

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF  
**HENRIK IBSEN**

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VOLUME VII

A DOLL'S HOUSE  
~~GHOSTS~~

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
WILLIAM ARCHER



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HENRIK IBSEN

VOLUME VII

A DOLL'S HOUSE ·  
GHOSTS



# THE COLLECTED WORKS OF HENRIK IBSEN

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INTRODUCTIONS BY WILLIAM ARCHER

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## A DOLL'S HOUSE.

### INTRODUCTION.\*

ON June 27, 1879, Ibsen wrote from Rome to Marcus Grönvold: "It is now rather hot in Rome, so in about a week we are going to Amalfi, which, being close to the sea, is cooler, and offers opportunity for bathing. I intend to complete there a new dramatic work on which I am now engaged." From Amalfi, on September 20, he wrote to John Paulsen: "A new dramatic work, which I have just completed, has occupied so much of my time during these last months that I have had absolutely none to spare for answering letters." This "new dramatic work" was *Et Dukkehjem*, which was published in Copenhagen, December 4, 1879. Dr. Georg Brandes has given some account of the episode in real life which suggested to Ibsen the plot of this play; but the real Nora, it appears, committed forgery, not to save her husband's life, but to redecorate her house. The impulse received from this incident must have been \*trifling. It is much more to the purpose to remember that the character and situation of Nora had been clearly foreshadowed, ten years ear-

这似乎是个误会，不是要  
情是不对的。

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lier, in the figure of Selma in *The League of Youth*.

It is with *A Doll's House* that Ibsen enters upon his kingdom as a world-poet. He had done greater work in the past, and he was to do greater work in the future; but this was the play which was destined to carry his name beyond the limits of Scandinavia, and even of Germany, to the remotest regions of civilisation. Here the Fates were not altogether kind to him. The fact that for many years he was known to thousands of people solely as the author of *A Doll's House*, and its successor, *Ghosts*, was largely responsible for the extravagant misconceptions of his genius and character which prevailed during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and are not yet entirely extinct. In these plays he seemed to be delivering a direct assault on marriage, from the standpoint of feminine individualism; wherefore he was taken to be a preacher and pamphleteer rather than a poet. In these plays, and in these only, he made physical disease a considerable factor in the action; whence it was concluded that he had a morbid predilection for "nauseous" subjects. In these plays he laid special and perhaps disproportionate stress on the influence of heredity; whence he was believed to be possessed by a "monomania on the point. In these plays, finally, he was trying to act the essentially uncongenial part of the prosaic realist. The effort broke down at many points, and the poet reasserted himself; but these flaws in the prosaic texture were regarded as mere bewildering errors and eccentricities. In short, he was in-

(恩德, 同情)

病態 (生病)

可怕 (令人懷疑)

偏激, 偏執

個人主義的  
不相容的

散漫 (無聊)

roduced to the world at large through two plays which showed his power, indeed, almost in perfection, but left the higher and subtler qualities of his genius for the most part unrepresented. Hence the grotesquely distorted vision of him which for so long haunted the minds even of intelligent people. Hence, for example, the amazing opinion, given forth as a truism by more than one critic of great ability, that the author of *Peer Gynt* was devoid of humour.

Within a little more than a fortnight of its publication *A Doll's House* was presented at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, where Fru Hennings, as Nora, made the great success of her career. The play was soon being acted, as well as read, all over Scandinavia. Nora's startling "declaration of independence" afforded such an inexhaustible theme for heated discussion, that at last it had to be formally barred at social gatherings, just as, in Paris twenty years later, the Dreyfus Case was proclaimed a prohibited topic. The popularity of *Pillars of Society* in Germany had paved the way for its successor, which spread far and wide over the German stage in the spring of 1880, and has ever since held its place in the repertory of the leading theatres. As his works were at that time wholly unprotected in Germany, Ibsen could not prevent managers from altering the end of the play to suit their taste and fancy. He was thus driven, under protest, to write an alternative ending, in which, at the last moment, the thought of her children restrained Nora from leaving home. He preferred, as he said, "to commit the outrage himself, rather than leave

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his work to the tender mercies of adaptors." The patched-up ending soon dropped out of use and out of memory. Ibsen's own account of the matter will be found in his *Correspondence*, Letter 142.

It took ten years for the play to pass beyond the limits of Scandinavia and Germany. Madame Modjeska, it is true, presented a version of it in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1883, but it attracted no attention. In the following year Messrs. Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, London, a play entitled *Breaking a Butterfly*, which was described as being "founded on Ibsen's *Norah*," but bore only a remote resemblance to the original. In this production Mr. Beerbohm Tree took the part of Dunkley, a melodramatic villain who filled the place of Krogstad. In 1885, again, an adventurous amateur club gave a quaint performance of Miss Lord's translation of the play at a hall in Argyle Street, London. Not until June 7, 1889, was a *A Doll's House* competently, and even brilliantly, presented to the English public, by Mr. Charles Charrington and Miss Janet Achurch, at the Novelty Theatre, London, afterwards re-named the Great Queen Street Theatre. It was this production that really made Ibsen known to the English-speaking peoples. In other words, it marked his second great stride towards world-wide, as distinct from merely national, renown—if we reckon as the first stride the success of *Pillars of Society* in Germany. Mr. and Mrs. Charrington took *A Doll's House* with them on a long Australian



tour; Miss Beatrice Cameron (Mrs. Richard Mansfield) was encouraged by the success of the London production to present the play in New York, whence it soon spread to other American cities; while in London itself it was frequently revived and vehemently discussed. The Ibsen controversy, indeed, did not break out in its full virulence until 1891, when *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* were produced in London; but from the date of the Novelty production onwards, Ibsen was generally recognised as a potent factor in the intellectual and artistic life of the day.

A French adaptation of *Et Dukkehjem* was produced in Brussels in March 1889, but attracted little attention. Not until 1894 was the play introduced to the Parisian public, at the Gymnase, with Madame Réjane as Nora. This actress has since played the part frequently, not only in Paris but in London and in America. In Italian the play was first produced in 1889, and soon passed into the repertory of Eleonora Duse, who appeared as Nora in London in 1893. Few heroines in modern drama have been played by so many actresses of the first rank. To those already enumerated must be added Hedwig Niemann-Raabe and Agnes Sorma in Germany, and Minnie Madern-Fiske in America; and, even so, the list is far from complete. There is probably no country in the world, possessing a theatre on the European model, in which *A Doll's House* has not been more or less frequently acted.

Undoubtedly the great attraction of the part of Nora to the average actress was the \*tarantella scene. This was a theatrical effect, of an

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obvious, unmistakable kind. It might have been—though I am not aware that it ever actually was—made the subject of a picture-poster. But this, as it seems to me, was Ibsen's last concession to the ideal of technique which he had acquired, in the old Bergen days, from his French masters. I have elsewhere \* analysed *A Doll's House* at some length, from the technical point of view, suggesting that it marks a distinct, and one might almost say a sudden, revolution in the poet's understanding of the methods and aims of his art. There is pretty good reason to suppose, as it seems to me, that he altered the plan of the play while it was actually in process of composition. He seems originally to have schemed a "happy ending," like that of *The League of Youth* or *Pillars of Society*. No doubt it is convenient, even for the purposes of the play as it stands, that all fear of hostile action on Krogstad's part should be dissipated before Nora and Helmer settle down to their final explanation; but is the convenience sufficiently great to account for the invention, to that end alone, of Mrs. Linden's relation to, and influence over, Krogstad? I very much question it. I think the "happy ending" which is actually reached when Krogstad returns the forged document was, in Ibsen's original conception, intended to be equivalent to the stopping of the *Indian Girl*, and the return of Olaf, in *Pillars of Society*—that is to say, it was to be the end of the drama properly so called, and the rest was to be a more or less conventional winding-up, a confession of faults on both sides,

\* *Fortnightly Review*, July 1906.

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accompanied by mutual congratulations on the blowing-over of the threatened storm. This is the end which, as we see, every one expected: the end which adaptors, in Germany, England, and elsewhere, insisted on giving to the play. There was just a shade of excuse for these gentlemen, inasmuch as the poet himself seemed to have elaborately prepared the way for them; and I suggest that the fact of his having done so shows that the play, in embryo, passed through the phase of technical development represented by *Pillars of Society*—the phase to which its amenders would have forced it to return. Ibsen, on the other hand, when he proceeded from planning in outline to creation in detail, found his characters outgrow his plot. When the action, in the theatrical sense, was over, they were only on the threshold of the essential drama; and in that drama, compressed into the final scene of the play, Ibsen found his true power and his true mission.

How impossible, in his subsequent work, would be such figures as Mrs. Linden, the confidant, and Krogstad, the villain! They are not quite the ordinary confidant and villain, for Ibsen is always Ibsen, and his power of vitalisation is extraordinary. Yet we clearly feel them to belong to a different order of art from that of his later plays. How impossible, too, in the poet's after years, would have been the little tricks of ironic coincidence and picturesque contrast which abound in *A Doll's House*! The festal atmosphere of the whole play, the Christmas-tree, the tarantella, the masquerade ball, with its distant sounds of music—all the shim-

mer and tinsel of the background against which Nora's soul-torture and Rank's despair are thrown into relief belong to the system of external, artificial antithesis beloved by romantic playwrights from Lope de Vega onward, and carried to its limit by Victor Hugo. The same artificiality is apparent in minor details. "Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live to be happy!" cries Nora, and instantly "The hall-door bell rings" and Krogstad's shadow falls across the threshold. • So, too, for his second entrance, an elaborate effect of contrast is arranged, between Nora's gleeful romp with her children and the sinister figure which stands unannounced in their midst. It would be too much to call these things absolutely unnatural, but the very precision of the coincidence is eloquent of pre-arrangement. At any rate, they belong to an order of effects which in future Ibsen sedulously eschews. The one apparent exception to this rule which I can remember occurs in *The Master Builder*, where Solness's remark, "Presently the younger generation will come knocking at my door," gives the cue for Hilda's knock and entrance. But here an interesting distinction is to be noted. Throughout *The Master Builder* the poet subtly indicates the operation of mysterious, unseen agencies—the "helpers and servers" of whom Solness speaks, as well as the Power with which he held converse at the crisis in his life—guiding, or at any rate tampering with, the destinies of the characters. This being so, it is evident that the effect of pre-arrangement produced by Hilda's appearing exactly on the given cue was delib-

erately aimed at. Like so many other details in the play, it might be a mere coincidence, or it might be a result of inscrutable design—we were purposely left in doubt. But the suggestion of pre-arrangement which helped to create the atmosphere of *The Master Builder* was wholly out of place in *A Doll's House*. In the later play it was a subtle stroke of art; in the earlier it was the effect of imperfectly dissembled artifice.

My conjecture of an actual modification of Ibsen's design during the progress of the play may possibly be mistaken. There can be no doubt, on the other hand, that Ibsen's full originality first reveals itself in the latter half of the third act. This is proved by the very protests, nay, the actual rebellion, which the last scene called forth. Up to that point he had been doing, approximately, what theatrical orthodoxy demanded of him. But when Nora, having put off her masquerade dress, returned to make up her account with Helmer, and with marriage as Helmer understood it, the poet flew in the face of orthodoxy, and its professors cried out in bewilderment and wrath. But it was just at this point that, in practice, the real grip and thrill of the drama were found to come in. The tarantella scene never, in my experience—and I have seen five or six great actresses in the part—produced an effect in any degree commensurate with the effort involved. But when Nora and Helmer faced each other, one on each side of the table, and set to work to ravel out the skein of their illusions, then one felt oneself face to face with a new thing in drama—an

order of experience, at once intellectual and emotional, not hitherto attained in the theatre. This every one felt, I think, who was in any way accessible to that order of experience. For my own part, I shall never forget how surprised I was on first seeing the play, to find this scene, in its naked simplicity, far more exciting and moving than all the artfully-arranged situations of the earlier acts. To the same effect, from another point of view, we have the testimony of Fru Hennings, the first actress who ever played the part of Nora. In an interview published soon after Ibsen's death, she spoke of the delight it was to her, in her youth, to embody the Nora of the first and second acts, the "lark," the "squirrel," the irresponsible, butterfly Nora. "When I now play the part," she went on, "the first acts leave me indifferent. Not until the third act am I really interested—but then, intensely." To call the first and second acts positively uninteresting would of course be a gross exaggeration. What one really means is that their workmanship is still a little derivative and immature, and that not until the third act does the poet reveal the full originality and individuality of his genius.

## GHOSTS.

### INTRODUCTION.\*

THE winter of 1879-80 Ibsen spent in Munich, and the greater part of the summer of 1880 at Berchtesgaden. November 1880 saw him back in Rome, and he passed the summer of 1881 at Sorrento. There, fourteen years earlier, he had written the last acts of *Peer Gynt*; there he now wrote, or at any rate completed, *Gengangere*. It was published in December 1881, after he had returned to Rome. On December 22 he wrote to Ludwig Passarge, one of his German translators, "My new play has now appeared, and has occasioned a terrible uproar in the Scandinavian press; every day I receive letters and newspaper articles decrying or praising it. . . . I consider it utterly impossible that any German theatre will accept the play at present. I hardly believe that they will dare to play it in the Scandinavian countries for some time to come." How rightly he judged we shall see anon.

In the newspapers there was far more obloquy than praise. Two men, however, stood by him from the first: Björnson, from whom he had

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been practically estranged ever since *The League of Youth*, and Georg Brandes. The latter published an article in which he declared (I quote from memory) that the play might or might not be Ibsen's greatest work, but that it was certainly his noblest deed. It was, doubtless, in acknowledgment of this article that Ibsen wrote to Brandes on January 3, 1882: "Yesterday I had the great pleasure of receiving your brilliantly clear and so warmly appreciative review of *Ghosts*. . . . All who read your article must, it seems to me, have their eyes opened to what I meant by my new book—assuming, that is, that they have any *wish* to see. For I cannot get rid of the impression that a very large number of the false interpretations which have appeared in the newspapers are the work of people who know better. In Norway, however, I am willing to believe that the stultification has in most cases been unintentional; and the reason is not far to seek. In that country a great many of the critics are theologians, more or less disguised; and these gentlemen are, as a rule, quite unable to write rationally about creative literature. That enfeeblement of judgment which, at least in the case of the average man, is an inevitable consequence of prolonged occupation with theological studies, betrays itself more especially in the judging of human character, human actions, and human motives. Practical business judgment, on the other hand, does not suffer so much from studies of this order. Therefore the reverend gentlemen are very often excellent members of local boards; but they are unquestionably our worst critics."



This passage is interesting as showing clearly the point of view from which Ibsen conceived the character of Manders. In the next paragraph of the same letter he discusses the attitude of "the so-called Liberal press"; but as the paragraph contains the germ of *An Enemy of the People*, it may most fittingly be quoted in the introduction to that play.

Three days later (January 6) Ibsen wrote to Schandorph, the Danish novelist: "I was quite prepared for the hubbub. If certain of our Scandinavian reviewers have no talent for anything else, they have an unquestionable talent for thoroughly misunderstanding and misinterpreting those authors whose books they undertake to judge. . . . They endeavour to make me responsible for the opinions which certain of the personages of my drama express. And yet there is not in the whole book a single opinion, a single utterance, which can be laid to the account of the author. I took good care to avoid this. The very method, the order of technique which imposes its form upon the play, forbids the author to appear in the speeches of his characters. My object was to make the reader feel that he was going through a piece of real experience; and nothing could more effectually prevent such an impression than the intrusion of the author's private opinions into the dialogue. Do they imagine at home that I am so inexperienced in the theory of drama as not to know this? Of course I know it, and act accordingly. In no other play that I have written is the author so external to the action, so entirely absent from it, as in this last one."