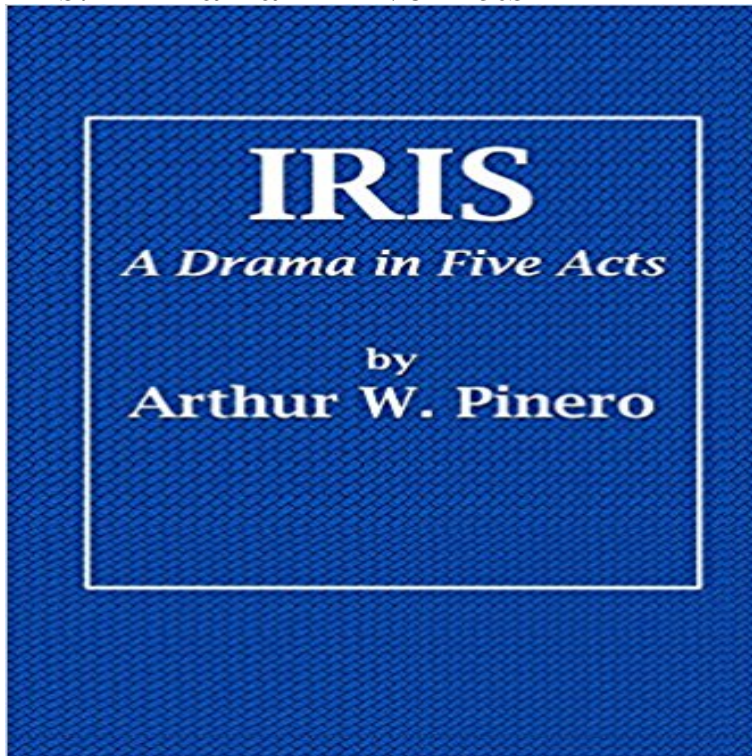


Iris: A Drama in Five Acts



An analysis of *Iris* as originally published in *The British and American Drama of Today*. In *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* Pinero is content with placing before his audience a situation, and selecting a certain group of personages to work it out. In *Iris*, although there is a situation, we are inclined to believe that the author wished to draw the picture of a woman, struggling with a situation, rather than a situation in which people struggle to extricate themselves. The earlier play was more of a story, the later, a painting. No such painting, it is true, as *Hedda Gabler*, still it is as near to it as this dramatist ever came. *Iris* is justly acclaimed as one of the best technical feats of Pinero, for the story is simply and interestingly told, the character of the heroine carefully limned, the logical needs of the theme rigidly supplied. In the case of *Iris*, the exposition is of especial importance. Every step she takes in her downward course throughout the play is dependent upon (1) the conditions of the will, and (2) her character. These two points must be indelibly impressed upon the mind of the audience, or what follows will be unconvincing. Take careful note of the innumerable references to Iris's temperament; the opening scene, between Miss Pinsent and Kane, is full of them, and when Iris herself enters she adds to our store of knowledge. Kanes ... it is only fair to assume that your husband, knowing how greatly your happiness depends upon your personal comfort, was actuated by a desire to safeguard you is peculiarly significant. Iris even goes so far as to quote some of the terms of the will. Does Pinero succeed in convincing you of the probability of the conditions? Does he prepare a sufficiently solid foundation upon which to build the rest of the structure? Is the exposition of *Iris* more economical or less so than that of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*? In what way is it superior to that of *Sweet Lavender*? Compare it with the exposition of

Mid-Channel. Pinero has selected a character more subtle and more difficult to portray than Mrs. Tanqueray: Iris, a weak woman, taxes the dramatists powers far more than Paula, whose very strength forms, as it were, a point of resistance against which to build situations. Positive wills, active agents, are the stuff of which drama is made, while passive and negative ones present numerous obstacles for the maker of plays. In The Second Mrs. Tanqueray the conflict of wills furnishes ready-made material, in Iris the lack of will, the drifting of the heroine, forces the dramatist at every turn to invent situations; it calls upon him to exert all his ingenuity to keep the story moving.

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