

**Redemption and Two Other Plays**

**By**

**Leo Tolstoy et al**

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## INTRODUCTION

After making a production of *Redemption*, the chief feeling of the producer is one of deep regret that Tolstoi did not make more use of the theatre as a medium. His was the rare gift of vitalization: the ability to breathe life into word-people which survives in them so long as there is any one left to turn up the pages they have made their abode.

In the world of writing, many terms that should be illuminative have become meaningless. So often has the barren been called "pregnant," the chill of death "the breath of life," the atrophied "pulsating," that when we really come upon a work with beating heart we find it difficult to give it place that has not already been stuffed to suffocation with misplaced dummies.

We seat it at table with staring wax figures and bid it to join the feast. There is no exclusion act in art, no passport bureau, not even hygienic segregation.

In writing the briefest introduction to Tolstoi's work, I am appointed by the publisher, a sort of reception committee of one to escort the work to some fitting place where it may enjoy the surroundings and deference it deserves.

The place to which I escort it is built of words, but what words have

been left me by the long procession of previous committees? Where they have been truthfully used they have been glorified, and offer all the rarer material for my structure, but how often have they been subjected to base use. Perhaps some day we will learn the proper respect of such simple words as love and truth and life, and then when we meet them in books we shall know how to greet them.

The study of Redemption is so simple that it needs no illumination from me. The characters may walk in strange lands without introduction. They are part of us. Fédyà is in all of us. His one cry "There has always been so much lacking between what I felt and what I could do" instantly makes him brother to all mankind. His simultaneous physical degeneration and spiritual regeneration is the glory that all people have invested in death. Tolstoi's cry against convention that disregards spiritual struggle, and system that ignores human growth, will find answering cries in many breasts in many lands.

Utterly disregarding effect, technique or method, Tolstoi has explored his own soul and there touched hands with countless other souls, and since he has trod the path of countless millions who will come after him, the mementos of his journey will long be sought.

ARTHUR HOPKINS.