A CRITICAL STUDY

OF THE THEATRE OF MOLIERE

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

PART THREE: THE TRIUMPH OF MOLIERE (cont'd)

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INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest names in the whole history of French Literature is that of Molière. Though his genius is less versatile than that of Shakespeare, his greatness lies in the fact that he was more than a typical poet of a particular era of French literature, that he was more than the representative genius of a great nation. He was one of the three great masters of modern literature whose fame belongs to all times, and to all countries. Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière are the three creators whose works appeal to all educated persons, and whose satire and whose humour is eternal, because they illuminate the passions and weaknesses of all humanity; and, whose influence is greater than that of other writers due to their vast and sympathetic knowledge of the thoughts and characters of real men and real women. Molière is surely, of all the great French masters, the most easily understood

by all classes of people and has the most to offer to that large majority for whom life is a realistic struggle and not a philosophic contemplation. No other dramatist in French literature, and perhaps, no other in the literature of the world, has left such a vivid picture of the vices and fads of mankind. The unhappy state of his domestic life did not prevent him from smiling in his works. He made all his characters seem natural and human; meanwhile, he produced a French laugh which foreigners did not understand. Molière's laugh, compared with that of the fable writer before him, shows that it is less brutal. It is more refined than that of Rabelais, warmer than that of Montaigne, and is less biting than that of Pascal in his famous "Provinciales".

Details of the origin of the comic theatre in France are still scarce, but it is quite clear that the farce, which was given as an interlude between the acts of the long mystery plays, eventually became the most popular form of the comic theatre and enjoyed a steady development from the fifteenth century down to the very day of Moliere. The spirit of these farces resembled the "fabliaux," which were presented in amusing short poems in lines of eight syllables, usually satiric in tone. They portray naturalistic bourgeois characters and depict scenes of everyday life, reminding one of the Spanish "capa y espada" comedies. In 1548 the French parliament forbade further performances of mystery plays in the city of Paris, but farce,

which was not affected by the order, lived on with ever increasing popularity throughout the sixteenth century, and later became one of the most important components of Molière's new theatre.

Molière wrote a number of one-act farces, but most of them remain known today by title only, such as "Gros-Réné écolier," "La Jalousie de Gros-Réné," sometimes called "La Jalousie du barbouillé," " Médecin volant," "Le Docteur pédant," "Gorgibus dans le sac," and Le Fagotier." He may have composed many other which are totally unknown today. Molière's early farces are not original works in the strictest sense of the word, for they are very similar to the popular Italian comedy of the day. Both, the characters and the situation are conventional; and the plays were composed of tricks, disguises, and enormous jokes. Many of them were coarse and vulgar, depending on slap-stick and clowning to get a laugh. It was this laugh that he reserved and converted into the French laugh, while abolishing the coarseness and other conventional qualities of Italian comedy. While doing this, Molière revolutionized and emancipated French comedy, breathing life into the drybones left to him by his predecessors, and changing them from stock-characters and types to realistic characters. The last sentence represents the thesis of this study, and in the following pages the investigator assumes the responsibility of defending this thesis.

P A R T O N E

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF MOLIERE

C H A P T E R I

"L'ETOURDI"

Grimarest says Molière's early education was neglected due to the death of his mother, and to the father's desire to have the young man follow his own profession. Thus, young Poquelin remained in his father's workshop until he was fourteen years of age. In 1636 Jean entered the Collège de Clermont, later, Louis-le-Grand, an institution founded by the Jesuits in 1551. The Jesuits, being pioneers in the field of modern education, were the first teachers who consciously made it their aim to fit their pupils for this world as well as for the next one. They introduced new methods of teaching old subjects, such as Greek and Latin. Not only was their education good, but also was their company desirable. Therefore, people who opposed their educational procedures were quick to seize the opportunity to send their sons to the Jesuits' schools. Thus, the sons of the nobles and those of lesser

people sat in the same classes, under the supervision of the same teachers. That was an example of the democratic spirit in education such as it is known in the Western hemisphere today.

Little is known about young Poquelin's sojourn at the College de Clermont due to the fact that neither La Grange nor Grimarest took the liberty to shed any light on this topic. It is known that he left school in 1641, but continued his work in the field of philosophy and law.

By the time young Poquelin was twenty years old he was quite sure of the future he wanted to be his. On June 30, 1642, he left the service of the Court, and during the late months of the same year he divided his time between the practice of law and visiting the theatres. It was then that he really became acquainted with Italian players, many of whom had been located in Paris since the reign of Henry III. It was then that he met Madeleine Bejart, beautiful actress, who soon persuaded him to take up the theatre as his profession. On June 30, 1643, the same year Corneille presented "le Menteur," Poquelin with the help of the Bejarts, founded the "Illustre Theatre." In December of the same year he discarded his father's name to take a new one which was to make him famous. From this time he called himself de Molière. No one knows why he selected such name. He first signed his name as Molière on a contract

drawn up between his group and Daniel Mallet, a dancer whom he was hiring. After a year and a half of reverses, Molière and his troop quit Paris to stroll in the Provinces for the next twelve years. La Grange mentions eleven plays that were written and played by the group in the Provinces, some of which may have been reworked and used in later presentations. The themes of thoseplays were taken from popular Italian pieces of the day, featuring surprises, mystifications, trickeries and disguises. The characters were taken from the Italian "commedia dell 'arte," based on stories of old men outwitted, loquacious doctors of learning, or resourceful valets. In general the "commedia dell 'arte" was an extremely simple form of entertainment, in which half-a-dozen traditional characters amused the audiences with witty jokes. Such plays obviously depended more on the actor than on the author, and the actor was free to develop or even to vary his part as he pleased. Such freedom of action would necessarily reduce the artistic value of the plays. One must not think, however, that in the case of the "commedia dell 'arte" there was no written composition. There was one, and though a great part of it might have been produced in skeleton or outline form, the actor could always be sure as to what he was to say, when to say it, and how to say it.

"L'Etourdi" represents Molière's first efforts in the field of serious drama. Moland [1] says: "Un événement beaucoup

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1. MOLAND: Vie de Molière, Librairie Garnier Freres, Paris, page 73.

plus remarquable pour nous s'était passé selon toute vraisemblance, au commencement de cette année 1653. Molière avait fait représenter sa première grande comédie, "l'Etourdi," qui obtient un succès considérable." This play had strong leanings towards French farce, but it was thoroughly Italian in character, and Molière did not fail to take his material wherever he could find it. He had had rich experience with the Italians, and "L'Etourdi" reflects that experience. He imitated at least three Italian comedies, not to mention episodes he took from Noel du Fail. He took his final event of his play from the works of Cervantes. Besides, he copied from "l'Epidicus" and "la Mostellaria," and the "Parasite," and perhaps from "Maitre etourdi." Another source is "l'angelica," written by Fabritio de Fornaris. The body and soul of "L'Etourdi" was taken from "Inavveritito," famous play of Nicolo Barbieri, written in 1629. Molière's "Etourdi" came some ten years after the appearance of Corneille's "le Menteur." [1] In all, it seems that Molière took his characters and situations from a dozen authors. "L'Etourdi" is a five-Act play in verse, and it is very similar to early French farces in the improbability and conventionality of plot and in the riotously funny quality of the action. Molière used his sources with great freedom, making changes, and adding new details as he chose to do. Thus, it is safe

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1. "L'Etourdi" may be called the second imperishable comedy; it would have been first, except for Corneille's "Le Menteur."

to assert that there is hardly a line of this farce which could bejustly called "original." [2] It must not be forgotten, however, that the author was thirty-three years of age when he wrote this play, and he had passed ten years of that time in varied company; men and women, poets, authors, princes, men of court, and soldiers; but, he had remained a little remote from them. He lived as yet in the theatre. Furthermore, his dramatic power had not been sufficiently developed to permit him to copy from life itself in the preparation of his early themes. Therefore, his first two authentic plays were chosen from the literature and practice of his profession rather than from life. It is not surprising, then, that personal observation counted for little or nothing. At that time Molière's idea of reality was found in the heroes of Corneille, who was still considered as the greatest literary man in France. The failure of literary critics to recognize "L'Etourdi," in spite of its great poetry, while considering Molière's great plays, is ascribable to that serious lack of originality of plot. All of the characters are traditional and trite in their behavior, and the play itself consists of a series of episodes in which Mascarille tries ingeniously to win for his master possession

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2. John Palmer: MOLIERE, pp. 110-114.

of Celie, the beautiful daughter of Trufaldin.[1] Mascarille invents one ruse after another, but each in turn is defeated due to his master's untimely and innocent intervention. It is almost generally believed in literary circles that Molière did not improve upon his originals; in fact, "l'inavvertito" is in some respects a better play than "l'Etourdi." It is clearer, more logical, more evenly balanced, and more convincing.

The most outstanding blemish of the play is its denouement. This is not to be wondered at, since it was the usual thing for the author to "sew on" unsatisfactory ending to his plays, even in the case of high comedy. The "Tartuffe," one of the plays in which Molière resorts to the "deus ex machina," is a case in point. Admitting, then, that the conclusion of "l'Etourdi" is poor, it is no more so than that of the "Twelfth Night." If Shakespeare was able to escape after having committed such a literary blunder, it does seem that Molière may be excused for making the same mistake. Both authors may be justified in cutting their plays off as they did, because

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1. It is in "L'Etourdi" that Molière presents Mascarille for the first time. At all events, the Mascarille of "l'Etourdi " is a valet, making no pretenses to "bel esprit", and is chiefly noted for his vain tricks. He comes from the familiar rascal invented by the Greeks, copied from the Romans, and passed along to the Italians, who in turn, passed him along to the French and Spanish. He had already lived on the European stage for nearly 2000 years, though in life, he never existed at all. Palmer: MOLIERE, p.113.

their stories had come to an end, and there was no good reason for prolonging the plays.

Finally, the appearance of "l'Etourdi" in 1655, announced the advent of France's greatest actor-dramatist. Though the play lacked originality it is not a discredit to its author, because originality of the writers of that period consisted in the treatment of themes rather than in the invention of them. Moreover, Molière knew his audience, and he was acquainted with its literary tastes. Therefore, he based his early works on that knowledge rather than on any set of rules of drama.

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P A R T O N E

C H A P T E R II

"LE DEPIT AMOUREUX"

"Le Dépit amoureux" is the second and last comedy written and staged during his period of apprenticeship. It was presented for the first time before the Estates of Languedoc at Béziers, 1656. Though a little better play than "L'Etourdi", "Le Dépit amoureux" shows a continuation of the "bookish" characteristics of the author's writings of that period. It is evident that he has not yet come into his own power of originality. In writing this play, Molière gives a more or less free adaptation of another Italian model: Nicolo Secchi's "l'Interresse", a romantic comedy of intrigue which had been popular in the Italian theatre since its original appearance in 1581.[1] Contrary to his endeavours in writing "L'Etourdi", Molière made some definite improvement over his model when he wrote "Le Dépit amoureux". He tacked on an addition of his own which is far superior to the part he borrowed. [2] In addition to the Italian play, listed as Molière's model,

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1. John Palmer: MOLIERE, pp.117-120.
2. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol.III, p.163. Also, see Act I; Act II, sc.4; and Act III, sc. 2 - 4.

it is believed that the author made frequent use of materials gained from his extensive readings. Among the sources named as more or less definite contributions to Molière's second good play, written in the Provinces, are works of the following authors: Plautus, Terence, Erasmus, Cyrano, Rotrou, Bracciolini, and Horace.[1] One literary critic asserts that "le Dépit Amoureux" represents no improvement over "l'Etourdi," and that its author is not always felicitous and sometimes fails to avoid obscurity in his handling of the romantic involutions of intrigue.[1] This critic is quite correct in his observation with regards to the obscurity that exists in this play, but it seems that he is a bit too critical when he says that "le Dépit Amoureux" is no better than "l'Etourdi," and pushes his argument further by saying that the former play represents a definite retrogression in the author's style. The intricacy of the plot of "Le Dépit" would of necessity force that play to be made of more solid material than "l'Etourdi." The double-love theme of the play would be sufficient in its effect to force the author to adapt some sort of plot in order to have some kind of story. Though very Italian in tone, "le Dépit Amoureux" contains germs of the comedy of manners. This opinion is based upon the presence of the many examples of affectation in the speech of several of its characters. In that respect, one is reminded

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1. Palmer: MOLIERE, p. 119.

of Corneille's "Cid" as he reads "le Dépit Amoureux." Molière's play is filled with such words as "feux," "flame," "sentiment," "infame," "transport," "rigueur," "protestation," and "justement"..... These words are the results of Molière's reading and copying from what he had read. When he forsakes literature itself as a guide for himself, he satirizes affected speech.

To the average student of Molière who has read his masterpieces, "le Dépit Amoureux" is a dull, tiresome play, containing no moral and telling no particular story. It was deisgned to create laughter and fun; its poetry is beautiful and the wit of Mascarille is excellent, but those qualities represent the high points of its merit. In fact, Molière employs the Mascarille in only one more of his productions: "Les Précieuses ridicules;" afterwards he completely abandons that character and replaces him with Sganarelle. The disguising of heroine in men clothing to hide her sex until she had married the man she loves is preposterous and represents a bit of horse-play introduced onto the stage by the Italian minstrel-showmen.

Valville, an actor of the Comedie Française, detached from the play half dozen scenes which were beyond the reach of fashion, and inserted a few connecting lines here and there, with the result that two acts of imperishable comedy replaced the original five acts of romantic comedy. The scenes in question are the whole of Act I, Act II, sc. 4; and Act IV, scenes 2,3,4.

The justification for this innovation can be found in the subsequent record of the first two plays of Molière. From 1814 to 1870 there were 51 performances of "l'Etourdi;" while, during the same period, the revised version of "Le Dépit Amoureux" was presented 372 times. It is the revised edition of this play that has retained its popularity for over three hundred years.

CONCLUSION

Like Shakespeare, Molière was born with dramatic talent, both as a writer and an actor. Just as the Great English dramatist had to undergo a period of apprenticeship, so did the perfecter of French drama. Thus, both men had to learn dramatic art by the trial and error method. Both of these men began their careers by copying from their predecessors. It would seem, however, that Shakespeare had a more complete set of models from which to copy than did Molière. In England, Gascoigne, John Lyly, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Lodge, Robert Greene, Thomas Kid, and Thomas Nash, had gone before Shakespeare, leaving in their wake a rather well organized English theatre. Up to 1592, Shakespeare devoted his efforts to copying from first one, and then, the other of these men. [1]

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1. Schelling: ENGLISH DRAMA, E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1914; Chapter III.

Molière's case presents a different picture. When he came to the stage, he found it in a state of chaos. There was only one comedy extant, Corneille's "Le Menteur," and it was not a masterpiece in the strictest sense of the word. In fact, Molière's earliest plays, written in the Provinces, served as worthy rivals for "le Menteur." From 1630 to 1658 a tremendous number of plays were produced, but their forms were bad, their constructions were poor, and they contained almost nothing of realism. The Comedy of Manners was almost unknown until 1654 when Boisrobert presented his "La Belle Plaideuse", and this play contained only germs of such a comedy.[1] Molière's predecessor who resembled him most in his writings was Gillet de la Tessonnerie (1620-1660). It appears that it was he who wrote the first comedy of character in the French language, and his character studies did not compare favorably with those of Molière. Tessonnerie's "Deniaise" furnished Molière with ideas as he wrote the "Dépit amoureux," especially in the preparation of Act II, Scene 6.[2] Gillet de la Tessonnerie's "Campagnard," (1657) ranks second only to "les Précieuses ridicules," as a commedy of manners and character. The form and style of "Campagnard" are faulty, but this weakness is due to the author's idea of following the traditional farcical methods of trying to arouse laughter.

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1. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol. III, p. 124.
2. Ibid. pp. 129-130.

The credit for recruiting the French theatre-goers into the appreciation of the comedy of manners belongs to Scarron, because it was he who began to convert traditional farce into literary form. It was he who originated the so called "laugh in five acts." [1] Scarron's best tragi-comedy: "L'Ecolier de Salamanque," found its source in some of the works of Francisco de Rojas. It is believed that such works as "le Parasite," "L'Intrigue des filous," "l'Amour à la mode," "la Belle Plaideuse," and "Deniaise," and "Campagnard," have served to prepare the French public for Molière.

It is believed that Molière began his writing with a number of one-act farces, most of which remain unknown today. Later, he did extensive reading, which served him well in his first two real comedies: "l'Etourdi," and "le Dépit amoureux." After the production of these two plays, he was given more to writing from observation, the first example of which was "les Précieuses ridicules," the play which inaugurated the second period of his literary career. From 1659 to 1664, date of the first appearance of "le Tartuffe," he devoted his attention to producing social comedies. With the production of "le Tartuffe," begins the period of high comedies, or comedies of character, which serve to make the author immortal. Molière

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1. Lafenestre: MOLIERE, Les Grands Ecrivains Français, Librairie Hachette, Paris, pp. 18-20.
Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol. III, p. 102.

never forgot the merits of good farce, which he learned in composing his earlier works, and even the most serious of his later plays contain farcical elements, which derive from his early training.

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P A R T T W O

MOLIERE'S DEBUTS

C H A P T E R I

"LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES"

A. - Background: French Society before the Seventeenth Century.

Molière returned to Paris in 1658, after a long period of apprenticeship in the provinces as an actor, author, and theatrical director. On Tuesday, November 18, 1659, he opened his glorious career with "Les Précieuses Ridicules." In that piece, at length, he opened up an original vein of pure comedy. "Les Précieuses Ridicules" was his first work completely free from Italian influence. It is here that he bagan to see things through his own eyes. This play is an important document for the history of social and literary movement of the seventeenth century known as "préciosité". In order that the "Précieuses Ridicules" may be treated with regard to what it was destined to satirize, the investigator thinks that it is quite fitting to review the history of the "salons" in France prior to the seventeenth century.

Literary groups date as far back as the Middle Ages, but those groups had very little influence upon later society. As the Middle Ages gave way to the Renaissance, feudalism's literary and social ideals fell into decay. Obstacles to free

social intercourse were slowly removed, and a new society came slowly into being. Women were liberated from two sorts of bondage: that of the chivalric ideal which isolated them from an active share in social responsibilities, and that of the misogynistic philosophy found in the "Roman de la Rose." The recent advent of gunpowder made feudal warfare an impossibility which resulted in the complete disappearance of knighthood. This state of affairs enabled women to enjoy a more comradely participation in everyday affairs. Women's new status was soon rationalized and codified according to the Platonic doctrines imported from Italy, thus preparing the ground for a freer, and more refined type of society.

The first woman to attain importance in the field of French polite society was Anne of Brittany, who came to France in 1496. She moved her father's library to Bois, and in a short time her friends were numbered among the leading writers and musicians of the day. It was Anne who began the modern custom of protecting and supporting literary men. Among her poets were such men as Jean Lemaire de Belges and Jean Marot, father of Clément Marot. Anne concerned herself greatly with the matter of stamping out anti-feminist literature, and she actually paid poets to devote poems and verses to the praise of women; and thanks to her attitude, the place of women at court was assured during the early years of the sixteenth century.

Near the end of the fifteenth century the Italian Renaissance had passed its climax, but the Peninsula still led the rest of Europe in the field of cultural achievement. The three French kings: Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I, led three costly Italian campaigns which proved later to be blessings in disguise. They definitely brought the spirit of the Renaissance right through the backdoor of France. Italian women, who had won their social freedom long ago, had formed new relationships to men and had developed an elaborate social code which became the envy of the French people. After the third and last Italian campaign came to a close, Italians in great numbers came to France, bringing with them their native culture. The Platonistic doctrines upon which the Italian social order was based penetrated into France and gave Frenchmen a new conception of society and French women a new place in society. In 1537 a translation of "Il Cortegiano" appeared in France, furnishing the first detailed account of Italian "salons." Of course, the absorption by the French of these new literary and social ideals was not rapid; in fact, the amalgamation required the remainder of the sixteenth century.

In 1541 Marguerite of Navarre produced a translation of "Lysis" by Bonaventure des Périers. This work introduced the Platonic philosophy of love into France, which was destined to become a part of French social philosophy. The new spirit was so far removed from medievalism that it affected the thought

of French society for the greater part of a century. The Platonic philosophy did little to check the immorality and coarseness of the age. Plain speech was permitted at all times, and the presence of women did little to modify this behavior. For the most part, the drawing-room tolerated all vulgarity providing that it was covered by a mask of gentility. It was left for the "salon" of Mlle de Rambouillet to finally put an end to this crude and giddy age.

Among the earliest "salons" in Paris was that of Jean de Morel, who came to the Capital city in 1541. Pierre de Nolhac, while speaking of Jean's house, calls it "le premier salon littéraire de Paris.[1] Jean de Morel and Antoinette de Loynes were married about 1544. Antoinette fitted readily into her husband's scheme of the development of an improved literary society. Among the friends of Jean de Morel were such men as Jean Dorat, a tutor of Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, and Ronsard himself. Among the women who are thought to have participated in the evening conversations in the Morel "salon" were Marie Morin, Gélonis Borsala, and several others whose identity is not now clear. Morel's society lasted until his death, which occurred in 1581.

A "salon" of a still later date was that of the Des Roches, which seems to have come into being about 1571. In

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1. "Le Premier Salon littéraire de Paris," REVUE UNIVERSELLE, V (1921) p. 341.

1579 Catherine and her sister Madeleine des Roches had the good fortune of entertaining a group of lawyers and judges, sent to Poitiers by the king in order to relieve the crowded conditions of the local courts in Paris. During the sojourn of the legal dignitaries the "salon" of the Des Roches was the seat of the discussion of contemporary events, philosophy, and history. Some of their sessions were really given to giddy subjects, but they made history and were well attended. And after the lawyers had returned to Paris the "salon" of the Des Roches continued to keep its doors open, entertaining scholars of the neighborhood.

Catherine des Roches was a woman of good training, good taste, high intelligence, and she was admired by all of her suitors. Though she enjoyed their affections, she refrained from becoming serious with any of them. She knew that none of her male friends had anything in the manner of prestige, wealth or literary attainments which would have made them assets to her. In married life she saw only child-bearing and the burden of rearing children, which would have deprived her of her leisure for literary pursuits which she loved so dearly. It is possible that her philosophy concerning love and marriage was handed down from salon to salon till it resulted in the nonsense displayed by the followers of the "Carte de Tendre" ridiculed by Molière in "Les Précieuses Ridicules." In her published works Catherine des Roches left herself open to a charge of preciosity.

She was fond of puns and anagrams. She and her sister died in 1582.

The death of Catherine and Madeleine did not bring an end to the "salons" in France. In 1605 Marguerite de Valois, the divorced wife of Henry IV, returned to Paris after a long exile, and she brought with her the manners and customs of the "eighties." In a short time she surrounded herself with her childhood friends, which represented a leaning towards the sixteenth century decadence. These reactionary activities did little to make the record of her "salon" an imposing one. This can be understood, however, when one is reminded that Marguerite was fifty-three years old, and thus, did not understand the new spirit that was slowly superseding the old social order with which she was familiar. The Renaissance with its lack of social and literary order was giving way to the oncoming classic age which was less than a half century away. Marguerite spent ten years in a vain effort to turn the hands of the clock back to bring backthe "good old days." After 1615 she faded from the picture and her dying literary and social world came to an end. Her efforts represented the last endeavors to revive the old Renaissance literary ideals.

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B. - <u>L'Hotel de Rambouillet</u> -- <u>Seventeenth Century Preciosity.</u>

Onemay easily say that the seventeenth century of

literary France began in 1589 with the reign of Henry IV, a soldier by profession, and a man of easy morals. For many years France had been torn by civil wars; public morale was low, and coarseness had invaded the language of the nobles and the members of the king's court. This condition was so distasteful to Catherine de Vivonne, the marquise de Rambouillet, that she decided to withdraw from court and set up a society of her own. The result was the "chambre bleue," in which she entertained her guests for many years. From 1630 until 1648 she enjoyed one of the most illustrious drawing-rooms the world had ever known. Her "salon" was not an outgrowth of the "salons" that had gone on before, but rather a protest against them. Mme de Rambouillet openly objected to the triviality into which former "salons" had encouraged the leisure classes to fall. She insisted upon polished manners and her literary ideals were in keeping with the accepted opinions of some of the best literary minds of her day. However, Mme. de Rambouillet was not an apostle of a "new order" in the literary and social world. Many of her fine ideals characterized every "salon" that had preceded her own.

From the Middle Ages each "salon" had endeavored to create an opportunity for the discussion of literary and philosophic problems in the most pleasant and informal way. There was, however, a vast difference between the "chambre bleue" and the "salons" of the sixteenth century, and this difference

was based on social, political, and economic changes that had taken place in France during the span of time coming between the reigns of Francis I and Henry IV. [1] France had ceased to be feudal state and had become a united nation. [2] It was no longer necessary for women to fight for a place in society; their places had been assured long ago. Likewise, it was no longer a question of providing a meeting place for obscure literary figures to meet and read their verses. In fact, the "salon" of Mme de Rambouillet served as a rendez-vous for some of the best known and most famous literary men of the day. [3] Thanks to these general conditions, Mme de Rambouillet did more than any of her predecessors to cultivate good taste and good manners. It is true that she lacked simplicity and her letters included material that was farfetched---"style précieuse" but she succeeded in avoiding "ridiculous extremities or preciosity. Under her influence a new art, the art of conversation, was there developed and perfected, and a successful effort was made to introduce a spirit of chivalrous and romantic gallantry toward women, and to improve the French language by giving it an ideal standard of delicacy, which is still characteristic of that language. On the other hand, the cleavage between

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1. André Leveque: HISTOIRE DE LA CIVILIZATION FRANCAISE, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1940, pp. 85-141.
2. T. W. Richer: A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE, The MacMillan abd Co., New York, 1935, Chapter II.
3. Nitze and Dargan: HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE, Third edition, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1938, pp. 221-226.

"society" and the "people" was increased; literature became mainly the expression of a super-refined class, while natural and commonplace things were shunned. Each member of the group found it fitting to take upon himself a new name in order to rid himself of the vulgar one he received from his parents. For many of these and other silly characteristics the "Hotel de Rambouillet" was not responsible, because the marquise was not extremely affected by preciosity as were some of the women who followed her.

In 1645 the marquise was superseded by her daughter, Julie d'Angennes, who inherited many of her mother's better qualities, along with an exaggerated portion of the "esprit précieux". Julie's profound hatred for what was commonplace and vulgar caused her to become quite eccentric. After the close of the "salon" of Mme de Rambouillet following Julie's marriage, the marquise's place in society was taken over by Mme de Sable, a friend of Pascal, Mlle Paulet. But the most noteworthy of all her successors was Mlle de Scudéry, who assumed the name of Sappho. Her guests numbered among the literary classes, but were less distinguished in social rank than were those of the marquise and were more affected in their attitude. While Mlle de Scudery was a member of the society which met at the "Hotel de Rambouillet," she was the principal literary exponent of the "esprit précieux," especially in the time of the decadence of the "salon". She was the author of

two huge romances: "Artamene ou le Grand Cyrus," (1649-1653) and "Clelie histoire romaine," (1656). Each of these works was produced in ten volumes; and, the most interesting feature about them is the fact that under fictitious names she has described the deeds, the characters, and the personal appearance of some of her most famous contemporaries. In the "Grand Cyrus," one sees the Great Condé, the "Hotel de Cleomire" is certainly the "Hotel de Rambouillet."

Finally, Mlle de Scudery gave literary "salons" a new tone, and from her example a long line of imitators sprang up as mushrooms and spread throughout the provinces. Even the illiterate young women were imitating the characters of "Clelie" in their behavior. It was impossible for such societies to avoid becoming corrupt and earning for themselves the hateful title of "Précieuses." [1]

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, pp. 38-42.

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C. - Satire in "les Précieuses Ridicules"

Many sweeping andexaggerated statements have been made concerning preciosity in France. One might be lead to believe that it represented a baneful scourage blasting and withering good taste. To be sure, the precious tendency was, at first, a laudable effort towards refinement of language,

and was, in many respects, merely one manifestation of the growth of polite society in general. The word "précieux" itself suggests something of value. One school of thought holds that in his "précieuses ridicules" Molière intended his satire for the "salons" in general, and the "Hotel de Rambouillet" in particular. The preceding pages of this study will serve to refute any supposed reflexion on the "salons." Likewise, it is almost impossible that Molière was referring to the "Hotel de Rambouillet" in his first real comedy. In the first place, the great days of the "salon" de Mme de Rambouillet had passed long before 1659, date of the first presentation of "Les précieuses ridicules". The daughter of the marquise de Rambouillet had married and left the "Hotel de Rambouillet" in 1645. Then, came the Fronde, and in a very short time, both Balzac and Voiture had died. Finally, the marquise was growing old and had complained of being tired for several years. The facts indicate clearly that the "Hotel de Rambouillet" was not the stronghold of preciosity in 1659, and therefore, it was not the object of Molière's buffoonery. In his preface to his "Précieuses ridicules" Molière asserted that it was the précieuses of the Provinces that he was satirizing, and not the "real précieuses" of Paris. He admonished the so-called "real précieuses" to understand that he was their friend, that he believed in them and wanted them to believe in him. This type of commitment was quite in harmony with Grimarest's

assertion that Molière had performed "Les Précieuses" for years in the Provinces. It has been rather hard to accept anything that Grimarest had to say about Molière. La Grange, a personal friend of Molière for years, disagrees with Grimarest on the matter of the first presentation of "Les Précieuses ridicules." The former has tried his very best to avoid any mistakes in connection with the plays of Molière. In his register he lists "L'Etourdi" as "la première," "Le Dépit Amoureux" as "la deuxième," and in the preface of "Les Précieuses ridicules," "la troisième." If La Grange's report is correct, and the investigator believes he is, Molière's claim to omission of the précieuses of Paris in his satire is open to a great deal of suspicion. He had returned to Paris a year before his famous play was performed. Besides, the comedy itself proves that the précieuses of Paris were included among its victims. It was from Paris that the evil was coming. From 1652 Mlle de Scudery had been the leader of the "précieuses"; she had acquired a great popularity as a writer of high-flown sentimental love-romances, unusual in their incidents, their pseudo-psychological portraiture, couched in the new ultra-refined jargon which was destined to be extremely witty. Molière had decided, above all, to make fun of this wit, a wit that could be learned without the least bit of intellectual application. Molière, a lover of what was natural and of the things based on common sense, hated all insincerity, whether

it was found in the city or in the country, whether among priests or among laymen. In his "Précieuses ridicules" he presented a literary criticism, aimed at superficial speech, and his criticism reacted effectively against highflown language wherever it was spoken, whether the place be Paris or the Provinces. Therefore, the writer is of a strong opinion that Molière certainly included in his thinking "l'esprit précieux" which existed in Paris as well as that which lived in the Provinces when he wrote his "précieuses ridicules." When he said in his preface that he objected to "false précieux" and not to the "real précieux," his assertion was a mere matter of policy. Such a declaration served as a tactful stroke on his part, destined to provide insurance against his bitter critics, whose resentment was ever mounting. However, Molière believed in nature. He believed that it was natural for a cat to run after a mouse, whether the scene took place in a palace or in a barn; that it was natural for hound to run after a rabbit, whether the scene of action took place in the city or in the country. Molière hated preciosity as strongly as a cat hates a mouse, or a dog hates a rabbit. Since it is natural for those animals to run down the objects of their hatred, it was equally natural for Molière to pursue the object of his hatred, whether the scene took place in the Capital city or in the Provinces. It seems that the characteristics of Cathos and Magdelon's were taken from the "Grand Cyre".

Magdelon's ideas of marriage seem to have found their origin in the same novel.

Finally, the writer believes it is erroneous to assert that Molière had a grudge against "salons" as such. They had served a good purpose and were quite worthy of their places in society and literature. They had succeeded in purging the French Language of the coarseness which it had inherited from the armies and court of Henry IV. It is safe to say that he satirized preciosity in the French capital as well as in the Provinces. He was most certainly opposed to the "salons" of Mlle de Scudery and her high-flown speech and mannerisms. In his "Précieuses ridicules" he satirized anything that resembled literary hypocracy---"esprit précieux". Here he continued a work begun by Pascal in his "Provinciales."

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D. - "Les Précieuses ridicules" as a farce.

Molière made his "Précieuses" [1] a farce, and that was the way it was presented the first time it appeared. There was an interim of fourteen days betweenthe first and second

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1. On the occasion of its first performance, Molière called his play: "Les Précieuses," but since its second appearance, it has been called "Les Précieuses ridicules."--Lafenestre: MOLIERE, p. 31.

presentations of this play, which has caused some speculation. One school of thought holds that the great success of his play led Molière to change it from a farce to a comedy because he did not wish to see the fun that had been created attain a tone that would have been too low and uncouth. [1] Somaize, in his "Dictionnaire des Précieuses," says that the play was suspended while a copy of it was being sent to the King, who was in the Pyrenees. A third opinion holds that between the two performances of his play Molière revised it so that the farce became a comedy, thus, it was rendered less offensive to the "real précieuses." [2]

In form the "Précieuses ridicules" remained a farce. In the first place, the actors gave their stage names to the roles they created, and that style was very characteristic of French farce. The manners and costumes of the actors were typically farcical. Molière, creator of the role of Mascarille, wore a peculiar looking suit; his hat was far too small for his head, and on his hat he wore a feather that was long enough to reach the floor every time he made one of his famous bows. It is believed that Molière wore a mask while playing this role. In aneffort to offset Molière's satire against the exquisites, his enemies nicknamed him "Mascarille, the clown."

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 32.
2. Palmer, John. MOLIERE, Brewer and Warren, Inc., New York, 1930, p. 150.

The effect of enemy action against Molière can be readily appreciated by the fact that the playwright abandoned forever the Mascarille and replaced that Character with Sganarelle.

Another element of farce in this play is the use Molière made of exaggerated representation of the ridiculous. When the daughter and niece of Gorgibus offered their objections to having a suitor begin his conversations with them with marriage as a theme, the stern old man retorts: "Et par ou veux-tu donc qu'ils debutent? par le concubinage?" When Magdelon, his daughter, suggests that he put aside his vulgar speech and learn "beautiful airs," he answers with rashness: "Je n'ai que faire ni d'air ni de chanson." Here Gorgibus made innocent use of a double pun, which fitted nicely into the verbal conflict, and carried with it the double dose of sarcasm which Molière intended for the whole scheme of "Preciosity." Everybody gave him a hearty laugh while no one lost sight of his sincerity, which represented a worthy contrast to the foolish ideas of the two young women. In scene III, Gorgibus gives another example of his comic behavior when he spouts out with the following hyperbolic statement: "Dites-leur qu' elles descendent. Ces pendardes-là, avec leur pommade, ont, je pense, envie de me ruiner. Je ne vois partout que blancs d'oeufs, lait virginal, et mille autres brimborions que je ne connais point."

"Les Précieuses ridicules" does more than answering the general definition of farce. It is a direct descendant of the French medieval farce, because it is a scene rather than a complete play. The medieval farce sometimes assumed the form of an embryo comedy of manners, and even contained germs of satire; and, "Les Précieuses ridicules" followed that pattern very closely. This play is also farcical in the ordinary modern acceptation of the term, that is to say, it employs exaggeration in order to arouse laughter. Nothing could be more comical than the two valets who counterfeited their masters who had just been ejected from the same house by the same young women who now entertain and enjoy the company of the valets. This situation gives an underlying comic basis to the immortal scenes (IX and XI) which constitute half the play.

The presence of the Mascarille also introduces an element of farce to this play. The mascarille as a character had existed on the stage for a thousand years, but he had never existed in real life. The word "mascarille" is Spanish in origin, invented by the Greeks, borrowed by the Romans, and passed down through literary history to Italians, from whom Molière adopted it. It is interesting to note that Mascarille represents one of Molière's most notable creations. He was fond of flowery language, and was especially gifted in the tricks of rhetoric. In all Molière's plays where the Mascarille appeared, he retained the traits of the clever,

intriguing, valet which was characteristic of the same figure in Italian plays.

In 1660 Mlle de Jardins brought out her famous "Récit en prose et en vers de la farce des Précieuses." It must be noted with great importance that she called this play a farce. In her "Récit," Mlle. de Jardins gives the story of how the young men were received into the home by Magdelon and Cathos. That scene, of course, fails us in the standard edition of the play.

Finally, one must agree that "Les Précieuses ridicules" answers the description of a pure farce with regards to its length, its composition, its employment of exaggeration of the ridiculous, and its burlesque. However, the play is made of rather firm "stuff," which earns it the right to be classified with the playwright's real comedies. It numbers among Molière's most popular plays, and the subject of it never grows old.

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E. - "Les Précieuses Ridicules" as a Comedy of Manners.

When Molière printed his play he called it "une comedie." In the preface of his Registre of 1682, La Grange says: En 1659 M. de Molière fit la comedie des PRECIEUSES RIDICULES." The same writer referred to "Les Précieuses Ridicules" as la troisième pièce nouvelle de M. de Molière.

"Les Précieuses ridicules" opened a new chapter in the history of the comic theatre. It was in style, treatment and substance, for all its slightness of texture and brevity, the most profoundly original comedy since Aristophanes. It was not an imitation of any literature, and a previous pattern, model, or school cannot be found. The element of surprise did not play a major role in its success. It did not depend on theatrical situations and complicated plot. Though the play contained many elements of farce, the interest of it lay, not in what happened, but how the characters conducted themselves. Gorgibus introduced a long line of stubborn, silly city fathers. He was typical of all those who followed him. In scene IV he expressed his determination to be a "tough" father as he says: "Je veux être maitre absolu."

He wants to be master of his whole household, including the young women's wishes, tastes, manners and behavior. Molière was opposed to that type of autocracy, and he makes Gorgibus suffer at the hands of his daughter and his niece. This is realism in its purity.

In "Les Précieuses ridicules" Molière thrusts a mirror in the face of society, and the seamy side of life was exposed. Each word and each gesture were true, not only in the case of affectation of that day, but also in the case of affectation of any day, or of any period. Technically speaking, the play, in substance, was a comedy, and in form, it

was a farce. However, the substance of the play prevails over the form. It is undoubtedly a comedy of manners. Its appeal lay in the faithful portrayal of the "précieuses" and their undoings and punishments. In writing this play, Molière freed his comedy from the classic mask, and presented the first of his comedies of satire and observation. Among the victims of his satire were the ignorant and conceited noblemen, the foppish young gentlemen, and his rival actors. The Mascarille himself was a burlesque of the marquis, and though Molière drops the Mascarille after the "Précieuses ridicules," he continued his satire against the marquis in "L'Impromptu de Versailles," "La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes," and "le Misanthrope." A typical example of this satire is found in the following statement: "Les gens de qualité savent tout sans avoir jamais rien appris." Finally, this play is an important document for the history of social and literary movements, called "Préciosity." It presents a painting of the customs and ideas of that day, and ridicules the same thing.

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F. - <u>Contrast Between the Characters of Magdelon and Cathos, and between those of Mascarille and Jodelet.</u>

It is evident that the two young women in question were silly, unpolished, and deserved to be punished. Of the

two young women, Magdelon was the more affected. She was the daughter of the landlord, and thereby assumed the lead in the matter of hitting the paternal authority of her father. She always took the lead in expressing the ideas of the affected ladies of her time. On the other hand, Cathos was timid, and confined her role to one of imitating her more assuming cousin. When Magdelon loses her head and shouts to her father:

> "Et quelle estime, mon père, voulez-vous que nous fassions du procédé irrégulier de ces gens-là?"

her meek cousin follows with her outburst:

> "Le moyen, mon oncle, qu'une fille un peu raisonnaire se put accommoder de leur personne?"

Further along in the story Madgelon vehemently accused her father of gross coarseness and vulgarity of speech when he expressed her approval to marriage among young people. She hoped to learn at some future time that Gorgibus was not her real father, and that a more refined man would come along and claim her as his daughter. In that opinion, she made it clear that she preferred to be the illegitimate daughter of a "précieux" than to be the legitimate daughter of a blockhead, such as Gorgibus represented. Cathos sat quietly, listening to the whole conversation, and when the heat of it had finally subsided sufficiently to permit her to speak, she made her usual contribution by saying:

"En effet, mon oncle, ma cousine donne dans le vrai de la chose."

Magdelon asked her father to refrain from calling them by their given names, and to call them by names that were more noble. Cathos endorsed this suggestion too while crying out:

"Il est vrai, mon oncle qu'une oreille un peu delicate Pâtit furieusement à entendre ces mots-là, et le nom de Polyxène que ma cousine a choisi....."

And, after Marcarille and Jodelet had pushed their ridicule to all extremes, and when the former requested the young fools to touch scars on his body which he had received in battle, it was Magdelon who led the retreat by saying:

"Il n'est pas nécessaire: nous le croyons sans y regarder."

Cathos promptly followed her cousin's lead, and in like manner refused to touch the scars. When La Grange and Du Croisy reappeared, stripped and whipped their two lackeys in the presence of the two young women, it was Magdelon who proved that affected women could readily speak the vernacular of the common people when she shouts in dispair:

"Je crève de dépit."

In short, both young women were "bluffs," but Magdelon was to blame for most of the nonsense that took place in the

house. It was she who led the discussions, protected affectation, and set the stage for the natural punishment that was due all "précieuses." Likewise it was she who received the heavier dose of the final humiliation.

There is also a difference between Jodelet and Mascarille. The former succeeded in inventing a few witty expressions, but they were not too cleverly done. He did not trust his imagination to a great extent. However, it must be remembered that the man who created this role was seventy years of age, a fact which might have dulled his wits just a little. On the other hand, Mascarille was witty, clever, smooth and comical. Though he was a servant, he had lofty ideas. He wanted to become a marquis, or at least a person of importance. He took great pride indisplaying his originality, which may be readily seen in his assertion:

> "Tout ce que je fais me vient naturellement,
> c'est sans étude."

All four of the characters under discussion, played their part magnificently well. Everyone said the right thing at the right time to bring out what Molière was trying to do, namely, to satirize a literary fad. It is true that the audience is likely to be unsympathetic with the young women from the start, but the punishment they receive at the end of the play makes everybody completely satisfied.

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PART TWO

CHAPTER II

"L'ECOLE DES MARIS"

One has often heard the report that "When it rains, it pours." Molière was a witness th that statement long before he was a famous writer. While he was still in the thick of his fight with his enemies over his successful presentation of "Les Précieuses Ridicules", he found himself confronted with the meanest difficulty. On October 11, 1660, he was rudely shocked to learn that M. de Ratabon was supervising the demolition of the Petit Bourbon, Molière's only theatre, to make room for the renovation of the Louvre. The contractor had not taken the trouble to inform Molière of the Royal plans to enlarge the former movie house. Louis XIV, to whom Molière is greatly indebted for his success as a dramatist, came to the rescue of the recently developed playwright. The King assigned Molière to the Salle du Palais Royal, a location which became the permanent home for Molière and his group until his death in 1673. The group entered its new home January 20, 1661, and Molière's newly written play:"Sganarelle ou le Cocu imaginaire," was the center of attraction during the inaugural ceremonies. On February 4, 1661, Molière presented his "Dom Garcie," his first and only unambiguous failure. He tried in vain to force the public to appreciate his latest efforts, and when his seventh

performance brought him only seventy livres, he decided to give up the play as a lost cause. By that time, his admirers were staying away from his performances in large numbers. Something had to be done to bring the crowd back. Molière tried several light farces, but without success.

On June 24, 1661, he presented for the first time, "L'Ecole des Maris." With this play he succeeded in regaining his popularity which he held for the rest of his life. "L'Ecole des Maris" is usually listed as one of Molière's minor comedies, and minor it may be; but, it is certainly not of minor importance. This play marks a decided advance towards his goal, that is to say, towards social comedy, based on observation and having a moral purpose. In the first place, it is a thesis play, a fact that makes it a comedy of character, and it has the distinction of being the first play of this type that was ever written by Molière. Thus, at the age of thirty-nine years, he produced his first comedy.

The theme of "l'Ecole des Maris may be stately simply:

"He who violates the laws of nature shall suffer the consequences."

The story centers around two old men, both of whom have definite, but distinct ideas about obtaining good wives. Neither of them had enjoyed extensive experience in that field of endeavor, therefore, each was making full use of his own trial and error method. Ariste was the forerunner of the modern libe-

ral husband, who wants his wife to go places, to see things, and to do things. His brother, Sganarelle (a newly formed character designed to replace the older character Mascarille, abandoned by the author) was a jealous, mean, tyrannical type of being. Both men had the pleasure of rearing their wives, and it was up to them to employ methods best suited to such an undertaking. Each man represented a different school of thought. Ariste, through his kindness and reasonable indulgence, secures the affection of his student, Leonor. He expresses his desire to continue his policy of liberality after his marriage. He wants his wife to wear pretty clothes, tailored according to the latest styles; he wants her to have an attractive home, well furnished, and well kept. It would have been a source of joy to him to see his wife a member of the most famous social clubs, civic leagues, and welfare societies. He belongs to that group of men who believe in a liberal education for women. He would have sent his wife to college and permitted her to take her place in the professional world. Molière does not say that Ariste is a nice looking man, but one may easily judge that he likes nice things for himself because he wants his wife to have nice things. He is an embodiment of pleasing personality, and though he is a man of sixty years, he is rewarded for his kindness and good nature by being permitted to marry Leonor.

On the other hand, his brother Sganarelle is a suspicious, evil, bully, who calls his brother a fool and predicts that the latter will see his own mistake, and will thereby, be a much wiser person. Sganarelle promised to devote all of his time to directing the life of his wife. He thinks the best way to have a faithful helpmate is to keep her in the darkest ignorance. Her dress was to be made of black serge, and it was to cover her as far as her shoe tops. Her days were to be spent in the home where she would devote herself to knitting, patching, washing the linens, and watching the children.

It is easy to see how Sganerelle would turn the hands of the clock back into the sixteenth century, while Ariste was really announcing the twentieth century. That space of time represented by the difference between the two dates just mentioned will serve to point out the great difference of temperament that existed between the two brothers. In matters of enlightenment Sganarelle was four centuries behind his brother Ariste. He lagged almost as much in the matter of intelligence. While Ariste was winning his wife through his indulgence, Sganarelle was driving his love into the arms of a rival, through his own stupidity and stubbornness. He was possessed of an inferiority complex, and was completely contemptuous of human intercourse. Sganarelle presents the same type of bitterness and misanthropy that characterizes Alceste. He is the first

of Molière's masterpiece of comic portraiture. He brings about his disgrace by the eagerness with which he desires to exult over the disgrace of his brother. He possessed a mind which rendered him incapable of learning from his own mistakes. He had put his system of education for wives to test and it had failed, but the failure, instead of convincing him of his mistake, merely confirms it. Sganarelle is what the investigator calls a static character, that is, he is the same thing at the end of the play that he was at the beginning of it. Life's experiences have no effect on him or his philosophy. His extravagant absurdity towards the close of the play is a logical consequence of the fixed ideas and emotions by which he is inspired. Though foolish and distasteful, Sganarelle is deeply in love with Isabelle, the testimony of which falls from his own lips when he says:

"J'aurais pour elle au feu mis la main que voilà."

Sganarelle is the only flesh and blood character in the play, says one critic. [1] The investigator is of the opinion that Sganarelle is Molière's first great character study. He takes his place along side of Alceste, Dom Juan, Tartuffe, Harpagan, Argan, and Toinette. Ariste, the gentle, courteous, character is little more than a foil to his brother.

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1. Tilley: MOLIERE, Cambridge Press, King's College, p. 73.

Isabelle, the tricky young lady, is the forerunner of Agnes of "L'Ecole des Femmes," Likewise, Valere is forerunner of Horace in the same play. Leonor is the apostle of good sense, or the reward received by Ariste for his liberal ideas.

There is very little philosophy in "L'Ecole des Maris." Modern psychology had not taken its place among other sciences, thus Molière was unfamiliar with the intrigues of the more complex life as it is known today. The play is filled with common sense, and that was what Molière wanted. He was interested in solving a current problem among his contemporaries. The two opposing forces in the play are <u>freedom of women</u> versus <u>subordination of women.</u> The first concept won the struggle. The play itself did not bring more liberty to French women. It was not until two hundred years later that women in any part of the world began to enjoy total liberty, as it was suggested in "l'Ecole des Maris."

Critics have been very generous in their assignment of possible sources for "L'Ecole des Maris." The central idea of the play, contrasting two different systems of education, based upon indulgence and severity, comes from the "Adelphi" of Terence. There is no doubt as to Molière's having read Terence while the latter was a student at the College de Clermont, where he excelled in classes of Latin. Besides, Molière chose Terence as his most worthwhile ancient model. It should be noted that Terence presented a story touching onthe educa-

tion of boys, a fact which may be easily understood, because the education of girls and young women did not give anyone too much concern during the life of the Latin author. Education was something reserved for men, and only the best minds were given a chance to obtain training in the more specialized fields of endeavor.

In the third "Nouvelle" of the third journée of the "Decameron," Boccacio gave a story of a married woman who had enjoyed the misfortune of having fallen in love with a noble-man. Boccacio's work inspired Dorimond to produce his "La Femme Industrieuse," the theme of which may be stated as follows:

> "However much one may watch a woman who is in love, he cannot hope to successfully thwart her plans."

In his "Discreta ananorada," Lope de Vega had used the same theme. In the Spanish theatre, such themes were based on the old "honor code," which made the plays of Lope and Calderon immortal. In these plays, there is usually a noble husband who is forever jealous of his honor after he has married some upright young lady. It is interesting to point out that in these plays, the man in question is never jealous of his wife. He is always concerned with having her make his neighbors think that she is faithful to him; and if she is ever sufficiently absent-minded to cause the neighbors to think otherwise, her carelessness causes his honor to fall

sick. In such cases, the wife's blood remains the only cure for "sick honors". From the previous lines of this paragraph, one can easily see that these themes are tragic, and the plays were acted as tragedies. On reading Molière's "L'Ecole des Maris," and his "L'Ecole des Femmes," it is easy to sense in them the tragic elements that have successfully invaded them, though Molière's plays were written and acted as pure comedies. Sganarelle and Arnolphe are most pathetic characters. The investigator thinks that Molière received his main inspiration from the production of Dorimond, rather than from Lope de Vega. Molière takes his second act of "L'Ecole des Maris" from Dorimond. Likewise, he took one of his heroines: Isabelle, from the same author.

Another source assigned to Molière is Boisrobert's "La Folle Gageure." It is thought that Molière took the moral for his "Ecole des Maris" from that source.

In 1643, Antonio Hurtado Mendoza wrote "El Marido HaceMujer." It was from that play that Molière took most of the substance for his play, namely: the first and thirds acts.[1] It was from Mendoza that Molière copied another of his great heroines, Leonor. Mendoza's play tells the story of two brothers who married two sisters. One of the brothers is generous, and the other is brutal suspicious, and hateful. The

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 115.

former brother wins the love and esteem of his wife while the latter drove his wife mad by means of his cruelty.

Molière modified all his models so as to make them suit the tastes and stage of the French people. In other words, he took Latin, Italian, and Spanish originals, blended them into a workable theme, which he transformed into a picture of contemporary French manners. For him, it is no longer a question of writing French farces, even in verse, but real comedies. Instead of using two newly married women to play tricks on their equally new husbands, according to traditional patterns, he used two unmarried women, whom he placed in a situation that was rather common in French life. Thanks to his newly developed genius, the situation and the personnages of "L'Ecole des Maris," blend exceptionally well. It represents a vivid picture of the customs of Molière's contemporary society. Sganarelle, along with Gorgibus of "Les Précieuses ridicules," is a partisan of outmoded customs. Through the dislikes of those men one is able to see a perfect outline of the social life of the time, with its balls, assemblies, and entertainments. Not only do these men serve as eyes through which one can see a picture of local customs, but they also present character sketches of the people of their times. From the first scene one is able to note the difference between the two brothers: the wisdom and consideration of Ariste, and the egoism and vanity of Sganarelle. These differences are

noted in the play before the facts are presented. Each character of the piece plays his role so well that there is no room to doubt that "Ecole des Maris" is a true comedy. Besides painting characters and contemporary customs, this play causes one to think deeply. It furnishes a strong contrast to the virtues of a farce which serves only to give passing amusement and relaxation. Michaut [1] asserts that the play has three theses:

1. - How should a young women be reared?
2. - What liberties should be granted a married woman?
3. - What is the rule of conduct for men living in society?

The investigator is of the opinion that these three problems were attached by the two opposing brothers, and solved by the two women. Sganarelle would hold Isabelle as a semi-prisoner, enclosed in a country house, closely supervised. [2] Ariste, on the other hand, would permit Leonor extraordinary liberty. Sganarelle will use, or one may more properly say, abuse his authority as a tutor to marry Isabelle without taking the trouble to seek her approval. Ariste thinks that severity and constraint will do very little to cause women to be faithful to their husbands. He adds, that, the only means by which a man can hope to earn his wife's loyalty presents itself through

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, pp. 123-130.
2. Tilley: MOLIERE, Cambridge University Press, 1936, Chapter II.

his ability to win her whole heart. He adds that women should enjoy full liberty of will. In short, Sganarelle would watch women always. Ariste would give them complete freedom of expressions in every matter. That is the way the two brothers answer the first two theses listed above. As to the third one Ariste has this to say:

> "Toujours au plus nombre on doit s'accommoder
> Et jamais il ne faut se faire regarder.
> L'un et l'autre excès choque, et tout homme bien sage
> Doit faire des habits ainsi que du langage,
> N'y rien trop affecter, et sans empressement
> Suivre ce que l'usage y fait de changement.
> Mon sentiment n'est pas qu'on prenne la methode
> De ceux qu'on voit toujours rencherir sur la mode,
> Et, qui dans ses exces dont ils sont amoureux,
> Seraient fâchés qu'un autre eut ete plus loin qu'eux.
> Mais je tiens qu'il est mal, sur quoi que l'on se fonde,
> de fuir obstinément ce que fait tout le monde,
> Et qu'il vaut mieux soufrir d'être au nombre des fous
> Que du sage parti se voir seul contre tous."

Molière follows this same line of reasoning through Philinte in "le Misanthrope." It is evident that, while making that long speech, Ariste becomes the first example of Molière's "raisonneurs," in whose mouths he puts words that express his personal opinions. The "raisonneurs" appear in practically all the rest of Molière's plays.

The author of this study pointed out earlier in this chapter that "l'Ecole des Maris" has very little philosophical merit. Ferdinand Brunetiere [1] believes the philosophy

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1. The quotation from F. Brunetiere is taken from Michaut's LES DEBUTS, p. 126. The investigator has been unable to procure a copy of Brunetiere's work.

of the play is nature itself. He asks: "Shall we attempt to force nautre, or to constrain it, or to discipline it?" He answers his own question this way: "If so, we run the risk of reaching the same fate that was Sganarelle's in connection with Isabelle."

It is common knowledge that nature will take its course. This is particularly true in the case of the lower animals; but it does not hold too strongly in the case of human beings, because they are equipped from birth with a complex nerve system which makes them adaptable to any type of civilization. Due to his complex mental and physical structure, the human being is not dependent upon patterns of behavior set up by nature, as is the case with the lower animal. The behavior of persons can be directed and redirected almost at will at any period of a life time. In other words, the behavior of a person is the result of a learning process, while the behavior of most of the lower animals is based upon patterns which psychologists call "instincts," or "natural urges." Since those things appear to be true, the writer holds that it is always possible to change a person's behavior or conduct without violating rules of nature. It is natural for a man to become angry when things are not operating according to his wishes, but education will teach that man to not lose his temper. Besides, social codes enter into the equation of human behavior. In some localities traditions forbid marriage between old men and young women. In such

a locality the marriage between Leonor and the old man, Ariste, would have been called unnatural, a disproportionate match. In other localities such a match would be quite conventional. In any case, or place, it is always well to temper rules with common sense, and that is what Molière believed. Common sense forms the basis for all his philosophy. He believed in what one may call today a "middle ground." According to this theory, one must not be too liberal, nor too conservative. It is desirable to correct faults in the youth of the nation, and occasionally men's wives need to be checked. However, women are human beings and citizens of their countries, therefore, they are entitled to every right and privilege enjoyed by man.

Though "L'Ecole des Maris" is a true comedy, it contains several elements of farce. This is true with respect to all of Molière's plays. In the first place, the subject itself is farcical, and the name of one of the main characters is also farcical: Sganarelle. The deceived tutor in the play and the denouement of the play are both becoming to the regular farce. Valere and Ergaste come on the stage and find Sganarelle talking to himself without noticing them, a situation which is a conventional piece of farce. In spite of these traits of exaggeration, critics have seen fit to list "l'Ecole des Maris" among Molière's most famous plays. Vise said the subject was well conducted, and added that had the play been written in five acts it would have been in

posterity to the "Menteur" and "les Visionnaires." [1]

A few critics attack the morality of "l'Ecole des Maris." It must be confessed that Isabelle appears to be slightly more tricky than the average young woman. She tells lies with the skill of Ananias. Faguet [2] condemns Molière for his having made the beautiful Leonor marry a liberal old man who had already celebrated his sixtieth birthday. He insists that the story is false in every respect, and adds that it is only in bed-time stories that one may find a beautiful young woman falling in love with a man who is so far advanced in age. The same author wonders if Molière is thinking of his own domestic affairs when this play is under his pen. Faguet insists that a man of sixty years of age is not rational if he marries a young lady who is only twenty years of age. However, that is the only fault the critic finds in the play. He adds that this is one of Molière's best constructed plays and declares that the denouement of this play is the best in the Molieresque theatre.

Another critic, M. Lefranc [3] says:

> "Le sens caché de la pièce doit concorder avec la passion très vive qu'il éprouvait à ce moment pour Armande, et d'autre part avec hésitation qui accompagnait ses projets de marriage. Molière l'avait

1. "Nouvelles nouvelles, Collection molieresque, "p. 26
2. Faguet: EN LISANT MOLIERE, pp. 26-28.
3. REVIEW DES COURS, 1907, 1908, I, 107.

> en effet à moitié élevée et il y avait entre elle et lui, de ce chef, comme un obstacle inquiétant. Armande était d'environ 20-ans plus jeune que le poète; elle avait pour lui l'admiration, peut-être de l'estime, de l'amitié, mais pas d'amour ...; on peut croire que "l'Ecole des Maris" eut précisement pour but de prouver qu'une solution favorable de cette difficulté était possible; un tableau séduisant de la vie d'un ménage analogue à celui que l'auteur allait fonder s'y trouve trace et la possibilité de l'amour l'un pour l'autre de deux êtres différents d'âge y est démontrée, malgré les obstacles que font surgir la jalousie et la famille. Il est certain qu'Ariste, qui est plus que quinquagénaire, est le porte-parole de Molière. D'autre part, on pense que la famille de Molière avait en effet fait obstacle à ses projets de marriage, peut-être aussi y eut-il momentanement, de l'hostilité de la part de Madeleine Béjart. "

The investigator has found nothing in the play itself or in the criticisms of other investigators which leads him to believe that there is any evidence of Molière's personal affairs existing in "l'Ecole des Maris." The present writer doubts that such terms as "sentiments," "confidences," and "sens cache," have significance that goes any further than the content of the play itself. Molière did not play the role of Ariste, but that of Sganarelle. This fact does not prevent Ariste from being the mouthpiece of the author, any more than his playing the role of Argan in "Le Malade imaginaire," prevents Beralde from being his mouthpiece in the latter piece; but it does seem that had his own future had been wrapped in the play he would have played the part of his own philosophy. It is asserted that Molière was madly in love with Armande from her infancy,

but there are no real established facts to justify such belief. If Molière did not realize happiness from his marriage at once, no one is in a position to know the facts in the case. If Molière reared Armande, there is nobody around who has first hand knowledge of it. If Armande married Molière without loving him, there is still nobody to give facts in the case. For the sake of an argument, one could assume that Armande did not love Molière very long after their marriage; that would not prove that she did not love him when she accompanied him to the altar. If Armande mistook admiration, reconnaissance, estime, or friendship for love, she was not the first woman to make such a mistake, and she certainly was not the last one to make it. If there were examples of jealousy and other difficulties between Molière and Armande, there is no record of it which dates to the writing of "L'Ecole des Maris." In short, there is nothing in "l'Ecole des Maris" that justifies the belief that Molière was writing a sort of autobiography. The relation between Ariste and Leonor does not correspond to the relations recorded as having existed between Molière and Armande at that time. It seems ridiculous to assert that while writing this play, Molière was trying to persuade Armande to marry him, and at the same time, to illustrate what he would permit her to do after their proposed marriage. Armande had been in company with Molière all her life; she knew what he thought

and what he believed. At the age of twenty, she was certainly old enough to be able to make her own decisions without having to be influenced by something put on the stage. Even if she witnessed the earlier presentation of "l'Ecole des Maris," she knew that Leonor was only an imaginary character. Armande had spent most of her life in the company of actors and actresses. She knew most of the answers by 1661.

In conclusion, the writer believes that "l'Ecole des Maris" does not reflect on the private life of Molière. The playwright had just suffered several financial reverses, beginning with his "Don Garcie," and his money was definitely low. He had to do something to earn his badly needed bread. His followers had forsaken him and his troup. He had to present a good play in order to bring them back, and he elected a theme that had been popular on the stage for centuries. His popularity had dropped to such point that he was forced to succeed in this play, or to give up playwriting. He did succeed, and by this success he established himself forever as one of the world's best comedy-writers. He produced his first thesis-play. If Michaut is correct the play contains three theses, namely:

"1.- How should a young woman be reared?
2.- What liberties should be granted to a married woman?
3.- What is the rule of conduct for men living in society?

Molière solves all three problems. He believes that young women should be granted great liberty of choice and exercise

while they are growing up. He suggests no restrictions in that connection. That is the answer to question number one. As to question number two, he would permit the woman to continue in her life of freedom after her marriage.

His answer to question number three, asserts that men should follow the course of nature, take their cues of life from the codes of contemporary society. He hated all extremities, whether they represent good or bad qualities in people. He would have men to so conduct themselves that it would be easy for all other men to work in peace and harmony with them.

Finally, had Molière retired from the stage after the production of "l'Ecole des Maris," he would have still deserved a high place among the great dramatists of the world.

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P A R T T W O

C H A P T E R III

"L'ECOLE DES FEMMES"

Near the end of the year of 1662, Molière presented his eighth play,[1] "L'Ecole des Femmes." This play represents his second example of high comedy. On writing this play, Molière completely leaves the category of pure farce-writers, where he had been classified heretofore, (and rightly so) and becomes a part of the great comic poets. "L'Ecole des Femmes" is Molière's first comedy in five acts.[2]

The theme of this new play is practically the same as the one treated in "L'Ecole des Maris," that is to say: "The failure of an old man to win the love and affections of his ward, whom he had tried to bring up according to a system of repression and seclusion." In both plays the question is whether a liberal and indulgent plan of education or a narrow and repressive one is likely to make the best type of wife. This play may be said to have two theses:

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1. La Grange calls it the seventh play, because he disregarded "Dom Garcie."
2. In the seventeenth century only a piece in five acts, written in verse, was considered worthy of the name of regular comedy.

1. - How should a young woman be reared?
2. - Should an elderly man marry a young woman?

The working out of the plot of this play takes the form of a psychological duel between Arnolphe, the old man, and Horace, the young man; and it is by means of the conversations carried on between these two men that Molière solves the problem. Arnolphe is a new character, created by Molière specifically for this play. He is a continuation of the recently formed character: Sganarelle, who plays so magnificently in "L'Ecole des Maris." Arnolphe has some points in common with his predecessor, Sganarelle. He is rude, arrogant, self-opinionated, and self-confident. However, his manners are better than those of Sganarelle; his social status is superior, thanks to Molière's increasingly developed genius. He is not a noble although in a spirit of vanity, he calls himself, after the name of his house, M. de La Souche. He represents one of the earliest well-to-do bourgeois , which class is numerous in the theatre of Molière later on.

Like so many of Molière's characters, Arnolphe is stubborn and is obsessed by a fixed idea. He is thoroughly of the opinion that most wives are unfaithful. This opinion furnishes the basis for the psychological problem of the play. He has his own solution to the problem which he expresses in these terms:

"Epouser une sotte est pour n'être point sot.....
Mais une femme habile est un mauvais presage."

Here Arnolphe begins the discussion of his thesis. He thinks all husbands of his acquaintance are silly because they set themselves to the task of adjusting themselves to all types of wives. He gives an outline of the kind of person he would select for a wife; a person of little wit, and one who cannot compose verses. He continues:

"
En un mot, qu'elle soit d'une ignorance extreme;
Et c'est assez pour elle, à vous en bien parler,
De savoir prier Dieu, m'aimer, coudre et filer."

It is easy to see that arnolphe is more jealous than was Sganarelle in "l'Ecole des Maris." He wants a figure for a wife, rather than a woman. The most backward woman in history would hardly be able to supply his desires. As if his previous words were not sufficiently shocking, he adds more while saying:

"Tant, que j'aimerais mieux une laide bien sotte
Qu'une femme fort belle avec beaucoup d'esprit."

For those words one would like to take a club and chase Arnolphe from the stage. All men like pretty women, whether the beauty appears in the face or in their conduct. All sensible men want women who are interesting to other men, though it is unpleasant to the husband to find that a second man is being attracted to his wife. The husband

must have confidence in his wife if he is to have a happy home. Arnolphe is incapable of such confidence, and can never have a happy home, a fact that is finally brought out in the end of the play. His friend Chrysalde tries in vain to dissuade Arnolphe from his path of social blindness. The former questions the wisdom of holding a girl in ignorance. He asks:

> "D'avoir toute sa vie une bête avec soi,
> Pensez-vous le bien prendre, et que sur votre idée
> La sûreté d'un front puisse être bien fondée?
> Une femme d'esprit peut trahir son devoir;
> Mais il faut pour le moins qu'elle ose le vouloir;
> Et la stupide au sien peut manquer d'ordinaire,
> Sans en avoir l'envie et sans penser le faire."

In those words one findsthe opposite view to that of Arnolphe. Chrysalde supplies the antagonistic force necessary to the solution of the thesis of the play. He expresses the idea of a modern man; one who is farsighted and progressive. In a complex society, no man can make a successful bid for existance, or survival if his wife is a misfit. She has to know far more than grinning, knitting, patching, cooking, and loving her husband if she is to be an asset of any kind to him in his profession. Molière knew this, and he caused Chrysalde to say this in order to display his idea of commonsense, and to supply a firm background for the nonsense of Arnolphe. It is from this point that Molière begins the real development of

his plot. One character advocates the selection of an intelligent woman for a wife. Which theory will finally win?

In order to develop his plot, Molière makes Arnolphe extremely obstinate. His friend cannot shake him because he has absolute faith in his system and in his own skill. He laughs at his neighbors and ridicules them for their ignorance, displayed in their dealings with women. Chrysalde gives what may well be called the motto of the play when he says in reply to his laughing friend:

"Qui rit d'autrui
Doit craindre qu'en revanche on rie aussi de lui."

In scene 3, Act I, Agnes makes her first appearance in the play. It is here that one finds her to be dull, homely and simple. She promises to knit Arnolphe's bonnet until he returns from a journey which he is about to take. She has just returned from the convent where she has been kept in complete ignorance. In scene 4, of the same Act, Horace enters the story, and tells Arnolphe of his new love-affair. He talks with Arnolphe for several minutes without receiving a comment from the old man. Here he shows himself to be as silly as Arnolphe would like to have Agnes be. He tells everything about his business to the wrong person: Arnolphe. It is from this point that these two characters go along developing Molière's plot. It is interesting

to point out that Arnolphe is made to suffer as early as the fourth scene of the first Act, due to his foolish philosophy. His ultimate defeat is apparent to everybody concerned except to himself.

When the curtain drops at the end of the first Act, everyone has been introduced to most of the main characters.

The second Act begins with statements coming from Arnolphe to the effect that he no longer considers Agnes to be an innocent young woman, but one who has already shown signs of having deviated slightly from his teaching. In the first scene he makes this clear by the following statement:

"Je la regarde en femme, aux termes qu'elle en est;"

Arnolphe's philosophy has already begun to fall. Throughout the second Act, one can note the development of Agnes as she progresses from a simpleton to a none-too innocent young lady. Arnolphe has been away from the house for nineteen days; he returns and finds his ward in very good spirits. She informs him that she has not been lonesome since he has been away, and that statement forces Arnolphe to reply:

"Le monde, chère Agnès, est une étrange chose."

Then, he informs her that he has heard news to the effect

that she has been entertaining a young man during her leisure moments. At the same time he expresses doubts as to the truth of the statements. To his great surprise, Agnes admonishes him to have no doubts about the matter, because every word he has heard is true! Furthermore, she is still "too innocent" to understand why Arnolphe should be opposed to her talking to a nice looking young man. Then, she gives a detailed account of her meeting with the young man, of what he said to her, and of what her reactions were. As she spoke Arnolphe grew increasingly uneasy. He tries to persuade himself that she is still ignorant and her mistakes are the results of her limited experiences with people. He was curious to know what had taken place between Agnes and her new friend when they were finally alone. She loses no time in explaining that Horace had said some very sweet things to her while they were in private, and above all, he had told her that she was his first love. On hearing of that, he wanted to hear more of the story, especially if there was anything of caresses in it. Agnes remains very obliging and gives the desired information to her master:

"Oh tant! Il me prenait et les mains et les bras,
Et de me les baiser il n'était jamais las."

These words aroused Arnolphe's anger, and he finally says:

"Baiser ainsi les mains et chatouiller le coeur,
Est un péché mortel des plus gros qu'il se fasse."

It is easy to understand how Molière's enemies were able to accuse him of having made mockery of religion in those two lines. It was a great sin for Agnes to allow a man of her age to kiss her hand, but it was perfectly lawful for her to become the wife of a man who was twice her age, and who was unfit for her in all other respects. He was simply trying to make her fear a Divine punishment, and thus be mindful of her duty to her master. Agnes replies by asking why one should consider it a sin to be responsive to that which pleases. At this point she shows that she has developed greatly. Her education had proceeded along lines which Arnolphe had not contemplated. She had a teacher whom Arnolphe had failed to recognize, namely: nature itself.

"Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait pas."

Under the instruction of her heart she develops the capacity for deception and intrigue which is noteworthy. Her progress is rather slow, but that was to be expected, because she had to grow in intelligence in proportion to her newly acquired experiences. When the play reaches the end of the second Act, Agnes has developed to the point where she knows what Arnolphe means when he offers to marry her; at the same time, she knows she does not want him for her life-long partner.

Critics have charged that the fifth scene of the second Act is indecent, vulgar, and unworthy of a first class dramatist. Molière was obviously affected by such criticism, because he insinuates in "La Critique" that if anyone saw anything wrong in the lines in question, he had a none too pure imagination. The investigator feels that it is necessary to come to Molière's defence with regards to the criticism aimed at the conduct of Horace and Agnes. Although Horace is painted as a young man who kisses the hands and arms of Agnes, and she shows a willingness to have him go further if he so desired, Molière is careful to change the procedure before it reached the point of immorality. In fact, there is nowhere in the theatre of Molière a hint or a sign of obscenity. Therefore, his critics were mistaken when they charged him with suggesting that Agnes and Horace had been left to themselves too much, or too long.

In Act III, one will find the final preparation for the complete breakdown of Arnolphe's philosophy. He is introduced in the very first scene of that Act as a boisterous man, full of confidence, who believes his shortsightedness and egoism will earn for him his desired goal, namely, that of bringing up the type of wife he would make his choice. [1] In scene 2, he uses seventy-two lines while

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1. The portion of the play beginning with line 7 of scene 1, Act I and continuing through line No. 17, was suppressed when the pl was given during Molière's life. TOUS LES CHEFS-D'OEUVRE DE LA LITTERATURE FRANCAISE, Tome I, p. 170.

giving Agnes her lessons in housewifely duties. [1] He forced her to look directly into his face as he spoke to her, and as he began to speak, he put his index finger on her forehead. While advising her that he was about to marry her, he admonished her to be very thankful for the blessing of having a man of his status pick up a girl of her low position. It was her duty to try to make herself worthy of such blessings. To further convince her of her low estate, he continues:-

"Votre sexe n'est là que pour la dépendance: [1]
Du côté de la barbe est la toute-puissance.
Bien qu'on soit deux moitiés de la société,
Ces deux moitiés pourtant n'ont point d'égalité:
L'une est moitié supreme et l'autre subalterne;
L'une en tout est soumise à l'autre qui gouverne
Et ce que le soldat, dans son devoir instruit,
Montre d'obeissance au chef qui le conduit,
Le valet à son maître, un enfant à son père,
.....
Et du profond respect où la femme doit être
Pour son mari, son chef, son seigneur et son maître.

From these lines it is easy to understand that Arnolphe would hold his wife in complete slavery, without the liberty to even speak to her husband except with his expressed consent. She was not to look into his face unless he first gave her the signal to do so. His wife would not be of the coquettish type, which always deserved to be punished by her husband, rather, she should be modest in

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1. Arnolphe gives a correct picture of the role of the husband in the 17th. century home.

her conduct at all times. Agnes was told to devour these lessons with all her heart. On arising he forces her to read the ten maxims, which he had prepared for her. [1] In the first maxim he admonishes her to refrain from adultery, and from there he continues to teach her the duties of a good ignorant wife. In the ninth maxim he suggests that Heaven will punish her if she fails to abide by the text o. the by-laws. It is here that Molière was attacked by his enemies for having made a parody on the ten commandments. The accusation is entirely untrue however, it is believed that Molière added the last maxim to offset this criticism. The dramatist was simply interested in presenting a comic character, and he intensified the comic effect by making this character ridiculous. He did not mention the name of Heaven in the play. The idea of religion apparently did not come across his mind. He had enjoyed a great success in the presentation of the companion play: "l'Ecole des Maris," and he wanted to continue in that success by bringing forth another play based on the same theme. At the same time he was portraying human characteristics which were more or less common among the lower classes at that time.

In scene 3, Arnolphe expresses his belief to the effect that he has trained Agnes to lead the life he has

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1. It seems that Molière took the idea of the maxims from "l'Asinaria," written by Plautus.

destined for her. This opinion sets the stage for new developments in Agnes' natural training. Horace re-enters the picture, telling Arnolphe of his latest experiences with his new lady friend. During the conversation, he reads a letter, written by Agnes, in which she asserts that some one has held her in gross ignorance, and she admits that she does not know what steps to take in connection with the interest she has developed in Horace. Thus, another indication of the downfall of Arnolphe's philosophy is apparent. In spite of his holding the girl in darkness, she has learned to love a young man of her own station in life, and she does this without having been taught. Nature is really taking its course where Agnes is concerned. It is at this point that Arnolphe begins to appreciate that his system is giving way, and he displays this appreciation as he says:

"Hon! Chienne!"

On being asked what was the matter with him, he answers:

"Moi? rien, C'est que je tousse."

He knows he is beaten, but he refuses to give up. Horace makes himself increasingly ridiculous by persisting in telling his rival everything that has happened between himself and Agnes. He has succeeded in winning the affection of Agnes from Arnolphe, but he dissipates this advantage by

coming immediately to Arnolphe and confiding in him.

In scene 5 of Act III, Arnolphe appears for the first time as a really pathetic figure. He is convinced that the younger rival has supplanted him in the heart of Agnes. He accuses the girl of having deceived him while pretending to be innocent, when all the while she was really exceedingly wise. He fails to understand that Agnes is an intelligent girl, with a very high I.Q. She is a flesh and blood character and not a piece of wax in the hands of a man who moulds his type of wife as Arnolphe had declared earlier in the play. It is clear at this stage of the play that common sense has won the battle with jealousy, ignorance, egotism, and selfishness. Arnolphe is definitely in love with Agnes and her lack of love for him serves to torture him. He cries:

> "Mais il est bien facheux de perdre ce qu'on aime.
> Et dépendant je l'aime, après ce lâche tour,
> Jusqu'à ne me pouvoir passer de cet amour."
> .....
> "Ciel , faites que mon front soit exempt de disgrace;
> Ou bien, s'il est écrit qu'il faille que j'y passe,..."

Arnolphe now becomes a definite figure of tragedy. His heart is torn to bits because he has lost the only person in the world whom he loves. In that respect, he is very natural; any man would have reacted in a more or less similar manner under similar circumstances. He arouses the sympathy of his listerners in spite of his previous philosophy of "making good

wives of ignorant women." He is particularly pathtic in scene 2, Act IV, where the notary walks into Arnolphe's room and finds him talking to himself. (Such displays are considered to be signs of insanity, however, such conduct is rather common among very intelligent folk who have been disappointed in love-affairs). From the words of the notary one learns that Arnolphe is walking around shrugging his shoulders and making ugly faces. It is here that Arnolphe ceases to be a tragic character and assumes a position between that of a tragic figure and a comic figure. At this point, sorrow is mingled with laughter. This bit of fun does not give rise to the type of laughter that accompanied the presentation of "l'Etourdi," or "Les Précieuses ridicules." The humour is different in this play. The audience is more refined than the one that witnessed the presentations of Molière's earlier plays. Thus, the laughter aroused at this point serves as a relief for those persons who have been held speechless by the rapid change of events. In scene 6, Horace returns and brings news of his most recent experiences, consisting of his having been driven away from Agnes (against her will) by some chaperon. The scene changes the play back to a real comedy, and everybody laughs heartily. In scene, 7 of the same Act, Arnolphe becomes more tragic than ever. Those who laugh at him, do so with a little more reserve, as he begins a new soliloquy with the following outburst:

"Coup sur coup je verrai, par leur intelligence,
De mes soins vigilant confondre la prudence?
Et je serai la dupe, en ma maturité,
D'une jeune innocente et d'un jeune éventé?
En sage philosophe on m'a vu, vingt années,
Contempler des maris les tristes destinées,
Et m'instruire avec soin de tous les accidents
Qui font dans le malheur tomber les plus prudents;
Des disgraces d'autrui profitant dans mon âme,
J'ai cherché les moyens, voulant prendre une femme,
De pouvoir garantir front de tous affronts,
Et tirer de pair d'avec les autres fronts.
.....
Après vingt ans et plus de méditation
Pour me conduire en tout avec précaution,
De tant d'autres maris j'aurais quitté la trace
Pour me trouver après dans la même disgrace?

In those verses Arnolphe acknowledges that his system has crumbled. For twenty years he has watched unsuccessful matches between men and women, and has built up a personal theory by which he had planned to succeed in married life. He had been successful in holding the young girl in ignorance; but when he was ready to enjoy the benefits of his system, he was completely disillusioned to the point of learning that it was not easy for one to rear his own type of wife and do so by means that were contrary to the laws of nature. He has played his hand and lost the game. He has lived in a society where men were supreme in their families. Fathers made all arrangements involving the marriage of their daughters, and without their daughters' consent or advice. Young girls could be placed into convents involuntarily, and without appeal. This system, however, had long since been outmoded in higher circles. Men were no

longer tyrants in their homes; women were beginning to enjoy more liberty in the home and an increased popularity at court.[1] This new system may well be termed as "Democracy in the French Home." This democratic spirit continued to live and by the eighteenth century it had extended beyond the boundaries of the homes. It swelled the lines of literature, especially in the works of Voltaire, until it prepared the French nation for the great Revolution of 1789.[2]

In Act V, scene 2, Horace shocks everybody by confessing his love for Agnes to Arnolphe. As a climax to his long speech to the teacher of Agnes, he says:

> "Et comme c'est à vous, sûr de votre prudence,
> Que j'ai fait de mes feux entière confidence,
> C'est à vous seul aussi, comme ami généreux,
> Que je puisconfier ce dépôt amoureux."

In scene 3 of Act V, one will find the anti-climax to the play. Horace, Agnes, and Arnolphe come on the stage together; Horace tells her that he is about to leave

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1. Leveque: HISTOIRE DE LA CIVILIZATION FRANCAISE, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1940, Chapters 14-16.
   Bagley: FAMOUS WOMEN OF FRANCE, Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1941, pp. 46-71; ibid. pp. 72-179.
   L. Clark Keating: STUDIES ON THE LITERARY SALON, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1941, pp. 138-147.
2. "L'Assemblée vota la "Déclarations des droits de l'homme et du citoyen," qui posait les grands principes sur lesquels devait être fondé l'ordre nouveau: "liberté, égalité." Lévèque: HISTOIRE DE LA CIVILIZATION FRANCAISE, p. 320.

her forever. To the great surprise of Arnolphe, Agnes says to Horace:

> "Quand je ne vous vois point, je ne suis point joyeuse."

On hearing Horace say that he was unhappy when he is out of her sight, Agnes responds:

> "Helas! s'il était vrai, vous resteriez ici."

And finally she says:

> "Non, vous ne m'aimez pas autant que je vous aime."

That line represents the anti-climax of the play. It is clear that Agnes is definitely in love with Horace, and that Arnolphe's system has completely collapsed. He acknowledges his defeat by pulling Agnes away from Horace. As she goes away from Horace, she tells him that she would love to be left in his care, and asks him when she may be able to see him again. Interest in the plot rises rapidly as Arnolphe flies into a fit of anger against Agnes, and tells her that she is a cheat, wench, and hypocrite. Agnes replies to his wrath by saying that she saw nothing wrong with her attitude towards Horace, because he had expressed a desire to marry her. She continues:

"J'ai suivi vos leçons, et vous m'avez prêché
Qu'il se faut marier pour ôter le péché." [1]

At this point Arnolphe reminds her that it was for himself that he reared her, and he wanted her for his own wife. Then, as an unexpected clap of thunder, Agnes gives the climax of the play. She explodes as follows:

"Oui, Mais, à vous parler franchement entre nous,
Il est plus pour cela selon mon goût que vous.
Chez vous le mariage est fâcheux et pénible,
Et vos discours en font une image terrible;
Mais, las! il le fait, lui, si rempli de plaisirs,
Que de se marier il donne des désirs."

Further in the scene she continues:

"Est-ce que j'en puis mais? Lui seul en est la cause;
Et je n'y songeais pas lorsque se fit la chose."

In a fit of anger Arnolphe threatens to drive Horace out of existance. Agnes retorts:

"Le moyen de chasser ce qui fait du plaisir?"

Arnolphe counters with the statement:

"Et ne saviez-vous pas que c'était me déplaire?"

She answers:

"Moi? point du tout. Quel mal cela vous peut-il faire!"

In this scene Agnes shows that she has fully matured.

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1. Act V, scene4.

Some of Molière's critics have said that Agnes was never an innocent character, [1] however, it must be said that in the opening scenes of the play, Agnes was quite silly. Later she is able to write a letter to Horace, in which she shows herself to be a very witty person. Now, at the end of the play she answers Arnolphe in strong language, while demonstrating that she has a great will of her own, a strong faculty for deep thinking, and tremendous reasoning power. Even when Agnes was in her silliest stages, she used language that was too far advanced for the simpleton she was supposed to have been. When the time came for her to make the momentous decision, she proved herself to be quite capable of telling Arnolphe that she did not love him at all. As if she wanted to add insult to injury, she asked Arnolphe this question:

"Voulez-vous que je mente?"

At this point Arnolphe threatens to break all relations with her. He has lost interest in her cause; he is extremely angry! He shouts:

"Ah! je l'ai mal connue; ou ma foi! là-dessus.

Immediately he changes his tone to one of hopeless despair as he shakes his head and murmurs slowly:

"Une sotte en sait plus que le plus habile homme."

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 190.

The play could have ended with that sentence. Arnolphe had finally acknowledged his defeat and the collapse of his philosophical system of preparing for himself a tailor-made wife. The first thesis of the play which was stated earlier:

"How should a young woman be reared?"

had been solved. The inference of that solution may be stated in following words:

"Water will seek its level; birds of
a feather will flock together."

In other words, nature will take care of itself under any ordinary condition. No man or woman can direct the love of another man or woman. Love will take its own course, and it is an act contrary to nature if one tries to interfere with it. Agnes had been held in complete ignorance with regards to love and the selection of a husband, but when the hour came for her to make the selection, she conducted herself in the manner of a veteran. Such behavior is today known as functional psychology. Agnes becomes wise by virtue of her instinct. In her closing words to Arnolphe she asserts:

"Croit-on que je flatte, et qu'enfin, dans ma tête,
Je ne juge pas bien que je suis une bête?
Moi-même, j'en ai honte; et, dans l'âge ou je suis,
Je ne veux plus passer pour sotte, si je puis."

Those words force Arnolphe to threaten to beat her, but she sits calmly and replies:

"Hélas! vous le pouvez, si cela peut vous plaire."

Arnolphe changes his attitude from one of anger to one of humble submission, and he says meekly:

"Chose étrangère d'aimer, et que pour ces traitresses
Les hommes soient sujets à de telles faiblesses!
Tout le monde connaît leur imperfection. "

He forgives Agnes for her having disappointed him, and reaffirms his love for her.

The ending of the play is rather weak: Molière resorts to the "deus ex machina," a denouement of the conventional Italian type. A father from America appears on the scene and one learns that a marriage between Agnes and Horace has already been arranged by him and Oronte. Arnolphe, ignorant that it is Agnes who is Enrique's daughter, treacherously breaks his promise to help Horace, and urges Oronte to insist on his parental authority. When the parentage of Agnes is revealed and he quits the stage with a comic exclamation of defeat, he has lost whatever sympathy he may have atrracted by the real feeling which he exhibited in the earlier scenes. Many critics have found fault with this ending. Voltaire called it "potiche." Molière had finished his story, and there was nothing for him to do

except to bring it to an end. The climax had been reached; his last thesis had been proved, namely:

"Should an elderly man marry a young woman?"

If Arnolphe's misfortune is to be taken as an example, the answer to the question is a definite and emphatic, NO! In life there are many disproportions. Some of them are based on wealth, some on education, some on interest, while others are based on social status, and age. It is the latter disproportion that makes the difference between Arnolphe and Agnes. He is forty-two years of age, while she is only eighteen, making a discrepancy of some twenty-four years. It is hardly possible for happiness to exist between two persons so unequally matched. In the first place, the man would belong to an entirely different generation from that of his wife. Even in the seventeenth century when the world was not changing with the speed of the present day airoplane, Arnolphe was too old to be the husband of an eighteen-year old girl. His outlook on life was too ancient and outmoded. He believed in the old system of tyrant husbands, an idea that was obsolete.

Some critics attempt to read into this play some of Molière's domestic problems. [1] Nothing is further

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1. Tilley: MOLIÈRE, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1936, p. 79.
Turgeon and Gilligan: PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIÈRE, MacMillan & Co., New York, 1939 "L'Ecole des Femmes."

from the truth. Molière was highly intelligent, and no intelligent man is likely to write a play depicting his own family affairs within ten months after his marriage, unless the marriage turns out to be a dismal failure. That was not the case with Molière's marriage. [2] There are critics who say Molière reared Armande for himself. [3] There is no proof of any of these accusations available. If he did rear Armande, there are no evidences that he held her in ignorance. It is certainly true that he did not purchase her as a slave. While Armande did some very silly things after her marriage, no one living today knows if she was ever as ignorant as Agnes appeared to have been at the beginning of "l'Ecole des Femmes." Arnolphe does not portray the personality of Molière by any means. The hero of this play is selfish, stubborn, backward, and unreasonable. His idea was to marry a fool so that he himself would not be made a fool. Molière had no such idea; he married a pretty, witty, young lady, who was an accomplished actress. Finally, the opinion held by some critics, that Molière was painting a story of his own life when he wrote "l'Ecole des Femmes," is without foundation. In writing this play, Molière was interested in causing his audience to laugh; and while so doing he painted passions and their natural effects, depicted

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2. Palmer: MOLIERE, Brewer and Warren, Inc., New York, 1930, pp. 250
3. Loiseleur: POINTS OBSCURS DE LA VIE DE MOLIERE, pp. 10-89.

living characters, with their perplexity and contradictions in real life.

The general theme of this play, cuckoldry, was a traditional source of laughter in both French and Italian literature all through the Middle Ages. Thus, the play is connected with a whole stream of earlier farces and fabliaux. Michaut [1] lists the following sources of "l'Ecole des Femmes:" Plutarch, Herodote, Bernardino Pino da Cagli, Rojas, Machiavel, Reginier, Corneille, Saint-Grégoire de Nazianze, translated by Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, Terence, and Plautus.

De Visé, in the third volume of his "Nouvelles nouvelles," accused Molière of plagiarizing the confiding of Horace in his own rival from an Italian book of tales, entitled: "Les Facetieuses Nuits de Straparole, Nuit IV, Fable iv," translated into French in the sixteenth century. Scarron's "La Précaution inutile," is the source of the idea of a man marrying his ward, whom he has sent to a convent, in the belief that ignorance will insure innocence. [2] The idea of Agnes's growing increasingly intelligent as she was learning to love Horace found its source in "La dama boba," of Lope de Vega. [3] The idea of Horace's confidences to his rival is found in Straparola and Ser Giovan-

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1. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 179
2. Tilley: MOLIERE, p. 81.
3. Michaut: LES DEBUTS, pp. 179-180

ni.[3] It is believed that Molière made some borrows from "El major imposible", of Lope de Vega. It is probable that he was influenced, to a limited extent, by "L'Ecole des Cocus", a play written by Dorimond, who took his theme from a Spanish source.

Although "L'Ecole des Femmes" was Molière's greatest play when it was produced, it has several traits of farce in it. In Act III, scenes 2, 3, and 4, there are many traits of pure burlesque. Horace's telling Arnolphe' about his new experiences with Agnes is extremely farcical, and Arnolphe's reaction is equally farcical. The reading of the maxims is another example; Arnolphe's pulling Agnes away from Horace after her confession of love for the latter is used for the sole purpose of raising laughter. Finally, the deneuement of the play is farcical. Moreover, the theme itself is farcical. Thanks to his genius and skill, Molière used farce in the play often enough to relieve the tension, which almost turned it into a tragedy, "à la Racine", on several occasions. Thus, the farcical elements of the play are more or less incidental, and have no particular effect on the quality of the play itself. Arnolphe is the leading character of

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1. Molière: OEUVRES, III, pp.115-116.
   Nitze and Dargan: HISTORY OF FRENCH LIT., Holt & Co., New York, 1938, pp.292-296.
   Bagley: INTRO. TO FRENCH LIT. OF 17th. CENT., The Century Co., New York, 1937, pp. 269-279.

the play, and he is one of the most tragic characters in the whole theatre of Molière. In many of his long dramatic speeches he approaches the pathos of Alceste in his deepest state of misanthropy.

In conclusion, the investigator summarizes his evaluation of this play as follows: If "Les Précieuses ridicules" was the beginning of the end of Molière's experimentation, "l'Ecole des Maris" certainly perfected that beginning, and "l'Ecole des Femmes" marked the end of that beginning. From the time of its production in 1662 until Molière's death, new chapters were written in glory of French comedy.

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P A R T T W O

C H A P T E R I V

"LA CRITIQUE DE L'ECOLE DES FEMMES"

The uncommon success of "L'Ecole des Femmes" caused Molière's enemies to engage him in one of the greatest fights of his career. The earliest blast directed against him, which has been preserved, came from Vise. The attack was mild in comparison with those that were to follow, because it merely accused Molière of "plagiarism" while acknowledging that the play had some good parts.[1] He added shortly thereafter that the success of the play was due to the excellent acting of Molière's troop.

During the Easter vacation of 1663, Louis XIV displayed his appreciation to Molière and the troop for

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1. Under the name of Pallante, de Vise represented himself interrogating three experts on a "certain comedian" of the troop of Monsieur whose plays were causing such tumult. His first person to be interviewed was Cloronte, an ill-willed man who was disgruntled because of l'Ecole des Femmes," but he did not wish to risk his reputation in an argument over it. He adds, however, that success might crown any play, even the bad ones. Thus success was not a criteria for judging the quality of dramas. He added that "l'Ecole des Femmes was nonsense. The second of the series was Ariste, who had nothing to say. The third was Straton, who resented Molière's idea of displaying the faults of his neighbors on the stage, but he thought that Molière had more wit than Terence had. Translated from Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 22.

their theatrical work by granting them a handsome pension.

Such act of benevolence on the part of the "Sun" King in behalf of Molière, did very little to eradicate the envy and jealousy of the dramatist's enemies, whose wrath was incensed by the appearance of "La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes. [1] This was the first written material used in the famous literary fight. [2] Molière was stirred to action by some uncomplimentary statements hurled at him by his enemies. [3] The play is almost without an intrigue, and Molière was hesitant to call it a play because it had no particular plot. Even if it was without intrigue or plot, it certainly was not without a purpose, because it was here that Molière began to stand and exchange blow for blow with his enemies. His most vicious enemy was the Hotel de Bourgogne, an old group of actors. They did not welcome the advent of a rival in the field of drama, and described the "Troup de Monsieur," as "amateurs." They had kept up a steady stream of criticism against Molière since the "Précieuses ridicules" had taken the public by storm four years before.

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1. "La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes" was presented to the public, June 2, 1663, at the Palais-Royal.
2. Here Molière took the lead in the battle which was soon followed by violent retorts from his enemies, Turgeon and Gilligan: PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, pp. 61-63.
3. His enemies laughed at his failure as a tragic actor, and his inability to make a success of "Don Garcie."

"La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes" takes the form of a conversation between proponents and opponents of the play itself. Molière selected Climene to represent the ideas of his critics, and she remains constant throughout the play. She presents a good contrast to the proponents of the play when they sustain the author's opinion. In scene 3, Climene enters the play, rushes for a chair for the purpose of discussing the terrible "La Critique de l' Ecole des Femmes." In her actions and speech, she is as much "précieuse" as Cathos in "Les Précieuses ridicules." She objects to the terms: "les enfants par l'Oreille," [1] "la tarte à la creme," [2] "potage." [3] Elise answers: "Les jolies façon de parler que voilà! Que vous êtes, Madame, une rude joueuse en critique, et que je plains le pauvre Molière de vous avoir pour ennemie! [4] At this point Climène opens her critiqism of "L'Ecole des Femmes," Act II , scène 5, where Agnes seems to lead Arnolphe to believe that she had had illicit relations with Horace. [5]

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1. "L'Ecole des Femmes," lines 164 and 1493.
2. "L'Ecole des Femmes," line 99.
3. "L'Ecole des Femmes," line 436.
4. This instance represents one of the rare references Molière made to himself in his plays. Another example is found in "Le Malade Imaginaire," Act III, scene3.
5. This scene was more criticized than any other, as being indecent, and obscene. Turgeon and Gilligan: PRIN. COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, p. 101.

Through the mouth of Uranie, Molière expresses his opinion of his play:

> ".....je tiens cette comédie une des plus plaisantes que l'auteur ait produites."

Immediately following that statement, Uranie comes forward with another blast directed at the entire idea of preciosity: "L'honnêteté d'une femme n'est pas dans les grimaces. Il sied mal de vouloir être plus sage que celles qui sont sages. L'Affectation en cette matière est pire qu'en toute autre; et je ne vois rien de si ridicule que cette délicatesse d'honneur qui prend tout en mauvaise part, donne un sens criminel aux plus innocentes paroles, et s'offense de l'ombre des chose." In the foregoing passage, Molière attacks preciosity with the same furore that characterizes his later attack on the false priests and doctors. Incidentally, Uranie was being sarcastic to Climene, and since Climene represents the ideas of a large group of Molière's adversaries, the irony of Uranie's remarks are more far-reaching than they appear to be. Uranie put on the finishing touch when he adds:

> ".....et quelqu'un même des laquais cria tout haut qu'elles étaient plus chastes des oreilles que de tout le reste du corps."

That is another way to say:

"He who is without sin, cast the first stone,"

or to say:

"She is puzzled at gnats, but she swallows camels."

Molière defends himself well against the accusation of having put examples of obscenity in his "L'Ecole des Femmes. Climene shouts:

"Il a une obscénité qui n'est pas supportable."

Elise replies:

"Ah mon Dieu! obscénité. Je ne sais ce que ce mot veut dire; mais je le trouve le plus joli du monde."

Later she adds:

"Ah, que vous êtes méchante, de me vouloir rendre suspecte à Madame!"

In scene 5, Dorante enters the play, and proves himself to be a complete "porte-parole" of Molière. He begins by rebuking the marquis who finds "l'Ecole des Femmes" to be bad "simply because it is bad." Dorante goes on to explain that the seats in which spectators sit do not give them the power to make a correct appraisement of a play. By that, he meant to say that the spectators of the "parterre" were equally as capable of judging the merit of a theatrical piece as were those who took the expensive seats.

He admonished the marquis to refrain from laughing at things he did not understand.

In scene 6, Molière takes the liberty to satirize his rival actors as he causes Le Marquis to say:

> "Parbleu! tous les autres comediens qui étaient là[1] pour la voir en ont dit tous les maux du monde.

Through Dorante, the author begins to lambast his rivals; if they say the play is bad, it just has to be so, because they are good judges of the quality of plays.

Uranie gives Molière's philosophy of drama as she refutes the charges of the marquis and Climene. She explains that the satire found in Molière's plays was of a general nature, and was not intended for any given person. She says:

> "Ces sortes de satires tombent directement sur les moeurs, et ne frappent les personnes que par réflexion. N'Allons pas nous appliquer nous-mêmes les traits d'une censure générale; et profitons de la leçon, si nous pouvons, sans faire semblant qu'on parle à nous. Toutes les peintures ridicules qu'on nous expose sur le théâtre doivent être regardées sans chagrin de tout le monde. Ce sont miroirs publics, où il ne faut jamais témoigner qu'on se voie; et c'est se taxer hautement d'un défaut, que se scandaliser qu'on le reprenne."

Here, Molière acknowledges that he is interested only in writing a comedy of manners, a comedy that depicts

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1. The Hotel de Bourgogne.

the habits of a group in its entirety. He is concerned with social satire, rather than individual satire. His job was to expose the seamy side of life itself, and thereby correct the undesirable traits of the members of society. He is opposed to vice, hypocrisy, and sham, and not to the person who is unfortunately the victims of these evils. Today, such writers are called realists. They write stories of what they actually see in the lives of the members of society, without distorting the picture with their personal ideas about the persons depicted. The works of such writers are called "walking mirrors." Molière denied that he was a realist, but his denial has no affect on the truth of the case in point.

Uranie gives a clear picture of Molière's idea of tragedy and comedy, as she says:

> "Mais la comédie a ses charmes, et je tiens que l'une n'est pas moins difficile à faire que l'autre."

Dorante takes up the conversation and asserts that it is easier to write a tragedy than to write a comedy. This is due to the nature of the themes of the two types of plays. Dorante declares that when a writer paints heroes, he paints as he pleases, following only his imagination; but when he paints men, he has to follow nature. After this attack on tragedy, Molière's enemies and rivals at the Hotel de Bourgogne constantly accused him of favoring

vulgarity on the stage and of attacking Corneille. [1]

Molière takes the liberty to express his appreciation to the Court for the kindness it has just bestowed upon him. He praises the wisdom of those centered around the Court while saying they are good judges of plays. At the same time he dares to ridicule certain "would be nobles" who are loitering around the Court, who, in his opinion, should be stationed elsewhere, probably doing some useful work for the State.

As to the rules of art, as they existed among his enemies, Molière admits that he is not acquainted with them. He adds that his own rule is merely "to please the audience." He says that the success of a good cook depends on his ability to please those who eat the food, and the matter of following "le Cuisinier français" was of no importance.

Finally, Molière declares through Lysidas, that "L'Ecole des Femmes" pleases, whether it follows the rules of art or fails to do so. He adds, however, that since this play does please its listerners, it does not violate any rules of art.

Molière adds that it is all right for an actor to appear ridiculous in one scene and to represent an "honnête homme" in another. That statement bears the secret of his great character creations. He followed that scheme

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1. Racine had not yet begun his famous career.

in the creation of Ariolphe, Alceste, Don Juan, Tartuffe, Harpagon, and in Argan. In so doing, he caused his characters to resemble life most closely. No man is always jolly, and no man is always despondent. One finds several moods existing in one person, on different occasions. The same person may laugh at one time and cry at another. To follow such plan of character-drawing in the classical tragedy of the seventeenth century was almost a matter of impossibility, but comedy wonderfully adjusted itself to the play.

Molière cares very little for his denouements. After the story has been told, the play is over, and he brings it to a close in the most convenient manner.

Thus, in a one-act, seven-scene play, Molière shot his big gun at his accusers and when the smoke had cleared away, he was the winner. The public continued to flock to the theatres to witness his plays in spite of the criticisms of his many, many enemies.

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P A R T T W O

C H A P T E R V .

"L'IMPROMPTU DE VERSAILLES"

The performance of "La Critique" brought to Molière an addition to his already long list of enemies. According to a legend, the duc de la Feuillade misunderstood Molière's general satire in the play, and felt obliged to recognize himself in the character of the marquis. As a result, he attacked Molière and administered a good sound beating to the "fun-maker," as he called the dramatist. The details of the affair are lacking.

The tireless and unscrupulous de Vise led the literary attack on Molière. On August 4, he presented his answer to the "Critique" in the form of a violent pamphlet in dialogue, entitled: "Zélinde, comédie, ou la Véritable Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes et la critique de la critique." In this work, he omitted the reserved praise he had given to Molière in his "Nouvelle, nouvelle." Instead, he repeated earlier criticism made by him, while adding vicious attacks on Molière's reply to that criticism. De Vise describes Molière as a man who went around stealing with both hands from Spanish literature and subjects. He charged further that the dramatist was making use of

old dusty books, seeking and copying old, dry, obsolete satires and jokes, which he used to ridicule people of class. De Vise refuted Molière's claim to writing plays according to the laws of nature, and charged that he was merely a second-rate copyist, whose pictures were vulgar and distasteful. Finally, he asserts that "L'Ecole des Femmes" is completely worthless from a literary standpoint.

As to the "Critique," de Vise finds it to be a joke; badly named; and it constitutes an apology rather than a criticism.

The second document directed against Molière came from Boursault, who presented his "Le Portrait du peindre, ou la Contre-critique de l'Ecole des Femmes" at the Hotel de Bourgogne, early in October. This piece was written in verse, lacked originality, and presented a sort of inversion of Molière's "Critique."

Molière's reply came in the form of a short play entitled: "L'Impromptu de Versailles," presented at Court, on short notice, by royal command. This play brought to an end the part that Molière had taken in the fight over "L'Ecole des Femmes." The play, also called "la piece de circonstance," is an important document for the history of the stage and the theories of acting in the seventeenth century. Present evidences do not point to any given source for this play, but it is not the first to show

actors on the stage "in propriâ personâ." [1] Gougenot, in 1633, and Scudery, in 1634, had both written plays called "La Comédie des comédiens."

In this play Molière directed his first important bit of satire against Montfleury [2] the notoriously fat and pompous actor of the Hotel de Bourgogne. Here he says:

> "Il faut un roi qui soit gros et gras comme quatre, un roi, morbleu! qui soit entripaillé comme il faut, un roi d'une vaste circonférence, et qui puisse remplir un trone de la belle manière."

He continues with the recitation of a portion of Corneille's "nicomede," where he mocks the speech and posture of Montfleury.

It is in the first scene of this play that one learns Molière's idea of stage-craft. He says that the character on the stage should always select the role most suited to his own personality, thus, he would seem more natural. The actor should be filled with his part, that is, he should know his part thoroughly, and should be able to interpret it flawlessly. He stresses exact pronunciation and enunciation, as well as proper intonation. The actor

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1. Turgeon and Gilligan: introduction to "L'Impromptu de Versailles, p. 197.
2. In retaliation the Hotel de Bourgogne presented the comedy of Montfleury, fils, entitled: "Impromptu de l'Hotel de Condi," printed January 19, 1664. In the same month Monteury, père, was so angry at Molière until he presented to the King an accusation against Molière, charging him with having married the daughter of his former mistress.

should not miss a syllable or a single letter as he speaks his lines. Likewise, the actor must be serious and refrain from laughing at his own roles; he must use a natural tone of voice, with as few gestures as possible. When he turns to La Grange, he says:

"Pour vous, je n'ai rien a vous dire."

That line would lead one to believe that Molière thought very hig ly of the acting ability of La Grange. However, this is a play, and it might not be safe to read too much meaning into that one line.

Thus, the investigator has given a review of the dramatic theories of Molière. His ideas may be well contrasted with those set forth by Shakespeare:

> "Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature scorn her own image, and the very age and body at the time his form and pressure." [1]

While Molière taught his actors how to act, Shakespeare told his group to permit their good judgment to be their tutors. As to the realistic quality of drama,

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1. Hamlet, III, 2.

they were in total agreement. Both men were in accord with the idea of the "walking mirror," which would show a true and undistorted picture of every man in his own life. It is interesting to refer to Corneille in this connection, because it was he who said: "La comedie n'est qu'un portrait de nos actions et de nos discours, et la perfection des portraits consiste en la ressemblance." [1] He added that the action should be simple and direct and the characters should be great. It is clear from the foregoing lines that three of the greatest playwrights of all time have similar opinions about realism in comedy.

In a very succinct manner Molière sets forth his conception of the function of comedy:

> "Comme l'affaire de la comédie est de représenter en général tous les défauts des hommes, et principalement des hommes de notre siècle, il est impossible à Molière de faire aucun caractère qui ne rencontre quelqu'un dans le monde; " [2]

In this same connection Molière denies that he is a realist. To prove his point he refers to the numerous types of fops and nobles at Court, whom he has never ridiculed. He asserts that there are twenty personnages who would lend themselves well to bitter ridicule, and describes them as men who lavish praise and flattery indiscriminately. To

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1. Roberts: LA POETIQUE DE RACINE, p. 53.
2. "L'Impromptu de Versailles, scene 4.

him these persons are cheats who go from person to person with their deceitful embraces.[3]

In scene 4, Molière sketches a character in the "marquis ridicule," which he develops fully in Aronte of "le Misanthrope." In this sketch, however, he confines himself to describing the characteristics of the over-friendly group of men who frequented the Court. From his description one gets a clear idea of the embracing, the kissing of the hands, and the flattery carried on by these affected men. Aronte presents an embodiment of everything characteristic of the urchins and fops in "l'Impromptu de Versailles." The point the investigator wishes to make is the fact that this type of effeminate man is still around in society, laughing and lavishing his friendship on everybody he meets, and he is as disgusting to the men of today as he was to Molière almost three hundred years ago.

In a dialogue between Mlle Molière and Mlle du Parc one finds the author taking one more punch at affectation and all the superlatives pertaining thereto. The short speech gives a beautiful portrait of the conventional feminine conversations, the sophisticated airs that were

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3. "L'Impromptu de Versailles, scene 4. Here Molière sets the ground work for his most bitter attack directed against the marquis, developed in "le Misanthrope."

used and the silly ideas that prevailed.

In scene 5, direct reference is made to Brossaut, author of "Le Portrait du peindre." In this scene he is described as a man who is so little known that his name is mistaken, and sometimes he is actually mistaken for several other persons around the city. In pronouncing Brossaut's name Molière pretends that his memory fails him, and he takes a long time trying to get the word out of his mouth. Boursault had been very rash in his criticism of all Molière's plays, charging that in "Les Précieuses ridicules," Gorgibus was dressed in old fashion clothes, and that Sganarelle and Arnolphe in "L'Ecole des Maris" and "L'Ecole des Femmes" reflected new and contemporary clothes. While replying to Boursault, Molière implies that there are many companions who help him plot, but who are ashamed to lend their signatures to their writings.

In the next speech, Mlle Béjart says:

> "Passe pour tout cela; mais il satirise même les femmes de bien, et ce méchant plaisant leur donne le titre d'honnêtes diablesses."

It is evident that Molière is here referring to enemy-criticism of "L'Ecole des Femmes," line 1296, where Chrysalde says:

> "Ces dragons de vertu, ces honnêtes diablesses,"

Continuing his mockery the author says through Melle Molière:

"Il faut qu'il en ait tout le soûl."

In short, "le Portrait du Peindre" is a copy of La Critique" turned inside out, and possessed no particular literary value.

After having denied that he was making mockery of the Church in the so called sermons of Arnolphe to Agnes, Molière renounced forever the fight, waged over his famous "L'Ecole des Femmes," while saying:

> "Sur la réponse? Ma foi, si je le trouverais un grand fou, s'il se mettait en peine de répondre à leurs invectives, -- ma meilleure réponse qu'il leur puisse faire, c'est une comédie qui réussisse comme tous les autres. Voila le vrai moyen de se venger d'eux comme il fait; et de l'humeur dont je les connais, je suis fort assuré qu'une piece nouvelle qui leur enlevera le monde, les fachera bien plus que toutes les satires qu'on pourrait faire de leurs personnes."

It is here that Molière shows his real sportsmanship. He refuses to continue in a quarrel that was getting him nowhere, while declaring that he would not be challenged to participate further in it, regardless of what was said about his works. He suggests that he has too much to lose, and says definitely that his enemies have nothing to lose in such duels. Molière did not want to embarrass his friends, and he was eminently correct in

his decision. One desire expressed by him, is that his enemies refrain from further criticism of his domestic affairs; he felt that he deserved that much courtesy from them.

He concludes his play with hearty thanks to the King for his support to the troop in its darkest days.

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P A R T T H R E E

THE TRIUMPH OF MOLIERE

C H A P T E R I

"LE TARTUFFE"

A. - Sources of "Le Tartuffe."

The origin of the word "Tartuffe" is uncertain. Various suggestions have been made, deriving it from the old French verb "trufer", which means "to deceive"; from the old French word "truffe, tartuffe", meaning "a truffle", considered a decayed tuber, hence a rotten, despicable thing. Some critics think it is Italian in origin, coming from "tartufo", meaning "truffle". Others say it comes from the German "der Teufel", meaning "the devil". There may be some validity in a few of the suggestions, but there are serious doubts as to the reliability of the last one, because, as far as the investigator knows, Moliere did not know the German language. Whatever may be the origin of the word "Tartuffe", to many French critics the mere sound of the word connotes something underhanded

and suggests a deceiver. [1]

No play ancient or modern furnishes the intrigue of "le Tartuffe," nor does any of Molière's predecessors leave traces of the character of Tartuffe or of Orgon. Therefore, "le Tartuffe" is one of Molière's most original plays. It seems to be a pure product of his rich experiences and genius to which he added traits and dispositions, borrowed from the works of several other authors. It is clear that he took the general idea of his play from the "Hypocrites" of Scarron, which appeared in 1661. [2]

Another important source of the play is "Lo Ipocrito," [3] of Arétin. This regular Italian comedy furnishes the outline for "le Tartuffe." The situations in the two plays are similar. In the Italian play, the story goes as follows: Ipocrito settles in the home of an old man, and begins to dominate and to exploit the family.

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1. Turgeon and Gilligan: PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1935, p. 250.
2. The main character of "Les Hypocrites," frere Martin would go into the streets with his arms crossed, while looking in every direction for some attractive lady to pass. He took pride in teaching religious expressions to the children he met in the streets. His admirers would run after him, begging for his prayers, and if anyone asked him his name, he would reply that he was an animal, a beast of burden. -- Michaut: LES LUTTES, pp. 87-88.
3. The main characters of "Lo Ipocrito" are: Liseo, and old man, who was head of the family; his wife, Maia, his five daughters and their sweethearts. --- Moland: MOLIERE ET LA COMEDIE ITALIENNE, p. 209. Also, Michaut: LES DEBUTS, p. 89.

His speech is always slow and serious; he is always found in the company of priests and monks, dressed in a narrow coat. As he walks, his head is held downward and his hands are folded behind him. Most of his time is spent in temples, churches and libraries. On receiving gifts from his admirers he announces that he is doing so on behalf of the poor and unfortunate people of the community. In short, frere Martin has several traits in common with those of Tartuffe, namely: "la gourmandise" and "la sensualité." Both men employed the same means in raising their prestige and influence, that is to say, each one is known and characterized by his "simagrées pieuses, humanité feinte," and false devotion. Moreover, a similar weakness is found in the proprietors in both plays: Orgon in the "Tartuffe," and Liseo in "Lo Ipocrito," that is, both men become fanatically devoted to their exploiters.

On the other hand, Ipocrito is far less wicked than Tartuffe. The former is interested only in his personal welfare,and in leading the life of a parasite, while Tartuffe offers to marry his benefactor's daughter, makes advances to his wife, drives his son from home, and in the end, he is about to drive the entire family away. Ipocrito brings peace and consolation into his friends' home, while Tartuffe brings in that which would finally amount to death and destruction to the household of his friends.

Finally, Aretin pities his character, while Molière influences his audience to dispise Tartuffe. "Lo Ipocrito" remains a pure comedy while the "Tartuffe" becomes a tragi-comedy. Aretin and his "Lo Ipocrito" are almost forgotten, while "le Tartuffe remains one of the most popular plays ever written in the French language, and the name of its author is immortal.

The attitude, dress, wit, and way of life of Tartuffe were taken from "la Macette," (seventh satire) of Regnier, which is also the source of the moral of "le Tartuffe." [1]

In Boccacio's "Nouvelle VAII, third Journée," Molière found the famous expression:

> "J'ai beau être un abbé, je n'en suis pas moins un homme." [2]

From that sentence he was inspired to put the following sentence into the mouth of Tarfuffe:

> "Ah! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme." [3]

The philosophy of "le Tartuffe" was taken from

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1. Michaut: LES DEPUTS, p. 236.
2. Ibid. p. 89.
3. "Le Tartuffe" line 966.
4. "Provinciale" seventh and nineth letters.

Pascal.[1] Molière took a few ideas from Spanish sources; Dorine's intervention in the quarrel recalls a scene of " "Chien du Jardinier."[2] Rotrou's "Clarice" gives inspiration to Orgon's anger, aroused by Marianne's determination to enter a convent to avoid being married to a man who is not her choice. "Le Polyandre" of Sorel supplies the name of Mme Pernelle, and her personality is taken from Ragonde, the principal character of the play mentioned above.

From real life it is believed that Molière selects as models: the Jesuit Rapin, the Jansenist Deslions, Marquis Fenelon, the Count of Albon, and the Count of Brancas.[3]

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1. "Provinciale" seventh and nineth letters.
2. Written by Lope de Vega.
3. Michaut: LES LUTTES, p. 91.
   Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Dix-septieme siecle, Paris, 26 Rue Racine, Vol. III, pp. 254-262.
   Palmer, John: MOLIERE, Brewer and Warren, Inc., New York, 1930, pp. 342-256.
   Libraire Larousse --- Paris VI., 13 à 21 rue Montparnasse, et boulevard Raspail, 114, "Le Tartuffe."
   Tilley: MOLIERE, Cambridge at the University Press, 1936, pp. 98-109.

B. - The three editions of "Tartuffe."

Very little is known of the first "Tartuffe", except that it was played at Versailles, May 12, 1664, during the festivals of PLAISIRS DE L'ILE ENCHANTEE. This play contained only three acts, but one cannot be sure, in the absence of Molière's manuscripts, that those three acts constituted a full play, or, that they were the same three acts that have been handed down to the present generation, as a part of the current five-act play. The fact that the same three acts were performed for a second time, at Villers-Cotterets, for the King's brother, on September 25, 1664, would indicate that they did constitute a complete play. In the first place, it seems unlikely that Molière would have dared to use an unfinished work on an occasion so momentous as that of the festival of PLAISIRS DE L'ILE ENCHANTEE. In the second place, he was more than forty-two years of age, and had long since passed the trial and error stage of his experience as a dramatic producer. The production of "Les Précieuses ridicules," "L'Ecole des Maris," and "L'Ecole des Femmes," had brought him great fame, and as he quit the fight with his enemies over "L'Ecole des Femmes," he declared in his "Impromptu" that he would confine his future efforts to the production of more plays that pleased his admirers. That declaration

alone would serve to dispell any belief in the rumor that charges Molière with having presented an unfinished work.

It is known that the Queen of Sweden, Christine, who was in Rome during the first presentation of "le Tartuffe," wrote a letter to the French minister of foreign affairs, M. de Lionne, asking him to send her a copy of the play. The minister's reply, dated February 26, 1666 reads as follows:

> "Monsieur, ce que vous me demandez de la part de la Reine de Suède, touchant la comédie de TARTUFFE que Molière avait commencée et n'a jamais achevée, est absolutement impossible....."[1]

Whether the minister of foreign affairs was serious about the incompleteness of the play is a matter of speculation, but it is clear that his words were motivated by his own personal prejudice which governed his opinion of the play. Thus his letter cannot be considered as evidence to the effect that the first three acts of "le Tartuffe" did not constitute a complete play. He did not want the play used in France proper or outside of France, and would be expected to employ any excuse that would serve well his purpose.

Michelet says the play was complete in three acts, but the denouement remains unknown today,[2] and

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1. Michaut: LES LUTTES, p. 47.
2. Ibid. p. 59.

that opinion seems quite plausible, in the light of the fact that Molière did not present incomplete plays at Court or in public.

The facts in the case are that Molière presented the "Tartuffe" at Versailles on Monday, May 12, 1664, and the king found it to be "fort divertissante," but it met with such militant opposition from the religious leaders and the queen mother, Louis XIV was forced to forbid Molière to perform it in public. In order to raise this interdiction against the performance of his play, the author found it necessary to make wide revisions in its text, and to suppress certain lines. These revisions forced Molière to recast his play, and when he performs it in private at Le Raincy, on September 27, 1664, and again on November 8, 1665, La Grange describes it as "parfaite entière et achevée en cinq actes." [1]

The second "Tartuffe" was presented Friday, August 5, 1667, at the Palais-Royal. This was a revised edition of the old number, and was presented under the title of "l'Imposteur," and the name of the hero was no longer Tartuffe, but Panulphe. [2] His costume had been changed, and he was a man of the world, rather than a priest.

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1. Michaut: LES LUTTES, pp. 67-72.
2. Turgeon and Gilligan: THE PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, pp. 231-236.

This edition met with the same fate that overtook the first one. From August 8 till September 7, Moliere worked feverishly in an effort to obtain permission to re-open his theatre. It was during this interim that an admirer of Molière published the "Lettre sur la comedie de l'Imposteur, [1] in which he analyzed the play and ably defended its author. This pamphlet is the only current source of information concerning the play as it was performed in 1667.

On February 5, 1669, Molière was granted Royal permission to perform his play in public, and on February 9, 1669, "le Tartuffe," as it exists today was performed at the Palais-Royal. [2]

Finally, there were three editions of "le Tartuffe," each of which was different from the others. The first edition was in three acts, the second, in five acts, and the third, in five acts. Each edition probably showed an interesting development in the author's technique in writing the play, while showing an equal development in the genius of the author himself. The first "Tartuffe" was written for the sake of giving the spectators a good laugh, while raising revenue for the actors; the second one was written as a vindication for the first edition; and the third

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1. This letter is found in "Les Grands Ecrivains de la France, Vol. 4, pp. 529-566.
2. Turgeon and Gilligan, p. 235.

"Tartuffe" was written in full revenge for the insults the author had suffered at the hands of his enemies.

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C. - Molière's reasons for writing "le Tartuffe."

No one knows why Molière selected the theme of "le Tartuffe." [1] In his preface, he declares that the play is not directed against those who practise true religion, but against those who misunderstand the concepts of religion, such as Orgon, and those who misuse it for Ulterior reasons to deceive, as Tartuffe. In other words, Tartuffe represents the knaves of society and Orgon represents the fools, and as such, they have become universal characters depicting human behavior of all ages.

Michaut records the opinions of some critics who believe Molière gave the impostor the costume of the leaders of Port-Royal. M. Roelliau makes the observation that Molière's contemporaries charged that the "Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement" was the object of his criticism. [2] It was not Tartuffe that made the great difference in the play; it was Orgon, the dupe of the hypocrite, who gave rise

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1. Michaut: LES LUTTES, p. 93.
2. Ibid., p. 95.

to the bitter criticism of the play. That fact would lead one to believe that Molière's enemies did not object so much to having him paint hypocrites as they did to having him suggest that they were the victims of the hypocrites and exploiters. As a result of that feeling they accused Molière of acting under the cover of fighting hypocrisy in false priests, while he actually attacked the church. Today, it is not held that Molière was attacking the church when he wrote "Tartuffe." Even the Frenchmen have discarded that notion, and the act that they decided to elect him to membership in the French Academy is a clear testimony in behalf of this opinion. Molière believed that there were those who were accusing him of impiety who were far less serious about their religion than he was about his own. When he, accompanied by Boileau, paid a visit to Lamoignon, in an effort to persuade him to lift the interdict placed against the performance of "le Tartuffe," the churchman politely refused their request, and when it was clear to him that they wanted to remain for an additional few moments to discuss the matter, he said:

> "Messiers, vous voyez qu'il est près de midi; je manquerais la messe si je m'arrête plus longtemps."

It is believed that Molière has that conversation in mind when he causes Tartuffe to say to Cleante:

"Il est monsieur, trois heures et demie."

Finally, it seems that Molière is attacking his personal enemies in his play rather than the church itself. The bitterness that fills the play from one end to the other easily sustains this belief. Besides, the author had lived under the influence of the Jesuits when he was in attendence at the College de Clermont, thus, it is hardly plausible to think that he would criticize them. "La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement" was outlawed by an act of Parliament in 1660, after which time, their activities were conducted with such secrecy that the details of them were never apprehended.

It is well known that Molière had difficulties with the priests while he was travelling in the Provinces, but Conti saved him, and protected him. Later, Conti withdrew his support from him, thus, forcing him to leave Southern France, from where he went to Rouen and Paris. [1] It must have been a bitter blow to Molière to lose his place, due to the intrigue of the "devots," but it seems that he forgave them everything after his return to Paris.

In conclusion, there is little reason to believe that anyone ever knew why Molière elected to write "le Tartuffe." He had just won his fight against his enemies

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1. Lafenestre: MOLIERE, pp. 18-25.

who objected to his successes, earned by the production of his earlier plays. He had little reason to have a grudge against the Church, the Brotherhood, or any of the other institutions which are listed as the victims of his invectives. There is no doubt that he did turn full weight of his wrath against those persons who succeeded in preventing the production of "le Tartuffe." Finally, whatever may have been his original purpose for writing this play, it became the most successful and most popular examples of his theatre. Between the year 1680 and 1932 it was presented 2256 times at LA COMEDIE-FRANCAISE, the highest score recorded by any of his plays.

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1. Lafenestre: MOLIERE, pp. 18-25.

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D. - The Development of the Character of Tartuffe.

When Molière introduced Tartuffe to the French stage, he gave the world a new type of character, one that was not an embodiment of humours, inthe style of Ben Jonson, nor a clown, so common to Italian drama. Instead of possessing those features, Tartuffe is one of the world's greatest

dramatic characters; one that breathes, eats, drinks, and behaves generally as a human being of any given locality, epoch, or nationality. In his development of this character, Molière gives the first real display of his genius. [1]

Tartuffe possesses three qualities, and three only: religious hypocricy, lasciviousness, and the love of power, and there is not a word that he utters which is not impregnated with one or all of these. Here is vice in its meanest and most repulsive forms, which has been endowed with awful grandeur. In his first speech he gives evidence of his false piety as he says:

"Si l'on vient pour me voir, je vais aux prisonniers
Des aumônes que j'ai partager les deniers. [2]

On delivering these lines, he is greeted with laughter, and the fun continues as he takes out his handkerchief and begs Dorine to cover her bosom. Throughout the scene with Elmire, (lines 933-960, and 966-1000) the incongruity of this stout, handsome saint making love to his benefactor's wife in language which is a strange compound of gallantry and mysticism provokes as much ridicule as disgust. Here, Tartuffe is a purely burlesque representation of religion, a fact which the following lines will attest:

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1. Landmarks in French Literature, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1912, p. 83.
2. Reminiscent of LES HYPOCRITES of Scarron: "Il ne bougeait des prisons, il prechait devant les prisonniers." It is interesting to point out that the members of the "Saint-Sacrement" were great visitors of the prisons.

"Ah! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme."

Through all of this Tartuffe remains a sinister and comic figure. Even in the scene with Orgon, when Tartuffe's hypocrisy begins to be more apparent, the note of comedy, even of farce is reintroduced by Tartuffe and Orgon as they drop to their knees simultaneously. And after Damis informs his father of the trickery of Tartuffe, and is promptly driven from the house by his father, Tartuffe sustains the comic element as he confesses his guilt, clothed in terms that cause Orgon to believe in him more than ever before. The hypocrite begins:

"Oui, mon frère, je suis un méchant, un coupable,
Le plus grand scélérat qui jamais ait été;
Chaque instant de ma vie est chargé de souillures;
Elle n'est qu'un amas de crimes et d'ordures;
Et je vois que le Ciel, pour ma punition
Me veut mortifier en cette occasion."
(lines 1074-1079)

On hearing these words of the hypocrite, Orgon becomes one of the most ridiculous characters in the whole theatre of Molière, as he runs down the street, crying and shaking his fists at his son, whom he has just driven from the house. Tartuffe is made guardian of the entire estate, and receives permission to visit Elmire as often as he sees fit to do so. The Tartuffe's reaction to all this is summarized in one line:

"La volonté du Ciel soit faite en toute chose."

In the second scene with Elmire, the comic effect is sustained by the presence of Orgon under the table. In the fourth scene of the Fifth Act., when M. Loyal arrives with the order for Orgon and his family to quit their home, the situation is saved from becoming too tragic partly by the comic figure of M. Loyal himself, and partly by the intervention of the irrepressible Dorine, the shrewd maid, whose personality is further developed in the character of Toinette in "le Malade imaginaire. It is not till the last verse in the play that Tartuffe becomes really terrible, and then only for a brief period, for, as soon as he has called to the officer to arrest Orgon, he himself is recognized as a criminal of long standing, is arrested, and his power for evil is broken forever.

While Tartuffe is a character of comedy, and on the whole, he inspires ridicule rather than terror, he is also a wicked scoundrel. Molière uses two Acts of the play in preparing his audience for the advent of the principal character. When he arrives, the audience knows to expect a fat, red-faced, hearty eater. It knows further that Orgon is greatly infatuated to him, due to his famous expression of pity:

"Le pauvre homme!"

In his chapter "De la Mode," La Bruyere criticizes Tartuffe as an overdrawn figure, but this opinion is not held by some other critics,[1] who maintain that Molière presents a carefully finished and faithful portrait of a religious hypocrite. Tartuffe has two sides, an outer man, and an inner man. Bruyere evidently, saw only the outer man. The outerman is comic; the inner man is sinister. Tartuffe is sensual, covetous, and vindictive, and it is his sensuality that brings him to his downfall.

Lemaitre[2] expresses the belief that Molière presents two Tartuffes; the first one is a beetle, a church mouse. He eats in the manner of a hog; he is ugly and repulsive. In the first two Acts, he resembles frère Martin in "Les Hypocrites," whose actions were mechanical and habitual rather than spiritual. Thus, the first Tartuffe is a libertine.

Orgon is a wealthy bourgeois who is quite stupid in his manners and beliefs. He has probably been faithful to the King during the recent Fronde, for which he was beautifully rewarded at the end of the play. Though insipid by nature, he is very jealous of his economic status, and would be slow to accept a wretch on even terms with himself and to offer his daughter to him in marriage.

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1. Tilley: Molière, p. 112.
2. Les impressions, pp. 37-48.

Molière knew human nature too well to fail to recognize that fact, therefore, he created a second Tartuffe. The first Tartuffe was not seen by the audience; he is known to it only by the description given by certain members of Orgon's family. The second Tartuffe is the one which came walking on to the stage, handing Dorine the handkerchief to be used in covering her bosom. Lemaitre thinks that Molière did not take the pains to make the second Tartuffe harmonize with the first one. The same authority describes the first Tartuffe as harmless, while the second one is extremely dangerous and adventurous. In order to make him wicked rather than innocent, Molière gave Tartuffe a great deal of wit and finesse, in fact, he is one of the cleverest of Molière's characters. He remains a hypocrite throughout the play, and there is no doubt about him on this count at any time. In creating Tartuffe the author directs his satire in such manner that it is not confined to any given person or particular age. He represents hypocrisy of all ages regardless to caste or class.

He assures Cleante that he accepts Orgon's household in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of some wicked person who might exploit his opportunities. Therefore, he does the family a particular service when he allows himself to become custodian of its property. On being told by Cleante that a better service could be rendered to the family, and to the neighborhood, if the impostor

changed his locus, the baffled Tartuffe dismissed the subject by saying:

> "Il est Monsieur, trois heures et demie:
> Certain devoir pieux me demande là-haut
> Et vous m'excuserez de vous quitter si tôt. [1]

Even after he has walked into the trap set for him by Elmire, which results in the disillusionment of Orgon, Tartuffe tries once more to use his chicanery, but this time his deceit fails him. Immediately the impostor takes off his mask of hypocrisy and displays the wicked monster he has always been. It is here that he becomes a tragic figure, driving his benefactor out of doors as he shouts:

> "C'est à vous d'en sortir, vous qui parlez en maître
> La maison m'appartient, je le ferai connaître
> Et vous montrerai bien qu'en vain on a recours,
> Pour me chercher querelle, à ces lâches détours,
> Qu'on n'est pas où l'on pense en me faisant injure,
> Que j'ai de quoi confondre et punir l'imposture
> Venger le ciel qu'on blesse, et faire repentir
> Ceux qui parlent ici de me faire sortir.
> (Lines 1556-64)

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1. It seems that Molière is making mockery of Lamoignon, by whom he and Boileau were insulted when they sought to have him lift his interdict from the "Tartuffe," as he said to them: "Messieurs, vous voyez qu'il est près de midi; je manquerais la messe si je m'arrêtais plus longtemps. -- LES CLASSIQUES POUR TOUS, p. 61.

At this point in the play, Orgon becomes the most pathetic character in Molière's theatre, as he realizes his great mistake; and repents for his having had too much confidence in an impostor. The pity of the audience must rise to its highest point as the old bourgeois, shaking from head to foot utters the following words:

> "Ma foi, je suis confus et n'ai pas lieu de rire."
> Je vois ma faute aux choses qu'il me dit,
> Et la donation m'embarrasse l'esprit."

Thoroughly punished for his stupidity, Orgon resolves himself to his fate. Molière has solved his thesis, which may be stated in the following sentence:

> "Over-confidence is as destructive as a complete lack of confidence." [1]

Now, Molière has finished his story and everybody understands its implications. Priesthood has been treated with the bitterest irony ever used by a satirist, and hypocrisy has been subjected to its most daring exposure. The victim of the hypocrite has taken his share of punishment, thus becoming an example to be held before others who believe too strongly without first examining their reasons for such credence.

The fifth Act, with its intervention of the King,

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1. Molière develops an opposite theme in his "Dom Juam."

is a mere postcript of the struggle. Molière has been saved by the King in his fight with his enemies of the production of "le Tartuffe," and as an expression of appreciation on the part of the author, he takes the King for his "deus ex machina." The innocent, but ridiculous Orgon is finally rewarded, while the impostor is punished by Royal power itself.

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E. - The "Dénouement".

The dénouement of the first "Tartuffe" remains unknown today. John Palmer is of the belief that in the first edition of the play there was no unmasking of the hypocrite, and there was no sinister triumph for him. AT the same time, he doubts that the intervention of the King appeared in this version. According to that authority, those elements represent later developments imposed upon Molière when his play, begun as a diverting comedy, became a serious morality. It would seem that the climax of the old version came at the end of the third Act, which is practically the same as the third Act of the present version: Tartuffe makes an attempt upon the virtue of Elmire; he is denounced by her; Orgon hears about the affair, and fails to believe it. The play closes with the infatuated husband insisting

that Tartuffe will be permitted to enjoy the company of Elmire at will. Thus, the edition of 1664 closed in a shout of laughter at the expense of the dupe, Orgon; and not, as in the final version, in salutary of royal justice. The earlier conclusion is admittedly cynical; the impostor triumphs while the crowd laughs at his admirer. If such a play had a moral, it would have to be stated thus: "Hypocrisy pays."

Finally, it seems that the earlier version of "le Tartuffe," corresponded more with the spirit of Molière as of the second period of his dramatic development. This play was produced for the primary purpose of raising revenue and creating laughter. He had pledged to write more plays that would please the spectators, and he was following that idea when he presented a greatly improved edition of the conventional theme of "the hypocrite." The fight that ensued between the author and high churchmen, based on moral grounds, reached such a furious state, that Molière was forced to change his comic satire "in three acts" to a "morality play in five acts." The addition of the fourth and fifth Acts of the play certainly must have entailed a sweeping recasting of the acts already in existence, however, it does not appear from meag r evidences available, that the general disposition of material was seriously disturbed. Molière's achievement in recasting this play is

nothing less than miraculous. The truth of the old proverb which says: "Trials andtribulations serve to make men and not to break them," certainly obtains in this work. The author's enemies sought to crush him by means of destroying his play, but while so doing, they made him undoubtedly the greatest comedy writer in the history of French literature, and the presentation of the "Tartuffe" represents the beginning of the third period of his dramatic career, and the first in a series of his great masterpieces.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R I I

"DOM JUAM"

A. - Sources of "Dom Juan".

After Molière's disappointing experiences with the production of his "Tartuffe," he found himself without a new play to be presented to his newly won audience. At the request of his comrades, he produced his own version of the popular theme----the legend of "Dom Juan". This legend has its origin in Spanish literature, beginning with "El Burlador de Sevilla y Combibado de Piedra," a tragedy, written by Tirso de Molina. This theme did not pass directly from Spain to France, as one may be led to believe; it found its way into France by the way of Italy, and by means of Italian players. Two authors: Cicognini and Giliberto,[1] imitated this play at nearly the same time, under the title of "Il convitato di piedra."[2] Unfortunately the play written by Gilberto is lost, but it

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1. Michaut: LES LUTTES DE MOLIERE, pp. 134-141.
2. Moland: MOLIERE ET LA COMEDIE ITALIENNE, p. 191.

appears that it was a close imitation of the original Spanish.

It is known that in the lost work, Dom Juan's valet was Trivelin, however, in the edition that has been preserved, Dominique has replaced Trivelin as a valet of Dom Juan. Between the appearance of the lost edition of Gilberto and that of the edition that was preserved, several French versions of the play were produced, with those of Dorimon and Villiers assuming the greatest importance. [1]

Cicognini's play came at a date that remains uncertain, but it is rather certain that Gilberto presented his play in 1652,[1] The writers of the "comedia dèal'arte" copied from Cicognini in preparing "un scenario comique", which was played by Italian actors at the Petit-Bourbon, and later at the Palais-Royal. It was during the Italian performances that the play assumed the title of "Festin de Pierre." The first French author to present it under that name was Dorimon who presented it at Lyon, in 1659, the full title of which was "Festin de Pierre ou le fils criminel", a tragi-comedy in five acts, written in verse. Michaut thinks Dorimon used the edition written by Gilberto.[2]

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1. Moland: MOLIERE ET LA COMEDIE ITALIENNE, pp. 190-193.
LES LUTTES DE MOLIERE, p. 141.

In 1661, Villers presented a translation or a new adaptation, under the same title: "Festin de Pierre, ou le fils criminel," written along the same model.

Villiers spoke of his play as "la tragi-comédie, traduite de l'Italien en Français." It appears certain that Molière consulted the works of Dorimon and Villiers before he drafted the outline of his own "Dom Juan," and he probably went to Cicognini for several details of the story; it was his good fortune to see the play presented by Italian actors as early as the year 1658. In 1659, Molière witnessed the same play at the Hotel de Bourgogne, under the title of "le Festin de Pierre," written by Villiers. Later, in 1661 Dorimon's edition was presented, and Molière was one of the spectators who cheered it. [1] It is believed that Molière received his total inspiration for writing his "Dom Juan" from the above named plays, which is to say that "El Burlador de Sevilla" had little effect on the great French legend of 1665, though the events of Molière's play are quite similar to those of the Spanish original. It is of the greatest importance to point out the fact that Tirso's play is written in three Acts, with the first Act containing eighteen scenes; the second Act has twenty scenes, and the third Act is composed of twenty-seven scenes. [2] Like-

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1. "Dom Juan," CLASSIQUE-LAROUSSE, Preface.
2. COLECCION DE LOS MEJORES AUTORES ANTIGUOS Y MODERNOS, NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS, Tomo 105: "El Burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de Piedra."

wise, Tirso's play is interesting because it falls into the category of "Royal plays," due to the fact that some of its characters belong to the Spanish Royal family. On the other hand, the circumstances and details of the story as they appear in the editions of Cicognini and Villiers are quite different from the circumstances and details of "El Burlador." The French plays are very similar to the Italian plays from which they were copied. The additions that Molière brings to his Italian originals or models, bear no resemblance to "El Burlador." The personnages of the Spanish play which were suppressed by the Italians were not re-introduced by Molière. [1] The traits of haughtiness and worldliness are common to all the "Don Juans," the Spanish, the French, and the Italian, but the wickedness, irreligion, and the aggressive and ironic unbelief are found only in Molière's play, and in his Italian models.

In many respects the heroes in the plays of Dorimon and Villiers are bolder in expressing their unbelief than Molière's Dom Juan, yet, no one charged Dorimon and Villiers with being impious. Here is anexample taken from Dorimon's play:

"Mon destin est écrit même des berceau,
Et l'endroit est marqué qui sera mon tombeau....
Si le ciel attaquait, je lui ferais la guerre;
Tout au moins je mourrais dans cette volonté."

1. "El Burlador" has twenty-two main characters, ten of which are members of the Royal or noble classes.--BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSAL, Tomo, 105.

The following lines are taken from Villiers' play:

"Apprends, apprends, Esprit ignorant et témide,
Que le feu, le viol, le fer, le parricide,
Et tout ce dont tu m'as si bien entretenu,
Passe dans mon esprit comme non advenu.
S'il en reste, ce n'est qu'une idée agréable
Quiconque vit ainsi ne peut être blamable:
Il suit les sentiments de la Nature, Enfin,
Soit que je sois ou loin ou proche de ma fin,
Sache que ni le ciel ni l'enfer ne me touche." [1]

Those words are far more daring in nature than those of Molière's hero. Moreover, the heroes in the plays of Dorimon and Villiers direct their impious words to the statue, while in Molière's play, there is only the valet, Sganarelle, who hears the boastful words: "I believe that two and two are four, and that four and four are eight!" However, Molière gives his principal character a prestige that is not found in the works of his predecessors. This may have been a necessary dramatic procedure on the part of the author to reclaim the lofty place for Dom Juan, which he has just lost in his unsuccessful attempt to persuade "le pauvre" to blaspheme.

The question which arises now is: "Why does the Church take exception to Molière's play, while it merely laughs at the plays of Dorimon and Villiers?" Several answers may be given. In the first place, the earlier

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1. These two extracts are taken from Michaut's LES LUTTES DE MOLIERE, pp; 176-179.

versions of "Dom Juan" are pure farces, without much solid material, or a moral. The theme comes from a play that is listed as "high Spanish drama;" the said theme had become traditional and very popular before Molière became famous, due to the fact that there were no traces of irony or sarcasm directed towards religious leaders. In the case of Molière, there were many persons who thought, not without good reasons, that the author had ulterior motives for presenting his "Dom Juan." He was having great difficulty in presenting "le Tartuffe," due to the opposition of those who suspected his good intentions in staging that play. In the second place, Molière's "Dom Juan" has a moral, and the audience did not fail to appreciate its implications. Dom Juan of Molière had become a legend "in the flesh," that is to say, Molière had copied many of his traits from people whom he had actually met. It was a definite criticism of the nobility that existed at the Court of Louis XIV. Thus, it was the realistic elements in "Don Juan" which gave rise to such a storm of protest against it. Finally it was the consensus ofopinion that Moliere was an open enemy to the Church, and anything he said or wrote was received with the greatest suspicion of impiety.

The idea of the scene of "le pauvre" was taken from the works of Dorimon and Villiers, in whose plays, it formed an integral part of the intrigue. [1]

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1. LES LUTTES, p. 166.

In the buffoonery of the supper, in the scene of M. Dimanche and Sganarelle, and even in the scene of M. Dimanche and Dom Juan, Molière is deliberately seeking to create laughter.[1]

It appears that Molière went to Corneille's "Menteur" for the noble and majestic qualities of Dom Juan's father. In presenting this noble character here, it is noteworthy to say that the author reserves for the fourth act of his play a scene which his predecessors have placed at the beginning of their plays. Moreover, Sganarelle, the valet in Molière's play has his own individuality, which is not the case with either Briguelle or Philippin.[2] Sganarelle could not resist the temptation of money, which is clearly seen as he shouts to the beggar:

"Va, va, jure un peu, il n'y a pas de mal." [3]

The dénouement is traditional and is common to all editions of the legend.

The foregoing pages present a rather complete picture of the sources from which Molière copied his material for his play, or from which his predecessors copied.

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1. LES LUTTES, p. 166.
2. Ibid., p. 172.
3. Dom Juan, Act Sc.

B. - The Exposition

Sganarelle initiates the play with his striking description of his master, Dom Juan:

> "Eh! mon pauvre Guman, mon ami, tu ne sais pas encore, crois-moi, quel homme est Dom Juan---------- que tu vois Dom Juan, mon maître, un chien, un diable, un Turc, un hérétique, qui ne croit ni Ciel, ni Enfer, ni loupgarou, qui passe cette vie en véritable bête brute, un pourceau d'Epicure------Un mariage ne lui coute rien à contracter-------c'est un épouseur à toutes mains." 1

From those lines it is clear to the reader that he is about to read a story of an outlaw, a criminal, or an unscrupulous man. But, before those lines are well digested, Sganarelle makes another statement which sounds the keynote of the whole play:

> "Mais un grand seigneur méchant homme est une terrible chose." --- "A fine gentleman, deliberately wicked is a terrible thing."

When Dom Juan appears on the stage, he leaves nothing to doubt with references to his general disposition. He is wicked simply for the pleasure he derives from such leading such life; he believes neither in God nor the Devil; he gains pleasure from his seducive arts and the deliberate corruption of the innocent. He is a man who can look his wickedness in the face, viewing it with admi-

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1. "Dom Juan," Act I, scene 1.

ration, and when Sganarelle ventures to deprecate his mockery of the sacred mystery of marriage, he replies:

> "Va, va, c'est une affaire entre le Ciel et moi, et nous la demelerons bien ensemble, sans que tu t'en mettes en peine." [1]

Those lines would seem to deny the statement that Dom Juan does not believe in God. However, a little additional reading reveals that Dom Juan's words are worth very little more than those of Tartuffe, especially in the third scene of the first Act, where Elvire appears, begging her husband to come home with her. To her great sorrow, she learns from Sganarelle the reason for her difficulties in persuading her husband to conduct himself in the manner of a married man. Sganarelle tells her the story in these words:

> "Madame, les conquerants, Alexandre et les autres mondes sont causes de notre départ." [2]

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1. All this is new to the legend. Neither the Italian nor the French models from which the play was drawn, nor even the Spanish original of Tirso contains anything in the least degree comparable with this preliminary exposition.
2. It is here that Molière announces that he is going to present a play of the "heroic" type, similar to the superhuman characters of Corneille.

On hearing those words spoken by her husband's valet, Elmire retorts with one of the most important remarks made throughout the whole play:

> "Mais sache que ton crime ne demeurera pas impuni, et que le même Ciel dont[1] tu te joues me saura venger de ta perfidie.

With the foregoing scenes and incidents the main characters have been introduced to the audience, which now has only to wait to see how the author develops his thesis:

> "A fine gentleman, deliberately wicked, is a terrible thing."

The emphasis laid by Molière on the intellectual arrogance of his hero, as distinguished from the commonplace sensuality of his predecessors, not only puts the comedy in a different rank, but it also serves to completely change its tone and calibre. In the "Tartuffe" Molière uses two full acts to prepare his audience for the entrance of his hero; but, in "Dom Juan," he finds it necessary to devote only two scenes to such preparation.

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1. It is here that Molière makes his first preparation for his denouement. "Dom Juan, Classique-Larousse. This bit of artistic planning adds to the general improvement that the author brings to hisseveral models of the popular theme of "Le Festin de Pierre."

C. - Development of the character of Dom Juan.

In the plays of Dorimon and Villiers, the story begins with a conversation in which the king deplores the conduct of his noble, Don Juan, [1] and tries to find some means by which the libertin can be reformed. Further in the play, Don Juan appears on the stage, his valet, whose name is Arlequin, is already standing there holding a lantern on the edge of a Spanish sword, which he drops to the floor, causing the spectators to laugh heartily. Then, accompanied by his valet, Don Juan goes to the home of the Commander, seeking the hand of his daughter, Dona Anna. He leaves his valet on the outside at the door, dressed in police clothes in order to prevent any other person from entering. The enraged Commander chases Don Juan from the house, pursues him for some distance down the road where a fight ensues between the two men, as result of which, the Commander loses his life. Don Juan escapes, leaving Dona Anna seeking vengeance from the King for the death of her father. [2]

Likewise, in these earlier plays, Don Juan's valet is offered a reward for the capture of the murderer of the Commander, but he refuses to accept the reward.

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1. Moland: MOLIERE ET LA COMEDIE ITALIENNE, p. 191.
2. The situation recalls a similar incident in "le Cid."

Don Juan becomes suspicious, demands Arlequin to exchange clothes with his master for the best interest of the latter. Arlequin refuses to make the exchange of clothes with Don Juan; later, he receives a purse from an officer with the understanding that he would furnish information leading to the arrest of Don Juan, but he fails to produce any useful information.

Thus, in the first Act of the earlier French versions of "Dom Juan," a crisis has occurred, a murder has been committed and a reward has been offered to the murderer's valet, who is expected to assist in bringing his master under arrest. Though there has been a great deal of action in this Act, the play is held strictly to the literary level of farce. Even the scene in which the Commander is killed, the audience never ceases to laugh.

In Molière's play, the first Act serves only as an exposition, in which an introduction of the hero is given. During this exposition it is learned that Dom Juan has stolen Elvire from the convent, married her and deserted her, and that is about all there is of importance.

The contrast between the second Act and Molière's play and the second Act of his models is also quite interesting. In the second Act of "Il Convitato di Piertra," as well as in the case of the French adaptations of this play,

Don Juan and his valet meet Rosalba, a peasant young woman, busily engaged with her fishing chores at the seashore. Don Juan asks her to marry him, she agrees. When the appointed time, arrives, he disappoints her, while directing her to consult his valet for the change of plans. When she visits the valet, he shows her a long list of the names of women who had been previously disappointed by the seducer. [1]

In the second Act of Molière's play, the shepherds and shepherdesses are changed to true French peasants of "L'Ile-de-France." Of these peasants, Charlotte appears to be the most interesting. [2] When Dom Juan begins his flirtation with her she informs him at once that she possesses great self-pride as she says:

> "Je suis une pauvre paysanne; mais j'ai l'honneur en recommandation, et j'aimerais mieux me voir morte que de me voir deshonorée." [3]

That expression coming from Charlotte may well represent the attitude of Molière where the French peasants are concerned. It seems that he is very sympathetic with them,

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1. It is from Villiers that Molière copies the idea of making Dom Juan a great seducer.
2. In the edition of Villiers, the characters are shepherds.
3. Charlotte uses the patois in her speech. Molière, borrows this trait from Cyrano de Bergerac's "Pédant joue."

and he does not permit Charlotte to become sufficiently infatuated to go out and drown herself because Dom Juan is not serious with her, as Rosalba had done in "Il Convitato di Piedra."

Scene four of Act II drops to the lowest state of farce as Dom Juan tries to talk to two women simultaneously. The purpose of this episode is to give the audience a good laugh, and thereby relieve some of the seriousness of tone that takes place in the piece as the herb grows progressively worse with regards to morals. [1] The nonsense is brought to an abrupt end in the next scene as twelve men appear on the scene seeking Dom Juan, forcing him to flee. Thus, the play which was farcical in the fourth Act, attains the height of high comedy in the fifth Act. Don Juan escapes from twelve blood-thirsty men with all the skill of a Cid. Besides, Molière does not find it necessary to bring the statue in during the second Act of his play due to an exhaustion of events necessary to keep it alive, as his predecessors had done before.

The second Act has been severely criticized, and not entirely without good reason. It could be easily left out without disturbing the progress of the play, because it is unrelated to the other Acts except for +

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1. This comic scene is found in the first Act of "Il Convitato di Piedra," and in the fourth Act of the works of Dorimon and Villiers.

hero himself. However, the second Act is not out of harmony with the other Acts, and does not serve to spoil the spirit or the tone of the story. Likewise, the fact that Dom Juan's role in this Act assumes the most farcical proportions does not alter the high quality of the play, because farce in Molière is always an extreme logical development of his comedy, and in "Dom Juan," farce stands nearer to tragedy than to comedy.

Finally, the second Act could well be omitted from the play without doing any serious harm to it. The hero furnishes the only link of unity between this Act and the other four. On the other hand, it could be said that the second Act is as important to the play as the fifth Act, where Molière himself comes forward to take his enemies to task for thir opposition to the presentation of "le Tartuffe." Both Acts represent the originality of the author himself and a display of his genius used in bringing new material to the traditional legend. Thus, the former ghost of Dom Juan which existed in the works of Molière's predecessors becomes a real character in a high comedy.

In Act II Dom Juan displays his insolence towards his fellows: in Act III, he displays his insolence towards Heaven, especially in his very daring remarks to Sganarelle:

"Je crois deux et deux sont quatre, Sganarelle,
et quatre et quatre sont huit." [1]

In this same connection Sganarelle jumps up and down clapping his hands while shouting:

"Je veux frapper les mains, hausser les bras,
lever les yeux au ciel, baisser la tête,
remuer les pieds, aller à droit, à gauche
en avant, en arrière, tourner...."

When Sganarelle falls to the ground as he demonstrates his belief in God, his master retorts:

"Bon! voilà ton raissonement qui a le nez cassé."

It is this episode that drew the wrath of Molière's enemies. They deplored his idea of entrusting the defense of the mysteries of religion to a buffoon, who concludes his arguments by falling down in the manner of a clown performing before a crowd at a fair. They insisted that Molière might have at least given Heaven a more respectable champion. To that accusation, Molière had very little rebuttal, thus, he avoided comment that might have added fuel to the fire his enemies were holding over his head, and after the Easter holiday period, he quietly

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1. Molière had probably read the Tenth "Discours du Socrate chretien," published by Balzac in 1652. In this work Prince Maurice d'Orange made the same statement while he was lying on his death-bed. LES CLASSIQUES LAROUSSE, p. 52.

withdrew "Dom Juan" from the stage.

In the scene of "le pauvre" Molière shocked his contemporaries to such degree that he found it necessary to deliberately cut out certain passages from his play, some of which have never been restored. [1] The expression which proved to be the most offensive to his enemies was Dom Juan's final remark to the beggar:

> "Je te veux donner en Louis d'or, et je te le donne pour l'amour de l'humanité." [2]

Their charge of impiety can hardly be justified in the light of the position taken by the beggar, who becomes the real champion of religion. Further, those enemies did not appreciate the fact that Molière was satirising the nobility, and whatever Dom Juan said or did reflected upon that group, and had no particular bearing on the opinions of the author with regards to religion. In the absence of Molière's notes, it is extremely difficult to say with certainty that Dom Juan reflected the ideas of

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1. Palmer: MOLIERE, p. 369.
2. The suppressed version is said to have contained the following statement: "

> "Voilà qui est étrange, et tu es bien mal reconnu de tes soins. Ah! Ah! je m'en vais te donner un Louis d'or tout à l'heure pourvu que tu veuilles jurer."

The reply of the beggar was: "Ah! Monsieur, voudriez-vous que je commisse un tel péché?"

the author any more than the beggar did. While remaining true to his religion, the beggar gets what he asks for, and is thereby rewarded for his strong stand. In this scene, Dom Juan is definitely the loser, while the beggar is the indisputable winner, and with his victory, heaven is likewise a victor.

Another innovation brought to the play by Molière was the scene of Elvire's brothers. Though he copied the idea from Villiers and Dorimon, he made drastic changes in the treatment of the details. In Dorimon's play, the hero stole the sword from Dom Philippe; in Villiers' play the hero assassinated his unarmed adversary. Molière thought too highly of his hero to permit him to resort to such cowardice, thus the tragic elements were postponed. By adopting this method of procedure, the author succeeded in preserving his hero's elegant pride, which would serve him well in the fifth Act.

The situation, in which Dom Carlos finds himself hedged between a spirit of gratitude for Dom Jaun and a desire for vengeance upon him, due to the latter's treatment of Elmire, is borrowed material, receiving its inspiration from at least three important works, all of which were copied from Lope de Vega. These works are:

"les Illustres ennemies," by Thomas Corneille
"les Genereux ennemis" by Boisrobert

"l'Ecolier de Salamanque," by Scarron. [1]

The next great episode is the appearance of the Statue, who is making his debut in the story. The scene is preposterous in nature, and its only function in the play is to furnish a new background for Don Juan's wickedness, while causing his defiance for Heaven and earth to be reaffirmed. He has already asserted that he believed that two and two were four, and that four and four were eight; and beyond that point, he believed nothing, and no amount of persuasion could force him to alter his conviction. The firmness of his belief, and, one may say, the unbelief, is attested by his complete disregard for the bowing and nodding of the head on the part of the Statue.

Tirso de Molina gives a better reason for the fight between Don Juan and the Statue. [2] The Spanish author gives a complete picture of the duel which takes place between Don Juan and the Commander, who is fighting to preserve his daughter's honor which had been exploited by El Burlador.

DON JUAN

"Quien esta aqui?

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1. "Dom Juan," CLASSIQUE LAROUSSE, note at bottom of page 61.
2. "El Burlador de Servil a," BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSAL, Vol.105 Act II, scene 13.

DON GONZALO

La barbacana caida
de la torre de mi honor,
que echaste en tierra, traidor,
donde era alcaide la vida.

DON JUAN

Dejame pasar.

DON GONZALO

Pasar?

DON JUAN

Moriras.

DON GONZALO

No importa nada.

DON JUAN

Mira que te he de matar. (Rinen.)

Don Gonzala

Muere, traidor.

DON JUAN

Desta suerte.

Muero. (le hiere.)

CATALINON, aparte

Si escapo de aquesta,
no mas burlas, no mas fiesta.

DON GONZALO, cayendo.

Ah! que me ha dado la muerte!"

It is not possible for Molière to present the identical elements in his play because Tirso is giving his spectators a pure tragedy, while the French author is giving a comedy to the French stage. Nevertheless, the spirit of tragedy dominates in both plays. Thus, the critics who say that Molière is more tragic than Racine have a rather strong point to substantiate their views.

Molière brings his Statue into the play in the third Act in order to make it possible for him to present the Statue on two following occasions. These different appearances of the ghost-like figure would of necessity require different Acts, because each appearance takes place in a different locus. In Tirso's play, the Statue does not return until the thirteenth scene of the final Act. The Spanish author's problem was to punish his hero for his developed habit of defiling womanhood, thus Tirso's task was relatively easy. Don Juan had gone from place to place, deceiving woman after woman, which was a definite violation to the Spanish code of honour. In Molière's play, the problem is more complex. The wickedness of his hero must be further displayed in order to justify the ultimate punishment which must come in order to retain the traditional ending of the legend. Besides, Molière's "Dom Juan" is a biting satire on the nobles, while Tirso's "El Burlador de Sevilla" is a play written for the amusement

of the nobles. While Tirso was typically Spanish, and the tone of his play represented everything that the early Seventeenth century Spaniard liked, Molière was a Frenchman, living a century ahead of his time. His "Dom Juan" is an embodiment of the evils that existed among the average Christian of the France of that day.

The episode of Dom Louis and his noble speech directed to Dom Juan recalls the venerable old Don Diego of Tirso, but Molière went to Corneille's "Menteur" to borrow the noble character of Dom Juan's father. In Molière's play the situation is more tragic. [1]

In scene six, Elvire returns for another brief conversation with her wicked husband. Her return represented another example of the author's originality and a master stroke of his genius.

Her speech is calm and touching though her voice is of a tone that echoes vengeance. None of Molière's predecessors employed a scene in their plays in which the hero's wife returned to haunt him just before destruction overtook him. It is at this point that Dom Juan feigns repentance. [3]

In the final scene of Act IV, the Statue makes his second visit to Dom Juan, where the group is having

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1. DOM JUAN, Classique Larousse, pp. 72-72.
2. MICHAUT: LES LUTTES, 166.
3. The idea of repentence is taken from Dorimon and Villiers, however, their heroes are sincere.

supper. As he parted company with Dom Juan and his company, the Statue says:

> "Dom Juan, c'est assez. Je vous invite a venir
> demain souper avec moi. En aurez-vous le courage?"

This situation in "El Burlador" is identical: The Commander says to Don Juan:

> "Bajo esta palabra y mano,
> manana a mas diez te estoy
> para cenar aguardando.
> Iras?"

In Tirso's play one finds the following lines:

DON JUAN

"Aguarda, iréte alumbrando,"

DON GONZALO

"No alumbres, que en gracia estoy." [2]

In Molière's play one finds the French version of the same lines:

DOM JUAN, a Sganarelle

"Prends ce flambeau."

LA STATUE

On n'a pas besoin de lumiere,

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2. "El Burlador de Sevilla," Act III, scene 14, p. 144.

quand on est conduit par le Ciel." [1]

The legend of "Dom Juan" ends with the fourth Act. The fifth Act is made of Molière's original work, including everything he thought about his enemies. It is here that Dom Juan becomes a greater hypocrite than Tartuffe, and justifies his conduct while saying:

> "Il n'y a plus de honte maintenant à cela: l'hypocrisie est un vice à la mode, et tous les vices à la mode passent pour vertus....la profession d'hypocrite a de merveilleux avantages."

After having finished his discourse, Molière resorts to the traditional denouement and brings his play to a close. Thus, the author has added his second in a series of great plays.

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1. Though the French words are almost a direct translation from the Spanish, Molière copied his verse from Cicognini, who had translated them to Italian from Tirso's play. Cicognini's lines as listed as follows: "Non, ho piu bisogno di lume terreno." Which means "Je n'ai pas besoin de lumière terrestre."- DOM JUAN, last line in Act IV, p. 78.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R I I I

"LE MISANTHROPE".

A. - General view of the comedy.

On June 6, 1666, date of the first performance of "le Misanthrope," Molière was a broken man. For seven years he had been obliged to fight against the enemies of his theatre, who began the struggle by charging him with literary faults, making mockery of contemporary society, and who eventually attacked him for what they termed as "impiety". His favorite play, "le Tartuffe," was suppressed for almost five years, due to their opposition. To all of this trouble, domestic difficulties were soon added, because Molière and his beautiful wife had ceased to be the model couple. Some critics think that the break in marital relations between the couple serves as a source of the play itself, but there is no proof available to sustain such belief. However, there is nothing in Italian farces, the ancient classics, or the Spanish tragi-comedies that give evidences of having been a source of inspiration to Molière as he wrote "le Misanthrope." In "Don Garcie de Navarre," there

is a similar personnage, and Molière took this character from an Italian comedy, written by Cicognini. [1] Moreover, Molière's health had begun to fail him by 1666. He was plagued with what he thought to be unfaithfulness on the part of the newly found French poet, Jean Racine, whom he had assisted in becoming famous. He refers to this bitter experience in the following line:

"Je me verrais trahir, mettre en pièces, voler..."

All of these troubles certainly afflicted Molière with misanthropy. So heavy was his sorrow, he went back to Greek literature seeking a name for it. [2] In his new play he continues his fight against hypocrisy which he had begun with the presentation of "le Tartuffe," however, in "le Misanthrope," he makes an aggressive fight against the evil, with Alceste shouting against it in almost every breath.

If "le Misanthrope" has an exposition, it must be confined to the first scene of the first Act. The

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1. Moland: LA VIE DE MOLIERE, pp. 142-143.
2. The word "Misanthrope" comes from the Greek word "misanthropos," a compound word. ("Miseo," means to hate, and "anthropos," means man.) "Misanthropos" means a hater of mankind. It is an anonyme to "philanthrophy", which comes from the Greek word: "philanthropia," (from philos, meaning loving, and "anthropos," meaning man) "Philanthrophy," means a lover of mankind.

opening scene introduces the principal character and his friend, and presents a problem of social ethics, and indicates the plot which is to provide the structural frame work of the play. The method of procedure is very similar to that of the "Ecole des Femmes," which also opens with a conversation between two friends who express diametrically opposite views with regard to a social problem. In "le Misanthrope," the simplicity of plot permits its identification to be recognized earlier than is the case in the former play. In developing Alceste, Molière poses the question how far strict veracity and sincerity should be carried out in social intercourse. Alceste wants no compromise, while Philinte endorses extreme temperance. But Alceste is another of the author's stubborn characters, similar to Orgon, Arnolphe, Argan, and Dom Juan, thus, opposition to his views serves only to enrage him and make him more resolute in his convictions. He shouts:

> "Non, elle est générale, et je hais tous les hommes,
> Les uns parce qu'ils sont méchants et malfaisants,
> Et les autres pour être aux méchants complaisants
> Et n'avoir pas pour eux ces haines vigoureuses
> Que doit donner le vice aux âmes vertueuses.
> (Lines 118-122)

Philinte is far more practical and tolerant and remains equally as stubborn in his opinion as Alceste insists upon being. His response is:

"Mais quand on est du monde, il faut bien que l'on
rende quelques dehors civils que l'usage demande."
(lines 65-66)

Those lines correspond well with the adage:

"When one is in Rome, he must do as the Romans do."

Philinte may have added, however, that though one is in Rome, and is following Roman customs, he need not always bother himself to wear the Roman toga. Philinte continues his philosophy:

"J'observe comme vous, cent choses tous les jours,
Mais quoi qu'à chaque pas je puisse voir paraître
En courroux, comme vous, on ne me voit point être;
Je prends tout doucement les hommes comme ils sont
J'accoutume mon âme à soufrir ce qu'ils font."

Here, Philinte expresses the modern concept of society, which permits every man to live his own life, and if he violates the general patterns set up by society, then society itself will punish him.

In the following lines Philinte gives Molière's complete philosophy as he tells Alceste:

"La parfaite raison fuit toute extrémité
Et veut que l'on soit sage avec sobrieté.
(lines 151-152)

That expression might serve as a general thesis for all three of his high comedies: "le Tartuffe," "Dom Juan," and "le Misanthrope." In the first named play there is a character who believes too strongly and too easily.

Orgon has such great faith in Tartuffe, that he is not disillusioned until the Impostor is almost ready to send the police to arrest the entire household. Molière forces him to pay the bitter price for his stubborn belief, a belief not based on anything resembling common sense. Thus, there is the proof of the thesis:

"Good sense avoids all extremities."

In "Dom Juan," the hero does not believe anything. He represents the other extremity, and he pays the penalty just as Orgon does for believing everything told him by Tartuffe.

In "le Misanthrope," the hero is an extreme critic of mankind. Unlike his two predecessors, Alceste does not have to wait until the end of the play to suffer for his excesses. When the play opens he is introduced as a suffering man; he suffers throughout the play. Dom Juan and Tartuffe enjoyed life through the first four Acts of their respective plays: Alceste did not enjoy life in any scene in the play. His unreasonable suspicions make him more ridiculous than Orgon. It is almost impossible for a stranger to meet him and greet him because he thinks that all other men are hypocrites and are unworthy to shake his hand or embrace him. His conceit causes the audience to murmur at him instead of laughing at him as they laugh at Tartuffe and Dom Juan. On meeting Oronte, Alceste

advises him:

"Avant que nous lier, il faut nous mieux connaitre." [1]

Alceste exaggerates his love just as he does his moral purity. It is his misfortune to fall deeply in love with a young widow, who possesses all the qualities which he abhors. She is unfaithful, untruthful, and unsteady. Alceste undertakes the impossible task of reforming her, only to the increase of his own unhappiness. His uncontrolable love for Celimene represents a complete contrast to the lofty ideals of perfection which he endorses. She is indifferent to criticism from him or ffom the public.

Celimene is a young woman twenty years of age, followed by a long line of suitors. She is fond of Alceste but she is unwilling to surrender her worldliness. He confesses his own love for her while increasing his ridiculousness:

"Jamais
Personne n'a, Madame, aime comme je fais."

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1. This recalls the verse written by Joe Baille:
"Friendship is no plant of hasty growth;
Though planted in esteems deep fixed soil,
The gradual culture of kind intercourse
Must bring it to perfection.
"le Misanthrope," MacMillan & Co.,
New York, p. 77.

Here he seems to think he is superior in love as he thinks he is superior in morals. His love for Celimene gives the play a sort of unity which is constant throughout. It is this strange type of love that causes him to conduct himself in such ridiculous manners. His jealousy is as rash as his ideals of sincerety. Thus, Molière drags him through the whole play, suffering one misfortune after another.

His first real blow comes when he has his quarrel with Oronte. He meets Celimene on the street, carries her home; as he is about to ask her to reform, a visitor knocks at the door and is admitted in spite of Alceste's objections. That is his second misfortune. Alceste waits for the visitor to leave so he can continue his conversation, and loses his temper when the visitor is slow to leave. At once he declares that he will not leave the room until the other man has left. At this point he is disappointed by some one who sends for him, and he has to leave the house---this is his third setback. When he is free, he rushes back as he has promised to do, reppens the quarrel; Celimene leaves the room. This is fourth setback. Now he finds himself alone in the room with Arsinoe, and the clever woman loses no time in initiating a conversation with him in her own interest, while denouncing Celimene. Instead of gaining Alceste's love for herself, she succeeds only in increasing his

jealousy of Celimene, and for the fifth time he tries to begin a conversation with the woman he loves; he is successful in telling her how he would have her live, but Dubois happens to come into the room and embraces Alceste, thus for the fifth time he is interrupted in his effort to reprove his friend. For the sixth time he tries to talk with Celimene, and this time he finally succeeds in demanding her to inform him of his status with her. Her response is far from satisfactory, thus, he decides to retire to the desert, where he would not have to trouble himself with such a corrupt world. Through all of this, Alceste fails to arouse general sympathy. Critics ask why he is hesitant to forsake Celimene, and to go and develop an interest in some one who possesses the qualities which appeal to him. Those who ask such questions are quite unreasonable. It is natural for a man to love a woman who represents the qualities that are contrary to his ideals. Dissimilarities attract, while similarities repel. Then, it is not fair to blame Alceste if he wanted Celimene for himself only. Stendhal says: "L'amour, c'est le plus fier des despote: il faut être tout ou rien."

If that statement is true, and most people will say that it is true, Alceste is quite regular in that phase of his behavior. However, it is the fact that he allows his love for Celimene to cause him to lose self-control and to make a fool of himself that

renders him ridiculous. He displays too great a dependence upon the woman whom he loves. He allows himself to become discourteous, disrespectful, crude, and silly. Molière makes one laugh not only at the character, his acts, his words, his attitudes, his gestures, but he also makes one laugh at his renewed obstacles, and his successive deceptions.

Finally, "le Misanthrope" is the story of a man who is suffering from an excess of virtue, and may be considered as a study in social deportment. There is one argument against thinking of the play as a study in social deportment, and this argument is the fact that Alceste is not social, therefore, could not represent a study of things that are social. It may be better to characterize the play as a study of social values. Molière is here painting the comic side of man: displaying his discords, his vices, ugliness, and his pathetic side. Moreover, he paints society of all times, therefore, he is a man of human nature. Molière is less a man of his time than were Despreaux, Racine, Bossuet, and Pascal. While the seventeenth century was an embarkment between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, which it separates, Molière's genius could not be confined to such limits. His thought was vaster and more universal. Like Shakespeare, and Cervantes, Molière is a painter of human nature without regards to cult, fixed dogmas, or traditions.

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B. - The character of Alceste

In "le Cocu imaginaire," Molière presents a new character, which he calls Sganarelle. This character replaces the older one, called Mascarille, and was probably taken from the Italian theatre. He appears in several states of valets, of husband, of father of Lucinde, brother of Ariste, a teacher, a fagot-maker, and finally, a doctor. Sganarelle belongs to Molière as Panurge belongs to Rabelais, or Sancho to Cervantes. He is portrayal of everything distasteful and burlesque. [1]

Alceste is an elevated type of Sganarelle; he is more serious than the earlier characters of that name, he is more noble; and he represents ridicule that is confined to courage and to virtue. According to one critic, Sganarelle embraces three-fourths of the comic scale of Molière's theatre, [2] This would include the whole bottom, the middle, which he shares with Gorgibus, and Chrysale, and Alceste occupies the last quarter of the scale, that is, the highest point. Therefore, Sganarelle and Alceste represent the whole of Molière's theatre.

Alceste represents a picture of a fight by a grand soul against a cruel world, which finally conquers

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1. Sainte-Bueve: PORTRAITS, pp. 21-24.
2. Ibid.

him. He is easily angered, and has little patience with anyone. From start to finish Alceste is ludicrous, due to his profoundly unsocial attitude and his great egocentricity. When he is right in his conceptions, he spoils his case by over-statements and by being completely insensible to the reasonable views and feelings of others. Some critics think that Alceste is an embodiment of all that is least desirable in a member of society. [1] He is unjust, disagreeable--a type of man who would make human society impossible if he were not always discouraged and opposed. He may be described as an individual fighting against the the whole people.

Alceste is the most complex of all of Molière's characters. Sometimes he is noble, at other times he is ridiculous; sometimes he is intolerable, and at other times he is pathetic. And many times he is a combination of all these qualities simultaneously. One sentence will serve to attest this fact:

"Etre franc et sincere est mon plus grand talent."
(line 1087)

It is a mistake to think that Alceste is a mouthpiece for Molière. The great author-actor would not portray himself in such a ridiculous fashion. A believer in "common sense," Molière would never subscribe

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1. Palmer: MOLIÈRE, pp. 390-395.

to an extremist's point of view. It cannot be said that the author sympathizes any more with Philinte than he does with Alceste, because the former is as much an extremist as the latter. [1] Both men are perfect antitheses to what Molière himself believes. If Alceste is friendly to nobody, Philinte is friendly to everybody, thus, the latter is no more valuable to society than the former. True wisdom would suggest that one flee the philosophy of both men:

> Faguet says: "Le titre n'est pas très bon, puisqu'il ne s'ajuste exactement ni à Alceste, ni à Philinte, le misanthrope étant l'homme qui méprise les hommes, qui les déteste et qui les fuit, et Alceste étant l'homme qui veut les réformer et qui par conséquent les aime encore, et Philinte étant l'homme qui tout en les méprisant les supporte avec bonne humeur et leur est serviable... Le vrai titre serait "L'Insociable", et qu'Alceste n'est pas autre chose que l'insociable par impétuosité de vertu..."[2]

At the end of the play Alceste is finally persuaded that he cannot reform the woman he loves, to say nothing of the whole world. He retires and forsakes her.

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1. Michaut: LES LUTTES, p.208.
2. EN LISANT MOLIERE, p. 45.

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C. - "Le Misanthrope as a Satire of the Seventeenth Century Society.

Michaut says that Alceste is one of the most perfect inventions of Molière's genius, and adds, that traces of his personality could be found in every age. While that is very true, Alceste represents a pure satire of the seventeenth century when he finds himself involved in a lawsuit. It was the custom for pleaders to interview the judges before whom their cases were to be tried, and to try to persuade them beforehand of the merits of their cases. Gifts were often given to judges, originally without the idea of bribery, but such a system soon degenerated into corruption. [1]

Alceste says to Celimene:

"Est-ce par l'ongle long qu'il porte au petit doigt
Qu'il s'est acquis chez vous l'estime où l'on le voit?"
(lines 479-480)

In these lines Moliere gives a picture of the fashions of the fops of the day, the "petit marquis" whom he ridicules so often. It is one of their affectations to let their finger nails grow very long. They wore long, curley wigs, exaggerated all decorations of their costumes, and spoke in a falsetto voice. [2]

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1. Turgeon and Gilligan: PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, p. 434.
2. Turgeon and Gilligan, p. 450.

Molière appears to satirize dueling along with other abuses. Dueling was forbidden by law at this time, and the punishment of offenders was entrusted to a special court made up of the Marshals of France. The courts usually tried to prevent duels, rather than to punish them, and had a company of guards at its disposal to arrest those who planned them. A reconciliation was then forced by the court. [1]

In his treatment of Celimene, it would appear that Molière is also satirizing young widows.

"Madame, comme on sait, d'être prude a vingt ans."
(line 984)

Celimene is a young woman, twenty years of age, who is not with her husband, and no one knows who he is, or where he is.

Finally, Molière is attacking the idea of the indiscriminate embracing that was carried on by foppish men of that day. Alceste describes the idea as something rather informal as he rejects Oronte's aggressiveness in the second scene of the first Act.

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1. Turgeon and Gilligan, p. 463.

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D. - "Le Misanthrope as a French classic high Comedy.

"Le Misanthrope" is a high comedy of serious character-study and very little action. [1] In many ways Alceste is a strong character, unyielding in his opinions under all conditions. In this respect he is equal to Polyeucte, le Cid, or Andromaque. In creating Alceste, Molière gives the world another of his great flesh and blood characters, who breathes, eats and moves around in the society of all ages. His role represents a great psychological study, a mental struggle equal to anything in the tragedies of Racine.

Another classical feature of "le Misanthrope" is its form. It is a five-act play, written in verse. There is unity of place in this comedy, something almost unknown in Molière's works. "Toute la pièce se déroule dans le salon de Célimene, ou Alceste, en sa qualité de prétendant, à ses libres entrées," says Felix Guirand. [2] It is one of Molière's most perfect plays in verse, being surpassed only by "les Femmes savantes," and "Amphitryon." The style of "le Misanthrope" does not contain the taste and flavor that characterizes "l'Ecole des Femmes, nor the liberty of "le Tartuffe." Molière carries it through a type of refinement, under which the language of higher has undergone.

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1. Bagley: INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH LIT., pp. 275-276.
2. Classique Larousse.

Alceste is of noble blood and he is heroic in his mental struggle with the world. He is an extraordinary dramatic creation, equal to the creations of Corneille and Racine; but he more closely resembles the Racine productions, due to the fact that Alceste is moved by his inner feelings^^^ his passions. To some degree, one is reminded of Polyeucte as he reads the defiant words Molière's hero. However, these characters have common traits only so far as their iron determinations are concerned. Molière has replaced the "grandeur" which characterizes Corneille's figures by "la vérité et l'imagination par le gout des peintures morales. [1] It is his purpose to expose human weakness, to paint men's faults, and to do so according to nature itself, that is, on the basis of strict observation. Here he is quite in harmony with the ancients.

Finally, "le Misanthrope," is called a play with-out a subject. It contains no intrigue, no strange turn of events, and its action is confined to mental behavior. That quality makes it superior to "le Tartuffe," when the two plays are read. However, on the stage, "le Tartuffe" surpasses "le Misanthrope" due to the abundance of action that accompanies the performance of the former piece.

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1. Faguet: LE DIX-SEPTIEME SIECLE, p. 266.

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PART THREE

CHAPTER IV

"LE MEDECIN MALGRE LUI"

A. - "Le Médecin malgré lui" as a typical example of traditional French farce.

Molière has just presented three of his greatest masterpieces, "Le Tartuffe", "Dom Juam", and "Le Misanthrope", in which he ridicules hypocrisy in every form, while giving particular interest to religious hypocrites, pedantry, and ridiculous nobles, who frequented the Court. Now, he turns his attention towards another evil, namely, the contemporary doctors --- hypocrites of science. He has opened his attack, though in a mild manner, in "Dom Juan", (Act III,Sc.3) as he says:

> "Tout leur art est pure grimace, c'est une des plus grandes erreurs qui soit parmi les hommes."

Now he presents a new play,entitled: "Le Médecin malgré lui", the theme of which is taken from "Le Fagoteux", one of Molière's early farces, written as the troupe was travelling through the Provinces, and has since disappeared. In "Le Médecin malgré lui", the author returns to farce. Previously he has written another farce, entitled: "L'Amour Médecin", a revised edition of one of his old works, known as "Les Médecins."

It must be poihted out that themes satirizing doctors are almost as old as the theatre itself, and these themes have been presented on Spanish, Italian, and French stages since the Middle Ages. But Molière carries the satire much deeper than had been the case with his predecessors. He decries the gross ignorance and nonsense displayed by his contemporaries of the medical profession, and does so with such vividness that the objects of his ridicule are easily recognizable to the general public, thus arousing professional indignation against him. This farce was produced as early as 1661 if not before, but it was apparently considered of little importance by the company itself as well as by the general public, because it received scant attention in La Grange's record and in other contemporary accounts. [1] It may have been a mere scenario with dialogue supplies impromptu by actors in the manner of the Italian "commedia dell" arte." The presentation of "le Medecin malgré lui" serves to revive public interest in Molière's theatre in the wake of a rather cool reception of "le Misanthrope," given by theatre-goers. This same role had been played by l'Ecole des Maris," which followed the failure of "Dom Garcie," and "l'Amour medecin," which followed "Dom Juan,"

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1. Turgeon and Gilligan; page 511.
   Lintilhac: HISTOIRE GENERALE DU THEATRE EN FRANCE, Vol. III, p. 267.

to the stage after the latter play had been removed from the list of active plays due to the religious-party's opposition to it. [1]

The ease with which Molière produced and performed "le Medecin malgré lui," after having devoted so much of his time to high comedies of character, is an indication of the fact that he was as versatile in one field of comedy as he was in the other. The source of the situation in the first Act is a medieval fabliau: "Du Vilain mire," the tale of the peasant turned doctor. In this story a rich and miserly peasant married a poor noblewoman, and in order to keep her faithful to him, he beats her every day so that she will weep constantly and thereby remain forever unattractive to other men. Wishing to get revenge on her husband, she tells some messengers, who are searching for a doctor to cure the King's daughter who has a fish bone caught in her throat, that her husband is really a great doctor, but that he will not admit it unless he is obliged to do so by force. The messengers follow her suggestion, and beat the peasant until he confesses that he is a doctor and agrees to accompany them to Court. The peasant doctor has great success in his adventure, although he has no knowledge of medicine. Molière follows the first part of the story rather carefully,

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1. Lintilhac, p. 272.

but he varies greatly from the original as he writes his second and third Acts. Thus, the first Act of "le Medecin malgré lui," is the traditional theme, but the last two acts represent Molière's version of the play. In these two Acts, the lovers are in somewhat the same situation as those in his early farce, "Le Medecin volant."

"Le Medecin malgré lui" is a true piece of buffoonery. The ignorant peasant is persuaded that he is a doctor by dent of a thorough beating, after which he decides to make the most of his profession. He imitates the doctors with whom he has come into contact, and he makes particular use of the half-dozen words of Latin he learned during his six years service as a helper to doctor. Faguet says that if this play is a farce, it is the best farce Molière ever wrote. He observes that the satire in this play is not forced directly upon the doctors, as it is true in "le Malade imaginaire." A fagot maker with all his ignorance, earns a reputation equal to that of experienced physicians. This is indirect mockery, which may arouse the anger of the doctors, but they cannot make an earnest protest without seeming ridiculous. Faguet adds: "Le Médecin malgré lui" est une des plus proverbiales des comédies de Molière, la plus proverbiale peut-être, et on a vu passer dans la conversation courante et dans la langue commune et y

rester.[1]

Faguet is correct. At this period of his career, Molière did not present any plays that may be classified as "inferior." Though "le Médecin malgré lui" is farcical, it is a true comedy, with a story to be told. Likewise, it has a moral. Molière has been a sick man for a year, and he has not been able to obtain lasting relief from his ailments at the hands of the leading physicians. His whole philosophy as it appears in this play may be summarized in the following lines:

> "Tout leur art est pure grimace, c'est une des plus grandes erreurs qui soit parmi les hommes."

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1. Faguet: EN LISANT MOLIERE, pp. 48-49.

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B. - "Le Medecin malgré lui" as a comedy of manners.

"Le Médecin malgré lui" is a descendant of the traditional farce, with its buffoonery, its boisterous fun, and its exaggeration of the ridiculous things. At the same time, it possesses traits that are characteristic of comedies of manner. As in the case of "Dom Juan," "le Misanthrope," and "le Tartuffe," its theme is based

on family life. Sganarelle, in "le Medecin malgré lui," is a drunken man, a typical peasant--lazy, indifferent, and unreasonable. Above all, he is extremely ignorant. His quarrel with his wife contains an under-current of tragedy, which is also present in "le Tartuffe," in "Dom Juan," and in "le Misanthrope." This is especially true when Sganarelle beats his wife on the open stage. The potentially tragic scene is turned immediately into fun when Monsieur Robert rushes up to the couple and takes it upon himself to defend the weeping wife, who quickly stops her flow of tears and begins to slap his face for meddling into the affairs of a man and his wife. However comical the episode turns to be, Molière is sticking to his philosphy of nature, It is natural for a woman to resist any attempt on the part of a second man to punish her husband, even if the punishment is to be administered in revenge for some harm done to her person by her husband. The episode dealing with Sganarelle's going to the woods, being sought by two strangers who are in search for a doctor, and his being whipped until he confesses his medical skills, is pure "horse-play", nevertheless, it fits nicely into the scheme of the story itself. In "l'Ecole des Maris," in "le Mariage force," and in "l'Amour Medecin," Sganarelle is a morose and self-interested bourgeois, [1] but in "le Medecin

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1. Tilley: MOLIERE, p.318.

malgré lui," he is a "happy-go-lucky" drunkard, who is soon turned "doctor."

It is important to point out the fact that Seventeenth century literature is of an aristocratic tone, telling stories of the great deeds of outstanding heroes. Much of the drama is devoted to the glory of the reign of Louis XIV and his personal vanity. In this century of literature, very scanty attention is given to the peasants of that age. La Fontaine, in a few of his Fables, gives a sympathetic account of the poor wood-cutter, weighed down by family cares. A few lines of his works are devoted to the heavy taxes that were paid by these poor folk, and the forced labour that formed a part of their lot.

La Bruyere refers to them in these words:

> "L'on voit certains animaux farouches, des males et des femmelles repandus par la compagne, noirs, livides et tout brûlés du soleil."

It is Molière who gives a more detailed picture of their conditions, and, at the same time, he displays the amusing side of his contemporary peasant life. Alaine and Georgette, the two servants to whom Arnolphe has entrusted the care of Agnes, are chiefly characterized by their stupidity and their love for money. In "Dom Juan" , there is an admirable portrait of Pierrot and

Charlotte. French realism is developed and increased by their speaking in the patois of the neighborhood of Paris. In "le Medecin malgré lui," Lucas, Thibaut, and Perrin use it repeatedly. Though extremely ignorant, these peasants are apostles of "bon sens," and they are constantly confounding the characters in the play who are displayed as representing high personalities, and that is the real source of Molière's satire, and the success of it.

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C. - Conclusion.

The importance of the "Medecin malgré lui" is due to its position as a link in a chain of satires directed at the medical profession of Molière's day. The play itself possesses no peculiar dramatic qualities or innovations in the field of comedy. It is a successful combination of farce and comedy of manners. The three unities are violated repeatedly. The scene of the first act is the exterior of the house of Sganarelle. In Act II, the scene is centered in a room located in Geronte's house. In Act III, a part of the scene takes place in the open air, while the rest of it takes place in Geronte's house again.

There is one feature about this play that is noteworthy; and that is the fact that it ranks second to

"le Tartuffe" in the number of times it has been presented since its first appearance. On that basis, it remains the most popular of all Molière's farces, and only one of his high comedies has eclipsed it in the number of its presentations. Thus, it has well stood the test of time, and if public opinion has anything to do with making a piece of literary work immortal, "le Medecin malgré lui" must be granted a place that is peculiar to itself. Besides the excessive number of performances it has enjoyed, "le Medecin malgré lui" has been translated and adapted in nearly every modern language. It has been made into an opera twice.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R V

"GEORGE DANDIN OU LE MARI CONFONDU"

A. - Sources.

"George Dandin" represents another farcical theme which has its origin in medieval literature. This play may well be termed as another sort of "School for Husbands." George Dandin himself is a recapitulation of George le Veau, who also had the bad fortune of being married to "une fille de maison", and was so displeased with his married life that he decided "s'aller jeter dans l'eau la tête la première." [1] The name of George Dandin, which has come to mean "simpleton de luxe" is taken from Rabelais, III, 41.

"George Dandin" is a reworking of one of Molière's earlier farces: "La Jalousie du Barbouillé" which takes its theme from a tale told by an Indian, found in "Livre de Sindibad." [2]

Another source upon which Molière drew in preparing this theme is the "Decameron, VII, 4 and VII, 8, from which he took the idea of closing the husband out of the house. [3] It is believed that he took the idea of

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1. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Seventeenth Century, Vol. III, p.272.
2. Ibid. Sixteenth Century, Vol. II, pp.220-222.
3. Tilley, Molière, p. 196.

the family title ("de Sotenville") from the same source.

The final source listed is that of Moliere's personal experience. For several years he has seen parasites, wearing empty titles, making their home at the King's court. He deplored that state of affairs, and on several previous occasions he has taken the liberty to make mockery of the pseudo-nobles. In attacking them, he introduces a bit of social satire to his farcical themes. Thus, the country side is amused by the portrayal of the impoverished nobles with little left except honor and pride. To bring out the biting satire of the story, George Dandin is described as a wealthy middle class peasant, who takes a wife from the contemporary noble class. His wife is poor, and her family is endeavoring to use its noble status to counter-act this poverty.

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B. - "George Dandin" reviewed as a social satire.

In "George Dandin" Molière continues the theme he initiated in "Les Précieuses ridicules," namely: relations between men and women either as potential family groups or as established families. In "les Précieuses ridicules" there is the picture of two young men, paying a visit to two young women, who have recently moved to

Paris from the Provinces. In this particular case, no friendship is established because the young ladies are too burdened with affectation and sophistication to permit themselves to become identified with young men of their own social level. Here the satire is directed against "preciosity." In "l'Ecole des Maris," and "l'Ecole des Femmes," the situation is different, but the original theme is maintained. The two young men are replaced by two older men who dispute with each other concerning the best pattern to be used in getting a desirable type of wife. At the end of these plays, the result is the similar to that of "les Précieuses ridicules," that is, the two men characters (in each play) are no more pleased than were La Grange and Du Croisy. In "le Tartuffe" this social satire is further developed. In this play there is a completely established family, with an old man married to a young woman. The head of this family, Or on, is greatly infatuated with an impostor. By this time, Molière has developed his theme to such point that it is no longer necessary for the male characters to seek means of gaining the love of the women; that is being done for them by the girls' parents. It is here that the author begins his satire directed against tyrannical fathers who would give their daughters in marriage, while failing to take into consideration the daughers' personal

desires with regards to such a match. Orgon wants his daughter to marry Tartuffe, and he insists on such a wedding until he is finally convinced that Tartuffe is more interested in Orgon's wife than he is in the daughter. In "le Misanthrope," the theme is developed along a slightly different line. Here one finds the story of a young man, Alceste, who is madly in love with Celimene; she loves him, but she is not willing to abandon all of her other suitors for Alceste. In this case, Alceste is the ridiculous character, arousing laughter mixed with disgust. In "Dom Juan," it is the man who is satirized for preying on women. Dom Juan represents the typical nobleman and his characteristics. In "Medecin malgré lui," the story turns on a man and his wife again. In this play, one learns of the indifference towards family-responsibilities as it existed among the peasants of Molière's time, though his satire is not directed primarily on this phase of the play. Nevertheless, the string of social satire is held intact. It is in "George Dandin," that the social satire becomes predominant once more. Here, Dandin has married a young woman who is socially above his class. The irony of the case rests in the fact that this same young woman, though of noble birth, is beneath his class from an economic standpoint, though she and her family insist upon retaining privileges that are in keeping with

the noble classes. Yet, the wife is the most unfaithful of all of Molière's women characters. She conducts her intrigues with other men in the face of her husband, and his great ignorance is displayed by his inability to comprehend her activities. Her mother and father support her in her unfaithfulness. Time after time, they thwart him as he tries to adjust his unhappy state of affairs. From one end of the play to the other, this unhappy condition obtains, and as the play closes, all the characters retain the identity they display in the first scenes of the play. George Dandin is still a fool at the end, and Angelique is still unfaithful, and the family is still De Sotenville.

It is interesting to note the change of tone in this theme as Molière carries it through his several plays, dating in production, from 1659 to 1666. The tone existing in "les Précieuses ridicules" is one of gaiety, and though the satire is of a stinging sort, it is characteristic of an author who is smiling as he writes. That same tone is maintained throughout the four succeeding plays. It is in the "Tartuffe" that this tone undergoes a change. The author who has been made bitter by his fights with his enemies and his domestic difficulties, pours his feelings into all of his productions coming after 1665. He has been forced to believe that society itself is an unkind institution, and no satire

at his command is too biting to be used in condemning such an institution. Moreover, his constant quarrels with his wife have served to cause him to be more sour in his portrayal of family life.

This social theme continues to the end of Moliere's career, and the importance of "George Dandin" rests in the fact that it represents another link in that chain of social satire, especially where it reflects upon the family.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R VI

"L'AVARE"

A. - Sources.

"L'Avare" is Molière's greatest comedy in prose, and it represents another visit by the author to Roman drama for inspiration. Some critics call it a French version of Plautus' "Aulularia". That assertion is based on the fact that the "Aulularia" forms the background and frame-work of Molière's play. It is believed that the success enjoyed by Larivey near the close of the sixteenth century when he selected the same Latin source for his "Esprits", was the deciding factor in Molière's selection.[1] While the "Aulularia" has been preserved only in an incomplete state, no one can doubt that it is an amusing play, of which the chief interest lies in the character of Euclio and the situations which arise out of the plot. Euclio is not a true miser, but a poor, stingy man, whose stinginess is hereditary in his family. He has found a treasure hidden in a pot, which he hides in a garden; and this treasure served to transform him from a merely stingy man into an avaricious

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1. Tilley: MOLIERE, p. 200.
   Lintilhac: HISTOIRE GENERALE DU THEATRE EN FRANCE, Vol. III, pp.275-277.

man, who is never sure that his money is sufficiently hidden, and is constantly rehiding it. He has a daughter, a beautiful young woman, who is in love with Liconides, but Euclio promises to give her in marriage to a rich man, Megadorus, on condition that the latter would provide the dowry. Strobilus, the slave of Liconides discovers the hiding place of the treasure, carries the valuables away, and they are to be returned to Euclio when he decides to give his daughter to Liconides. In the end, the old man gives the treasure to his son-in-law. From the brief description just given, it is evident that the emphasis in "Aulularia" rests fairly heavily upon the love-scene, thus, leaving the play a regular light comedy. Molière transforms Plautus' gay comedy into a serious study of avarice, while introducing a sort of intrigue envolving Harpagon and his son as rivals for the hand of a young woman. On his selection of this choice of procedure, Molière fails to fuse Euclio of the "Aulularia" with his own profound conception of a miser, depicted in Harpagon. Moreover, he is not at all interested in making such a fusion. He is primarily concerned with showing how the vice of greed undermines the character of a man who harbors it, and how that man makes life difficult for all of those who have to associate with him.

Riccoboni boldly asserted that "l'Avare" did not contain four scenes that were Molière's original work.

Professor Robert E. Rockwood says that not less than five French comedies, four Italian, four Spanish, several canvas dramas, prose tales and contemporary anecdotes have been given credit for contributions to "l'Avare."[1] The following examples represent the most noteworthy references of sources:

The idea of Harpagon's hiding his money in the garden is taken from "Aulularia." Likewise, the comic scene (Act III, sc. 1) where Maitre Jacques tells Harpagon that everybody is laughing at him is taken from "aulularia, II, 4. Maitre Jacques' seriousness which he displayed while breaking the bad news to Harpagon was taken from Ariosto's "I Suppositi, II, 4.[2] The tragic scene between Harpagon and his son, in which the former is discovered to be the usurer from whom the latter is borrowing money (Act II, sc. 2) is inspired by a similar scene in Boisrobert's "La Belle plaideuse." Act. I, sc.8. A similar scene is found in Larivey's "Les Esprits," but the similarity is charged to the fact that both Molière and Larivey copied from Boisrobert, thus, dispelling the idea that Molière is in any manner indebted to Larivey.[3] Molière's only real debt to "Les Esprits" (Act III, sc. 2) is found in "l'Avare" Act, I, scenes 3 and 4.

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1. L'AVARE, Doubleday-Doran, New York, p. xxvi.
2. Turgeon and Gilligan, p. 648.
3. Tilley: MOLIERE, p. 206.

It was Ariosto's "I Suppositi, 1,2 that furnished the source for the scene in which Frosine flatters Harpagon, who immediately confesses that he is sixty years of age. The long scene in which Valere asks Harpagon for the hand of his daughter is taken from "Aulularia" IV, 10.

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B. - Character Study of Harpagon

Harpagon is one of the most complex characters in the theatre of Molière. He is a composite of Tartuffe, Don Juan, Alceste, Orgon, and Argan. At the same time he is the most despicable of Molière's characters. Like Tartuffe, he is a hypocrite, full of lies, deceit, and unscrupulousness. From his entrance in the play in the third scene of the first Act, his wickedness and extreme selfishness are in evidence. At this point he is simply a miser, but a miser of the first order, suspecting everyone within his sight, of wanting to rob him. La Fleche gives the audience of the play a bit of humour as he shouts to the old man:

> "Comment diantre voulez-vous qu'on fasse pour voler?
> Etes-vous un homme volable, quand vous renfermez
> toutes choses, et faites sentinelle jour et nuit."

On seeing anyone approaching, Harpagon begins complaining

about his financial difficulties and other personal misfortunes. His greediness makes him a source of discomfort and misery for his family and servants.

It is in the fourth scene of Act I that the play really takes tragic tone. Harpagon announces his love for Mariane, to his son Cleante, who is also in love with the beautiful young lady. In addition to throwing sorrow into the heart of his son, the miser informs his daughter that she will be married to Anselme, another old man. Why does he want to give his daughter to a man who is as old as himself? Simply because Anselme has promised to furnish the dowry necessary to the completion of such a marriage, thus saving the stingy Harpagon from having to bear that expense. Elise immediately threatens to commit suicide. This is the first instance of real tragedy in this play, and it is quite possible for a young woman living under similar circumstances, to become insane even if she did not commit suicide. Thus, Harpagon casts an atmosphere of gloom and uneasiness over his family.

His avarice is converted into usury. He will cheat anyone within his reach out of all that is possible. His plan to lend his own son money at an extortious rate of interest earns for him the rank of the most nefarious character in the theatre of Molière. Harpagon is more flagitious than Tartuffe; the latter did try to hide his wickedness until he had accomplished his motives. Though

a hypocrite, Harpagon never attempts to hide his wickeness from anyone. Cleante arouses the sympathy of everyone when he finds out that it is his father who is about to swindle him out of a great deal of money, and says to him:

> "C'est vous qui cherchez à vous enrichir
> par des usures si criminelles?"....
> "Osez-vous bien après cela vous presenter
> aux yeux du monde?"

Is Harpagon ashamed of his conduct? Indeed not! He drives his son from his sight without giving him one penny. In this same connection, La Fleche, another character in the play describes Harpagon as "the least human of all men," who will not open his hands to receive benefits because he is afraid of losing something that he already possesses. Further, La Fleche ridicules him in these words:

> "Il me dit jamais: 'Je vous donne, mais
> je vous prête le bonjour.'"

It is evident that such a man could not be very useful to society. He asks Maitre Jacques to give him details of public opinion where he is concerned, and on being told that he was the laughing-stock of the entire neighborhood, harpagon seizes a stick and beats his informer, while advising him: "Apprenez à parler." All of this means one thing; there is no power on earth that is able to reform this complex character. His heinous attitude

serves to cause Maitre Jacques to declare to Valere that sincerity and honesty do not pay dividends. In despair he adds:

> "Peste soit la sincerité! C'est mauvais métier. Desormais j'y renonce, et je ne veux plus dire vrai." (Act II, sc. 2)

Similar to Alceste, Harpagon is a manhater. His hatred does not arise from the same source as that of the misanthrope because Harpagon is not misanthropic. He does not hate men because of their insincerity, as it is the case with Alceste. Instead, he takes advantage of them through that particular weakness. Instead of trying to reform the world, he plunges it into deeper wickedness by driving his children to seek foul means to defeat his base designs upon them. His servants are influenced to steal, to tell lies, and to be deceitful. His neighbors do not laugh at him because he represents virtue, but because his sins are so flagrant that they make him ridiculous to persons who have no faith in human perfection. In keeping with the rest of Molière's great characters, Harpagon is extremely insensible to public opinion. He continues in his avaricious ways, plotting against everybody, cheating everybody, and creating embarrassing situations for his household. He openly quarrels with his son about a young woman whom the son loves. This episode might have easily become the

most tragic scene in comedy, but Molière relieves the tenseness by introducing a bit of farce, where Maître Jacques pretends to affect reconciliation between the son and the father.[1] In a little while the quarrel is resumed with increased fury; Harpagon disinherits his son and orders him to leave the place.

As the play progresses to the fifth Act, Harpagon has become the most wicked man in the theatre of Molière. The unbelief of Dom Juan is no match for the unbelief that is now the property of the miser. His money has been stolen, he does not know who stole it; he is suspicious of everybody, and even the agents of the police, seeking to restore his treasure, do not enjoy his confidence. The Miser discloses this lack of confidence as he shouts to the policemen: "Je demanderai justice de la justice." Could such a man ever think of justice! Only when his one interest is at stake. He wants everybody in the city and in the suburbs placed under arrest until his money is returned. He confesses his great love for money:

> "Bel amour, bel amour, ma foi! l'amour de mes louis d'or."

Later, he declares:

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1. DOM JUAN, II, 4.

"C'est etre bien endiablé après mon argent."

After these bold statements, it is easy to understand his behavior, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." [1]

In Act V, scene 4, Molière begins his bitterest attack on tyrannical fathers, who desire to marry their daughters against their wishes to men whom they do not love, for the simple purpose of promoting the selfish ambitions of the said fathers. Elise, who has already promised to kill herself, falls to her knees before Harpagon, begging him to reconsider his decision to marry her to an old man, but her pleas fall upon closed ears. In desperation she pleads:

> "Ne pousser les choses dans les dernières violences du pouvoir paternel."

What is his reply?

> "Non, non, je ne veux rien entendre; et il faut que la justice fasse son devoir."

In the next scene, the climax of the play is reached as Anselme comes on the stage. He is the "porte-parole" for Molière, and his first contribution to the story is given in these words:

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1. I Timothy 6:10.

> "Ce n'est pas mon dessein de me faire épouser par force...Seigneur Harpagon, vous jugez bien que le choix d'une jeune personne tombera sur le fils plutôt que sur le père."

When his identity is finally established, he endorses the marriage of his daughter to a man of her choice, thus presenting the antithesis of the philosophy of Harpagon. In spite of all this, the miser is more wicked at the close of the play than he is at its beginning. Public opinion has failed completely in its mission to reform him; and the sufferings of his children serve only to make him more bitter in his denunciation of them. Shame and self-pride form no part of his personality. These qualities combine to make Harpagon one of the most abstract characters in the theatre. There is no record of a man who ever lived and possessed so many base tendencies. A crying daughter will break the heart of the meanest man on the face of the earth, but such circumstance has no effect on the miser. Faguet describes him as "un sac ou un portefeuille ou l'on a accumule tous les traits, toutes les pieces d'un vice connu; ce n'est pas un portrait, c'est un dossier."[1] That is a splendid summary of the complexities that go to make up the character Harpagon. No man can possess all the wicked characteristics possible to human nature any more than any other man can possess

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1. EN LISANT MOLIERE, pp. 213-215.

all the good qualities possible to human. No person is one hundred percent perfect; likewise, no person is one hundred percent imperfect. It is upon that thesis that the writer describes Harpagon as the least realistic of all Molière's creations.

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C. - The Denouement

It is in Act II, scene 5, that Molière begins his preparation for the denouement. In this scene Harpagon says:

> "C'est que je suis obligé, Frosine, de donner a souper au Seigneur Anselme; et je serai bien aise qu'elle soit du regale."

The denouement is weak and of the conventional Latin and Italian type to which Molière had not resorted since "L'Ecole des Femmes." It is probable that this denouement was suggested to Molière by a similar event in Larivey's "Les Esprits." [1]

The solution of the problem presented in the play takes the form of an impossible combination of romantic coincidences and recognitions. For comedy, the appropriate denouement is marriage, which, is often the beginning of life, and the end of an episode. This circumstance

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1. Tilley's MOLIERE, p. 205.

would demand that the two lovers be the principal characters in the play. Though love furnishes Molière with a plot for his "Avare," it is of secondary interest; thus, the denouement which is based on the love-story is hardly a fitting climax to the play.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R VII

"LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME"

A. - General view of the comedy.

"Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" is not listed among its author's most popular plays. Up to 1870 it had been played in Paris only five hundred and twenty-six times, one-half as much as "Le Misanthrope", and "Les Femmes savantes", and one-fourth as many times as "Le Tartuffe".[1] However, this play is completely devoid of the bitterness that is so prevalent in "L'Avare" , "Le Tartuffe", or "Le Misanthrope". The absence of the under-current of tragedy which pervades the above-mentioned plays is a clear evidence of a better mentality existing in Molière at the time of the penning of the play. The removal of the interdict from the public performance of "Le Tartuffe" had resulted in greatly increased revenues, which gave rise to gaiety on the part of the author.

It has been rather difficult to establish a satisfactory English translation for the title of this comedy. Some call it "The Gentleman Cit"; others call it "The Shopkeeper Turned Gentleman". Both of these

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1. Trollop: LIFE OF MOLIERE, pp. 282-283.

titles are unsatisfactory, particularly the last one because there is no indication in the play itself that Monsieur Jourdain was ever a shopkeeper. "The Would-be Nobleman" seems to be more appropriate. The folly of imitating one's social superiors is a failing common to all ages, races, and countries, regardless of stations of life. The seventeenth century was particularly conducive to that human weakness, due to the peculiar organization of society of that epoch. The middle, or citizen-class was then, on account of the dominance of the aristocracy, relatively less important in the scale of society than it is now. In order to obtain complete sovereignty over the wealthy members of his kingdom, Louis XIV sold titles of nobility of all descriptions, while bringing those who bore the newly possessed titles to his own court. Everyone who lived at court enjoyed special privileges, which were denied to those who did not live there. For that reason, everyone who wanted to increase his social status bought some sort of title of nobility, and moved his effects to Versailles. Such state of affairs could not escape bringing to Court persons of questionable worth and of very ordinary achievements. Molière's decade of service as the "Royal Playwright," gave him wonderful opportunities to make close observations of the parasitic groups. And, from his observations he learned that the newly-made privileged class had all sorts

of temperaments, humours, and eccentricities. Among the members of this class were those afflicted with hypocrisy, preciosity, avarice, pseudo-learning, and vanity.

In "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," it is vanity that Molière holds up to ridicule, and the unity of interest in this play is upheld by the extreme vanity of Monsieur Jourdain, and each of the other characters contributes the sustaining of that vanity. Molière had treated the theme of vanity in nobles in "l'Ecole des Femmes," where he touched the subject lightly, with Arnolphe assuming the territorial name of M. de Souche in virtue of a small piece of land attached to his name. "Dom Juan" is a deeper and more developed study of the good-for-nothing parasitic type of noble. In "George Dandin" the theme is pushed further when a poor noble marries his daughter to a rich middle class man for economic reasons, while trying to maintain superiority which he thought belonged to the noble classes. In "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" the theme is developed into a comedy of manners containing social satire, with farce forming the background of the play. [1] The comedy itself appears to be almost entirely original, though there seems to be certain similarities between the scene of the philosophy lesson, (Act II, scene 4) and Aristophanes' "Clauds."

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1. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol. III, pp. 278-279.

The scene in which Mme. Jourdain offers definite objection to seeing her daughter married to a noble (Act, III, scene 12), resembles the fifth chapter of the second part of "Don Quijote." Monsieur Jourdain's desire to become a Turkish noble may have been inspired by a similar situation in Sorel's novel: LA VRAI HISTOIRE COMIQUE DE FRANCION, Book II.

"Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" was written at the command of Louis XIV for his entertainment at court. The story behind that command says that the King had been displeased with the conduct of the embassy of the Turks, who apparently had not been as strongly impressed with the greatness of the French King as that monarch had hoped.

The thesis of "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme may be stated this way: "A man afflicted with vanity is as ridiculous as one afflicted with hypocrisy, avarice, preciosity, or misanthropy."

In the fourth and fifth acts the author solves his problem with a purely farcical tone, but this farce does not spoil the unity of the play which ridicules Jourdain's vanity to the highest degree. The Turkish ceremony is most interesting, and it is doubtful if anywhere in literature, outside of the similar ridiculous interlude in "Le Malade imaginaire," when Argan is created a doctor, there is any burlesque so ludicrous. One critic

refers to the play in these terms: "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" is a comedy with a farcical appendix; Monsieur Jourdain is transformed from a comic figure to a hero of Burlesque. [1]

In this play Molière continues his fight for more democracy in the family. Here he is loud in his protests against parents who are selfish and unnatural in their relationships with their children. He continues his plea for young women to be granted the privilege to select their own husbands on the basis of love rather than on the basis of some selfish motive of a brutally wicked father. In this play he uses a mother to play the role of common sense and human spirit; and her strength is displayed in her stubborn objections to having her daughter married to a man selected solely on the basis of his social rank.

Finally, Molière is here portraying another of his fools. He thinks the newly-made nobles are as ridiculous as the newly made scholars, who learned to write beautiful verses without having to study grammar. M. Jourdain is a newly-made rich man, who tries to act the part of the wealthy class without being able to so do. He is the counterpart to Cathos and Magdelon of "Les Precieuses ridicules," who had just come to Paris.

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1. John Palmer: MOLIERE, p. 315.

and had begun trying to ape the fashions of that city before they had become acquainted with them. Just as they had refused to associate with men they thought to belong to ordinary people, so does Jourdain refuse to allow his daughter to marry a man who belongs to an ordinary family. In this respect "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" is a recapitulation of "les Précieuses ridicules." Society had laughed at the silly young ladies, and it is still laughing at Jourdain. Though the bitterness of "le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" is less striking than it is in several of the other plays of Molière, the satiric vein is no less biting. The hero is an ignorant fool, who does not change even after he has been carried through five lively acts. He is as far from common sense as Arnolphe, Orgon, Dom Juan, Harpagon, and Argon. Molière closes the play with the very fitting words: "Si l'on en peut voir un plus fou, je l'irai dire à Rome," which means: "If he is not a fool, I shall eat my hat."

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2. - Conclusion

Though M. Jourdain is a fool and amuses everyone who reads the play, or sees it acted, he represents the most progressive character in Molière's theatre. He wants to lead a better and more wholesome life. "Vous me verrez

équipé comme il faut, depuis les pieds jusqu'à tête." He is no longer satisfied with the clothes he has worn; and his desires are set upon a brand new dress. His mistake rests in his exaggeration of dress, the loud and striking colors. No one can laugh at his wanting to become better educated, to learn music, to learn philosophy, and to employ better behavior at the table. It was his vanity that made him ridiculous as he aspired to these new heights. His intelligence is of an inferior calibre, his memory is bad, his interpretation is poor, and his ability to understand is almost without existence. Before he will consent to his daughter's marriage, he must know that her husband is a "gentilhomme." He is ridiculous when it is evident that the title is all that matters, and he is willing for her to marry a Turk, about whom he knows nothing, provided that the Turk is a nobleman. Cléonte in the person of a bourgeois hears him say: "ma fille n'est pas pour vous." Cléonte as the son of the Turk hears him say: "J'y consens." In this respect M. Jourdain is the counterpart to Argan, who will never permit his daughter to marry unless she is willing to marry a doctor.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R VIII

"LES FEMMES SAVANTES"

A. - Sources.

After having presented "Les Fourberies de Scapin" and "La Comtesse d'Escabagnes", Molière returns once more, and for the last time, to high comedy, with the production of "Les Femmes Savantes." This play was staged for the first time at the Palais-Royal, March 11, 1672, slightly less than a year before the author's death. "Les Femmes Savantes" is a worthy example of the dramatic skill that Molière had attained through his many years of experience as an author, and the success of this play is a strong testimony to its author's popularity and to the intelligence of his audience. Strictly speaking, the play has little outward action and its comedy is of a refined type. Moreover, the subject is not a great one like that of "Le Tartuffe", or "Dom Juan", or "Le Misanthrope", and the plot is extremely simple. The characters are drawn with great delicacy, the action is developed on logical and natural lines. "Les Femmes Savantes" is recognized as the most perfect of Molière's

productions in verse.[1] Moland describes it this way: "Il écrivit, dans la plus belle langue qui ait jamais été entendu au théâtre.[2]

Another point of interest in connection with "les Femmes Savantes" is the absence of a long list of references given as its sources. This fact may be ascribed to his rich experience and the power of his observation. Much of the satire of the play is directed against the "bourgeois" salons. The most interesting and important literary sources that have been discovered for it is "Les Visionnaires" of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin. It is believed that Molière modelled his Belise after Hesperie, a character in "Les Visionnaires," who firmly believes that every man she meets is in love with her. Calderon's "No hay burlas con elamor" may be another source for Molière's new masterpiece. For a few matters of minor detail, the author is indebted to "Le Roman bourgeois" of Furetiere, to "L'Academie des femmes" of Chappuzean, to "La Comedie des academistes" of Saint-Evremond, and possibly to the anecdotes of Tallement des Reaux.[3] It is believed in some informed quarters that Trissotin is a caricature of Tricotin, one of Molière's enemies.

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1. Saint-Beuve: PORTRAITS, p. 35.
2. Moland: LA VIE DE J.-B. P. MOLIERE, pp. 291-293.
3. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE. Vol. III, pp. 281-285.

In some respects, however, the character in the play and the man whom Molière is charged with satirizing offer several dissimilarities.

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2. - "Les Femmes Savantes" and "Les Précieuses Ridicules".

It is interesting to note that Molière approaches the end of his brilliant career with a play that is designed to do, namely, to ridicule affectation. Likewise, it is noteworthy to point out the fact that the two plays in question: "Les Précieuses ridicules" and "les Femmes Savantes," are the only plays written by the author in which he uses a plural title. The society of 1672 had moved quite a distance from that of 1659, date of the first presentation of "les Precieuses ridicules." On his return to Paris after having passed twelve years in the Provinces, Molière found three forms of what may be described as "bad taste." This "bad taste" existed in the form of dull epics, or pedantry; burlesques or vulgarity; and preciosity or affectation, against all of which Boileau had waged a bitter fight. [1]

The epic began in 1651 with Pere Le Moyen's "Saint-Louis." The origin of the trivial and tiresome

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1. Tilley: FROM MONTAIGNE TO MOLIERE, p. 189.

kind of poetry which was called burlesque is not known, but it seems that it is indebted to both Spain and Italy. Saint-Amant is sometimes called the founder of French burlesque, though there are marked differences between his poetry and that of the true burlesque writers. It was not until 1644 that burlesque became recognized as good literary form, thanks to the appearance of Scarron's "Typhon." It raged until 1653, when it reached its height.

Unfortunately, no one knows of the origin of "preciosity" and the time of its first appearance in France remains a mystery. It was in 1656 that the abbé de Puré presented his "La Précieuse," a fact that points towards an earlier date of the origin of the literary and social evil. Some authorities believe that the spirit of the word had existed since the beginning of the seventeenth century, and these same authorities think that this spirit was fostered in the Hotel de Rambouillet.

In contrasting the "précieuse" and the "femme savante" there are some facts worthy of consideration. The requisite of a "précieuse" is esprit; and to qualify for the title, a woman must have esprit, or appear to have it. Further, she must attain some distinction as a writer or as a critic. Her readings must consist chiefly of romances; and she must be able to invent new and peculiar

modes of speech. The one distasteful feature in this type of woman to Molière was her habit of placing more value on imagination than on truth and reason in matters of pleasure. The "précieuse" is an exclusive woman, giving her opinions on any matters, only in the presence of persons of high esteem, and she should never speak of a person's faults without adding some praise. Her language is necessarily different from that of common folk so that she will be understood only by the intelligent group.

Magdelon and Cathos in "Les Précieuses ridicules" did not possess all of the above named qualities, but they aspired to attaining them. They did not know how to use beautiful phrases, to keep company with high society, and or express lofty opinions in the presence of folk who really mattered. Thus, Molière may be justified when he says it is not the true "précieuse" that he mocks, but the false one. It is a known fact, however, that he does not endorse any type of "préciosité" real or false.

To the peculiar interest in society, verse, and the refinement of love-making of the "précieuse," the "femme savante" added pretentions to learning, with special interest being devoted to philosophy. The "femme savante" is always a student of the natural sciences, and she is constantly thinking of her new status in society with regards to men. In fact, she makes every effort to prove her superiority over men. Philaminte, in her treatment of her husband, represents a splendid example of a "femme savante."

Finally, a "femme savante" is a woman who uses exaggerated and ridiculous expression of language and manners. [1] She has a special fondness for using "on" instead of "je" and by expressing mild emotions by such phrases as "on sue" "on pame," or "on se meurt". In "Les Femmes Savantes," Belise is the leader in this type of affectation, while she is closely followed by Armande and Philaminte. These women's ideal of refinement and elegance led them beyond all limits of common sense. They wished to be so intelligent that they became unintelligible as they confused strangeness with distinction.

In "Les Précieuses ridicules" there are two affected young women, Magdelon and Cathos. The former is the leader while the latter serves as a sort of witness and supporter of her cousin's views. In "Les Femmes Savantes" there are three affected women, each representing a different phase of character. Belise represents Hesperie in Desmaret de Saint-Sorlin's "Les Visionnaires (1637). Philaminte is a stronger character though she is not less silly and disgusting in her behavior. She dismisses her maid because the young peasant woman does not have a good command of French grammar. Besides Philaminte rules her house, including her husband, with a rather strong hand. She wants to have her daughter marry a poet, which would assure her of having an intelligent man in her family. In this respect, she is as ridiculous as

1. Turgeon and Gilligan: THE PRINCIPAL COMEDIES OF MOLIERE, p. 880.

some of the most stupid characters in Molière, for example, Orgon, who wanted his daughter to marry Tartuffe, in order to add a saint to the household; Harpagon, the wealthy miser, wanted to give his daughter in marriage to a man of 60 years, in order to bring riches into the miser's house; and, there is Argan of "Le Malade imaginaire," who is fanatical in his wishes to give his daughter to a doctor for the expressed purpose of providing himself with medical care free from expense to himself. All three of those men mentioned above are fools. If Philaminte resembles them in her ideas and behavior, she too must be classified as a type of fool. If she can be recorded as a fool strictly on the basis of her affectation, then, all affected persons, male or female, must be similarly classified. That is the point that Molière wishes to convey and establish, in this famous play. Philaminte, Armande, and Belise do not represent the ignorant women of the Provinces who have just moved to Paris, and without any preparation, are trying to ape polite society. They are not the prey of two lackeys as was the case with Magdelon and Cathos. These three ladies have lived in Paris a long time; they know the customs, the fads, and the styles of the great capital. Though they are not representatives of what one would call "learned women," they are intelligent; they have a slight, though warped idea of poetry, philosophy, and life itself. A knowledge of philosophy is very desirable, but when one suggests the idea of placing philosppphy before a young lady,

asking her to use the in the position of husband as Armande does, that some one cannot escape the charge of insanity.

> "Loin d'être aux lois d'un homme en esclave asservie,
> mariez-vous, ma soeur, à la philosophie," (lines 43-44)

The "femmes savantes" believed in the idea of learning for its own sake, pedantry. That brings to the story to what may be termed as the thesis of "Les Femmes Savantes:"

> "Je consens qu'une femme ait des clartés de tout;
> Mais je ne lui veux point la passion choquant
> De se rendre savante afin d'être savante." (218-220)

Those lines do not support the theory which says that Molière is here condemning the education of women. He is expressing his opposition to pseudo-learning, just as he has done in the case of false religion, worthless nobles, and avarice. As far as the investigator knows, there is no masculin form of "Les Précieuses ridicules," or of "Les Femmes Savantes." That is to say that the author makes no reference to affected men in either of the titles directed against preciosity. In "Les Précieuses ridicules," there is no character which represents an affected man. With regards to "Les Femmes Savantes," the situation is quite different. Though the title of the play is given in the feminine plural, there are many evidences to support the belief that Molière is including men in his thinking as he prepares this play. Trissotin is a thorough-bred

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"précieux." [1] He is the object of the conversations of the three affected women of this play, and Philaminte demands that he become the husband of her daughter Henriette. In treating this character, Molière includes him among the many other fops and would-be-nobles of his time.

"Son Monsieur Trissotin me chagrine, m'assomme". [2]

After carrying Trissotin through several scenes, depicting his folly, Molière closes his play by painting the second-class quack writer of poetry with the same black paint brush he had used in painting the Tartuffe. On seeing the family of Chrysale undergoing financial difficulties ending in bankruptcy, Trissotin immediately loses interest in becoming the husband of Henriette, the young woman whom he was to marry in spite of herself, due to the profound love he has had for her up to this time. He makes no apologies for his sudden change of mind, just as Tartuffe makes no apologies when he is fi ally trapped as he tries to make love to his friend's wife. His attitude represents a punishment for Philaminte who has sung his praises throughout the play, who has released her servant because

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1. Trissotin does not appear until the third Act. He is a sort of second-rate author of Moliere's day who frequented the "précieux" salons, and enjoyed quite a reputation as a "bel esprit." It is believed that Trissotin formerly represented the Abbe Cotin. Tilley: MOLIERE, p. 253.
   Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol. III., p. 282.
2. Line 231.

she did not understand Trissotin's poetry, and who has scorned her husband because he is not able to appreciate affected nonsense as it is practised by its fanatic devotees.

Molière displays more of his contempt for the "précieux" in these words spoken by Martine:

> "Les savants ne sont bons que pour prêcher en chaise
> Et pour mon mari, moi, mille fois je l'ai dit,
> Je ne voudrait jamais prendre un homme d'esprit."

It is clear from those few lines that the author uses the masculin singular form of "préciosity."

From the foregoing pages one may safely conclude that Molière is combating preciosity in all forms, whether it is found in men or women, despite his failure to employ the masculine form of the word "précieuse," as he wrote his two famous plays satirizing the literary and social evil that had crept into many of the better homes of the seventeenth century Paris. The two men, Trissotin and Vadius, who are characters in the lay, sustain this thesis. Both of them are said to represent some of Molière's contemporaries. While Trissotin is invested with some of Cotin's attributes, he is not a true portrait of the abbe. In the first place, Cotin was sixty-eight years of age at the time of the presentation of "Les Femmes Savantes," while Trissotin is only about thirty. Some critics think

this great difference between the ages of the abbe and the character in Molière's play serves to refute the assertion that the author is mocking one of his enemies. [1] It may be said that by this time, the author was too wise to paint a character who portrayed one of his contemporaries without using a little distortion. Though Trissotin is a young man, he possesses many traits of Cotin, and it seems to be fitting to accept the theory that Molière is satirizing the elderly gentleman.

1; Tilley: MOLIERE, p. 253.

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3. - Conclusion.

With "Les Femmes Savantes" Molière returned to the field of his first endeavor, initiated with "Les Précieuses ridicules" thirteen years before. In the latter play, the author aimed lightly at a fashion. The one-act comedy was gay, mischievous and destructive; and it indicted a contemporary affectation. "Les Femmes Savantes," though it was also aimed at a contemporary form of pedantry, seriously raised a social problem of permanent interest. Moland says that "les Femmes Savantes" is the story of a family displaying the sanest and loftiest intelligence in Molière's theatre. [1]

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1. LA VIE DE MOLIERE, p. 292;

The same authority praises Philaminte for her great diginity and able leadership, while he describes Henriette and Chrysale as admirable characters. This play may well be called the most complex work in Molière's theatre. It consists of a comedy, a farce, and a thesis. Philaminte represents the comedy, in her domineering ways, and in her desire to select a husband for her daughter. The farce is represented by Trossitin with his ridiculous verses. The thesis is represented by Chrysale as he denounces the "femmes savantes" and their instructors. [1]

The interest of the play depends chiefly on the portrayal or caricature of superficial learning, pedantry, affectation in the characters of Philaminte, Armande, and Belise. [2] The traits found in these three women, the "femmes savantes," represent the summation of the social problem raised by the play itself. Female education is the main subject of "Les Femmes Savantes." It may be added that, female education was weighed in the balance, but it was not found wanting, because Moliere's attack is directed against women who affect a sham learning. He indicts women who neglect their children, their household, and their business affairs outside of the home. It does not follow that Molière is attacking education in women as he carries his three affected women through the play, because Philaminte, Armande, and Belise are not really learned women.

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1. Faguet: EN LISANT MOLIERE, p. 82.
2. FRENCH REVIEW, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Oct. 1939, P. 42.

Thus "Les Femmes Savantes" is not a treatise on female education, but a satire on women who neglect their duties at home. This is the solution of the social problem raised by the play.

In conclusion, "Les Précieuses ridicules" is a one-Act farce, while "Les Femmes Savantes" is a five-Act high comedy of character, the most artistically written play that came from the pen of its author.

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P A R T T H R E E

C H A P T E R IX

"LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE"

A. - Molière and the doctors of his time.

"Le Malade Imaginaire" belongs to a group of plays, including "Le Médecin volant", "L'Amour Médecin", "Le Médecin malgré lui", and "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac", in which the object of satire is the medical profession. "As has been happily remarked, Molière gave them battle in five regular engagements, besides countless skirmishes, and, closing his career in "Le Malade Imaginaire", he fell fighting in the breach." [1] While he had held up to ridicule the hypocrite, the miser, the "précieux", and the "bourgeois", and had travestied the marquises, he had never shown continued or such marked animosity toward any one class of men. That attitude on the part of the dramatist may be ascribed to the fact that his health began to fail him in 1665; the physicians were

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1. A.M. Brown: MOLIERE AND HIS MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS, The Cotton Press, London, 1897, p. 25.

unable to give him relief, and from that date he began his march towards his premature death, by way of a disease that might have been eradicated completely had it been met with the proper medical science. Apparently, Molière knew he was going to die, and he blamed his contemporary doctors for their inability to help him, thus from 1665 until 1673, the medical Faculties came in for an increasing share of his invectives. [1]

Brunetiere says that Molière attacked physicians because they believed themselves to be stronger and more skillful than nature itself. He adds, that Molière's whole philosophy is based on that fact, and as a proof for his assertion, he cites Béralde's speeches in Act III, scene 3 of "le Malade imaginaire." [2] It must be said in contradiction to Brunetiere, that Molière's philosophy is founded on good sense, or commonsense. [3] Nature is equipped to rid itself of physical disturbances of a minor nature, but when these disturbances assume major proportions developping into pneumonia, such as was the case with Molière, nature must have spcedy and efficient help from medical science. That is comm n sense. Moreover, when Beralde makes the following statement:

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1. Palmer: MOLIERE, pp. 483-486.
2. ETUDE CRITIQUES, IV, "La Philosophie de Molière.
3. Faguet: ROUSSEAU CONTRE MOLIERE, p. 300.

"La nature, d'elle-même, quand nous la laissons faire, se tire doucement du désordre où elle est tombée."

he does not condemn the use of medicine. He is simply saying that it was better to avoid the type of medicine in use at that time and allow nature to take its course, than to use the medicine and expedite one's death. In a day of modern medical science that would not be the case; that opinion is supported by a further statement coming from the same character:

"Ce ne sont point les médecins qu'il joue, mais le ridicule de la médecine."

When one considers the condition of medicine in France in Molière's day, with its pedantry, conservatism, its lack of science, he does not marvel at Molière's attitude; in fact, he may find himself stunned by the attitude of those who condemned him. When he returned to Paris late in 1658, he found the leading physicians having great disputes over minor ailments, which may have been remedied with proper medical care, yet the victims of them were dying constantly. In 1664, the dramatist lost his son due to the ignorance of the doctors, and when, in 1665, he became permanently ill, he revolted against them. The two great medical Faculties of that day, one at Paris, and one at Montpellier, offered instruction that was largely theoretical, and the majority of the students attained the degree of

bachelor, and discoursed learnedly of the nature and cure of disease, before having seen a case. [1] The great attraction lay in dialectic skill, academic tiltings, and successful oratory, for which a brilliant future was the reward. They seemed to forget that medicine was for the patient and not for the physician. They were primarily concerned with a knowledge of what the ancients thought about health and disease. [2]

There was an occasional dissection for the students of anatomy; but corpses were difficult to obtain, and the Faculty was obliged to await an execution, for the bodies of criminals were the only ones dissected. These dissections were carried on in a most peculiar way. As it was considered a sort of manual work to dissect, a doctor would not deign to touch the corpse himself, but simply directed the operation, which was performed in general by some barber-surgeon, and contented himself with pointing out the different parts of the body with his wand.

The examinations were also rather farcical in nature; and they took place every two years. A candidate for a bachelor's degree in medicine had to qualify by birth as well as by passing the examination. After meeting

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1. Maurice Raynaud: LES MEDECINS AU TEMPS DE MOLIERE, pp. 221-222.
2. A. M. Brown, ibid. p. 184.

other stipulations with the regards to the test, the candidate took an oath to be faithful to the secrets, the honor, the practices, the customs, and the statutes of the Faculty. He promised to pay homage and respect to the dean and to all the teachers of the Faculty. He pledged himself to aid the Faculty against whoever shall undertake anything contrary to its statutes or derogatory to its honor. He was to prepare a thesis upon a question of medicine and hygiene.[1]

It is this thesis that Molière ridicules through his most stupid character, Thomas Diafoirus, in Act II, scene 6. The said character takes from his pocket a large roll of paper tied with a piece of ribbon, which he presents to Angelique, explaining:

> "J'ai contre les circulateurs soutenu une thèse, qu'avec la permission (saluant Argan) de Monsieur, j'ose présenter à mademoiselle, comme un hommage que je lui dois des prémices de mon esprit."

In this same connection the idiot Thomas continues:

> "Je vous invite à venir voir l'un de ces jours, pour vous divertir, la dissection d'une femme, sur quoi je dois raisonner."

The two previous quotations represent the bitterest attacks ever made by Molière on any of his victims.

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1. Maurice Raynaud; LES MEDECINS AU TEMPS DE MOLIERE, pp. 40-41.

It is of the greatest interest to note that the newly made doctor, Thomas Diafoirus, refers to dissection as something amusing, worthy entertainment for curious persons. It is also interesting to point out the fact that in none of his learned speeches does young Diafoirus express an intention or desire to make a contribution to the health of his clients, nor does he show evidences of aptitude along that line. Molière does not offer Thomas Diafoirus as an exception to the general rule of his contemporary doctors, but as a typical example of every man belonging to the medical profession. Likewise, the presence of Thomas Diafoirus in the play makes "le Malade imaginaire" one of the most realistic dramas in the theatre of Molière. It is here that he describes the main features of the course designed to prepare doctors under the auspices of the two great Faculties of his day. While giving this vivid picture of the training of doctors, he sheds light on their helplessness and inability to prescribe for their clients. The Faculty itself was a very dignified body, jealous of its reputation and prerogatives. This august body reminds one of the old system of scholasticism of the latter Middle Ages. It was a system that was definitely opposed to all improvements in intelligent procedures, and it was highly suspicious of any scientific discoveries.

The highest degree a medical student could earn was that of a doctorate, which admitted him to full rights and privileges in the Medical Faculty, and required no new

tests. The conferring of this degree consisted of two parts, a preliminary act, called "Vespérie," and the formal reception in which the candidate pronounced the three "juro's" immortalized by Molière in his famous "Cérémonie."

Thus, the spirit and teachings of the Parisian Faculty in Molière's day is a paramount interest in connection with production of "le Malade imaginaire." The Faculty's attitude was characterized by a profound reverence for antiquity, a taste for speculation and theory rather than for practice, a disdain for the accessory sciences, and a hatred of innovation and new discoveries. Their sole auth r ties were Hippocrates and Galen.

The principal medicines of the day were the laxatives cassia, senna, and rhubarb, all of which enjoyed the blessing and sanction of the Faculty.

Such was the condition of medicine during the lifetime of Molière. In the last interlude of "le Malade imaginaire" the parody upon the formalities of the medical schools show so intimate a knowledge of detail that it presupposes the collaboration of some member of the profession. That lends credence to the report that the frequent opposition of the profession to progressive ideas is well and realistically set forth by Molière in the description of Thomas Diafoirus in his immortal "le Malade imaginaire."

Finally, "le malade imaginaire" is not a parody of life, but a true picture of life itself.

2. - Sources.

It is possible that Moliere gathered a certain number of traits from self-observation in order to create the character of Argan. He was accused by malicious enemies of being himself a hypochondriac. He was charged with having conceived the notion of writing a self-portrait, which he later destroyed. Be that as it may, but the great difference between Moliere and Argan is precisely that Moliere was really sick. He may have worried a great deal about his health, and he may thus have found some details for the character of Argan in himself, but, except for minor points, the character cannot have been modeled upon the author.

Other sources which have been found for details in this comedy are comparatively unimportant. It is possible that the Diafoirus family was inspired by a play entitled: "Le Grand Benet de fils aussi sot que son père (1664). The authenticity of this statement cannot be established because the play is not preserved. Another source is Thomas Corneille's "Don Bétrand de Cigarral, which was taken from Francisco de Rojas.

This play has had considerable influence on a number of other plays, namely, Regnard's: "Arlequin homme fortune, (1690); Defresny's: ""La Malade sans malade, (1699), and Beaumarchais' "Le Barbier de Seville (1775). There have been many translations in all modern languages of this

play, a record that rivals that of "Don Quijote."

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3. - Step-mothers in Molière: Béline and Elmire.

Elmire of "le Tartuffe" is charming in her placid rectitude. Though she is accused of not being in love with her husband Orgon, she displays no evidences of hypocrisy in her dealing with him. It must never be forgotten that it was she who finally proved to Orgon that Tartuffe was a hypocrite. Her step-daughter enjoyed her friendship and her support when it came to a question of Orgon's selecting an undesired husband for his daughter.

On the other hand, Béline is a feminine Tartuffe. From her first appearance in the play, she displays hypocrisy and deceit. She hates to hear of her husband's death, yet she longs to see the day when he is a corpse. Her interest is never keener than when she listens to Argan account to her for his wealth. Beline becomes one of the most disgusting characters in Molière when she is finally uncovered in a farcical scene, which divulged her unfaithfulness to her husband.

These two characters represent the extent of Molière's step-mothers. The report that he was antagonistic to step-mothers is not confirmed by his treatment of these characters. It would appear that he is in sympathy with Elmire while he hates Beline, and his audiences are of the same opinion.

4. - Conclusion.

The fact that Molière died almost on the stage while playing the role of Argan has always attached a particular significance to this play. For a long time it has been customary to use this play as a sort of commemorative ceremony at the Comédie Française. "Le Malade imaginaire" is one of Moliere's most popular plays. Its theme is based on Argan's fear of death. [1] Not only does this play ridicule the doctors themselves, but it also attacks those who have faith in the doctors. The first and second Acts of the play are pure comedy, but the third Act is filled with burlesque. In spite of this change of tone, in the last third of the play, M. Donnay is not justified in calling it a "farce noire." "Le Malade Imaginaire" is a combination of farce, comedy of manners and comedy of character. [2] The simultaneous conversation between Argan and M. Diafoirus is farcical; Thomas Diafoirus' blunder of mistaking Angelique for Beline is likewise farcical; and Argan's pretended death is pure horse-play. Nevertheless, all of these episodes contribute heavily to the action and the plot of the play.

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1. Faguet: ROUSSEAU CONTRE MOLIERE, p. 307.
2. Lintilhac: LA COMEDIE, Vol. III, p. 285.

As has been pointed out earlier in this study, the first two acts of the play represent comedy of manners. The whole family is here introduced, and the family life of the seventeenth century is fairly well portrayed, with the tyrannical father demanding the right to select the husband for his helpless daughters. In the meantime, there is the conniving step-mother, bulging with hatred for her husband's daughters, as well as lust for his wealth. The method of creating doctors was as true to life as it possibly could be. The ignorance of the physicians was far from exaggerated in this play.

Finally, Molière presents some of his most charming characters in this play. Angelique, with her sincere love for her father in spite of his tyranny, has not been surpassed for beauty in all literature. There is Louison, the little girl of eight years, the only such character inMolière, who is a masterstroke of dramatic art. She is extremely intelligent for such a young child, yet she does not spoil her part by over-playing it, or by displaying in her behavior that she is really more than eight years old. In conclusion, Argan, with allof his silliness, is more natural in his love for his daughters than any other of Molière's fathers. He is greatly concerned when he thinks Louison is seriously injured, and he forgives Angelique for having antagonized him when he sought to give her a husband of his own choice. He is

one of Molière's immortal characters, and will always be the idol of the French theatre.

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C O N C L U S I O N S

In this study the investigator set out to show how Molière revolutionized and emancipated French comedy. When Molière came onto the scene of activity he found the French theatre in a state of chaos. There were several parallel currents in the comic productions of that day; namely, the native farces, comedies written by French authors modeled on Italian comedies, and the "commedia dell'arte," played in Paris by Italian Stock Companies. Closely related to some of these types were the farce comedies like those of Mairet and Cyrano de Bergerac, and the comedies of intrigue like Corneille's play "le Menteur." Just before Molière's time there appeared a few comedies of manners based on observations of contemporary society.

At first, Molière confined his work to copying these traditional farces, both from the French and the Italian. As a result of this copying he gave to the world "La Jalousie du barbouillé," light farce (date unknown), "Le Médecin volant," another light farce, (date unknown), "l'Etourdi," comedy of intrigue, 1655, and "le Dépit amoureux," light comedy in verse, 1656. These four plays belong to his period of apprenticeship.

With "Les Précieuses ridicules" he presents his first original work. Though a farce in form, this

play is a comedy of manners in spirit. It is here that he blends his imitations with knowledge gained from his observations of French life in the Provinces; and the successful blending of these two qualities earns for him the title of "créateur dramatique". Thus, in six short years (1653-1659) he succeeds in elevating the French dramatic productions from comedy of intrigue to comedy of manners. With the appearance of "L'Ecole des Maris", (1662), he introduces his first real comedy of character.

In 1664, he gives the world its first high comedy, written in the French language: "Le Tartuffe." This is the beginning of his third dramatic period, the period of his greatest masterpieces. During this period he produced, in addition to "Tartuffe", "Le Misanthrope", sometimes called his greatest play; "L'avare", his greatest work in prose, and finally, "Les Femmes Savantes", his most artistic work in verse.

Just as Corneille and Racine elevated French tragedy, so did Molière elevate French comedy to a glory that is without rival in the whole theatre of France. No writer before him had ever displayed such strong psychological development of character. Never before had a writer shown such ability to portray the most obscure human traits in a few characters and illustrate how those traits and peculiarities affect society in general. Each of his characters is an individual to himself with no counter - parts, and every word uttered by him and every

gesture made by him is peculiar to him. Thus, Molière did not give a picture of nature, he gave a painting of nature itself. His genius permitted him to mix and diversify all forms of comedy. For that reason he might be correctly called the father of French comedy just as Corneille is called the father of French tragedy and La Fontaine is called the father of the French fable.

Before Moliere's time, comedy, such as it was, was presented for the purpose of arousing laughter. The plays had little plot, almost no story. The characters were commonplace; the themes were vulgar. People of quality did not frequent the theatres because of the low type of pieces that were presented. Molière changed that condition. He gave comedy dramatic form, plot, and meaning. Stock characters were abolished and replaced by characters of flesh and blood, exemplifying the realistic behavior of the members of human society in all walks of life. Not only did people of quality attend his performances, but it is believed that some of them gave Molière information concerning their own peculiarities so that he would portray them in his plays, thereby, giving the persons in question publicity that they would not get otherwise.

Molière emancipated French comedy from the shackles of the three unities. He justified his position by saying that he knew only one dramatic rule, and that was "to please

his audience." He adhered to that rule throughout his career.

Molière gave comedy a new function, a function which he described in the first placet addressed to Louis XIV at the time of the controversy over the production of "Tartuffe." In that treatise he states definitely the guiding principle of his work:

> "Le devoir de la comédie étant de corriger les hommes en les divertissant, j'ai cru que, dans l'emploi ou je me trouve, je n'avais rien de mieux à faire que d'attaquer par des peintures ridicules les vices de mon siècle." "Rien ne reprend mieux la plupart des hommes que la peinture de leurs défauts. C'est une grande atteinte aux vices que de les exposer à la risée de tout le monde. On veut bien être méchant, mais ne veut point être ridicule."

The above quotation is sufficient to show that Molière aimed to combat anti-social fads and inherent vices by holding them up to ridicule. He accomplished that task with great success. His valets: Mascarille, Scapin, Dorine, Martine; his bourgeois: Sganarelle, Dandin, Harpagon, M. Jourdain, Orgon, Alceste, Philinte, Argan, Tartuffe; his feminine characters: Agnes, Philaminte, Henriette and Toinette, will live forever.

In the opinion of the investigator, this dissertation proves that Molière revolutionized and emancipated French comedy, relieved it of the domineering effects of Italian farce, and gave it a lofty position

in the literature of the world. Not only did he perpetuate comedy in France proper, but he was copied in England where his borrowers and beneficiaries include almost every name of importance from Davenant and Dryden to Shadwell and Wycherley.

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