

THE IDEA OF TRAGEDY

THE
IDEA OF TRAGEDY
IN ANCIENT AND
MODERN DRAMA

THREE LECTURES DELIVERED
AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION

FEBRUARY, 1900

BY

W. L. COURTNEY

WITH A PREFATORY NOTE

BY A. W. PINERO

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PREFATORY NOTE.

MY DEAR COURTNEY,

Your publishers have flatteringly invited me to write an "Introduction" to your lectures on *The Idea of Tragedy*, but, even were I competent to avail myself of so great a privilege, I should consider it in the highest degree presumptuous, as it would be superfluous, in me to "introduce" an acknowledged scholar and authoritative critic like yourself. When the scholar and thinker speaks of immortal poets, and of their development of an idea which has proved a source of noble and lofty inspiration to man through innumerable ages, the playwright of to-day, seeking illumination, must surely be among the humblest of his listeners. What has such an one to do with the part of Master of Ceremonies? And what need have you of such a functionary? However, I feel that personally I owe you a large debt of gratitude, and in payment I can only offer you this my note of hand.