations inadequate, and the fact that a large part of these works is cynical in its character, have made them subordinate in interest to the later works in prose. We are told that they are faultless in versification. Epigrammatic and riotous in wit and mirth, with an intensity of feeling that partakes of a religious fervor. One touch of irony where the poet satirizes his people in the character of *Peer Gynt*, is worth mentioning. *Peer Gynt* is an imaginative character who combines idealism and realism most completely. Among other vocations he carries on a large trade in slaves to the Carolinas and idols to China, and at the same time, as an asset to this business, he sells Bibles and rum to the missionaries at a profit. Such a character is not particularly Norwegian.

It is however to the later series of dramas that I particularly can call attention, for the appearance of his play "The Pillars of Society" opens up a new era in his work.

Ibsen was born March 20, 1828 at Skien, a small market town on the south coast of

Norway, situated at the head of a narrow fjord between the mountains and the sea, in a land where the year has but one day and one night. "The summer a perpetual warm sunfilled day, filled with the aroma of trees and plants, and the rest of the year a night of darkness and horror; the land which is the extreme northern limit of European civilization on the outskirts of which great primitive gods still revel". To quote again from Mr. Gosse – "a land of dark forests, gloomy waters, barren peaks, inundated by cold sharp airs, off Arctic icebergs; a land where nature must be won with violence, not wooed by the siren songs of dream impulses." Norway is the home of vigorous, ruddy lads and modest maidens, a healthy population unexhausted and unrestrained. Here a man can open his chest, stride onward upright and sturdy, say the out his honest word and be unabashed; here if anywhere human nature may hope to find a just development."

This last sentence is particularly shocking to the reader of every one of Ibsen's eight social dramas, whom the writer calls a typical modern European, a soul full of doubt and sorrow and unfulfilled desire, piercing downward into the dark profound Promethean – a romantic Satanist."

Bjornson says there is something in nature here which challenges whatever is extraordinary in us. Nature herself here goes beyond all ordinary measure. We have night nearly all through winter; we have day nearly all the summer, with the sun by day and by night above the horizon. More have seen it by night half veiled by the mists from the sea. It often looks three and, even four times larger than usual, and then the play of colors on sky, sea and rock, from the most glowing red to the softest and most delicate yellow and white, and then the calm of the northern lights on the winter sky, with their more suppressed kind of wild pictures, yet full of unrest and forever changing. Then the other touches of nature! These millions of seabirds, and the wandering processions of fish stretching for miles. These perpendicular cliffs that rise directly out of the sea! They are not like other mountains, and the Atlantic roars around their feet, and the ideas of the people are correspondingly unmeasured. In such a land and surrounded by such formative influences did Ibsen pass his early years. His mother was an Altenberg of North German descent, so that there is one more example of the influence for good on the development of character of a mixed lineage. In the leisure moments of his position as an apothecary's apprentice he educated himself to study medicine at the University of Christiania, and while reading Sallust and Cicero, he composed his play "Catilena" of which he sold some thirty copies.

In 1851 he went up to the University, where he met a number of young men who afterward made a place for themselves in the literature of his country. Among them was Bjornson, who later described him at this time – "[ ] and lean, the color of gypsum – behind a vast coal black beast – Henrik Ibsen"–In 1851 after contributing to a newspaper edited by his youthful associates, he met Ole Bull, the violinist who had him appointed director of the national Theatre at Bergen, which position he held until 1857. In 1857 he undertook the direction of the national Theatre at Christiania, exchanging places with Bjornson, and in 1864, having accumulated sufficient means, he left his native country, which he has revisited only once in 1885. Part of the time he has lived in Italy, but mainly in Dresden and Munich. His principal works, prior to 1877 were six historical and

legendary dramas, chiefly in prose, of which *The Emperor and Galilean* “finished in 1873” the most important, and the three dramatic poems heretofore referred to. In 1869, the forerunner of his so-called Social dramas, “*The Young Men's League*” appeared. This play depicts the career of a political adventurer – a young man named Stansgaard, who, possessed of considerable wit and more impudence, endeavors to satisfy his overweening ambition by catering on the one hand to the sympathy of the lower classes, and on the other by maneuvering for the influence of the proprietary class. Of course he overreaches himself and is completely exposed. There is quite a view of comedy running through the play which is a clever satire on current political methods. It applies with full as much force to American politics as to those of Norway, and indeed this is one of the things that must impress every person who reads any of the so-called social dramas of Ibsen – the fact that human nature is pretty much the same the world over. The scene is laid in Norway and the names are foreign, but the characters are familiar and the conversations true to our own life. The [ ] seems to be human from whatever point one views him, either of time or of place, so that this play applies admirably to our own conditions. This play from the point of view of the present time, foreshadowed the plays that followed, but its style is much lighter than that of the later plays. Ibsen had not become so keen in his dissection of human character, nor so inexorable. The process of thought working in his mind at that time is indicated by two passages that are always quoted in showing his point of view. The toward the close of the Franco-Prussian war he wrote, “the state is the curse of the individual. How has the national strength of Prussia been purchased? By the sinking of the individual in a political and [ ] formula. The state must go! That will be a revolution which will find me on its side. Undermine the idea of the state, set up in its place, spontaneous action, and the idea that spiritual relationship is the only thing that makes for unity, and you will start the elements of a liberty which will be something worth possessing.”

The Paris Commune was a great blow to him as being a parody on the ideal of individuality; but later in 1875, he again recurs to this idea of the state crushing out individuality in a letter announcing his intention of leaving Dresden for Munich. He says “I must go. In April I shall flit to Munich, and see if I can settle there for two or three years. I fancy that all spiritual life breathes with greater fullness and comfort there than in North Germany, where the state and politics have drafted all the strength of the people into the service, and have arrested all genuine interests”

Such were the feelings of Ibsen at the time he set about writing his later works. But after all, the state is but another name for a vast number of influences that work together for the purpose of crushing out individualism. Deep down in the hearts and feelings of men have sunk the iron shackles of custom and propriety that have greater weight and much more power of flattering both soul and intellect than a mere form of political government, than the idea of authority conveyed by the designation of the state. It is the Social Authority, the conventionality of thought and act that Ibsen attacks most fiercely, and it is to this warfare that his most powerful energies have been directed in the last thirteen years. In that time he has produced seven remarkable plays, forming a series that for stern realism and thorough fidelity to truth are not equaled by any contemporary work that I am familiar with. I do not join in the wild applause of those who speak of him as a

“Second Shakespeare” for the term is inappropriate, and such praise does both writers and injustice, just as Charles Kingsley was misjudged by the same title. But it seems to me that there are a few plays that for dramatic force and unity of purpose surpass these. I have always looked upon the “Oedipus Tyrannus” of Sophocles as the play that to me is the nearest to perfection in dramatic literature. Throughout that play not a word is wasted. Everything is subordinated to its central idea. All tend to the inevitable catastrophe, and all the is tried in simple language, that from its very simplicity and directness, produces the effect of power. Such is the characteristic of these plays of Ibsen. The style is of the simplest; the conversations natural; the [ ] and scenes characteristic. There is no catch penny dialogue for its own sake; the realism is most severe. He is not light or amusing or romantic. He that reads his plays must think for himself. Ibsen suggests the idea; the reader must often carry it out to its legitimate conclusion. Not that they are is any mysticism about his writing, for he that “views may read;” but as in real life, the motives of man are complex and no one can put his finger upon any act or thought and say what alone produced it. Character and environment together produce certain results. Ibsen shows you the results and allows you to infer the working of the man's mind. The hero does not come down to the footlights and in a lengthy monologue detail the secret workings of his heart and mind. But you see his characteristic actions and expressions, and the whole soul of the man stands revealed to you.

All these plays are written in prose. The following passage from a letter written just as he was preparing for his new play “The Pillars of Society” is a startling statement of his conception of dramatic form. “There is one point which I must discuss with you. You think my new drama ought to be written in verse, and that it will gain an advantage if it is. Here I must simply contradict you; for the piece is as you will find, developed in the most realistic way possible. The illusion I wish to produce is that of truth itself. I want to produce upon the reader the impression that what he is reading is actually taking place before him. If I were to use verse, I should by so doing be stultifying my own intentions and the object which I placed before [ ]. The vanity of every day and unimportant characters which I have intentionally introduced into the piece would be effaced and blended into one another if I had allowed them all to converse in a rhythmic movement. We are no longer living in the time of Shakespeare, and among sculptors there is beginning to be a discussion whether statuary ought not to be painted with lively colors. Much can be said for and against such a practice. I myself would not have the Venus of Milos painted, but I would rather see a Negro's head carved in black marble man in white. On the whole, my feeling is that literary form ought to be in relation to the amount of ideality which is spread over the representation. My new drama is not indeed a tragedy in the old world signification of the word, but what I have tried to depict in it is human beings, and for that reason I have not allowed them to talk the language of the Gods.”

This is the theory on which all his later dramas have been constructed, and they all make the attack against the conventions of social life, as exemplified in one phase or another. The first of the series is “The Pillars of Society ” which appeared in 1877.

The scene is laid in the little Norwegian seaport town, and its purpose is to explore the hypocrisy as a result of which men rise to the greatest honors while all the while they are

rotten within. Consul Bernick after a long life of industry has become the wealthiest and most influential citizen in the town, and is a model of propriety and virtue. The only blot on his name is a story that a young girl, Dina Dorf, who is living in his house, is the daughter of a woman who had been too familiar with a young brother of his wife, John Torneson, who was not her husband. John had long since fled to America, and with him went much of Bernick's money, and subsequently an older half sister, Lona Hessel, who was said to have disgraced herself by wearing short hair and writing a successful book. These rumors have not detracted from the consul's reputation, but have won for him the sympathy of the community, particularly as he has taken into his family, the unfortunate Dina. The first act is a glorification of Bernick and presents a picture of his preeminent position. The life of the town is explored and it centers about the consul, his shipyard and his good deeds. The scene ends the arrival of Lona and Johan from America.

Act II opens with Bernick directing his ship master Aune to have a rotten American vessel the Indian Girl, ready for sea on next day as well as his own vessel the [ ] Tree. The talk seems impossible to Aune, but the penalty for failure is dismissal. Aune reminds him of his services and says "have you rightly reflected what it is to dismiss an old workman?" He shows how it works the ruin of his family, and he finally leaves with the promise that the vessels shall be ready.

The reappearance of John discloses the fact that Bernick's the whole life has been a lie. He not John, should have borne the scandal of the years and John had fled, offering himself a sacrifice to protect his sister's husband. Barwick is not disposed to make trouble until he finds how widespread the scandal is, and only when the Rector Birland charges him with his supposed past life and history to Dina who has consented to go with him to America, does he begin to wish to defend himself.

In act 3 Barwick learns that Aune to avoid dismissal has repaired the Indian Girl so hastily as to render her unseaworthy; at the same time he learns that John has taken passage on her to America and that after settling his affairs there, he will return, marry Dina and demand that the truth be made public. To John's demand for justice, he exposes his own delicate position; that his opposition to the coast rail road was due to his interest in the steamship line, and his favoring the inland line to a secret purchase of the adjoining land, and that an exposure at that time would crush both these enterprises. But John goes off inexorable, after which Bernick begins a very sophisticated dialogue with the priggish Rector as if speaking of the railway – "when one stands at the commencement of the wide spreading undertaking, intended to promote the welfare of thousands, if a single sacrifice should be demanded. Take, for example a man who is starting a great manufactory. He knows very certainly that in the working of that manufactory, human life will be lost – By such reasoning, based on his egoistic theory that the preservation of his reputation is necessary to the public good, he justifies himself in overlooking the unseaworthiness of the Indian Girl, and directs that in spite of the storm that is brewing, she must sail. John determined upon revenge, decides to go with her, Dina having been forced to acknowledge her engagement to the Rector.

Act 4 opens with the announcement to Bernick that the citizens are coming in procession

to do him honor. At the same time he hears the sailors hauling out the Indian Girl. They are fast becoming stupidly drunk. As John steals out on his way to the vessel, he is met by Dina who has been persuaded by Martha that she is not bound by her promise to Rector Röhland and who therefore is determined to go with him. After they are gone, Martha makes her confession to Lona – “I have loved him more than all the world. My whole life lies in the [ ]. I have loved him and waited for him. From summer I have looked for his coming. And then he came, but he did not see me.”

While still in doubt as to his action and allowing John to go in the Indian Girl, he learns that he has changed his plans and is in the [ ], but that his favorite son Olaf, the center of all his hopes, has run away in the rotten American vessel which is already at sea. He is crazed with anguish at the frustration of his plans and the retribution that is coming upon him, and is almost beside himself, when just as the procession arrives, he learns that Arne in his fear had stopped the Indian Girl and all were safe. Almost broken down by the revulsion of feeling, and the conflict of emotions he had been undergoing, he listens to a fulsome address from the citizens, which would do credit to any similar occasion. Much moved, he astonishes all by making a clean breast of his whole life, turning over of the railroad land for the common benefit, and throwing himself upon their mercy. His frankness seems to lend him an additional virtue, and his suggestion that one man, and that man he, could best manage the vast interests involved, meets with a satisfactory response, and the play ends with his family gathered about him in adoring admiration. To them he says– “it is you women who are the pillars of society” but Lona contradicts this: – The spirits of truth and freedom – these are the pillars of society.”

The Doll's House – In 1879 appeared the best known of Ibsen's plays – The Doll's House. It contains his most elaborate study of woman and the marriage relation, and is said to be the most perfect of this plays from an artistic standpoint.

The play moves through without break or interruption in motive; interest intensifies as the calamity approaches. So much discussion did he create when it first appeared that it became the custom in Stockholm (so the story goes) during the winter of 1879–82 to put on social invitations the injunction “You are requested not to mention Ibsen's Doll's house.”

Nora Helmer is the idol of her husband Torvald the newly appointed director of the Bank, who during the eight years of their married life has watched over her with scrupulous care, keeping from her all that is disagreeable in life, refusing to allow her to share in his work or troubles, and cherishing all her childish interests and instincts. He is the soul of honor, with the [ ] contempt for deceit set in any form, with the most perfect confidence in the brightness of his own motives and in his own judgment. His only complaint of this, and it is a very mild one, is that she is extravagant “just like her father,” he says, “but it's in the blood. Yes, Nora, that sort of thing is inherited.” She is given too to eating confections, which he thinks bad for her health, but upon charging her playfully with breaking the rule against macaroons, she lies to him point blank at the outset of the play. This is the keynote of her character as undeveloped. She is proud, however, of her one secret from her husband which is this. In the first year of their married life he became

so ill from overwork that the doctor said he must go. The money for the trip which saved Torvalds's life she was supposed to have obtained from her father, who died just at that time. In fact she had borrowed it, but had never dared to tell her husband whose one pet aversion was going in debt, and it was the necessity of paying back this loan that had made her appear extravagant – he could not tell where all the money went.

But the peculiarity of the transaction of the greatest importance has never struck Nora until Krogstad, the lender, comes to her for her influence with her husband to obtain his retention in the bank of which the husband has become manager. When she refuses, he reminds her that the note given him at that time signed by her father as security was signed by him three days after his death, to which she defiantly responds that her father was so ill that she could not annoy him by telling him that her husband's life was in danger, so she simply wrote her father's name herself. When he tries to explain that this is a crime, she says: “do you mean to tell me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father's anxiety, that the wife has no right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but I assure you that somewhere or other you will find that that is allowed.”

When she learns from Helmer that the reason he cannot keep Krogstad in the bank is because he had committed forgery years before, and had been wearing a mask even in his own family, her terrors, but not her conscience, are aroused. She has never had any moral sense, such as would direct her in a matter of this kind, and it is only when her husband incidentally remarks that nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying [     ]”, that she begins to see her position. Helmer's determination to discharge Krogstad, brought about partly by reason of the latter's familiarity in calling him “thou” (German du) makes her realize the danger she is in. Her one fear then becomes the thought that Helmer, when the exposure comes, will insist in taking the blame and crime upon himself for the purpose of exculpating her, and to prevent this she determines to die before Helmer can read Krogstad's letter, exposing her which she has induced the former to keep unopened until after a ball which they expect to attend. But she is utterly mistaken in Helmer. After the most fulsome protest of affection for her he opens Krogstad's letter and the effect is altogether different from what she expected. Instead of offering to shield her, as she feared, he loads her with reproaches, charging her with destroying his whole happiness and ruining his whole life, by putting him in the power of a scoundrel, and telling her that he does no longer trust her children to her, an unprincipled woman. When a knock at the door disturbs them, his first thought is that Krogstad has betrayed her to the authorities and he bids her hide herself. But it is a letter from Krogstad enclosing the forged note. He has relented. And now the climax which is the awakening of Nora. She is no longer the child and pet. The terrible suspense she has passed through has developed the patent force of character. Scorning his forgiveness, she sits down to their first serious talk in the eight years of married life. She has discovered that she has been living a doll's life in a doll's house; a mere puppet for his amusement; in no sense a companion of his thoughts on life. The idea of right and wrong that he has always held she has found are not the ideas of the world. She feels that she is not fit to rear her children according to the world's standard. She is at sea in all things. She must go out into the world, leaving her husband and children who are in safe hands, and find out which is right, society or she. To his reproach that she forgets her love for him she answers that that is the most

convincing of all things. She had misunderstood him in all things. She expected him to step forward in spite of her protest and say "I am the guilty one." To his statement that no man sacrifices his honor even for one he loves – she responds "Millions of women have done so." Further when the terror, for himself not for her, was over, he again considered his doll. "Torvald, in that moment it burned upon me that I have been living here through eight years with a strange man and had borne him three children." This clearing up of the situation runs over some ten pages or nine, at the end of which she rushes out into the night, to be never more than a stranger to him until the "miracle of miracles" – until both have so changed that "they're living together could be a marriage."

The episode of Dr. Rauk who dies of spinal consumption, the result of his father's wild oats suggest the next play "Ghosts" which appeared in 1881

This is been well called the tragedy of heredity and most certainly is one of the most horror inspiring works in literature. Oswald Alving, a young artist, is the son of a dissolute father but has been brought up away from home and taught by his mother that her late husband was a model of virtue and a pillar of society. This impression she has by her energy and character spread about the neighborhood. It is on the occasion of opening an asylum built in memory of her "sainted" husband that her son, already dying of the disease inherited from the excesses of the father, comes home. His own life has been free from excess, but he shows the cravings of vice, and seems to the narrowminded parson, Manders, to have highly immoral ideas as to certain connections, not matrimonial but lasting, that are in vogue in France. A discussion on this subject leads Mrs. Alving to expose to the Parson the whole mask of hypocrisy that she has held up before her husband during all these years, and she describes a certain scene in the conservatory with the housemaid which led her to send her child away from such corrupting influences. She is just telling the story, when from the conservatory Oswald is heard repeating the scene with the girl who was in reality the daughter of the former housemaid by his father. In terror she springs, when [ ] with the word "ghosts." The specter of intended vice has risen in the person of her son. From this time he gradually sinks into helpless imbecility, and for cause for which not he, but his progenitor is to blame, his brain softens, and in the end we see him with reason entirely gone, feebly and childishly demanding the [ ], while the mother is distracted with doubt as to whether or not she should comply with his desire, that she should cut short his immiscible existence by morphia. The last scene is certainly one of the most terrible in all literature, and its realism, never exaggerated, is simply appalling.

This terrible breach of all the conventions shocked the public into a storm of abuse. The outcry was tremendous; and the charge of immorality was made both as to the subject and the method of treatment. As it was, however, probably the most powerful of all his works, the most daring and forceful attacks he had made against the narrowing influences of conventionality, both of thought and conduct, it gradually grew to a position of great popularity, and is now quite frequently acted upon the stage both abroad and in this country.

For revenge upon his critics, Ibsen wrote his next play "The Enemy of Society" which

appeared in 1882. A in the play the principal character Dr. Stockman is supposed to be Ibsen himself. The doctor is director of the baths, in a little Norwegian Wayside watering place, has brought the place up to great prominence is a resort by developing its natural resources. In the course of his investigations as sanitary officer of the town, he discovers that the drainage of the place is defective, and the water of the baths reeking with [ ] filth that makes the whole city a pest house. Once forced to so important a discovery in good time for a reform before much harm has been done, he hastens to make a report to the authorities. But large sums of money will be needed to remodel the baths and drainage, the reputation of the town will suffer in the meantime and the prestige will be lost. So he is denied a hearing. He applies to the press which remains closed to him. A final appearance to a public meeting is drowned down by kisses and howls, and he is publicly denounced as an enemy of society, and all this for endeavoring to say aloud what everyone in private knows to be true. Dr. Stockman is the type of the man who is for truth regardless of consequences, for integrity at all times and opposed to by [ ] of the many. The whole play is in illustration of the old saw "majority rules, but minority is right." It ends with the declaration that the strongest man on earth is he who stands most alone.

The "Wild Duck" which appeared in 1884 is an attack upon the "claims of the ideal". The hero, if he is one, is one Gregers Werle, who is an exaggeration of Dr. Stockman's hatred of hypocrisy can bring about. He is really a parody on Ibsen's own ideal or real characters. On arrival home after many years absence, he finds that an old friend of his has been married to a former mistress of his father. The father ever since has been a sort of patron saint to the household. Gregers conceives the idea that this is not a true marriage, and that it is his duty to let the light of truth in on the household, [ ] very happy, which he accordingly does. Instead of the truth and the mutual understanding between husband and wife which result from this exposure, bringing about a higher ideal of marriage between the two, the result is highly unsatisfactory. The play ends with a declaration by a cynical doctor that "life would be quite happy, if we might be delivered from those dear fanatics who rush into our houses with their ideals," and the conclusion by Gregers that his proper position is to be the truth at the table.

"The Lady from the Sea" (1888) is perhaps the most practical of his prose dramas. Here again a woman's individuality is the subject. Ellida, the lady from the sea is the daughter of the lighthouse keeper and is devoted to the sea. When taken into the town after her marriage to Dr. Wangel, who she loves and who loves her, she still pines for the salt water and ocean air. She is like a transplanted seaweed or the [ ] in the attic. In early life she had betrothed herself to a stranger who had taken a ring from her and tied it to one of his own and thrown both into the sea, as a token of their cemented promise. She feels still bound by the morbid notion that if he comes for her, she must go to him, her stranger from the sea. He does, and a severe conflict goes on within her, but it is not until she is left free by her husband to choose upon her own responsibility, that her love for her husband triumphs. Her "longing and pining" for the sea, its attraction for her in the power of this stranger were the experience of her growing yearning for liberty.

The marriage relation is again touched upon in Ibsen's last play, which has just appeared but has not been translated. The seven plays constitute the revolt against the conventions

of modern social life. Every one of them [ ] how to [ ] to the heart of some one of the questions that are closest to our everyday life, and therefore that are most bound about by the narrow restrictions of language.

“The Pillars of Society” lays open business and venal hypocrisy. The Doll's House destroys forever the conventional idea of married life. “Ghosts”, horrible as it is, utters the warning that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the sons. The “Enemy of Society” tears the mask of hypocrisy from communities as to public affairs.

"Rosmersholm" shows the futility of mere

—“The Wild Duck” the weakening of idealism as a guide to practical life, and “the Lady from the Sea” the enthralling influence of a morbid idea upon a mind [ ] perfect liberty but dependent upon some outside responsibility. These are tragedies not in the old world sense, but in the true sense dramas of our own life.

One striking thing about these plays is the prominence given to the women in them. Ibsen is the apostle of the identity and individuality of woman.

Space is lacking for a proper consideration of these plays in detail. In their fidelity to nature; their impression of reality, their simplicity of style, and in human interest, they are unsurpassed. A library almost has been written as to the problems suggested by the Doll's House, by Ghosts and by Rosmersholm, perhaps the least known in this country. The revolt against conventions involves the upraising of a standard of individualism. The great task is, as says Rosner, to make of every man a noble man and this is the work of which Henrik Ibsen stretching out his hand from far across the sea asks our aid.

Chas. Theo. Greve

Jan 17th 1891