

**THE LIGHT THAT  
SHINES IN DARKNESS;  
A DRAMA**

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The light that shines in darkness; A Drama by Leo Tolstoy

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**LEO TOLSTOY**

**THE LIGHT THAT  
SHINES IN DARKNESS;  
A DRAMA**



THE LIGHT  
THAT SHINES IN DARKNESS

*A Drama*

BY  
LEO TOLSTOY

*Author of "Anna Karenina," "Resurrection," etc.*

EDITED BY DR. HAGBERG WRIGHT



NEW YORK  
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY,

1912

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## PREFACE

### TOLSTOY AS DRAMATIST

IN almost every kind of literary work he touched, Tolstoy succeeded at once in reaching the foremost rank.

When he sent his first story, *Childhood*, anonymously to the poet Nekrásov, editor of *The Contemporary* (then the leading Petersburg magazine), the latter promptly accepted and published it; Dostoyévsky was so struck by it that he wrote from Siberia to inquire who its talented author was; Turgénev sang its praises, and Panáev was so delighted with it that his friends, it was said, had to avoid him on the Névsy lest he should insist on reading them extracts from it.

When Tolstoy turned from stories to novels he achieved the same immediate and complete success. The appearance of the first instalment of *War and Peace* sufficed to place him abreast of the world's greatest writers of fiction.

Fourteen years later he turned to spiritual auto-

biography, and his *Confession* immediately took rank beside those of St. Augustine and Rousseau.

When he propounded his interpretation of Christ's teaching, his works produced a profound impression and, though they were prohibited in Russia, found a large circulation abroad besides a surreptitious one at home.

Next he took to writing short, simple stories for the people, and the very first of these, *What Men Live By* (v. *Twenty-three Tales*), circulated by hundreds of thousands of copies in Russia, was translated into all civilised languages, and delighted people, old and young, in the five continents.

When he turned his attention to social problems, and wrote *What Then Must We Do?* the book aroused the deepest interest wherever it was read, and was promptly recognised as one of the most remarkable studies of poverty ever penned.

He took to essays, and at once produced a series which many readers have declared to be as interesting and stimulating as any that were ever written.

Interested in the philosophy of art, he wrote *What is Art?* His preparation for this attempt



to put art on a new basis took him, it is true, fifteen years, and a majority of critics everywhere denounced the opinions he expressed; but, at any rate, there was no doubt about the general interest he aroused, and the longer the matter is discussed, the stronger grows the suspicion that on the main point of the discussion Tolstoy saw deeper than his critics, and that, great artist as he was, his philosophy of art as well as his practice of it was fundamentally sound.

Finally his philippics, such as his *Reply to the Synod*, which had excommunicated him (v. *Essays and Letters*), and his denunciation of the Court-martial in *I Cannot be Silent!* rang out with a sincerity, courage, and effectiveness unparalleled since Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, or the famous theses Luther nailed to the church door at Wittenberg.

Only as a dramatist did Tolstoy fail at his first attempt; and even in that direction success came so promptly that it is his success rather than his failure that surprises one.

As a seventeen-year-old student at Kazán University, he had taken part with much success in two plays given for some charity at Carnival time; and his taste for theatricals did not soon pass,

for in later years, when writing of the time after his return from the defence of Sevastopol, and telling of the death of his brother Demetrius, he adds: "I really believe that what hurt me most was that his death prevented my taking part in some private theatricals then being got up at Court and to which I had been invited."

While living in Petersburg and Moscow as a young man, Tolstoy was enthusiastic in his admiration of one of the great Russian actors of those days; but he never lived much in cities, and probably no other great dramatist ever spent so little time in the theatre as he did. In that, as in many other lines of work, his quickness of perception, tenacity of memory and vividness of emotion enabled him to dispense with the long training men of less genius require.

In 1863, soon after his marriage, he wrote two plays which were never published. One, a farcical comedy called *The Nihilist*, was privately performed with much success. The other, also a comedy, called *The Infected Family*, he intended for public performance. With that end in view, Tolstoy took it to Moscow early in 1864. The theatrical season (which in Russia ends at the be-

ginning of *Lent*) was then, however, too far advanced for any manager to stage the piece that winter; and, as it dealt with a topic of the day which lost some of its freshness by keeping, Tolstoy never afterwards offered it to any one.

That was the one and only rebuff he ever had to face in his literary career, if one excepts the amusing incident of his sending a short prose poem anonymously to a Moscow newspaper, and receiving it back declined with thanks, on the ground that its author was "not yet sufficiently expert in expression!" For the next six years he seems not to have taken any interest in the drama; but in 1870 we find him writing to Fet:—

"There is much, very much, I want to tell you about. I have been reading a lot of Shakespear, Goethe, Púshkin, Gógol and Molière, and about all of them there is much I want to say to you."

A few days later he again wrote to the same friend:—

"You want to read me a story of cavalry life . . . And I don't want to read you anything, because I am not writing anything; but I very much want to talk about Shakespear and Goethe, and the drama in general. This whole