

**THE COMING OF  
PEACE: (A FAMILY  
CATASTROPHE)**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649461813

The Coming of Peace: (a Family Catastrophe) by Gerhart Hauptmann

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**GERHART HAUPTMANN**

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# THE COMING OF PEACE

(*A FAMILY CATASTROPHE*)

BY GERHART HAUPTMANN

TRANSLATED BY

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DUCKWORTH & CO.  
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## PREFACE

A FEW words about the author of "Friedensfest," which is here translated as "The Coming of Peace," will possibly be of interest to readers. Gerhart Hauptmann, who is still a comparatively young man, is as yet little known to English readers, and wholly unknown to English playgoers, except for the performance of this play under the auspices of the Stage Society on the 10th of June 1900, which has given occasion for this translation. In German-speaking countries he is recognised by many as the greatest modern dramatist with the single exception of Henrik Ibsen.

He is certainly the only dramatist who, writing under the inspiration of the great Norwegian poet, can by any remotest possibility be considered to have advanced a step beyond his master in dramatic treatment of the inner social forces of modern life.

It is not my intention here to do more than draw attention to the place Friedensfest occupies chronologically among its author's works, and to point out its probable source of inspiration. Those who wish to trace the author's career up to three years ago—he is now only thirty-eight—may be recommended to read "Gerhart Hauptmann, sein Lebensgang und seine Dichtung," written just after the publication of "Die Versunkene Glocke," by Dr Paul Schlenther, the gifted

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critic, now manager of the Vienna Court Theatre. I may, perhaps, be allowed to quote the final sentences of that book to show the high hopes entertained in Germany of Hauptmann's future. "At thirty-five years old," writes Dr Schlenther, "he is a famous man. He stands at life's zenith. Half the Scriptural age lies behind him. The best years of the strength and ripeness of manhood lie close ahead of him. We wait for what shall come."

"Friedensfest" was played in 1890, when Hauptmann was twenty-seven, eight years before these lines were penned. It was preceded by "Vor Sonnenaufgang" in 1889—the first utterance which gave more than local fame to its author—and was succeeded by "Einsame Menschen" in 1891. Of his later works "Die Weber" and "Hannele" have already been translated into English.

In "Friedensfest" and "Einsame Menschen" the influence of Ibsen can be traced more distinctly than in any of Hauptmann's other works. "Friedensfest" recalls in many respects Ibsen's "Ghosts," without any servile copying on the part of the younger author—who has presented his characters with a power and originality, a truth and subtlety peculiarly his own. Moreover he has not been so relentless as Ibsen. Although the "Family Catastrophe," as he calls it, is gloomy enough, in a sense the play ends more hopefully; the doom has not fallen on the younger members of the Scholz family, with whose hereditary qualities the play chiefly deals, and we are permitted to hope, if we choose, that it may never fall. Hauptmann's genius shows itself here of a softer and less uncompromising mould than Ibsen's. We feel that in as far as the play has any tendency, it leans rather



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towards meliorism than pessimism. Like Ibsen's later works, however, it is more objective in treatment than "Ghosts"—more a "family document" pure and simple, than a "tendency" drama.

But it is not my business here to tell the story of the play or to attempt any interpretation. I have merely helped to render it into English.

In translating, we have tried to give the broken, elliptical language in which Hauptmann's characters express themselves, as faithfully as possible—to keep the half-finished sentences and interjunctory outbursts without losing anything of the meaning of the play. Here and there, the rude colloquialism of the speakers, especially of Mrs Scholz and Friebe, have rendered our task almost impossible. We can only plead that we have done our best.

JANET ACHURCH.



## THE COMING OF PEACE

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