

**DRAMATIC CRITICISM:  
THREE LECTURES DELIVERED  
AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION  
FEBRUARY 1903**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649565016

Dramatic Criticism: Three Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution February 1903 by A. B. Walkley

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**A. B. WALKLEY**

**DRAMATIC CRITICISM:  
THREE LECTURES DELIVERED  
AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION  
FEBRUARY 1903**



# DRAMATIC CRITICISM

THREE LECTURES DELIVERED  
AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION  
FEBRUARY 1903

BY

A. B. WALKLEY



LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET  
1903

907  
W186  
d

## CONTENTS

### PART I

	PAGE
THE IDEAL SPECTATOR . . . . .	7

### PART II

THE DRAMATIC CRITIC. . . . .	47
------------------------------	----

### PART III

OLD AND NEW CRITICISM . . . . .	87
---------------------------------	----



# I

## THE IDEAL SPECTATOR



5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23



## DRAMATIC CRITICISM

### I

It is not to be gainsaid that the word "criticism" has gradually acquired a certain connotation of contempt. Indeed, one is sometimes tempted to wish that "criticism" and "critic" could be expunged from the dictionary, so lamentably misused as they are. Every one who expresses opinions, however imbecile, in print calls himself a "critic." The greater the ignoramus, the greater the likelihood of his posing as a "critic." The title has become as vulgar as "Professor," which Matthew Arnold modestly declined to share with Professor Pepper. But vulgarity, as we know, is sometimes a very different thing from popularity. It is significant that the vocabulary of daily life has never adopted the word "critic" as a term of endearment.

From the people whom the critic criticises it would be unreasonable to expect sympathy. When the rowdy baronet in Mr. Pinero's play felt particularly lively he always broke a valuable piece of porcelain, and it is an infallible sign of exuberant health in a popular actor when he says something sarcastic about the dramatic critics. There is a story in Bret Harte—or in Mark Twain—of a youthful convalescent in San Francisco about whom anxious inquirers were reassured by the information that "he was quite peart-like, heavin' rocks at the Chinamen." What the Chinamen were to this interesting invalid, the dramatic critics are to the popular actor—*hostes humani generis*—the mark for rocks, or any more handy missile. The dramatic critic's fellow-playgoers regard him as a wet blanket, a spoil-sport. They "know what they like," as the phrase goes, and therefore they look askance at the man one of whose functions it is to persuade them that they do not know what they ought to like. This attitude has been illustrated in a question seriously debated by a club of