

## A Theory of the Theater

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*of the*

Dramatic Museum

OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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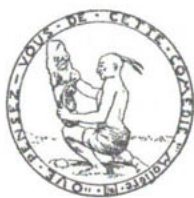
## A Theory of the Theater

BY

FRANCISQUE SARCEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS



Printed for the

Dramatic Museum of Columbia University

*in the City of New York*

M C M X V I

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

**I**N the brilliant essay on the Comédie-Française which Henry James wrote forty years ago, and which had for its text the series of critical analyses of the histrionic attainments of the chief performers at the House of Molière, then recently put forth by Francisque Sarcey, the American critic declared that the French critic was so predominant in the Parisian press that he held "in his hand the fortune of a play" and that if he "devoted an encouraging line and a half to a young actress, mademoiselle immediately had a career." This may be an overstatement, but it can hardly be called a misstatement. For the final thirty years of the nineteenth century Sarcey was the most influential of all the theatrical reviewers of France, even if he could not actually make or unmake a new play or a new player.

Henry James analyzed the reasons for Sarcey's enviable influence and for the weight of his words. Sarcey was "sternly incorruptible;" he had "a religious respect for his