# COQUELIN.

IT 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, to feel the solicitation of so many interesting problems, and to receive so many fine impressions, foremost among which was this, that the Théâtre Français was a school for the education of the taste. It seemed to the spectator of whom I speak that the education of his own dramatic taste began on the evening he saw M. Coquelin play a part — doubtless of rather limited opportunity — in "Lions et Renards." I have seen him play many parts since then, more important, more predestined to success (Émile Augier's comedy to which I allude was, not undeservedly, a failure), but I have retained a vivid and friendly memory of the occasion, and of this particular actor's share in it, because it was the first step in an initiation. It opened a door, through which I was in future to pass as often as possible, into a world of fruitful, delightful art. M. Coquelin has quitted the Comédie Française, 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. M. Coquelin's visit to America is, in fact, in itself a new experiment, the result of which cannot fail to be interesting to those who consider with attention the evolution of taste in our great and lively country. If it should be largely and strikingly successful, that sacred cause will beyond controversy have scored heavily. Foreign performers, lyric and dramatic, have descended upon our shores by the thousand and have encountered a various fortune. Many have failed, but of those who have succeeded it is safe to say that they have done so for reasons which lay 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 attitude of the public towards him, is in the fact that he offers no bribe whatever — none of the lures of youth or beauty or sex, or of an insinuating aspect, or of those that reside in a familiar domestic repertory. It is a question simply of appreciating or not appreciating his admirable talent, his magnificent execution. Great singers speak or rather sing for themselves. Music hath charms, and the savage breast is soothed even when the "words" require an ingenious translation. Distinguished foreign actresses have the prestige of a womanhood which is, at any rate, constructively lovely. Madame Sara Bernhardt was helped to make the French tongue acceptable to the promiscuous public by the fact that, besides being extraordinarily clever, she was also, to many eyes, very beautiful and picturesque, and had wonderful and innumerable gowns. M. Coquelin will have had the same task without the same assistance; he is not beautiful, he is not picturesque, and his clothes scarcely count. The great Salvini has successfully beguiled the American people with the Italian tongue; but he has had the advantage of being very handsome to look upon, of a romantic type, and of representing characters that have on our own stage a consecration, a presumption in their favor. M. Coquelin is not of a romantic type, and everything in him that meets the eye of the spectator would appear 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. But to enjoy the refinement of M. Coquelin's acting the ear must be as open as the eye, must even be beforehand with it; and if that of the American public learns, or even shows an aptitude for learning, the lesson conveyed in his finest creations, the lesson that acting is an art and that art is style, the gain will have been something more than the sensation of the moment — it will have been an added perception.

In M. Augier's comedy which I have mentioned, and which was speedily withdrawn, there was frequent reference to the

"robe of innocence" of the young Viscount Adhémar, an interesting pupil of the Jesuits, or at least of the clerical party, who, remarkable for his infant piety and the care taken to fence him in from the corruptions of the town, goes sadly astray on coming up to Paris, and inflicts grievous rents and stains on the garment in question. I well remember the tone of humbugging juvenile contrition in which Coquelin, representing the misguided youth, confessed that it was no longer in a state to be worn. He had a little curly flaxen wig, parted in the middle, and a round, rosy face, and a costume resembling that which in New York to-day is attributed to that elusive animal the dude; yet he was not a figure of farce, but a social product, as lightly touched as he was definitely specified. I thought his companions as delightful as himself, and my friendliness extended even to the horrible stalls in which, in those days, one was condemned to sit, and to the thick, hot atmosphere of the house. I suspect the atmosphere has never been lightened since then, and that the Théâtre Français has never had a thorough airing; but certain alleviations have been introduced, new chairs and wide passages, and frescoes on the ceilings, and fresh upholstery on box and balcony. It is still, however, of the dingy and stuffy old theater that I think, haunted as it then was more sensibly by the ghosts of the great players of the past — the mighty shades of Talma and Mars and Rachel. It has seemed to me ever since that the "improvements" have frightened them away; the ancient discomforts were a part of the tradition — a word which represents the very soul of the Comédie Française, and which, under the great dim roof which has echoed to so many thrilling sounds, one pronounces with bated breath. The tradition was at that time in the keeping of MM. Régnier, Bressant, Delaunay, and Got, of Mesdames Plessy, Natalie, and Favart, to say nothing of the subject of this sketch, the latest comer in the great generation of which these were some of the principal figures. Much has been changed since then, and M. Coquelin, though still in the prime of life, was the other day almost a senior. Régnier, Bressant, Delaunay have disappeared, and from the boards of the Théâtre Français the most robust depositary of the tradition in the younger line — for to this title Coquelin certainly has a right — has also vanished. Gone is the brilliant, artificial, incomparable Plessy; gone is that rich and wise comédienne, the admirable, elderly, humorous, discreet, and touching Natalie; gone is poor Madame Favart, whose utterance I remember I couldn't understand the first time I heard her (she was still playing young girls, and represented, in a very tight dress, the aristocratic heroine of "Lions et Renards"), but whom I afterwards grew to admire as an actress of high courage and a great tragic gift.

It took a certain time for a new spectator to discriminate and compare, to see things, or rather to see persons, in the right proportion and perspective. I remember that the first evenings I spent in the Rue de Richelieu I thought every one equally good, I was dazzled by the universal finish, by an element of control which at that time seemed to me supreme. Every one *was* good,— I don't say that every one is to-day,— but afterwards the new spectator perceived differences. He even discovered that, such is the grossness intermingled with even the noblest human institutions, there is sometimes a failure of taste behind that stately *rampe*. He has heard common voices there, he has seen the dead letter of the famous tradition uninformed by a spirit. He has seen gentlemen put down their hats with great accuracy on the first chair on the right of the door as they come in, but do very little more than that. He has seen actresses to whom all the arts of the toilet, all the facility of the Frenchwoman, and all the interest they had in producing an illusion could not impart the physiognomy of a lady. These little roughnesses, however, inherent, as I say, in every mundane enterprise, were not frequent, and the general glamour lasted a long time. I am nevertheless pleased to believe to-day that (if I do not deceive myself) even at the very first I dimly discerned that the essence of the matter, the purest portions of the actor's art, abode in this young Coquelin — he was then young — with an unsurpassable intensity. Benoît-Constant Coquelin was born at Boulogne-sur-Mer in 1841; his vocation defined itself at a very early age, and he became a pupil of the Conservatoire in 1859. From this nursery of histrionic hopes he entered the Comédie Française, where he immediately made his presence perceived. At the age of twenty-three he was a *sociétaire* of the great house. His cast of countenance, his features, the extraordinary metallic ring of his voice, marked him out for parts of extreme comic effort and of what is called charactery. Long before I had seen him I remember a friend's exciting — in a letter — my interest in his acting of Théodore de Banville's touching and picturesque little play of "Gringoire," where, in the part of a mediæval Bohemian of letters, condemned to be hanged by Louis XI. and reprieved when the halter is already around his neck (I have not seen the piece for a long time, and forget the exact argument), he gave occasion to that amiable interfusion of smiles and tears to which a

French audience is so much inclined. "Gringoire" is an exquisite creation, which has taken its place in M. Coquelin's permanent repertory, where he has given it, in comparatively recent times, a companion figure in M. Coppée's "Luthier de Crémone," a sensitive, slightly morbid personage, represented by the actor with extreme discretion and genuine poetical feeling, and dear to the French public from the fact that he may be introduced to families and young ladies. The pathetic, the "interesting" (including, where need be, the romantic and even the heroic), and the extravagantly droll represent the two opposite ends of M. Coquelin's large gamut. He turns from one to the other, he ranges between them, with incomparable freedom and ease. Into the *emploi* of the impudent, extravagant serving-men of the old comedies,—the *Mascarilles*, the *Scapins*, the *Frontins*, the *Crispins*,—he stepped from the first with the assurance of a conqueror; from hand to foot, in face, in manner, in voice, in genius, he was cut out for them, and it is with his most successful efforts in this line that, for the public at large, his name has become synonymous. If his portrait is painted (perhaps it has been) for the *foyer* of the Comédie Française, it should be as the *Mascarille* of Molière's "L'Étourdi."

I have an impression that this was the second part I saw him play, with Delaunay as the scatterbrained hero. Coquelin was dressed like a figure of the old Italian comedy, in great stripes of crimson and white, a little round cloak, a queer, inflated-looking cap, and breeches and hose of the same pattern. I can see him, I can hear him, the incarnation of humorous effrontery and agility, launching his prodigious voice over the footlights, fairly trumpeting his "points," and giving an unparalleled impression of life and joy. I have seen him in the part many times since then, and it has always seemed to me, with the exception of his astonishing incarnation of the false marquis in the "Précieuses Ridicules" (the valet, who in his master's finery, masquerades as a *bel-esprit*), the most exuberant in his repertory. Of this fantastic exuberance he is a rare master, and his command of it is doubly wonderful when one thinks of his command of effects which lie entirely in self-possession — effects of low tone, as painters say. The representative of *Don Annibal* in "L'Aventurière," of *Don César de Bazan* in "Ruy Blas" (in both of which parts the actor is superb), is also the representative of various prose-talking, subdued gentlemen of to-day (the *Duc de Septmonts*, in "L'Étrangère" of the younger Dumas, the argumentative, didatic *Thouvenin*, in the same author's "Denise") caught in various tight places, as gentlemen must be in a play, but with no accessories *à la Goya* to help them out. The interpreter of the tragic passion of *Jean Dacier*, which I have not seen for many years, is hidden in the stupendously comical and abject figure of M. Royal, the canting little pettifogger or *clerc d'huissier*, who appears in a single brief scene in the last act of "Tartuffe," and into whom M. Coquelin, taking up the part for the first time in the autumn of 1885, infused an individuality of grotesqueness and baseness which gave him — all in the space of five minutes — one of his greatest triumphs.

The art of composition, in the various cases I have mentioned, is the same, but the subjects to which it is applied have nothing in common. I have heard people enunciate the singular proposition: "Coquelin has great talent — he does ever so many different things; but, I don't know — he is always Coquelin." He is indeed always Coquelin, which is a great mercy, considering what he possibly might have been. It is by being always Coquelin that he is able to be *Jean Dacier* one night and *Don Annibal* another. If it be meant by the remark I have just quoted that he makes *Don Annibal* resemble *Jean Dacier*, or gives the two personages something in common which they could not really have possessed, no criticism could well be less exact. What it really points to, I suppose, is the extreme definiteness and recognizableness, as it were, of the performer's execution, of his physical means, above all, of that voice which no manner of composing a particular character can well render a less astounding organ at one moment than at another. *Don César* is Coquelin and *M. Thouvenin* is Coquelin, because on the lips both of *Don César* and of *M. Thouvenin* there sits a faculty of vocalization, as one may call it, which is peculiar to the artist who embodies them, and surely one of the most marvelous the stage has ever known. It may be said that M. Coquelin's voice betrays him; that he cannot get away from it, and that whatever he does with it one is always reminded that only he can do such things. His voice, in short, perpetually, loudly identifies him. Its life and force are such that the auditor sometimes feels as if it were running away with him — taking a holiday, performing antics and gyrations on its own account. The only reproach it would ever occur to me to make to the possessor of it is that he perhaps occasionally loses the idea while he listens to the sound. But such an organ may well beguile the ear even of him who has toiled to forge and polish it; it is impossible to imagine anything more directly formed for the stage, where the prime necessity of every effort is that it shall "tell." When Coquelin speaks, the sound is not sweet and caressing, though

it adapts itself beautifully, as I have hinted, to effects of gentleness and pathos; it has no analogy with the celebrated and delicious murmur of Delaunay, the enchanting cadences and semitones of that artist, also so accomplished, so perfect. It is not primarily the voice of a lover, or rather (for I hold that any actor — such is the indulgence of the public to this particular sentiment — may be a lover with any voice) it is not primarily, like that of M. Delaunay, the voice of love. There is no reason why it should have been, for the passion of love is not what M. Coquelin has usually had to represent.

He has usually had to represent the passion of impudence, and it is, I think, not too much to say that it is in this portrayal that he has won most of his greatest victories. His expression, his accent, give him the highest commission for placing before us the social quality which, I suppose, most conducts a man to success. The valets of Molière and Regnard are nothing if not impudent; impudent are *Don César* and *Don Annibal;* impudent, heroically impudent, is *Figaro;* impudent (as I remember him) *M. Adolphe de Beaubourg* (in "Paul Forestier"); impudent the *Duc de Septmonts;* impudent even — or at least decidedly impertinent — the copious moralist *M. Thouvenin.* (I have selected simply a handful of instances, out of M. Coquelin's immense repertory. There are doubtless others at least as much to the point, in parts in which I have not seen him. He is believed, moreover,—and the idea is most natural,— to have aspirations of the most definite character with regard to "Tartuffe," and it may be predicted that on the day he embraces that fine opportunity he will give a supreme sign of his power to depict the unblushing. It need hardly be remarked that the Mephistopheles, which at the moment I write he is rumored to have in his eye, in an arrangement of Goethe's drama, will abound in the same sense.) If M. Coquelin's voice is not sweet, it is extraordinarily clear, firm, and ringing, and it has an unsurpassable distinctness, a peculiar power to carry. As I write I seem to hear it ascend like a rocket to the great hushed dome of the theater of the Rue de Richelieu. It vibrates, it lashes the air, it seems to proceed from some mechanism still more scientific than the human throat. In the great cumulative tirades of the old comedy, the difficulties of which are pure sport for M. Coquelin, it flings down the words, the verses, as a gamester precipitated by a run of luck flings louis d'or upon the table. I am not sure that the most perfect piece of acting that I have seen him achieve is not a prose character, but it is certain that to appreciate to the full what is most masterly in his form one must listen to and enjoy his delivery of verse. That firmness touched with hardness, that easy confidence which is only the product of the most determined study, shine forth in proportion as the problem becomes complicated. It does not, indeed, as a general thing, become so psychologically in the old rhymed parts; but in these parts the question of elocution, of diction, or even simply the question of breath, bristles both with opportunities and with dangers. Perhaps it would be most exact to say that wherever M. Coquelin has a very long and composite speech to utter, be it verse or prose, there one gets the cream of his talent. The longest speech in the French drama, not excepting the famous soliloquy of *Figaro* in the second comedy of Beaumarchais, and that of *Charles V.* in "Hernani," is, I should suppose, the discourse placed in the mouth of *M. Thouvenin* aforesaid in the last act of "Denise." It occupies nearly four close pages in the octavo edition of the play, and if it is not a soliloquy it is a sermon, a homily, a treatise. An English or an American audience would have sunk into a settled gloom by the time the long rhythm of the thing had declared itself, and even at the Théâtre Français the presumption was against the actor's ability to bring safely into port a vessel drawing such a prodigious depth of water. M. Coquelin gave it life, light, color, movement, variety, interest, even excitement. One held one's breath, not exactly to hear what *Thouvenin* would say, but to hear how Coquelin would say it. Such a success as that seems to me to be the highest triumph of the actor's art, because it belongs to the very foundation, and to the most human part of it. On our own stage to *say* things is out of fashion, if for no other reason than that we must first have them to say. To *do* them, with a great reënforcement of chairs and tables, of traps and panoramas and other devices, is the most that our Anglo-Saxon star, of either sex, aspires to. The ear of the public, that exquisite critical sense which is two-thirds of the comedian's battle-field, has simply ceased to respond from want of use. And where, indeed, is the unfortunate comedian to learn how to speak? Is it the unfortunate public that is to teach him? Gone are the days when the evolution of a story could sit on the lips of an actor. The stage-carpenter and the dress-maker have relieved him long since of that responsibility.

One September night, ten years ago, being in Paris after a considerable absence, an occasional sojourner there went to the Comédie Française to see "Jean Dacier," a tragedy in four acts, in verse, by M. Thomond. When he came out he was too excited to go home, to go

to bed, to do anything but live over the piece and walk off his emotion. He made several times the circuit of the Place de la Concorde, he patrolled the streets of Paris till the night was far gone and his agitation had subsided. It had been produced by Coquelin's representation of the hero, and no tribute to the actor's power could have been more unrestricted and spontaneous. Many years have elapsed since then; the play, for reasons social and political, rather, I think, than artistic, has not been repeated, and the spectator of whom I relate this harmless anecdote has consequently never had a chance of renewing his impression of it. He has often wondered whether his recollection is to be trusted, whether there is not an element of illusion in it, of fortuitous, extraneous glamour. That evening remains with him as almost the most memorable he has ever spent in a play-house. Was there, as it happened, something in his mood that favored the occasion inordinately, or was the whole thing really as fine, and was Coquelin's acting, in particular, as magnificent, as his subsequent ecstatic perambulation would have indicated? Why, on the one hand, should Coquelin's acting not have been magnificent, and why, on the other, if it was as much so as I have ever since ventured to suppose, has it not been more celebrated, more commemorated, more of a household word? I do not remember to have heard that particular triumph very often alluded to. Why, above all, social and political reasons to the contrary notwithstanding, has the play never again been brought forward, if the effect of it was really even but half as great as I imagine it to have been? At any rate, if I may trust my memory, *Jean Dacier* is a part which, now that he is his own master and may take his property where he finds it, M. Coquelin will consult the interest of his highest reputation by taking up again at an early day. As the beauty of this creation comes back to me, I am almost ashamed to have intimated just now that his strong point is the representation of impudence. There is not a touch of that vice in the portrait of the young republican captain who has sprung from the ranks and who finds himself, by one of the strange combinations of circumstances that occur in great revolutions, married from one moment to another to the daughter of his former *seigneur*, the lord of the manor, now ruined and proscribed, under whom he grew up in his Breton village. The young man, of course, of old, before being swept into the ranks, has adored the châtelaine in secret (and in secret only), being divided from her by the impassable gulf which in the novel and the drama, still more than in real life, separates the countess from the serf. The girl has been reprieved from the scaffold on condition of her marrying a republican soldier,—cases are on record in which this clemency was extended to royalist victims,—and the husband whom chance reserves for her is a person who, in the days of her grandeur and his own obscurity, was as the dust beneath her feet. I say "chance," but, as I remember the situation, it is not altogether that, inasmuch as *Jean* has already recognized her—he naturally escapes recognition himself—as she passes the windows of the guard-house at Nantes in the horrible tumbril of the condemned. A "republican marriage," with the drum-head for the registrar's table, has just been celebrated, before the spectators' eyes and those of the young man; a stout Breton lass (not in this case a royalist martyr) has cheerfully allowed herself to be conjoined by a rite not even civil, but simply military, with one of her country's defenders. This strikes the note of *Jean's* being able (the idea flashes on him as he sees her) to save his former mistress if she will accept a release at such a price. She doesn't know whether she accepts or not—she is dazed, bewildered, overwhelmed. The revulsion is too great and the situation too strange to leave her, for the moment, her reason; and one of the most striking incidents, as well as the most thrilling pieces of acting, that I remember to have seen, was the entrance of Madame Favart, as the heroine, at this stage of the piece. She has at a moment's notice been pulled down from the tumbril, and with her hands just untied, her hair disordered, her senses confounded, and the bloody vision of the guillotine still in her eyes, she is precipitated into the room full of soldiers with the announcement of the inconceivable condition of her pardon in her ears. The night I saw the play, the manner in which Madame Favart, in this part, rendered in face and step all the amazement of the situation, drew forth a long burst of applause even while she still remained dumb.

The ceremony is concluded even before one of the parties to it regains her senses, and it is not till afterwards that she discovers the identity of her partner. I recall, as a scene to which the actress's talent gave almost as much effect as Coquelin's, the third act of "Jean Dacier," in which, in the poor room to which he takes her as his bride, an *éclaircissement* comes to pass between these romantically situated young persons. As I allude to it here, a certain analogy with the celebrated cottage-scene in the "Lady of Lyons" occurs to me; but I was not struck with that when I saw the play. The step the young man has taken is, of course, simply to save the girl's life; having done this, he wishes

only to efface himself (though he does worship her) without insisting on the rights of a husband. The situation, naturally, is foredoomed to become still more romantic and tragic; by the time *Marie* (I forget her noble surname) discovers that her husband is an uncommonly fine fellow, by the time a new passion on her side begins to take the place of her first impression that he wished to obtain a base advantage of her — by this time it is, of course, too late, and we are close on the edge of the catastrophe. I forget how it comes about; I think (but about all this I am not perfectly clear) through *Jean's* taking or appearing to take part in a secret movement for putting the life of the girl's father in safety as against his own colleagues, the republican chiefs. The attempt comes to light after it has succeeded, and the young man's life, either by his own hand or by military justice, is the forfeit. What I most definitely remember is that as the curtain falls the once proud *Marie*, who has fathomed the depths of his heroism, flings herself upon his inanimate body. All this is very grand (M. Thomond's play must surely be a very interesting one), and my theory would be that M. Coquelin's representation of it was thoroughly superior. Not formed by nature for depicting romantic love, he triumphed over every obstacle which his person might have presented, and gave signal support to the interesting truth that if an actor have the rest of the business in him, his physical appearance, as regards the particular image to be projected upon the sense of the public, is the last thing that matters. The impression of the ear can always charm away anything that needs to be got rid of in the eye. Youth, passion, patriotism, tenderness, renunciation, everything that thrills and melts, everything gallant and touching, appear to me, at this distance of time, to have been embodied in the little republican officer with the weather-worn uniform, the *retroussé* nose, and the far-ringing voice (in two or three of the patriotic couplets of the first act it sounded like a clarion). And it is to be noted that the part is purely and exclusively tragic; the actor is not allowed to help himself by touching any of the other chords of his lyre.

It comes over me, moreover, that if that admirable old Alsatian country schoolmaster in "L'Ami Fritz," of whom M. Coquelin makes so inimitable a figure, is not tragic, neither is he in the smallest degree impudent. This character is an elaborate picture of quaint, old-fashioned geniality and morality and patriarchial *bonhomie.* It is a marvel of specification without exaggeration, an individual reproduced in his minutest peculiarities, and yet kept perpetually in relation to the medium in which he moves, perfect in tone, perfect above all in taste. The taste in which MM. Erckmann-Chatrian's village schoolmaster is embalmed I judge it would be impossible for M. Coquelin, under any circumstances whatever, to depart from. One feels it is there as a sort of classic temperance — in all the grotesque unctuousness of *M. Loyal*, in the extravagance of the grimacing, chanting, capering footman of "Les Précieuses." In other words, as I have already hinted, in everything he does, in his lowest comedy as well as in his highest, M. Coquelin has style. Of how much he has it in his highest, his *Duc de Septmonts*, to which I have already alluded, may stand as the fullest proof. I have left myself no space to descant on this admirable picture, which I had in mind in saying just now that *Jean Dacier* is his most perfect piece of acting but one. (I can only answer for those I have seen, of course, and there are many that I have not had the good fortune to see. I am ignorant, for instance, of three or four of his creations of the last few years — of *Le Député de Bombignac*, of *Un Parisien*, and of *Chamillac*, which I have heard spoken of in superlative terms, and in which M. Coquelin appears to have won a brilliant triumph.) Confining myself to those episodes of his career which have come under my direct observation, I should say that if *Jean Dacier* is his highest flight in the line of rhymed parts, the *Duc de Septmonts* is his most striking attempt in the field of a closer realism. It is impossible not to have a high opinion of the art which can project so vivid and consistent an image and yet keep it (to borrow again a convenient term from the painters) so quiet, so much in the tone of familiar, conceivable life. There is something in the way M. Coquelin goes through this long and elaborate part, all of fine shades and minute effects, all appearing to the finest observation as well as displaying it, which reminds one of the manner in which the writer of a "psychological" novel (when he knows how to write as well as M. Coquelin knows how to act) builds up a character, in his supposedly uncanny process — with touch added to touch, line to line, and a vision of his personage breathing before him. M. Coquelin is really the Balzac of actors. The effect that his farewell to the Théâtre Français (taken in conjunction with some other recent vicissitudes — now a goodly number; with some other "rifts within the lute") will have upon the classic house itself belongs to a range of considerations which, though seductive, are not open to us here. But it is impossible not to watch with lively interest, and almost with a sort of suspense, the future of the distinguished seceder; his

BENOÎT-CONSTANT COQUELIN, BORN JANUARY 25TH, 1841.

endowment, his capacity, his fortune up to this time, his general intention and ambition, are all of so high and bold an order. He is an image of success as well as of resolution, and we shall watch with curiosity for the forms that success will take with him hereafter. It came to him the first hour he trod the stage, and to the best of my knowledge he has never known a defeat. Not only this, but in a company of which half the members and pensioners spend more of their career behind the scenes than before them, he has never known an intermission of activity. My impression would be that in the last five and twenty years he has created more parts than almost all his comrades put together. All this is an earnest of very interesting things yet to come; for, as life is measured in the theater, M. Coquelin is still a young man. The defect of his talent is (I have already ventured to use the word) a certain hardness, an almost inhuman perfection of surface; but the compensation of that, on the other hand, is that it suggests durability, resistance. The observation, the assimilation of ideas, can only extend themselves. May they do so as much as possible in the United States!

*Henry James.*