

**PAPERS ON ACTING  
II; ART  
AND THE ACTOR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649440023

Papers on Acting II; Art and the Actor by Constant Coquelin & Henry James

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)

**CONSTANT COQUELIN & HENRY JAMES**

**PAPERS ON ACTING  
II; ART  
AND THE ACTOR**



PAPERS ON ACTING

II

Art and the Actor

BY

CONSTANT COQUELIN

TRANSLATED BY

ABBY LANGDON ALGER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HENRY JAMES



STANFORD LIBRARY

Printed for the

Dramatic Museum of Columbia University

*in the City of New York*

MCMXV

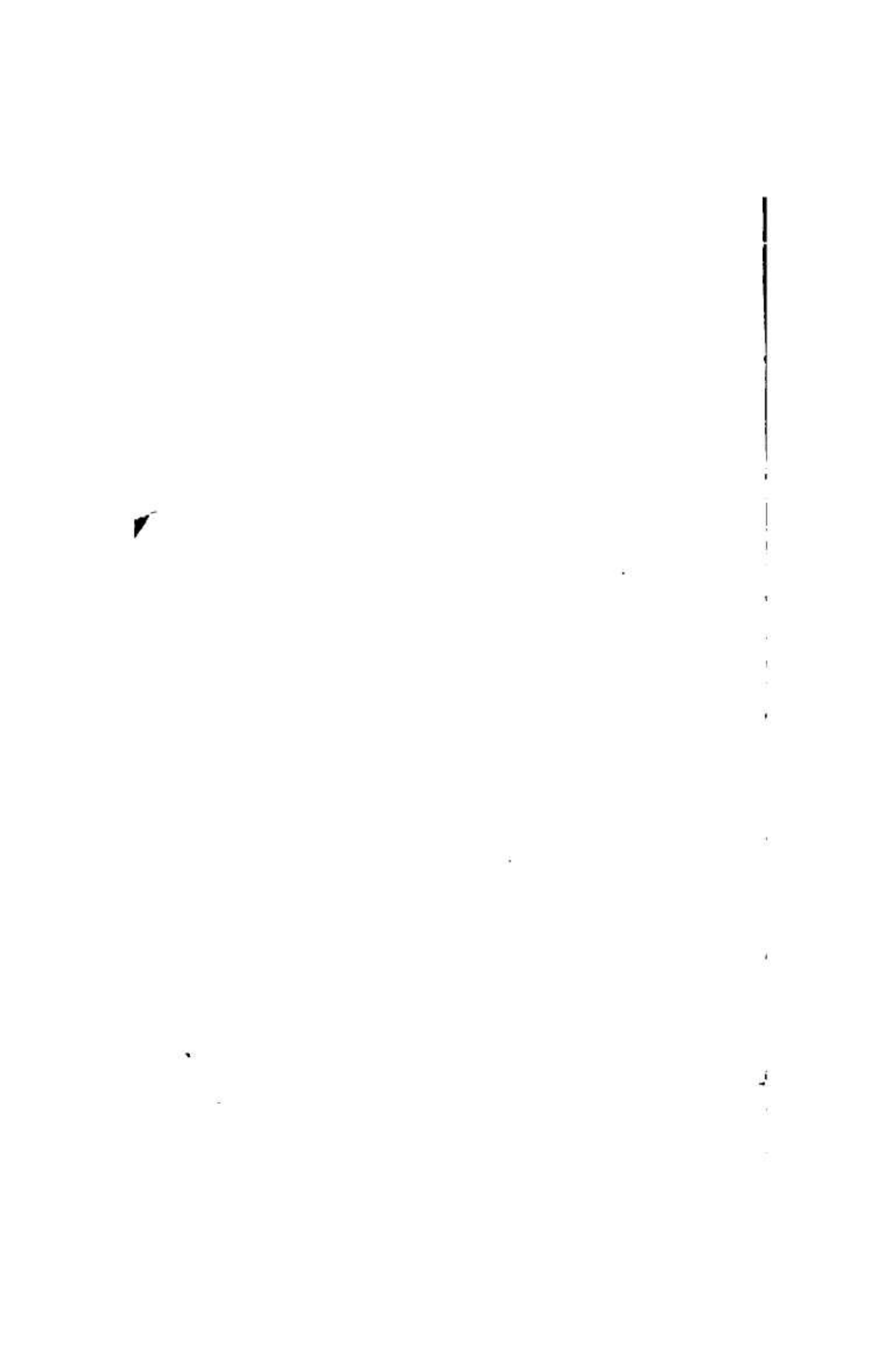
K<sub>1</sub>

6874-15

674

## C O N T E N T S

Introduction by Henry James .....	1
Art and the Actor by Constant Coquelin .....	39 ✓
Notes, by B. M. ....	91



STAMFORD LIBRARY

I N T R O D U C T I O N \*

**I**T was nearly seventeen years ago and the first time that the writer of these remarks had taken his seat in that temple of the drama in which he was destined afterwards to spend so many delightful evenings, feel the solicitation of so many interesting questions and welcome so many fine impressions, these last crowned by the conviction that the Théâtre Français was such a school of taste as was not elsewhere to be found in the world. The spectator of whom I speak felt the education of his theatric sense fairly begin on the evening M. Coquelin was revealed to him in 'Lions et Renards'—and revealed in spite of a part of rather limited opportunity. Many parts since have continued the revelation, these more important, more markt for success (Émile Augier's comedy to which I allude was, not undeservedly, a failure;) but I have retained in its vividness my image of the hour, and of all that this

\* The substance of this paper appeared in the CENTURY MAGAZINE for January, 1887.



actor in especial contributed, because it was the first step of an initiation. It opened a door thru which I was in future to pass as often as possible into a world of delightful, fruitful art. M. Coquelin has quitted the Comédie, his long connection with that august institution has come to an end, and he is to present himself in America not as a representative of the richest theatrical tradition in the world, but as an independent and enterprising genius who has felt the need of the margin and elbow-room, the lighter, fresher air of a stage of his own. He will find this stage in the United States as long as he looks for it, and an old admirer may hope that he will look for it often and make it the scene of new experiments and new triumphs. His visit is in fact itself a new experiment, the result of which can scarce fail of interest for those who watch with attention the evolution of taste in our great and lively land. If it should be largely and strikingly successful that sacred cause will quite of necessity, I think, have scored heavily.

It is nevertheless to be noted that foreign performers, lyric and dramatic, descending

upon our shores by the thousand, have encountered a various, by no means always an assured, fortune. Many have failed, and of those who have succeeded it is safe to say that they have done so for reasons lying pretty well on the surface. They have addressed us in tongues that were alien and to most of us incomprehensible, but there was usually something in them that operated as a bribe to favor. The peculiarity of M. Coquelin's position and the cause of the curiosity with which we shall have regarded the public's attitude toward him are in the fact that he offers no bribe whatever, none of the lures of youth or beauty or sex or of an insinuating aspect, and none of those that reside in a familiar domestic repertory. The question is simply of appreciating or not appreciating his admirable talent and his not less admirable method. Great singers speak, or rather sing, for themselves; music hath charms, and the savage breast is soothed even when the "words" require a handy translation. Distinguisht foreign actresses have the resource of a womanhood which a chivalrous people is much more willing than not to take for lovely. Madame Sarah-

Bernhardt was helpt to relieve the burden of the French tongue to the promiscuous public by being able to add to her extraordinary cleverness her singular beauty, and then to add ever so many wonderful dresses and draperies to that. M. Coquelin will have had to please with nothing like the same assistance; he is not beautiful, he is not pictorial, and his clothes scarcely matter. The great Salvini has successfully beguiled us in Italian, but has had the advantage of the bravest address to the eye of which a man can be well capable, and of representing with his romantic type characters that have on our stage a consecration, a presumption in their favor. M. Coquelin's type is not romantic, and whatever in him is most immediately visible would seem to have been formed for the broadest comedy. By a miracle of talent and industry he has forced his physical means to serve him also, and with equal felicity, in comedy that is not broad, but surpassingly delicate, and even in the finest pathetic and tragic effects. To enjoy the refinement of his acting, however, the ear must be as open as the eye, must even be beforehand with it; and if that of the