



The Dramatic Works of Gerhart Hauptmann (Complete)

Gerhart Hauptmann

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The present edition of Hauptmann's works contains all of his plays with the exception of a few inconsiderable fragments and the historical drama Florian Geyer. The latter has been excluded by reason of its great length, its divergence from the characteristic moods of Hauptmann's art, and that failure of high success which the author himself has implicitly acknowledged. The arrangement of the volumes follows, with such modifications as the increase of material has made necessary, the method used by Hauptmann in the first and hitherto the only collected edition of his dramas. Five plays are presented here which that edition did not include, and hence the present collection gives the completest view now attainable of Hauptmann's activity as a dramatist. The translation of the plays, seven of which are written entirely in dialect, offered a problem of unusual difficulty. The easiest solution, that namely, of rendering the speech of the Silesian peasants or the Berlin populace into some existing dialect of English, I was forced to reject at once. A very definite set of associative values would thus have been gained for the language of Hauptmann's characters, but of values radically different from those suggested in the original. I found it necessary, therefore, to invent a dialect near enough to the English of the common people to convince the reader or spectator, yet not so near to the usage of any class or locality as to interpose between him and Hauptmann's characters an Irish or a Cockney, a Southern or a New England atmosphere. Into this dialect, with which the work of my collaborators has been made to conform, I have sought to render as justly and as exactly as possible the intensely idiomatic speech that Hauptmann employs. In doing this I have had to take occasional liberties with my text, but I have tried to reduce these to a minimum, and always to make them serve a closer interpretation of the original shade of thought or turn of expression. The rendering of the plays written in normal literary prose or verse needs no such explanation nor the plea for a measure of critical indulgence which that explanation implies. I owe hearty thanks to Dr. Hauptmann for the promptness and cordiality with which he has either rectified or confirmed my view of the development and meaning of his thought and art as stated in the Introduction, and to my wife for faithful assistance in the preparation of these volumes. LUDWIG LEWISOHN

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