Les Comédies-Ballets de Molière by Maurice Pellisson

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of treating these questions in a larger work. The influence of Platonism on philosophical speculation, the revival of pagan ideas and their menace to Christianity, the growth of a higher conception of the relations of men and women, all these would naturally find their place in a comprehensive volume on the influence of the Renaissance on French thought.

ARTHUR TILLEY.

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Les Comédies-Ballets de Molière. Par MAURICE PELLISSON. Paris : Hachette et Cie. 1914. 8vo. x + 234 pp.

M. Pellisson complains in his preface that Molière's *comédies-ballets* are unduly neglected by both managers and readers. Not only are they seldom, in some cases never, produced on the stage, but they are either ignored by readers altogether, or read without any thought of the music and dances which accompany the dialogue. I am afraid that as regards the majority of Molière's plays of this class M. Pellisson will preach to deaf ears. The reason is that in most cases the *ballet* is not an integral part of the play. It serves either as a framework or as an incidental accompaniment to the comedy, which is so good as effectually to overshadow the rest. How can anyone take an interest in the *ballet* of so perfect a piece of work as *Le mariage forcé*? There is no real connexion between *Georges Dandin* and the *grand divertissement royal* in which it is set, nor is there between that admirable little social drama, *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnac*, and the *ballet* to which it serves as an introduction. In *L'amour médecin* the music and dancing are more intimately blended with the play, and there is something to be said for its revival with these accompaniments. Even out of the four plays which by a little stretching of the term may be called pastoral, *La Princesse d'Élide*, the unfinished *Mélicerte*, *Le Sicilien*, and *Les Amants magnifiques*, the first and the last, especially the last, are social comedies of considerable merit. The objection to their revival lies in the fact that they are *comédies galantes*, and that the gallantry of a bygone age, if not supported by any real psychological interest—this applies much more to *La Princesse d'Élide* than to *Les Amants magnifiques*—is always insipid. On the other hand *Le Sicilien* is admirably adapted for representation, music and all. It is in fact a sort of *opéra comique* written in prose, and its charm is considerable. *Le Barbier de Seville* owes much to it, but even nearer to it in spirit than Beaumarchais's play is Rossini's opera.

M. de Pourceaugnac is very different in character to *Le Sicilien*, but in this boisterous and delightful extravaganza Molière has equally succeeded in blending comedy and ballet into one harmonious whole. The ballet-scenes at the end of each act take their places naturally as part of the glorious mystification which is practised on the unfortunate provincial. In *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, which is the only one of Molière's plays that is called a *comédie-ballet* in the original edition,

each act is followed by an *intermède*. The first three of these are merely dances, but the fourth is the famous *cérémonie turque*, without which no representation of the play is complete. I had the good fortune to see a gala performance at the Théâtre Français in 1880, in which the whole company took part, and it was a most delightful entertainment. I have also a clear recollection of a performance at Eton in the late sixties, when Frank Tarver played the part of M. Jourdain with admirable verve and humour. As for the ballet in six *entrées* with which the play concludes, I doubt whether a manager would be well advised in giving it, at any rate in anything like entirety. Certainly the reader, in spite of M. Pellisson, may be excused for ignoring it. There remains *Le Malade imaginaire*, which like the foregoing play has one great ballet, the reception ceremony of a doctor, which should not be disregarded either by readers or managers.

It is of the three last-mentioned plays that Sainte-Beuve in a well-known passage, quoted by M. Pellisson, says that 'they represent the highest stage of that exuberant and spontaneous comedy which in its way rivals in creative fancy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.' And the great critic points out that Molière having been driven to write *comédies-ballets* by the exigencies of the Court came to take a real delight in them and found in them a new source of inspiration. It is satisfactory to find that M. Pellisson shares this view, and that he gives no support to the theory that Molière's genius was towards tragedy rather than comedy. No. Molière was the lord of laughter, and his *comédies-ballets* help to shew the extent of his domain.

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Le Vers Français, ses Moyens d'expression, son Harmonie. Par MAURICE GRAMMONT. Deuxième édition refondue et augmentée. Paris: Édouard Champion. 1913. pp. 510.

This new edition of Professor Grammont's important work 'contient... deux chapitres entièrement nouveaux: l'un sur les différentes espèces de rejets et leur valeur artistique, l'autre sur la variété du mouvement rythmique' (the author in *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift*, April 1914). Professor Grammont claims (*ibid.*) that 'dans ce dernier...l'on voit apparaître pour la première fois les résultats de la phonétique expérimentale appliquée à l'étude du vers; l'auteur a réussi à calculer l'intensité qui marque le rythme; il a reconnu aussi que dans certains cas le rythme est marqué par des consonnes prolongées.' This is unfair to M. Landry, whose *La Théorie du Rythme et le Rythme du Français déclamé* (1911) is almost entirely concerned with 'la phonétique expérimentale appliquée à l'étude du vers,' and to M. Verrier, whose *L'Ischronisme dans le Vers français* (1912) combats M. Landry's conclusions from a point of view very similar to that of Professor Grammont.