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C.A. CLEARY

ASPECTS OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF DANCOURT

Ph.D Thesis, 1973.

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ABSTRACT

The opening chapters of the thesis illustrate, with the help of authentic documents, details of Dancourt's biography both from the point of view of his domestic life and his career at the Comédie Française. Then follows a study of his prologues from which we gain an insight into his dramatic theories and aspects of life in the contemporary theatre. Chapter IV offers a review of Dancourt's complete works, and traces his evolution in choice of subject-matter and manner of presentation. His plays are studied in relation to a wide variety of dramatic works by his predecessors and contemporaries. Chapter V concerns that part of Dancourt's work which is devoted to topics of contemporary interest. These include his satire of certain individuals, his exploitation of contemporary events and his satire of rival forms of entertainment. All these points are treated with reference to the relevant historical, social and literary background. The next two chapters centre around the 'social' content of Dancourt's plays which dramatize the manners of fashionable Parisian society, both aristocratic and bourgeois. These plays are explained with reference to the realities from which they sprang, as well as to works by writers of other forms of literature. Chapter VIII illustrates the importance of rustic themes in Dancourt's plays. Unlikeⁱⁿ the previous chapter, the emphasis is placed on the dramatic qualities of these comedies and on their character portrayal rather than on what light they throw on the social scene. Finally, Chapter IX offers an estimate of Dancourt's success as a playwright at the Comédie Française and at Court both during his lifetime and posthumously. A comparison is made between his success and the criticism offered by contemporary and eighteenth-century commentators whose opinions are studied in the light of prevailing trends of literary criticism.

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DANCOURT

Pen-sketch by C. Cleary taken from the original portrait by R. Gence.

INTRODUCTION

Dancourt, one of the most prolific and successful playwrights of the seventeenth century, is in our time little more than a shadowy figure of the past who puts in a brief, almost apologetic, appearance in numerous manuals of French literature, and whose works have never been appreciated in their true historical perspective. While no attempt is made in this thesis to confer on Dancourt any undue distinctions or attributes of 'greatness' - he will always rank, rightly, as a dramatist of secondary importance in comparison with the great classical playwrights,- it must be pointed out that the semi-obscurity into which he has lapsed is far from being a suitable reward for his contribution to literature. Of course, there are some obvious reasons which helped bring about the decline of Dancourt's popularity with theatre audiences, particularly the ephemeral nature of much, though by no means all, of his work which dramatized contemporary events and social conditions. But it does not follow as a necessary consequence that the intrinsic value of these plays was bound, beyond all possible hope of redress, to fail to be adequately appreciated right up to our time. The circumstances which brought about this long-term lack of appreciation are not so easily defined, as they are of a more abstract and therefore more elusive nature, but they can be traced back to the 'image' which, as time went on, Dancourt gradually acquired: that of a playwright of insignificant merit, a farceur who scarcely deserved to be taken seriously as a literary figure. The dangers of subscribing to this popular fallacy are only too apparent: the greater our ignorance of a writer's life and works, the less appreciation he is likely to receive from posterity, and the more remote he becomes as a result, the more difficult it is to engender an active interest in his work.

However, the odds against breaking this vicious circle were great. The

difficulties arise on the one hand from lack of sufficient reference to archival sources, and on the other hand from the generally poor quality of literary criticism of Dancourt's work. To embark on such an enterprise, therefore, and proceed with the required enthusiasm, it is necessary for the researcher to be either blissfully unaware of the difficulties involved or else incurably optimistic.

With such little support to fall back on, there was no alternative but to undertake the task from the angle of 'pure' research, the results of which have produced the information set out in this thesis. The biographical section came into being only after thousands of pages in various archives were combed for possible references to Dancourt, while the rest of the thesis was built on first-hand knowledge of his plays together with research into a variety of wider fields, such as the administrative history of the Comédie Française, the financial position of seventeenth-century playwrights, the history of contemporary drama and works by writers of other forms of literature, the social and historical background of the times and the nature of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary criticism.

A brief review of the numerous articles and studies on Dancourt should be sufficient to demonstrate the scarcity of authentic and scholarly information which has up to now been our only means of evaluating his achievements. For centuries critics have offered, for the most part, no more than a superficial study of Dancourt's works, which resulted in some vague generalizations; his chief attributes as a playwright - gaiety and a keen ability to observe and dramatize contemporary manners and events - have become irritatingly trite for want of approfondissement.

This situation can be explained in part by the nature of literary criticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which lacked both an objective basis

and a historical perspective. On the other hand, no writer of the nineteenth century except J. Lemaître, was concerned with offering more than a few pages of trite remarks on Dancourt. J.L. Geoffroy, writing in the early years of the century, speaks of his best-known play, Le Chevalier à la Mode, in flattering terms, describing part of it as 'digne de Molière', and praises Les Bourgeoises de Qualité for 'le naturel, la vérité, la gaieté, un genre de plaisanterie un peu libre, mais vif et franc...ce qui lui assure un rang distingué parmi les anciens comiques'; but with reference to Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, he comes to the conclusion that 'Aujourd'hui Dancourt est un impertinent, un écrivain de mauvais ton qui dégrade la scène par des caractères extravagans et méprisables.' (1) Later in the century C. Gidel gave his opinion that 'ce qui plaît surtout dans son oeuvre c'est un cours aisé, une démarche simple, une tournure naturelle', and states that Dancourt 'devrait rester au rang de ces esprits aisés, pour qui le travail est léger et le succès facile à saisir, sans qu'ils puissent commander l'attention et captiver la gloire' (2). H. Lucas (3) portrayed Dancourt rather summarily as a recorder of contemporary manners, a theme which was to be taken up and developed by various writers : C. Barthélémy (4) who quotes from a selection of his plays to illustrate his ideas, C. Lénient (5) and V. Fournel (6).

The first book-length commentary on Dancourt's works was La Comédie après Molière et le Théâtre de Dancourt (1882) by J. Lemaître, which differs from previous accounts in the greater attention paid to a wider variety of Dancourt's plays. In it the author attempts to 'rescue' Dancourt from being engulfed in almost total oblivion. While it is true to say that Lemaître contributed to making the reader more familiar with the content of these plays by his fairly detailed comments, their significance in terms of the social realities is not studied from a scholarly point of view.

(1) Cours de Littérature Dramatique, Paris, 1819, vol. II.

(2) 'La Comédie et les Moeurs aux premières années du XVIIIe siècle - Dancourt', Revue des Cours littéraires de la France et de l'étranger, no. 36, 1866, pp. 559-560.

(3) Histoire Philosophique et Littéraire du Théâtre François, Paris, 1862.

(4) La Bourgeoisie et le Paysan sur le théâtre au 18e siècle: La comédie de Dancourt, Paris, 1882.

(5) La Comédie en France au 18e siècle, Paris, 1888.

(6) 'Un auteur dramatique fin de siècle : Dancourt', Revue d'Art dramatique et musical, no. 21, 1891, and Le Théâtre au XVIIe siècle, Paris, 1892.

The early years of the twentieth century ushered in a spate of contributions to literary reviews by writers with a slight interest in Dancourt : H. de Curzon (1), A. Gazier (2), L. Batcave (3), and X. de Courville (4), none of whom made any contribution to knowledge of Dancourt's plays. Apart from these review articles, there is a section of E. Lintilhac's Histoire Générale du Théâtre en France (5) devoted to a detailed study of Le Chevalier à la Mode, but the author gives no more than a passing reference to some of his other plays. Quite distinct from any of these works was an unpublished thesis by W.H. Starr (1937) (6) which was the first serious attempt to study Dancourt's productions from an academic point of view. The author's approach to the subject is that of a classifier who puts Dancourt's plays into groups according to the number of acts they contain, and then proceeds to analyse each one in turn in isolation from Dancourt's dramatic production as a whole. Consequently there is no comprehensive grasp of the subject, and as the author is limited to the use of already published material, his work cannot claim to have made a real contribution to knowledge on Dancourt. Then there are the weighty volumes published by H.C. Lancaster on the history of French dramatic literature in the seventeenth century (7) which can always be consulted as a convenient catalogue of information on Dancourt's works. His treatment of Dancourt presents many similarities with that of W.H. Starr in his detailed examination of individual plays and his compilation of available knowledge.

(1) 'Un mot pour le théâtre de Dancourt', Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Théâtre, no. 7, 1903.

(2) 'La Comédie en France après Molière : Dancourt', Revue Hebdomadaire des Cours et Conférences, no. 1, 1909-10.

(3) 'Dancourt observateur des mœurs de la banlieue parisienne', Revue Bleue, 1914.

(4) 'La Querelle des Comédiens', Revue Critique des Idées et des Livres, 1914.

(5) 5 vols., vol. III, Paris, 1904-10.

(6) Johns Hopkins University.

(7) A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, Baltimore, 1929-42, 9 vols.

Another, much shorter, unpublished thesis was written on Dancourt entitled The Conception of Character Types in the Comedies of Dancourt (1967) By W.H. Lakin (1). While it views Dancourt's work from a different angle - that of various character types - it is of severely restricted scope and, at best, a superficial study. However, two more works on Dancourt were produced in recent years, one a book by N. Melani (2), and the other an unpublished thesis by A. Sokalski (3). Whereas the former, as its title suggests, is chiefly concerned with a minor aspect of Dancourt's plays, the latter is a specialized study of these plays from a technical angle, taking into consideration the structure and development of the plot, the role of language used by different character types, and even the stage setting and costumes, all in an attempt to provide something different on the playwright on the dubious grounds that 'after Lemaître everything has been said about Dancourt; his many comedies have been scrutinized as documents on life and manners during the declining years of Louis XIV' (4).

Not only has the real significance of Dancourt's works never been the object of a critical study, but no one has ever produced a biography of the playwright in any meaningful sense of the word. J.F. Nicéron, writing a decade or so after Dancourt's death, was the first to put forward some biographical information chiefly of an anecdotal nature, which he claimed to have received directly from the family, and this has been embroidered on by subsequent writers, particularly nineteenth-century journalists and writers of biographies romancées : A. Housseaye (5), the novelist, A. de Bast (6) and later by H. de Jouvencel (7) and the Marquis de Ségur (8). These were responsible for creating and perpetuating various myths which have surrounded Dancourt's private life by offering opinions formulated on unsound and often non-existent evidence, and by reaching conclusions based on pure speculation.

(1) University of Sheffield.

(2) Motivi Tradizionali e fantasia del 'Divertissement' nel teatro di Florent Carton Dancourt, Naples, 1970.

(3) The Dramatic Art of Dancourt and the Metaphor of Pretence, Yale University, 1970.

(4) *ibid.*, p. 22.

(5) 'Trois Pages de la Vie de Dancourt', Revue de Paris, no. 34, 1841.

(6) La Comédie au Palais, Paris, 1861.

(7) 'Gentilshommes et Comédiens: Les Dancourt', Revue hebdomadaire, no.43, 1909.

(8) 'La Jeunesse de Madame de la Poupelinière', Revue des Deux Mondes, no.37, 1917.

It was not until 1879 that the first authentic documents about Dancourt's domestic life came to light with the publication of E. Campardon's Les Comédiens du Roy de la Troupe Française, which contains extracts from six documents in the Archives Nationales relating to Dancourt. This was followed over eighty years later by Documents du Minutier Central (1960) in which M. Jurgens and M.A. Fleury put the researcher in touch with about a dozen legal documents concerning Dancourt and his wife up to 1700, but without publishing their content. The task of transcribing these documents is, of course, left for those willing and able to undertake it. Although no references are given to any eighteenth-century documents, this source has provided valuable clues for further research : by taking up the threads from 1700 onwards and going through the Répertoires of notaries' études, it has been possible to trace more than twice as many unpublished documents in the Minutier Central. The transcription of these documents, together with those referred to by M. Jurgens, not only yielded information on Dancourt's private life but also led to cross-references to other études containing information on Dancourt which in turn opened up fresh avenues of research; once a document had been located in a new étude, the chances were that more would be likely to be found there, and so the laborious task of hunting in the relevant Répertoires from 1700 to 1725 was put into action. What is more, some of these documents relate to others in the Archives Nationales which, when transcribed, often referred the researcher back to the Répertoires of the Minutier Central.

Another rich source of information on Dancourt is the Archives de la Comédie Française, in the Registers, the feuilles d'assemblée and the dossier Dancourt. Although H.C. Lancaster's publication of information contained in the Registers (1) covers the period from 1685 to 1718 when Dancourt was a member of the troupe, there remains some unpublished material relating to performances of plays at Court during this period, as well as to the plays in which Dancourt acted. It was therefore

(1) The Comédie Française, 1680-1701: plays, actors, spectators, finances, Baltimore, 1941 and The Comédie Française, 1701-1774: plays, actors, spectators, finances, Philadelphia, 1951.

necessary to plough through the daily records of the theatre's activities over a period of thirty-three years in order to glean the unpublished information which they contain. In addition to this, a host of references to Dancourt's career at the Comédie Française were discovered by an examination of the manuscript notes supplied by the actors in their feuilles d'assemblée from 1685 to 1724, while a substantial part of Dancourt's biography was derived from a variety of unpublished documents in the dossier Dancourt.

In contrast to these main archival sources, relatively little has been found among the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français and the Bibliothèque Municipale de Fontainebleau which contain information principally on Dancourt's forebears. This does not mean, however, that the documents found in these archives, while being fewer in number, are necessarily of less considerable importance. Apart from the light they shed on the background from which Dancourt came and on his family connections, they have been of great value in facilitating the construction of Dancourt's family tree. One of the most valuable documents relating to Dancourt is his acte de décès of 1725 found in the Mairie of the tiny village of Beaulieu-sur-Loire in Le Loiret. The underlying reason for this document remaining undiscovered for so long can be explained by the difficulties involved in locating the exact place where Dancourt died: ever since Nicéron's time it was known generally as 'Courcelles-le-Roi en Berry', which is a private estate in the heart of a vast province. As neither the Archives Départementales of Le Loiret, in Orleans, nor those of Le Cher, in Bourges, could provide any clue as to the whereabouts of this place, it was necessary to carry out hours of tedious - but rewarding - research in detailed maps of the region until the château of Courcelles was eventually spotted near Beaulieu, and it was upon application to the Mairie of this village that the document d'état civil was found.

With this profusion of archival treasures there was no alternative but to set about patiently transcribing them, piecing them together and then watching them

grow into a fairly comprehensive picture of Dancourt's domestic life and his career at the Comédie Française. Quotations from these documents have been kept to a strict minimum in order to spare the reader the joyless task of having to wade through masses of legal jargon and unnecessary verbiage before finally getting to the central issue. With this kind intention in mind, only the most relevant details are used to illustrate various aspects of Dancourt's biography. However, far from being uninteresting legal documents covered with centuries of dust, they open up colourful perspectives in Dancourt's private life and give the reader some insight into his family background, his temperament, his way of life, his relationship with his colleagues and the connections of his family with prominent figures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; indeed, some of them relate scenes of violence in which passions are at their height and swear-words are brought into play or provide breath-taking details of a cloak-and-dagger episode in which Dancourt was fortunate enough to escape with his life.

Then, having read Dancourt's fifty-one published plays and considered the kind of criticism to which they had been subjected, it was felt that what was needed was a study of their content and significance seen against the background of contemporary literature and social conditions. One of the chief weaknesses in previous criticism of Dancourt's works was the failure either to study them as an integral and coherent whole or to relate them, as such, to the history of contemporary comedy. In this thesis Dancourt's plays are seen to have followed a steady evolutionary pattern over a period of more than three decades. Their literary value is assessed in the light of the contemporary theatre with reference to a wide variety of dramatic productions given in Paris from the mid-seventeenth century to the opening decades of the eighteenth.

An essential section of the thesis is devoted to the historical and 'social' content of Dancourt's plays, as much of his inspiration came from direct observation of the contemporary scene. There are, hidden among his many little-known plays,

some interesting references to contemporary manners which give abundant testimony to the spirit of the age. These unpicked 'plums' are now brought into focus as an important addition to contemporary social satire and are considered in relation to works produced by writers of other forms of literature and to the historical and social background of the times. This thesis is not, however, a sociological survey which puts Dancourt's work under a microscope, as it were, to examine from a clinical standpoint the social conditions which they depict; it is intended to bring out something more broadly human, an indefinable je ne sais quoi, which transcends the rigid class structure of seventeenth-century society and which, even at this distance in time, shows through the fabric of our society in the familiar traits of human nature. It is this very fundamental and elusively simple point which often is overlooked by historians commenting on the society of the time whose views are strongly coloured by their political or religious bias; after our senses have been assailed by a volley of garbled statements, it is refreshing to turn to writers such as Dancourt who, with a more serene and clear-sighted approach, go straight to the heart of the social question by examining the underlying motives, deeply rooted in human nature, which give rise to and foster the growth of injustices.

Finally, the last section of the thesis deals with the success of Dancourt's plays in terms of the number of performances they enjoyed both during his life-time and posthumously, and a comparison is made between his achievements as a dramatist and the opinions of contemporary and eighteenth-century critics whose comments are studied in relation to the trends of literary criticism which prevailed at the time.

This thesis is designed to achieve a four-fold aim : to produce a biography of Dancourt authenticated by over eighty unpublished documents (that is without counting individually the numerous snippets of information which are grouped under larger headings), to set Dancourt's literary achievements in a historical perspective, to illuminate the significance of his works and to estimate his success as a playwright. Coming on the scene in the mid 1680's, he is often judged in an unfair comparison with Molière at his best, and the conclusions which are reached as to his achievements are

bound to reflect unfavourably on the lesser mortal; but with his prolific output of plays ~~he~~ deserves to be judged in his own right, as having made a distinct and personal contribution to the literature of the age.

It is important to keep in mind that Dancourt was writing during a period of the French theatre about which much remains to be known. There are many unfilled voids in the administrative history of the Comédie Française of the period, while the history of the Théâtre Italien is even less complete, and that of the Théâtres de la Foire minimal. In fact, only one of the numerous comic dramatists of the time - Regnard - has been the subject of a sufficiently well authenticated study (1) to provide a comprehensive coverage of his life and works. Clearly, the value of pioneer work in the field of contemporary comedy which taps new sources of information opens the way to further research and provides a firm foundation on which to build our knowledge of the 'successeurs de Molière'.

(1) cf. A. Calame, Regnard, sa Vie et son Oeuvre, Paris, 1960.

I. BIOGRAPHY : PART I - DANCOURT'S DOMESTIC LIFE.

J'ai des ayeux qu'on vit briller
Chez eux de plus d'une maniere.
Un peu dérangé de leur sphere,
Je soutiens autant que je puis
L'honneur du parti que j'ai pris. (1)

In this extract from his epistle written in 1712 Dancourt, referring to the incongruity of his theatrical profession and the social status of his family, was making a claim which can be confirmed from various sources which offer some concrete evidence on his immediate forebears. From these sources it is possible to glean valuable pieces of information which throw light on his ancestry and give some indication of the social status of the Carton Dancourt family from which he descended. The evidence suggests that members of this family, emerging from their solidly bourgeois background, aspired to the rank of the lesser nobility, according to the titles by which individual members were described, that they were of the Protestant religion and that they probably originated from Saint Quentin in the department of L'Aisne (2).

Existing records going back as far as the mid-seventeenth century enable us to form an idea of the type of background from which Dancourt came. The following document signed by Dancourt's grandfather (3) in 1648, illustrates the fact that he held a position of authority which carried with it an element of social prestige as well as considerable financial reward :

(1) Sancho Pança Gouverneur, Paris, 1712, dedicatory epistle.

(2) The Archives Départementales in Laon have no available information on this family.

(3) Florent Carton I. As three members of the Dancourt family of succeeding generations bore the name of Florent Carton, it will be necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to append to their names a distinguishing mark in the form of a Roman numeral.

Noble homme M(essir)e florent Carton Con(seill)er du Roy cy devant son receveur g(e)n(er)al Juge et controlleur au grenier a Sel a Saint Quentin confesse avoir receu de noble homme Mr (1) la somme de Cent soixante dix huit livres huit sols six deniers Pour un quartier escheu le dernier jour de juin...faict et passé A paris en l'estude des notaires soub(sign)e s L'an mil six cens quarante huit Le huit (iesm)e Jour de febvrier avant midy Et a signé

FLORENT CARTON (2)

According to the records preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Florent Carton I, husband of Judith Léger, made his will in 1651, bequeathing his property to their five children :

Florent Carton pere avoit cinq enfans : ladite Judith qui estoit l'ainée, et quatre fils, Pierre, ledit Daniel, Florent et Manasses Carton...Carton pere se trouvant hors d'etat d'agir a cause de son grand age delaisa ses biens a ses enfans par acte du 11 septembre 1651...le pere est mort le 11 novembre 1652, et peu apres ledit Manasses son fils estant decédé sans enfans, leurs biens ont appartenu par quart aux quatre enfans restans. (3)

The exact ^{amount} of money left to the four surviving members of the family is stated in a document of 18 April 1689 concerning Daniel Carton, Sieur de la Boullaye, and Florent Carton II, Dancourt's father :

...la somme de six mil trente une livres cinq sols faisant le quart de celle de vingt quatre mil vingt cinq livres qui estoit cy devant due a la succession de deff(un)t florent Carton pere desd(its) Daniel et Florent Carton. (4)

There is no doubt that the Cartons were adherents of the Protestant religion. In spite of the fact that the archives of the Temple de Charenton, the only Protestant church serving the region of Paris at that time, were totally destroyed on 24 May 1871 during the Commune, it has been possible to trace a certain number of documents relating to Protestants of Paris in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français contains a collection of manuscripts by Eugène Haag entitled L'Etat Civil des Protestants à Paris compiled before the destruction of the original documents of the Etat Civil during the Commune. It can be seen

(1) Word missing in the original.

(2) Bibliothèque Nationale Manuscripts, Pièces Originales, 606.

(3) Bibliothèque Nationale Manuscripts, Dossiers Bleus, 156.

(4) Minutier Central, LII, 122.

from this reconstituted collection that the Carton family in question figured among the entries. Florent Carton I, simply described as 'controleur du grenier a sel a Saint Quentin', was buried at the Temple de Charenton on 30 November 1653, a date which conflicts with details given in the foregoing account.

Pierre Carton, Sieur Dancourt, eldest son of Florent Carton I, held a position of considerable importance according to a document which he signed in 1658 and in which he was described as 'Messire Pierre Carton Con(seill)er Et M(aistr)e Dhotel ord(inair)e Du Roy' (1). He is described by Jal as an 'homme d'assez de consideration' on the grounds that a person of such high status as Abel Servien 'surintendant des finances, chancelier et garde des sceaux' was godfather of one of his children baptized at the church of Saint Eustache (2). It is significant that Pierre Carton, whose name does not appear in the Protestant Etat Civil, had his child baptized in a Catholic church. His wife was Angélique Le Paulmier whom he married about 1654 and who later became separated from him 'quant aux biens' (3). The only known child of this couple is Catherine Dancourt. It appears from a document of 1654 that his sister, Judith, was residing with him in a house which he owned in the Rue des Bons Enfants. At a later date, on 28 January 1688, he was living with his wife and daughter in the Rue Saint Benoist (4).

The second of Dancourt's uncles, Daniel Carton, sieur de la Boullaye, bears the title of 'Ecuyer, avocat au parlement' in 1654 (5). In his marriage contract to his first wife, Marie Léger, daughter of Jacques Léger 'marchand de Saint Quentin' and Elisabeth Bossu, in May 1652, he is described as 'receveur des Gabelles a Saint Quentin', his father's post (6). This information provides yet another proof of the connection of the Carton family with the region of Saint Quentin.

(1) Bibliothèque Nationale Manuscripts, Dossiers Bleus, 156.

(2) Dictionnaire Critique de Biographie et d'Histoire, Paris, 1872, p.466.

(3) Bibliothèque Nationale, Pièces Originales, 606.

(4) op. cit.

(5) Bibliothèque Nationale, Dossiers Bleus, 156.

(6) Bibliothèque de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français, Manuscript 66, pp. 43 and 50.

The second marriage of Daniel Carton on 6 July 1657 was to Marie Fenou, daughter of Oudin Fenou 'procureur en parlement', and Marguerite Loiseau (1). Three children of this marriage were baptized in the Protestant religion, namely Catherine Marie Carton on 7 December 1659, Daniel Carton on 19 June 1660 and Marguerite Angélique Carton on 2 August 1665 (1). Legal proceedings were taken against Daniel Carton by his wife, 'femme séparée de Daniel Carton Sieur de la Boulaye...demanderesse en opposition et Requête Civile contre un arret du 29 aout 1665' (2). In 1685 Daniel Carton and his wife 'de luy séparée quand aux biens' made a financial settlement on 'Daniel Carton sieur de la Boulaye mineur et ladite damoiselle Catherine Marie Carton Fille Majeure ses enfants' (3). Records of Daniel Carton's activities exist as late as April 1689 when he settled a debt which he owed his brother, Florent II. At this date he was living in the 'Rue Saint Jean de Beauvais, Paroi(sse) Saint Etienne dumont' (4).

Comparatively little is known of Dancourt's remaining uncle, Manassé Carton, described simply as 'ecuyer' (5). In 1654 he was one of the witnesses at his sister Judith's marriage (6). As we have seen, he died shortly after this date having left his estate to his brothers and sister.

Judith Carton, then residing in her brother's house in the Rue des Bons Enfants, married Samuel Boutinon, Sieur des Hayes, 'Lieutenant de l'artillerie de France au département de la bresse demeurant dans l'arsenal paroisse st. paul'. The contract was drawn up on 19 February 1654

en presence de noble homme Antoine Cottereau docteur en la faculté de medecine... de noble homme Pierre Carton dam.lle Angelique le paulmier sa femme Marc Leger Marchand orfevre cousin noble homme Daniel Carton avocat florent Carton escuyer Sieur de Dancourt et Manassé Carton escuyer fait et passé en la maison dudit Carton l'aisné ou lad(ite) damoiselle sa soeur est dem(euran)te.

S. BOUTINON
DANIEL CARTON
MANASSE CARTON

JUDITH CARTON
PIERRE CARTON
ANGELIQUE LE PAULMIER
F. CARTON (6)

- (1) Bibliothèque du Protestantisme Français, Manuscript 66, p. 50.
- (2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Dossiers Bleus, 156.
- (3) Archives Nationales, Y 247.
- (4) Minutier Central, LII, 122.
- (5) Bibliothèque Nationale, Dossiers Bleus, 156 and Pièces Originales, 606.
- (6) Minutier Central, CXII, 326.

On 21 May 1657 Judith Boutinon, 'fille de Samuel sieur des Hayes...et de Judith Carton', was baptized in the Protestant religion (1). She married Daniel le Maistre 'bourgeois de Paris fils de feu Denis docteur en medecine a Orleans' in August 1671 (1). A document of 25 May 1689 (2) relating to the two daughters of this couple, Judith-Jeanne and Catherine Le Maistre (3), reveals the decease of their grandmother, Judith Carton, and their subsequent inheritance.

The fourth of the Carton brothers, Florent II, known as Sieur Dancourt, father of the actor and playwright, married in 1655 Louise de Londy according to the rites of the Protestant religion. Their marriage contract of 22 January is particularly interesting for Louise de Londy's family connections :

Pardevant les Notaires et gardenottaires du Roy en son chastelet de Paris soubsignes furent presents en leurs personnes Florent Carton ecuyer sieur Dancourt demeurant a Paris rue des Bons enfants paroisse St Eustache fils de deffunct noble homme Florent Carton vivant conseiller du Roy Receveur general Juge et controlleur au grenier a Sel de Saint Quentin et de dam.lle Judith Leger Jadis sa femme ses pere et mere...Et dam.lle Louise de Londy fille usante et jouissante de ses biens et droits fille de deffunct Denis de Londy vivant sieur de Malassis et de Courtinon et de Jeanne Dumas jadis sa femme ses pere et mere demeurant a St Germain des Pres rue Princesse paroisse St Sulpice (4).

Among those present were Daniel de Londy, 'oncle paternel', Daniel de Londy, 'cousin germain paternel', Elisabeth de Londy 'soeur germaine', Maître Perreaux 'procureur en parlement au nom et comme disant avoir charge et pouvoir', Jean Perreaux 'son frere demeurant a orleans aussy oncle paternel a cause de sa femme', and Maître Paul Rossin 'aussi cousin de ladite dam.lle a cause de dam.lle Rachel de Londy sa femme'. It is of interest to be able to identify among the witnesses of the marriage the mysterious 'Chevalier de Londy' who became almost a legendary figure in many accounts of Dancourt's life. Nicéron was the first to state that Dancourt's mother 'comptoit parmi ses parens un Chevalier de Londé établi en Angleterre où il avoit été honoré de l'ordre de la Jarretiére' (5). It can be seen from this document that the chevalier was none other than her first cousin, Jacques de Londy, 'cousin germain paternel, premier cappitaine et major du

(1) Bibliothèque du Protestantisme Français, Manuscript 66.

(2) Minutier Central, LII, 122.

(3) Mistakenly interpreted by M. Jurgens and M. Fleury, Documents du Minutier Central, Paris, 1960, p. 80, as three daughters, Judith, Jeanne and Catherine.

(4) Minutier Central, CVI, 6.

(5) J.F. Nicéron, Mémoires pour servir a l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la République des Lettres, Paris, 1729-45, 43 vols, vol. XVI, p. 287.

regiment de la Vieuxville'. His own marriage contract of May 1653 further describes him as a 'chevalier d'ordre d'Angleterre (1) major d'un regiment de cavallerie de la Vieuxville, fils de Daniel (de Londy) et de Rachel Rousseau' (2).

When Florent II's marriage contract was drawn up on 22 January, there remained to be fulfilled certain formalities relating to two estates which Louise de Londy was to receive and which constituted her dowry 'dont huict mil livres en escheront en leurd(ite) communauté'. On the other hand, Florent II promised to give his future wife a douaire worth 8,000 livres, yielding an annual interest of 400 livres which was to be entailed for the benefit of any children of the marriage :

Comme aussy desd(its) biens dudit sieur futur espoux en escherra en lad(ite) communauté pareille somme de huict mil livres...Et a aussi luy sieur futur espoux doué et doue ladite dam.lle sa future espouse de quatre cens livres de rente annuelle et Viagere de douaire prefix...Le fonds duquel sera et demeurera propre aux enfans qui naistront dudit mariage.

It is interesting to note that the entailed sum of 8,000 livres was to be settled on one of the children of this marriage, Benjamin Carton, some months before Florent II's death in 1701. A document of 1699 concerning this question reveals for the first time the existence of Dancourt's younger brother, Benjamin, who is to receive a life annuity of 400 livres :

Louise de Londy epouse separee quant aux biens de m.e fleurant Carton sieur Dancourt bourgeois de Paris...demeurante rue de Bussy...laquelle vollontairement a donné...au Sieur Benjamin Carton son fils et dnd(it) sr. Dancourt aussy bourgeois de paris et dem(euran)t susd(ite) rue...et acceptant la jouissance par Usufruit sa vie durant de quatre cent livres de rente au p(rincip)al de huit mil livres Constituez sur les Aydes et Gabelles au proffit de lad(ite) damoiselle Louise de Londy...A Commencer La jouissance par led(it) sr. Carton fils de lad(ite) rente du premier Janvier de l'annee 1701 (3).

At the same time, Florent II, 'demeurant rue de taranne, paroisse St Sylpice' gave his consent to these arrangements at the Châtelet. There is also evidence that in 1705 Benjamin Carton continued to receive a rente of 400 livres :

Lequel a fait et Constitué sa procuratrice generale et speciale Damoiselle

(1) cf. J. Haydn, The Book of Dignities, London, 1894. There is no trace of Londy either in the section devoted to Knights of the Garter or in the index.

(2) Bibliothèque du Protestantisme Français, Manuscript 66, p. 43.

(3) Archives Nationales, Y 273, folio 83 verso.

Louise de Londy sa mère...a laquelle il donne pouvoir et puissance de pour luy en son nom Recevoir des Sieurs payeurs de rente assignez sur les aydes et gabelles de france les arrerages escheus et qui echerront a l'avenir de quatre cens livres de Rente assignez sur lesd(ites) aydes et gabelles
BENJAMIN CARTON (1)

Dancourt's mother, Louise de Londy, is reputed to have descended from Guillaume Budé although there is no evidence of this family tie in the genealogy of the Budés contained in the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale (2). The first mention of this illustrious ancestry is made by J.F. Nicéron who claimed to have received this information from the Dancourt family.

Florent Carton II and his wife are known to have renounced the Protestant religion : ('Ils étoient tous deux de la religion prétendue Réformée; mais ils l'abjurèrent dans la suite pour embrasser la Catholique' (3). The exact date of their conversion is not revealed, however. Florent II is criticised in La France Protestante for not having been an active participant or a devout member of the Protestant Church :

Le Sieur d'Ancourt n'a rendu aucun service à l'Eglise dont il étoit membre, et comme il se convertit avec sa femme même avant la révocation de l'Edit de Nantes nous ne l'aurions pas jugé digne d'une mention spéciale s'il n'avait pas été le père de Florent Carton d'Ancourt, un acteur célèbre et un auteur dramatique de quelque renom. (4)

It appears from the rather amusing outlook expressed in this passage that the author was bent on having his religious community composed of all saints and no sinners.

There is little documentary evidence to give any clear indication as to what profession Dancourt's father followed. Only one source describes him as a 'Senechal de Saint Quentin' (5), without, however, providing any concrete information as to the dates of tenure of this judicial post. It is unlikely that by the seventeenth century the post of sénéchal was an influential one; the term

(1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 129, 1705, April 6.

(2) cf. Pièces Originales, 546-547, Carrés d'Hozier, 141, and Cabinet d'Hozier, 71. also Archives de la Ville de Paris, Manuscrits Phillips, vol. 8. The latter source only goes as far as the grandchildren of Guillaume Budé .

(3) J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

(4) E. Haag, La France Protestante, Paris, 1846-59, 10 vols., vol. III.

(5) Bibliothèque Nationale, Dossiers Bleus, 156.

sénéchaussée, synonymous with bailliage, formerly indicated a position of some authority which carried with it responsibilities in the legal, military and financial fields, but, in the course of time, the post was reduced to a nominal office :

On leur laissa seulement la conduite de l'arriere-ban pour marque de leur ancien pouvoir. Présentement il ne leur reste plus de même qu'aux baillis que la séance à l'audience et l'honneur que les sentences et contrats passés sous le scel de leur sénéchaussée sont intitulés de leur nom. (1)

Florent II bore the title of 'écuyer' and has also been described as a 'petit gentilhomme' (2), which gives some vague idea of his social standing. It is of interest to point out that he had a coat of arms described as follows :

porte parti au premier d'azur à un rocher mouvant de la pointe surmonté d'un soleil naissant d'or, au deuxième de gueules à un lion d'argent, et un chef cousu d'azur, chargé de trois étoiles d'argent. (2)

Florent Carton II and his wife are known to have had two children, namely Florent Carton Dancourt, later to become the actor and playwright, and a younger son, Benjamin. It is claimed that Dancourt was born in Fontainebleau on 1 November 1661, according to material furnished by his family (3). This date is confirmed by Dancourt himself in a dedicatory epistle to the Dauphin, Louis de Bourbon, son of Louis XIV and Marie Thérèse, in which he claims 'twinsip' with that member of the royal family :

Pour m'attacher à toi, le Ciel m'a destiné
Dès le moment qu'au jour il ouvrit ma paupière.
Quel présage heureux d'être né
Ce même jour si fortuné,
Où tu vis aussi la lumière! (4)

On the other hand, it has not been possible to find contemporary documentary evidence as to either the place or the date of Dancourt's birth. There is, however, a piece of information in the Dossiers Bleus of the Bibliothèque Nationale which describes Dancourt as 'Escuyer, né a fontainebleau, 1661, le P(remie)r novembre', but as there are no means of estimating at what date this was written, it cannot be quoted as a contemporary document. The Archives Départementales

(1) L'Encyclopédie, 1765, vol. 15, p. 12.

(2) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 466.

(3) cf. J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

(4) Les Fées, Paris, 1699.

of Seine-et-Marne at Melun which cover this region preserve no information on Dancourt. Although there is a possibility that Dancourt's parents may have been living in Paris where they had been married six years before his birth, research carried out among the registers of the Protestant archives has proved fruitless. The absence of Dancourt's name from these Documents which, as we have seen, yield some information on the Carton family in general, may suggest that his parents had already been converted to Catholicism before 1661. However, there is no mention of Dancourt in the parish registers of St. Sulpice and St. Eustache which are among the few surviving records of Paris churches (1). Nor is there any trace of his name in the Archives de la Seine et de la Ville de Paris which contain a number of reconstituted documents of the Etat Civil de Paris, the original registers of which had been destroyed in the conflagration in the Hôtel de Ville in 1871.

Nothing is known of Dancourt's early life, apart from the fact that he attended the Jesuit Collège de Clermont in Paris, renamed in 1682 Collège Louis-le-Grand. This school was composed of both boarders, mostly drawn from aristocratic families, and a number of externes (2). Nicéron states that 'le jeune Dancourt fit ses études à Paris dans le Collège des Jésuites, sous le pere de la Rue' (3). Since the famous Charles de la Rue (1643-1725), preacher and literary figure, was a teacher of rhetoric at the school in 1677 and spiritual director of its day-pupils (4), it is possible that Dancourt attended the school as an externe. Nicéron goes on to comment on Dancourt's ability in the academic field under the supervision of his tutor :

qui luy trouvant de la vivacité, de la pénétration, et des dispositions singulieres pour les Sciences, le regardoit comme un sujet qu'il devoit ménager à son Ordre: mais l'éloignement de Dancourt pour la vie religieuse rendit inutiles tous les soins qu'il se donna pour y réussir. (3)

It is not clear whether Dancourt, on leaving school, actually carried on the profession of avocat au parlement (5), a title by which he is described on several

(1) cf. Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 32,593-32,594 and 32,838-32,839.

(2) G. Brice, Description Nouvelle de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1684, 2 vols., vol. II, p. 65.

(3) op.cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

(4) Archives de la Société de Jésus, Chantilly.

(5) cf. A. Maillart, Nouveau Tableau des Avocats au Parlement de Paris, Paris, 1731, in which there is no mention of Dancourt.

occasions. Material furnished by his family states quite clearly that 'après avoir fait sa philosophie il étudia en droit, et se fit recevoir avocat à l'âge de dix-sept ans' (1). It is amusing to find that this piece of information was the point de départ for several fictitious accounts of Dancourt's career put forward by commentators on his life, such, for example, as that given by a nineteenth-century romancier :

Ses parents désirèrent qu'il fît son droit, et, à sa sortie de Louis-le-Grand, le jeune-homme alla s'asseoir sur les bancs de l'école de droit. Ses progrès là, comme aux jésuites, furent si rapides, qu'à dix-sept ans il fut reçu avocat, et qu'à dix-neuf ans, il se trouva en état de plaider. (2)

Another ^{commentator} goes a step further in his interpretation of this information :

Il étudia le droit, et obtint sans difficulté son diplôme de licencié ès loix.(3) Yet another embroiders on this idea with his completely hypothetical statement that Dancourt 'avait fréquenté le palais, plaidé non sans succès' (4). These examples are only a few of the more startling departures from the original information quoted from Niceron.

The first known mention of this profession in connection with Dancourt appears in a document of 6 August 1680 in which he is described as 'M(aist)re Fleurent Carton Dancourt ad(voc)at en parlem(en)t' (5). This title is used only on important occasions such as at the marriage of his brother-in-law, Pierre Lenoir, in 1685 (6), and again at the baptism of one of Michel Baron's children in 1687 (7). As late as 1714 Dancourt suppressed his usual title of Comédien du Roy and substituted for it that of avocat en parlement (8). The reappearance of this title which had not been used for many years can be explained by the importance of the occasion : Dancourt was coming into possession of a château and its domains which would entitle him to enjoy a higher social status than that of the much

(1) J.F. Niceron, op.cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

(2) A. de Bast, La Comédie au Palais, Paris, 1861.

(3) P. Pinsseau, La Châtellenie de Courcelles-le-Roi, Orleans, 1921, p. 39.

(4) L. Batcave, 'Dancourt Observateur des Moeurs de la Banlieue Parisienne' in La Revue Bleue, 1914, p. 661.

(5) Minutier Central, L, 165.

(6) Minutier Central, I, 183, November 2, and Archives Nationales, Y 248.

(7) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 466.

(8) Minutier Central, XCVII, 164, June 9.

despised members of the theatrical world. Another example of the use of this title is seen in a document of 1719 (1) when, after his retirement from the theatre, Dancourt was making a financial settlement. And finally it can be seen that he is described as 'advocat en parlement' on his death certificate in 1725 (2).

At the age of eighteen and a half Dancourt married the sixteen-year-old (3) daughter of the well-known actor, La Thorillière, Marie Thérèse Lenoir. He was almost two years older than his wife who was born at the Palais Royal in 1663 during the period when her father was a member of Molière's troupe. The original baptismal record disappeared in 1871 when the church of St. Eustache was destroyed by fire, but a partial transcription had previously been made by Jal :

1663

Du mercredi 8e aoust fut baptisée Thérèse Marie Jeanne fille de François Lenoir sieur de la Thorillière et de Marie Petitjean sa femme née au Palais Royal le 15 juillet le parrain Jean-Baptiste Poclin Molière vallet de chambre du roy la marraine damoiselle Marquise Thérèse de Gorlle Femme de René du Parc bourgeois de Paris. (4)

It is noteworthy that the young couple came from widely different social backgrounds. Dancourt, as we have seen, originated from a family bordering on the petite noblesse, whereas his wife belonged to the theatrical world, a despised section of the community. This marriage into a theatrical family was a decisive event in Dancourt's life as, through it, he embarked on a career which was to become, in due course, his life's work. The circumstances of the marriage have come to light from reliable sources. Jal states that it was solemnized in the church of St. Merry on 15 April 1680 (4) in the presence of Dancourt's mother, Louise de Londy, and the bride's parents, François Lenoir de la Thorillière (5) and Marie Petit-Jean (6). Dancourt's father was conspicuous by his absence, but he was willing to consent to the marriage by proxy :

Pardevant les Con(seill)ers du Roy notaires a Paris soussignés fut present en sa personne Sr Florent Carton bourgeois de Paris y demeurant Cul de sac et Paroisse St Sauveur Lequel a par ces presentes consenti que florent Carton son

(1) Minutier Central, XCII, 421, December 3.

(2) Archives de la Mairie de Beaulieu.

(3) cf. A. Jal, op.cit., p. 466 who correctly gives her date of birth as July 1663, but who, through a mathematical error, attributes seventeen years to her in April 1680.

(4) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 466.

(5) (c. 1626-1680), son of Charles Lenoir and Elisabeth Mestivier. François served first in the army and later joined the Troupe du Marais (1652), the Palais Royal (1662) and the Hotel de Bourgogne on the death of Molière.

(6) Daughter of Pierre Petitjean, sieur de la Roque, director of the Troupe du Marais.

fils et de damoiselle de Londy sa femme se pourvoye par mariage avecq Therese Le Noir fille du sieur Lenoir bourgeois de Paris et passe a cet effet Contrat de Mariage avec^{elle} pardevant notaires Donnant pouvoir a ladite damoiselle de Londy sa femme de signer ledit Contrat pour ledit Sr Ce acceptant a elle et que par iceluy elle stipule toutes les conditions qu'elle aduiera bon estre L'autorisant a cet effet par ces presentes a assister aux solemnitez dudit mariage sy bon luy semble...L'an mil seize c(ent) quatre vingts le sept avril avant midy et a signé

F CARTON . (1)

A note appended to the marriage contract drawn up two days later explains the reason for Florent^{II}'s absence : he was unavoidably detained - in the Châtelet :

...pour ledit fleurant Carton entre les Deux Guichets des prisons du grand Ch(aste)let ou il a esté atteint pour la validité de ce que dessus. (1)

No information, however, has come to light to indicate how he came to be there.

It is clear from the contract of 9 April that Thérèse Lenoir brought^{as} a dowry an annuity of 500 livres payable in quarterly instalments during her father's lifetime.

The couple were not destined to enjoy this dowry for very long, as La Thorillière made his will on 26 July of that year, two days before his death, bequeathing his property to his two daughters, Charlotte and Thérèse, and to 'les enfants nez et a naitre de leur mariage' (2). Dancourt, on the other hand, undertook to provide a yearly income of 200 livres for his future wife , while his mother promised to look after the immediate welfare of the couple by supplying the necessities of board and lodging . The latter arrangement is seen to have been fulfilled, for, immediately after their marriage Dancourt and his wife were living with the Carton family in the Cul de sac St. Sauveur (3).

A popular anecdote which had even found favour with Jal attributes the death of La Thorillière in July 1680 to his daughter's reputed elopement :

De part et d'autre c'était le temps des belles folies et des douces amours. Mais les amours précoces et l'action qui en fut la suite durent laisser de profonds regrets à nos deux amants s'il est vrai, comme on l'a dit, que le pauvre La Thorillière mourut du chagrin que lui causa la faiblesse de sa fille. (4)

As with other incidents in Dancourt's life, the story of the elopement originated from Nicéron and was subsequently embellished. It is difficult to believe that La Thorillière would have reacted so violently to this youthful escapade especially

(1) Minutier Central, L, 164.

(2) Minutier Central, L, 165.

(3) Minutier Central, XCII, 232.

(4) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 466.

as the couple had been married three months before his death. La Thorillière was, however, ill at the time when he made his will :

Fut present Francois Le Noir Sr de Latorilliere demeurant a Paris rue du regnard paroisse Saint Sauveur gisant au lit malade en une salle basse du corps de logis de derriere de la maison ou il demeure Sain toutefois d'esprit memoire et entendement come il est apparu aux notaires soussignez par ses paroles et actions. (1)

It can be seen from this testament that Thérèse Lenoir and her sister Charlotte received a life interest in his estate . No details are given as to the exact amount each would receive ; they would be entitled to 'certain consideration que le sieur testateur n'a désiré estre icy exprimée'. In a document of 6 August 1680 drawn up at the request of La Thorillière's widow, Marie Petitjean, his estate was shared among their four children, Thérèse, Charlotte, wife of the well-known tragic actor, Michel Baron, Pierre and Magdeleine :

L'an mil six cent quatre vingts le mardy six(iesm)e jour d'Aoust avant midy A la req(uest)e de Dam.le Marie Petitjean V(euv)e de feu francois Le Noir Sieur de la Torilliere dem(euran)te a Paris rue du regnard...tant en son nom que co(mme) tutrice de Pierre et Magdeleine Le Noir enfants mineurs dudit deff(unc)t et d'elle en la presence de Michel Baron bourgeois de paris accause de dam.le charlotte Le Noir sa f(emm)e...lesdits mineurs avec lesd(ite)s Dam.lles Charlotte et Francoise Therese Le Noir frere et soeurs...heritiers chacun pour un quart dud(it) deff(unc)t francois de la Torilliere leurd(it) pere. (1)

Shortly after these events Dancourt and Marie Thérèse succeeded in gaining admission into a theatrical company known as the Troupe de Rouen, formed in 1677 by an amalgamation of the troupes of the Prince de Condé and the Dauphin. This company renewed its contract of association on 19 October 1680 for a period of seven years before going on to recruit new members. The troupe was composed on the one hand of some of the Prince de Condé's actors : Marguerite Sivet 'Veuve de Edme Raisin Vivant organiste du Roy' and her son, Jacques Raisin, and/ of Michel Du Rieu, 'Chuiissier du cabinet de Son Altesse' and his wife, Anne Pitel , while on the other hand there were Bernard Vaultier, Sieur Deschamps, Pierre Bernard Sieur de Bonneuil, Daniel Racot and his wife, Marguerite Poirier, and Jacques Crosnier Sieur Du Perche 'tous Comediens de Monseigneur le Dauphin establis et dem(eurant)s

(1) Minutier Central, L, 165.

en la Ville de Rouen'. In a clause appended to this contract they accepted Dancourt and his wife into the association a few days later :

Lesquels...pour parvenir a parfaire la troupe et comme jl est dit par lad(ite) societé et Convention ont associez avecq eux Sr florent Carton d'ancourt sieur de la bertiliniere (1) et dam.le therese lenoir de lathoriliere sa femme q(u'i)l autorise a l'effet de ces pr(ese)nt(e)s dem(eurant)s a paris cul de sac et paroisse St Sauveur a ce presents et acceptans pour entretenir...ainsi q(u'i)ls s'obligent la convention et societé declarations escrites aux clauses et Conditions suivantes (2).

Under the terms of the contract Dancourt received a full share in the company, but his wife was granted only a half share on the understanding that she would gain a whole share when she gave evidence of greater ability as an actress :

Est assavoir que lesd(its) Sr et d.le dancour entreront en part pour les frais et proffits qui se feront pend(ant) la premiere annee au temps de la societé savoir led(it) Sr d'ancourt pour une part et lad(it)e d.le sa femme pour une demye part a la fin de laq(uel)le annee lesd(its) sieur et d.le premier contractans promettent et s'obligent de donner a lad(ite) d.le Dancourt sa part entiere pend(ant) le reste de lad(ite) societé au cas que leurs Altesses la jugent capa(ble) de soustenir les rolles qu'elle aura representé devans elles

We see from this document that Dancourt was required to pay 250 livres for his full share in ~~instalments~~ over a period of four years, and his wife a proportionate amount :

Et a este accordé de plus que pour par lesd(its) Sr et d.le dancourt entrer en part et portion de propriété de theatre et choses g(e)n(er)ales...apartenans a la Compagnie...lesd(its) sr et d.le dancourt s'obligent de rembourser...la so(mme) de deux cents Cinquante livres pour la part dud(it) Sr dancourt et a proportion de ce qui reviendra a lad(ite) d.le sa femme aux memes conditions et termes accordez pour led(it) Sr de bonneuill (3)...fait et passé en l'hostel de Condé...et ont signé

F CARTON DANCOURT
M SIVET

THERESE LENOIR

CROSNIER DU PERCHE
RACOT

DU RIEU

RAISIN

VAULTIER

DE BONNEUIL

ANNE PITEL

MARGUERITE POIRIER

- (1) This is the only known example of the use of this title in connection with Dancourt.
- (2) Minutier Central, XCII, 232. The correct year in which Dancourt joined this troupe is 1680, not 1682 as indicated by M. Jurgens and M. Fleury, *op.cit.*, p. 79.
- (3) These terms regarding Bonneuil are explained in the contract as follows :
de plus sont convenus que led(it) Sr de bonneuill pour entrer en part et portion de propriété du theatre...leur remboursera ainsi q(u'i)l s'oblige la so(mme) de deux cens Cinq(uante) livres scavoir le quart dans la premiere annee aud(it) jour premier mars prochain le second quart Une aultre annee apres et les deux aultres quarts deux aultres annees encor apres qui fera quatre annees pour le payem(en)t parfait desd(its) deux cent Cinq(uan)te livres.

During the five years which followed their marriage, however, very little of the couple's activities has come to light. Dancourt is known to have been in Arras in 1683 where he had his first play printed, a tragedy entitled La Mort d'Hercule. This play was dedicated to a member of the well-known aristocratic family, Eugène Maximilien, 'comte de Horn, lieutenant général gouverneur de la Gueldre' who became a prince in 1677. The dedication marks Dancourt's first attempt to gain the patronage of a person of noble rank. In it he resorts to the conventional technique of lavishing praise on a potential benefactor. Dancourt begins the epistle by making servile apologies for daring to address such a noble figure. Then, having promised 'de ne la point remplir d'un Pompeux galimatias de louanges' he goes straight on to say :

Chef d'une des plus Illustres Familles, vous possédez toutes les belles qualités qui peuvent contribuer à la perfection d'un Homme de vôtre Rang. Jeune, Galant, Généreux, Affable, Magnanime, Vous avez le coeur grand, l'esprit délicat, les manieres les plus agréables du monde. (1)

Fortunately, out of consideration for his patron, Dancourt decides not to extend the list of attributes to 'une Lettre de vingt feuillets'. After all, reading through such a lengthy panegyric would tax the patience of even the vainest of patrons.

In the same year we find trace of Dancourt in Lille where he dedicated the first edition of his comedy, Les Nouvellistes de Lille, to the young Marquis d'Humières, only son of Louis de Crevant, duc d'Humières, maréchal de France and gouverneur of the town. The Marquis, a colonel of infantry, was killed in the following year during a campaign in Luxemburg. In his epistle Dancourt makes reference to certain favours bestowed on him by the young Marquis : '...cette même bonté que vous m'avés tant de fois et si obligeamment témoignée', before going on to offer the extravagant and fulsome praise which he terms 'le stile ordinaire de toutes les Epîtres Dedicatoires'. The comedy, performed in Lille, is stated by Dancourt to have been favourably received by theatre audiences :

C'est plustost au Libraire qu'au public que je donne cette petite Comedie. Je souhaite pour son profit qu'il en débite beaucoup, et qu'on ait autant de plaisir à la lire, qu'on en a témoigné dans ses Representations. (2)

- (1) La Mort d'Hercule, Arras, 1683 (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal).
- (2) Les Nouvellistes de Lille, Lille, 1683, (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal).

In 1684 the Prince de Condé decided to disband his company of actors but not without providing for the future of those under his protection, particularly the women members of the troupe. It is in connection with this event that we gain a piece of information on Dancourt's wife :

A l'égard des femmes Condé fit intervenir ses amis, le marechal de Créqui et Mme de Rochefort...Mlle Dancourt et la Desbrosses avaient pour protecteurs M le Duc de Créqui et Mme de Rochefort. (1)

The register of La Grange shows that on 3 November 1684 Marie Thérèse succeeded in fulfilling the conditions required to be accepted into the Comédie Française which entailed a trial performance in front of the Court at Fontainebleau:

Mlles Dancourt, Du Rieu et Des Brosses ont Joué à l'essai et ont été reçues pour Pâques prochain. (2)

The plays performed on that day were Iphigénie and La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas. There is no mention, however, of Dancourt until April of the following year, 1685, when the couple were officially received into the Comédie Française (3).

Shortly after his admission Dancourt addressed an epistle to Marie Anne Christine Victoire de Bavière, sister of the Elector of Bavaria, who had become Dauphine in 1680. Soon after her marriage Louis XIV had given her a position of authority over the Comédie Française and the Comédie Italienne; it was her task to issue orders to the theatres concerning various administrative affairs, often conjointly with the king or her husband (4). The exact date of the published version of Dancourt's epistle to the Dauphine is not known, but it is possible to deduce from the text of the poem that it was composed not long after she had given her consent for Dancourt to join the theatrical company. Addressing his Muse, Dancourt refers to the patronage he had received from the Dauphine while he was touring the provinces ('dans des Climats divers'), and thanks her for the more recent favour she had bestowed on him in accepting him into the Comédie Française :

Quoy depuis plus d'un mois une Auguste Princesse
A daigné vous flatter et vous faire caresse,
Prompte à vous obliger dans des Climats divers,
Sa main a déjà fait passer vos foibles Vers,
Ou de sa part receus quoy que peu bons peut-estre

- (1) G. Macon, 'Le Grand Condé et le Théâtre', Bulletin du Bibliophile, Dec. 15, 1898, pp. 88-9.
- (2) ed. B.E. and G.P. Young, Paris, 1947, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 342.
- (3) See Chapter II for details.
- (4) cf. J. Bonnassies, La Comédie Française, Histoire Administrative, Paris, 1874, p. 75.

Avec quelque succez ils auroient pu paroistre...
 Par des Vers plus polis plus noblement dictez
 Tâchez d'en meriter de nouvelles bontez...(1)

In this epistle Dancourt reveals, at this early stage in his career, his ambition to become known as an author after he has satisfied his ambition to distinguish himself as an actor :

Avant que d'approcher les bords de l'Hippocrène
 Je dois ceindre mon front des lauriers de la Scene.
 Si je tardois encor à les pouvoir cueillir
 Muse, on verroit sur vous la honte en rejaillir,
 Et comment par vos soins monter jusqu'au Parnasse
 Si cherchant au Théâtre une tardive place,
 De vous et de vos soeurs en vain favorisé,
 J'en trouvois aujourd'huy le chemin mal aisé.

In another epistle to the Dauphine which also bears no date, Dancourt recalls with gratitude the patronage which she had bestowed on him during the period of time he spent as a provincial actor before joining the Comédie Française :

S'il te souvient pourtant qu'en Province égaré
 Du Dieu des Vers sans toy je vivrois ignoré,
 Que c'est toy qui d'abord m'animant à mieux faire
 Au pied du mont sacré m'a conduit la première,
 Daigne encore m'animer d'une nouvelle ardeur. (2)

He goes on to make clear his intention to pursue his aims to write poetry and to concentrate on social satire :

Tantost dans une Epître en nouveaux traits fertile
 Des sottises du temps, je formeray mon stile,
 J'y peindrai ces Marquis d'Amour propre gonflez,
 D'un Rang peu mérité sottement aveuglez,
 J'y peindray d'un joueur la rage peu commune
 Luttant obstinément contre son infortune,
 Qui de mille remords chaque jour déchiré,
 Des pâles usuriers voit son bien dévoré;
 Du Ridicule enfin dévoilant les manieres,
 Ma plume en tracera les divers Caracteres;
 Si pourtant un sujet si peu digne de toy
 Te peut faire abaisser les yeux jusques sur moy...
 Quelquefois de moy-même osant t'entretenir
 J'iray de mon destin te faire souvenir.

Dancourt was never to become a successful writer of verse as, on the few occasions on which he attempted this genre, his plays were not well received by the public. His more successful plays, however, are those which have a flavour of social satire.

- (1) Vers presentez à Madame, n.d.n.p. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ye. 2469).
- (2) Epître à Madame la Dauphine, n.d.n.p. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ye. 2468).

It is interesting to note that Dancourt began his literary career by producing in 1683, as we have seen, two plays, one of which was a tragedy, and that, in yet another epistle to the Dauphine composed shortly after his admission into the Comédie Française in 1685, he declares his intention to follow, although at a distance, in the footsteps of Racine, and to imitate Michel Baron, his brother-in-law, a distinguished tragic actor who was to write a number of comedies. At the same time Dancourt refers to his dual occupation as actor and author, acknowledging the fact that, through the good offices of the Dauphine, he was successfully established as an actor, and envisaging himself one day as a comédien-auteur :

Pour moy je n'ose encore vous faire souvenir,
 que vous m'avez permis une heureuse esperance;
 Mais j'ay sur vos bontés une entiere assurance,
 Vous venés d'exaucer la moitié de mes Voeux,
 Vous pourrés quelque jour les remplir toutes deux.
 Alors quand je verray ma fortune certaine,
 Par des soins assidus je poliray ma Veine,
 Je ne m'occuperay qu'à vôtre seul plaisir;
 Trop heureux si le Ciel seconde mon désir,
 Et si suivant de loin Racine et mon beaufrere,
 Il'y puis contribuer de plus d'une maniere. (1)

As events were to prove, Dancourt soon abandoned his initial interest in tragedy.

Returning to the domestic scene, we find that Jal's reference to the young couple's 'amours précoces' was more apt than he had perhaps intended it to be, and that their marital bliss began to show signs of wearing thin when, six years after their marriage, Marie Thérèse brought legal action against her husband by obtaining a 'séparation de biens' which she promptly followed up by a request for the sale of his possessions. This is indicated in a document of 12 November 1693 where reference is made to

le proces verbal de vente qui a esté faict des meubles dud(it) Sr Dancourt a la requeste de lad(ite) dam.lle le deux octobre mil six cent quatre vingt six en execution de la sentence de separation (de biens) dud(it) jour vingt sept-embre audit an. (2)

By this stage the couple had two children, Marie Anne Armande (Manon) and Marie Anne Michelle (Mimi) who were born about 1684 and 1685 respectively.

(1) A Madame la Dauphine, n.d.n.p. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ye. 2467).

(2) Minutier Central, XXIII, 370.

In 1688 after the death of Marie Thérèse's mother, Marie Petitjean, her estate was divided equally among her four children all of whom were by this time married. We see that Dancourt, described as 'officier du roy' and his wife 'de luy séparée quant aux biens' were living in the Rue Saint Benoist which is the same address as that given for Michel Baron and his wife Charlotte Lenoir. Pierre Lenoir who had married the Italian actress, Catherine Biancolelli, daughter of the famous Arlequin, was living in the Rue Montorgueil and, like Dancourt, was described as an 'officier du roy'. As for the remaining party, Marie Magdelene Lenoir, she had married a certain Jacques Loiseleur 'bourgeois de paris' who apparently was not a member of the theatrical profession. Before the parties could receive their share of the estate, it was necessary for each of them to discharge the amount of debt he or she owed to the late Marie Petitjean. It was found that by a 'sentence contradictoire audit Châtelet le trois aoust mil six cent quatre vingt trois' Dancourt and Marie Thérèse owed Marie Petitjean the sum of 899 livres 19 sols 2 deniers, which was deducted from the 1,470 livres 18 sols 1 denier they would otherwise have received :

Partant n'est plus a partager que la somme de Cinq mil huit cens soixante cinq livres douze sols sept deniers qui est pour chacun quatorze cens soixante dix livres dix huit sols un denier Mais comme...Lesd(its) Sr et d.le Dancourt sont aussy debiteurs de la somme de huit cent quatre vingt dix neuf livres dix neuf sols deux deniers pour leur parfaire lad(ite) somme de quatorze cent soixante dix livres dix huit sols un denier reste celle de cinq cent soixante dix livres dix huit sols unze deniers...fait et passé a Paris en l'Estude de Loyer l'Un des notaires sous(sign)és L'an mil six cent quatre vingts huit le Unziesme Jour de novembre apres midy et ont signé (1)

CARTON DANCOURT	BARON	CHARLOTTE LENOIR
THERESE LENOIR		
MAGDELENE LENOIR	LOISELEUR	
DELATHORILLIERE LENOIR		
ORSOLA CORTESI (2)	LOYER	

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 97.

(2) Pierre Lenoir's mother-in-law, an actress at the Théâtre Italien.

In the following year Marie Thérèse, still living in the Rue St Benoist, sold, with Dancourt's permission, her right to the share in her mother's estate under the terms of which the four children of Marie Petitjean were to receive an annual income of 100 livres each, payable in quarterly instalments of 25 livres. Marie Thérèse transferred the right to this income on 9 March 1689 to Claude de la Porte 'l'Un des courtiers et deschargeurs de foin bourgeois de Paris et demeurant rue pirouette' in return for the sum of 500 livres. As there were certain complications involved in this transaction, Dancourt and his wife promised on 9 April to solve the difficulties that Claude de la Porte would encounter in availing himself of the rente :

Lesquels prevoyans que la perception des arrerages de Vingt cinq livres de rente a prendre sur les Aydes et Gabelles q(u'i)ls ont...transporté au Sr Claude de la Porte...pourroit estre difficile Atendu que les Revenus et payements des rentes Assignées sur lesd(ites) Aydes et Gabelles ne font le payement d'aucune partie de rente qui soit moindre de cent livres...C'est pourquoy lesd(its) Sr et d.le Dancourt pour donner moyen aud(it) Sr Delaporte de jouir commodement desd(its) vingt cinq livres de rente Ont promis...de bailler aud(it) Sr Delaporte en sa demeure a paris...lesd(its) vingt cinq livres de rente tant qu'Icelle rente aura Cours A l'escheance de chacun quartier (1)

A clause appended to this contract shows that later on the same day Marie Thérèse received the sum of 500 livres after she had furnished the necessary letters of ratification stipulated in the contract :

Fut presente Lad(ite) Thereze Le Noir...Laquelle...A Reconnu...avoir eu et receu dud(it) Sieur ~~Claude~~ De la Porte...La somme de Cinq cent livres qui est la mesme qui avoit esté déposée entre les mains dud(it) Bonhomme par ledit transport pour le prix principal de la rente de vingt cinq livres vendu cedée et transportée par lesd(its) Sr et d.le Dancourt ...Les lettres de ratifications obtenues sur led(it) contrat sans oppositions en datte du deux(iesm)e du present mois... fait et passé a Paris en l'Estude dud(it) Bonhomme no(tai)re Le neuf(iesm)e Avril aud(it) an mil six cent quatre vingt neuf apres midy et ont signé

BONHOMME

THERESE LENOIR

CLAUDE DELAPORTE

In order to clear up a case of mistaken identity made in Documents du Minutier Central concerning two documents of April 18 and May 25 1689, it is necessary to indicate that the point at issue concerns, not Florent Carton Dancourt actor and playwright, but his father of exactly the same name. Mme Jurgens (2) has confused the identity of the two Dancourts, father and son, and

(1) Minutier Central, CVI, 82.

(2) op.cit., p. 80.

has mistakenly attributed to Dancourt two brothers, Daniel and Manassé, whom we have seen to be his uncles. This is proved not only by the contents of the documents which refer to the estates of Florent Carton I and Judith Carton, but also by the signature and monogram of Florent II living 'hors la porte du Temple paroisse St Laurent' (1).

It appears that relations between the Dancourt couple deteriorated even further after the 'séparation de biens' of 1686 as, on 21 March 1690, Marie Thérèse resorted to the more extreme measure of obtaining at the Châtelet a 'sentence de separation de corps et d'habitation a l'encontre dud(it) Sr son mary' (2). The strained relations between the couple are illustrated by an incident reported to have taken place at the Comédie Française : according to a contemporary journal, dated 30 January 1690, Dancourt was prevented from violently assaulting his wife by the intervention of a colleague :

Un comedien nommé Dancourt voulut derriere la tapisserie assommer sa femme à coups de bâton, parce qu'elle vouloit devenir vestale, et un autre comedien, prenant le parti de la femme, lui donna deux coups d'épée, qui neanmoins ne sont pas dangereux. (3)

The account of this back-stage incident is fully borne out by Marie Thérèse's decision to obtain a complete separation from her husband.

In this new position of grass widower Dancourt resumed the task of courting the attention of potential patrons. In 1691 he dedicated his comedy L'Eté des Coquettes to 'son altesse serenissime Madame la Princesse de Conty', Marie Thérèse de Bourbon who had married in 1688 François Louis de Bourbon, Prince de Conti. It is clear from the epistle that she had already favoured Dancourt with her patronage. Referring to his comedies Dancourt states that 'elles ont eu quelques fois le bon-heur de vous plaire et de vous divertir', and goes on to say :

Je vous consacre celle qui a reçu le plus d'applaudissemens, vous avez eu la bonté de me le permettre, l'aveu de V^{otre} Altesse Serenissime justifie ma témérité, et rien n'est plus glorieux pour moy, que cette occasion de faire connoître que vous m'honorez de v^{otre} protection. (4)

(1) For verification of this signature as being that of Florent II, compare his signature of 7 April 1680 (Minutier Central, L, 164) and 18 April and 25 May 1689 (LII, 122) with that of his son on 9 April 1689 (CVI, 82) .

(2) Minutier Central, XXIII, 370.

(3) Nouveau Journal Universel, Amsterdam, January 1690.

(4) L'Eté des Coquettes, Paris, 1691.

As will be seen in greater detail at a later stage, this play was to become the most popular of Dancourt's productions to be performed at Court during his lifetime.

In the same year Dancourt was successful in gaining the influential patronage of Louis Marie de Rochebaron, Duc d'Aumont, one of the premiers gentilshommes de la chambre. The premiers gentilshommes acted as intermediary between the troupe of the Comédie Française and the Dauphine; their responsibilities in the seventeenth-century theatre consisted in transmitting the Dauphine's orders concerning administrative affairs to the troupe. Questions of an administrative nature and particularly the distribution of actors' roles could not be resolved without the consent of the premiers gentilshommes. The orders they received from the Dauphine were in turn passed on to the troupe by officials called Intendants and Controleurs Généraux de l'Argenterie et des Menus Plaisirs (1). In the dedicatory epistle of La Parisienne (1691) Dancourt states that the Duc d'Aumont had requested him to compose divertissements for the King :

C'est vous qui m'avez fait avoir l'honneur de travailler, par un ordre exprés, aux divertissemens du Roy, c'est par vous que j'ai reçu des témoignages de (sa) satisfaction...et des marques de sa libéralité. Enfin, Monseigneur, vous avez achevé de me faire un établissement, qui m'a mis en état de m'attacher avec plus de tranquillité à meriter quelque sorte de distinction par mes ouvrages, et à me rendre ainsi plus digne de tout le bien que vous m'avez fait.

The reference to the établissement is not made clear in the text of the epistle, but a document of 24 November 1690 (2) sheds some light on this subject. It can be seen from this source that on the order of the Duc d'Aumont, Dancourt was to receive the three-eighths share needed to complete his full share in the Comédie Française (3).

On 20 February 1692 Dancourt, then living in the Rue de Condé, (his wife continued to stay in the Rue St Benoist(4)) made a legal complaint against the younger brother of one of his creditors who had sent him insulting and threatening letters. The trouble had started about three years previously when the creditor,

(1) cf. J. Bonnassies, op.cit., p. 76.

(2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 145.

(3) Dancourt had entered the Comédie Française in April 1685 with a half share. By September of that year he gained five-eighths of a share. The Registers of the Comédie Française show that he was given a full share in 1693.

(4) cf. Minutier Central, XLIV, 116.

'le sieur Clinchant l'aisné fils du concierge des Tuileries' (1), a friend of Dancourt, had volunteered to pay off on his behalf one of his debts amounting to 139 livres. As Dancourt had not repaid his friend, Clinchant's younger brother a 'capitaine de dragons' took the initiative by sending him a written reminder. This was quickly followed by another letter 'remplie de menaces^{et} de vilains termes', evidently marking the growing frustration of the Clinchant brothers. On receipt of a third letter threatening dire consequences in default of payment, Dancourt made his complaint at the Châtelet against 'Clinchant le jeune', the perpetrator of this rash deed :

il fut surpris qu'il y a environ quinze jours le frere dudit sieur Clinchant qui est capitaine de dragons lui ecrivit une lettre par laquelle il lui marquoit qu'il eut a lui payer ladite somme de cent trente neuf livres A laquelle lettre le plaignant fit reponse qu'il estoit vrai qu'il devoit lad(ite) somme a son frere aisné...qu'aussitost qu'il auroit de l'argent il ne manqueroit pas de l'acquitter...qu'a cette response ledit Clinchant le jeune lui en ecrivit encore une autre il y a sept ou huit jours remplie de menaces et vilains termes et non content de cela la fit donner par le porteur au domestique du sieur Champmeslé (2) afin qu'il connut ce qu'il luy demandoit et les menaces qu'il luy faisoit et le lendemain une troisieme qu'il envoya encore toute ouverte et d'une ecriture contrefaite remplie d'injures et de menaces de lui faire donner des coups de baston partout ou il le trouveroit apres l'avoir montree a plus(ieu)rs de ses voising et comme Lesd(ites) lettres sont ecrites du mauvais dessein Dud(it) Clinchant a qui il ne doit aucune chose il nous Requiert De les vouloir parapher ne varietur et annexer a la presente Plainte estant une insulte qu'il veult Luy faire Laquelle merite Puniton...

F CARTON DANCOURT (3).

Dancourt produced as evidence of this affront to his dignity 'Deux Lettres Missives L'une signée Clinchant et L'aut(re) sans signature et adressees aud(it) Plaignant', both of which have been preserved, one in its entirety, and the other only in part :

A Monsieur Dancourt Comedien de Paris.

Jay attendu Vostre responce pendant deux jours comme vous me l'aviez fait dire Mons.r Vous voulez bien qu'au troisieme Je vous somme de me payer. Je n'ay point de temps a perdre et J'ay besoin d'argent. acquitez vous je vous prie et je seroy vostre tres humble et tres obeissant serviteur

CLINCHANT

Only a fragment remains of the anonymous letter mentioned in the complaint, but what remains of it is highly amusing - that is for all except the recipient :

(1) Michel Clinchamp (sic), 'concierge du Palais des Tuileries', was present at the marriage of Dancourt's brother-in-law, Pierre Lenoir in 1685. cf. Archives Nationales, Y 248.

(2) The house in the Rue de Condé in which Dancourt was staying was owned by Louis Chevillet, sieur De Champmeslé, brother of the actor and playwright.

(3) Archives Nationales, Y, 13178.

Pour M. Dancourt chez Mr de Champmesle
rue de Condé a Paris

...Contez que vos responses jusques a present me foutent et songez que celle ci soit plus honneste. Sinon Je...Pour un petit farceur je vous trouve bien hardy d'en user comme vous faites souvenez vous que les gens come vous en pareilles occasions se payent a bon coup de baton et vous vous en souviendrez encor mieux lorsque vous les resevrez. Adieu. Cet avis que ie vous done si vous ettes sage profitez en.

Paraphé par nous Con(seill)er soub(sign)é ce vingt fevrier 1692

BIZOTON

These unpublished letters are the only known example of private correspondence addressed to Dancourt.

It was during the period when Dancourt was separated from his wife that he was accused of having seduced a chambermaid, Barbe Lefol, aged about nineteen, who had recently taken up her abode in Paris in the service of the actress, la Beauval. The alleged offence gave rise to a court hearing on 22 July 1692 at the Châtelet at which the plaintiff, Barbe Lefol, and various witnesses gave evidence of Dancourt's guilt. According to the minutes of the court proceedings, Lefol had been obliged to leave her residence after being subjected to the persecutions of 'le sieur d'Hancourt comedien'. The situation was not remedied by her removal to the house of a certain Sieur Girault, 'conseiller', 'ou la plaignante n'eut pas esté huit jours que ledit d'Hancourt auroit continué ses poursuites se trouvant par tous les lieux ou la plaignante alloit' (1). He is stated to have called in a carriage on 1 April at Girault's house, abducted the young maid from the doorstep - no doubt she already had her bags packed - and whisked her off to certain 'chambres garnies au fauxbourg St Germain rue de grenelle'. The owner of the furnished accommodation, René Battereau, gave evidence to the effect that Dancourt had posed as the girl's guardian and had failed to honour his obligation to pay her expenses with the result that, after about six weeks in the lodgings 'elle en sortit a cause que ledit Dancourt ne luy donnoit aucune chose pour vivre et ne payoit la depence qu'elle avoit fait chez le dep(osan)t quoy qu'il eut promis de la payer'. Battereau's wife, Marguerite Charmoise, added her complaint about the 'depence' : Lequel Dancourt la remit a un autre temps et l'a toujours remise pendant plus de cinq semaines ne

(1) Archives Nationales, Y, 10727.

l'ayant encore païée a present'. With this wrangling over finances, it seemed as if the witnesses were in danger of losing sight of the central issue, the seduction of Lefol who claimed to be 'grosse et enceinte des oeuvres dudit d'Ancourt qui l'avoit seduite et subornée sous promesse de mariage'. Unfortunately, the outcome of this law suit has not come to light.

In November 1693 the Dancourt couple agreed to a reconciliation. It can be seen from a document of 12 November that Marie Thérèse, then living in the Rue des Fossés Saint Germain, repented of having taken legal action against her husband three years previously when she had obtained a 'sentence de separation de corps' :

Furent presents Florent Carton sieur Dancourt l'un des Comediens de la troupe du Roy d'une part et Dam.le Therese Le Noir son espouse aussy comedienne de la mesme troupe...demeurant a Paris rue des Fosses St germain...Lesquelles parties desirant establir la paix et union qui doit estre entre mary et femme et oublier pour toujours ces differens qui ont donne lieu a la demande en separation d'habitation intentée par ladite dam.le sont convenus de se remettre en demeure a l'avenir ensemble pour y vivre avec la bonne intelligence que demande l'estat du mariage et d'Eviter avec soins tous les differens qui pouroient en troubler la tranquillité (1).

This rather idyllic picture of marital harmony contains, however, an incongruous element as far as trustworthiness in money matters is concerned, as husband and wife continued to be financially independent :

Et neanmoins que la sentence de Separation de Biens obtenue par lad(ite) dam.le Dancour a l'encontre dud(it) sieur son mary au chastelet de paris le vingt septembre mil six cent quatre vingt six...Aura sa pleine et entiere execution et chacune des parties jouira separement de ses biens et droits et payera les debtes qu'elle a contractés

As a precaution against her husband's unreliability in financial questions, an inventory of goods belonging personally to Marie Thérèse is attached to the document so as to distinguish them from any possessions that Dancourt's creditors may have occasion to seize. In the light of this reconciliation Marie Thérèse agreed to the cancelling of the 'separation de corps et d'habitation' :

laquelle a consenty par ces presentes que la sentence des separation de corps et d'habitation ...et toutes les poursuites et procedures faites au sujet d'Icelle soient et demeurent nulles comme non faites ny avenues...

F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR

(1) Minutier Central, XXIII,370.

Ever solicitous of the advantage to be gained by forcing his wares on would-be patrons, Dancourt dedicated Les Bourgeoises à la Mode (1693) to Madame Deshoulières, a poetess with pretensions in the dramatic genre. Known for her poems, usually of a pastoral nature written in the spirit of the libertin tradition, and two tragedies, she played a prominent part in the 'Querelle de Phèdre' (1) by contributing largely to a sonnet damaging Racine's reputation. Her own reputation, however, was not unsullied, as she was notorious for her association with the libertins. (2). In dedicating his play to Madame Deshoulières Dancourt obviously considered her patronage worth gaining; the wife of an aristocrat (3), she was in a position to exert influence in literary circles. Dancourt refers in his dedicatory epistle to the 'Grand succes de cette Comedie' which he attributes to the 'applaudissemens que vous lui avez donnez dans la lecture que j'ai eu l'honneur de vous en faire'. He continues his flattery of her good taste :

Tout ce qu'il y aura jamais de personnes d'esprit et de bon goût se feront un devoir toujours de regler leurs sentiments sur les vôtres et vous êtes en droit de décider souverainement du prix des Ouvrages et du Merite des Hommes. Je vous avoue de bonne foi, Madame, que c'est ce qui me fait rechercher avec empressement l'honneur de votre estime, et je suis persuadé qu'il n'y a pas de meilleur moyen pour meriter celle de tout le monde. (4)

The ideas expressed in this epistle reflect the prevailing attitude held in aristocratic circles; it was to this elite that many seventeenth-century authors looked for literary reputation, so that 'merit' was assessed not so much in terms of the intrinsic value of a work as on the basis of a favourable reception with members of the nobility. Madame Deshoulières, however, died in the following year, leaving a daughter, Antoinette Thérèse (1659-1718) to follow in her footsteps as a writer of verse.

With a vigilant eye focused on the stepping-stones of literary distinction, Dancourt wrote in 1694 a brief introductory dialogue for his play, Les Vendanges,

(1) cf. A. Adam, Histoire de la Littérature Française, au 17e siècle, Paris, 1948-1956, 5 vols., vol. IV, p. 312.

(2) cf. A. Adam, Les Libertins au XVIIe siècle, Paris, 1964, pp. 252-4.

(3) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 690 & 'Guillaume de la Font de Bois Guérin chevalier, seigneur Deshoulières conseiller maistre d'hotel du Roy gentilhomme ordinaire de Monsieur le Prince de Condé et Lieutenant general'.

(4) Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, Paris, 1693.

in which his two daughters, Manon and Mimi, presented the comedy to 'son Altesse Royale MADAME', Elisabeth-Charlotte de Bavière, the second wife of Philippe d'Orléans (1). The dialogue takes the form of an argument between the two sisters as to which one of them is the more capable of pleasing the princess. Manon, the elder girl, aged about ten, contends that she would win the princess's favour on account of her better behaviour; Mimi, on the other hand, who is 'treize ou quatorze mois' younger, boasts of her greater attractiveness and ability to please Madame :

Si de l'âge sur moy vous avez l'avantage,
 Un peu plus de beauté m'est tombée en partage,
 Je n'ay pas moins que vous d'agrement et d'esprit,
 Et MADAME, à ce qu'on m'a dit,
 M'aime assurément d'avantage...
 Pour moy, mon merite est de plaire a La PRINCESSE...
 Je luy fais des mines, ma soeur;
 Je sçay d'un air tendre et flateur
 Tourner les yeux, faire la douceuse;
 Elle en rit, c'est assez, je me crois trop heureuse. (2)

As will be seen at a later stage, this reference to her talents as an actress was not a vain boast, as Mimi was to follow a long and successful career at the Comédie Française in contrast to her sister who left the stage shortly after her debut. By writing this dialogue Dancourt was introducing his daughters to the stage and, in an undisguised fashion, was attempting to attract the Princess's attention to them. At the same time, the author took advantage of the occasion to make the audience - and reader - aware of his success in providing entertainment for 'les Grands' :

Ce n'est donc rien de divertir les Grands,
 Hélas! ma soeur, combien de gens
 Tâchent tous les jours de le faire,
 Qui bien souvent font le contraire.

The sisters agree to end their quarrel by uniting their efforts to please the princess. Manon comments :

Ma soeur finissons des débats
 Dont La PRINCESSE n'a que faire:
 Profitons du bonheur qu'ont produit vos appas,
 Vous luy plaisez, moy je cherche a luy plaire:
 Unissons-nous, fessons qu'elle daigne accepter

- (1) Also called 'La Palatine', daughter of Charles Louis de Bavière 'comte palatin du Rhin'. She married in 1671 the King's brother, Philippe de France, duc d'Orléans.
 (2) Les Vendanges, Paris, 1694.

Cette petite Comedie
Que nous osons auj presenter.

Information on the domestic front relating to the period between 1694 and 1697 has not come to light, but this gap in Dancourt's life story is made up for to a certain extent by records of his activities during this period in the Comédie Française(1). Jal states that in 1697 Dancourt registered his name in the Armorial de Paris (2). In the previous year Louis XIV had given permission for members of the bourgeoisie to buy titles of nobility :

Lorsque Louis XIV ordonna, en 1696, qu'une révision fût faite de la noblesse française dans toutes les provinces du Royaume, ceux qui étaient vraiment nobles, comme ceux qui, ne l'étant pas, voulaient cependant avoir l'air de l'être et acheter moyennant finance le droit de le paraître, se présentèrent aux commissaires délégués par Sa Majesté, firent leurs preuves, montrèrent leurs titres vérifiés, ou seulement exprimèrent le désir d'être comptés désormais parmi les gens de quelque chose. (2)

The acquisition of a coat of arms was a significant step in the direction of greater social prestige. It was not, however, until seventeen years later when he became a seigneur, that he finally satisfied his ambition to rise above the bourgeoisie.

Dancourt was concerned with a question of a different nature in 1698, the admission of his two daughters, Manon and Mimi, into the Comédie Française. On 18 December 1698 the Duc d'Aumont issued an order from the Dauphin to the troupe to the effect that the two girls, aged about thirteen and fourteen, should become members of the theatrical company. The order was signed by both d'Aumont and Danes who transmitted it to the troupe :

Mgr. a ordonné que les D.lles Manon et Mimy Dancourt seroient admises dans la troupe des Comediens pour y jouer les roles qui leur seront donnés. Elles jouiront des memes droits et prerogatives que les autres acteurs et actrices a l'exception des emolumens journaliers dont Mgr. s'est reservé de leur donner dans la suite telle part et portion qu'il lui plaira fait a Marly signé le Duc d'Aumont
DANES (3)

The order was read out to the actors at one of their meetings, on 22 December :

On a leu a lassemblée Lordre de Monseigneur qui admet Mesdem.lles Manon et Mimye Dancourt dans la Troupe et de Ce jour Elles ont Eu leurs Jettons de lassemblée.(4)

There appears to have been some disagreement between Dancourt and his colleagues as to the exact interpretation of the Dauphin's intentions with regard to the girls, as,

(1) See chapter II.

(2) op.cit., pp. 466 and 453.

(3) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 146.

(4) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

the following week, they found it necessary to make an official entry in the minutes of the meeting signed by all the actors present, clarifying the whole situation :

Sur les Remonstrances qui ont Esté faites a Monseigneur au sujet de l'Ordre que la Compagnie a Receu d'admettre, .. Mesd. lles Manon et Mimye Dancourt du 18 Decembre Monseigneur le Duc d'Aumont Nous ayant fait dire par Monsieur Danez que l'Intention de Monseigneur Estoit que lesd(ites) dam. lles Dancourt n'eussent point de voix deliberative dans nos assemblées quelles Ne Jouiront point des Jettons qui se distribuent a nos assemblées et quelles Ne donneront point de Billets Nous avons trouve a propos d'en faire mention sur la feuille d'assemblée pour s'y conformer. (1)

Dancourt gave his consent to these arrangements by writing the following note :

J'acquiesce a l'exposé cy dessus que mes filles n'auront point de voix deliberative ny de Jetton ny de billets attendu que Monseigneur Le Duc d'Aumont m'a fait l'honneur de me dire que c'estoit l'Intention de Monseigneur. (1)

Another order from the Dauphin stated that Dancourt's daughters, as novices to the profession, should serve a probationary period to improve their acting ability 'par mois trois fois chacune pour les exercer et former a la Comedie' (2). The difference between the two sisters' careers at the theatre is striking; Mimi held her quarter share for five years, after which time her promotion to a full share was fairly rapid (3). On the other hand, the elder girl, Manon, left the stage in 1702 on her marriage. It is not known whether she ever received a share in the company.

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée, 1698, December 29.

(2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 146. (13 January 1699).

(3) Mimi Dancourt was assigned a quarter share on the retirement in March 1704 of the actor Le Comte. At the meeting of 10 March Dancourt wrote on the feuille d'assemblée: 'Les ordres de Monseigneur a qui il a plu de Distribuer de la part de Mr Le Comte qui a demandé son Congé Sçavoir a Mr Salle un quart et demy a M.lle Desmares un quart et demy et a Mlle Mimy Dancourt un quart. Le tout faisant la part entiere dudit sr Lecomte'. This was officially confirmed on 19 March in a document which mentions her promotion from her former quarter share :

Mgr le Dauphin ayant accordé a Mlle Mimi Dancourt un quart de la part vacante du Sr Le Comte a qui Mgr a permis de se retirer, pour avec un quart qu'elle avoit ci-devant faire demi-part il est ordonné aux Comediens de l'en faire jouir aux charges, signé Charles de la Tremoille. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 147).

In March 1705 she gained another quarter share on the retirement of Mlle Beauval :

Mgr. le Dauphin ayant accordé a Mlle Mimi Dancourt un quart de la part qu'avoit Mlle Beauval a qui Mgr a permis de se retirer pour avec la demi-part qu'elle avoit ci-devant faire trois quarts de part signé Charles de la Tremoille. (op.cit., p. 147).

In March 1706 she gained an eighth share on the death of Sallé bringing her total share to seven eighths :

Mgr le Dauphin ayant accordé a Mlle Mimi Dancourt un demi-quart dans la part vacante par la mort du Sr Salé pour faire avec les trois quarts de part qu'elle avoit ci-devant trois quarts et demie, signé le duc d'Aumont. (op.cit., p. 147).

And the following year she gained the eighth needed to complete her full share :

Du 6 9bre: Nous...mandons et ordonnons aux comediens suivant la volonté de Mgr de donner a la D.le Mimi Dancourt et a Ponteuil chacun un demi quart de la demi-part dont jouissoit feu fondprez...signé le Duc de Tresmes. (op.cit., p. 147).

In 1699 Dancourt dedicated his comédie-ballet, Les Fées, to Louis de France known as Le Grand Dauphin who, as we have seen, was born on the same day as the author. Dancourt had already been successful in gaining the patronage of Monseigneur's wife, the Dauphine, who died in 1690. In the preliminary epistle to the play the author mentions the various favours which the Dauphin had bestowed on him and his children, claiming that he had requested him to compose the play :

Pardonne à la témérité
D'un Auteur fier de ton suffrage,
qui d'un accueil favorable flaté,
Ose t'adresser son Ouvrage;
Par ton ordre je l'entrepris,
Plein d'une heureuse confiance,
Que l'ardeur de te plaire échauffant mes esprits,
Me serviroit et d'art et de science.
De cette noble ardeur épris,
Je me suis fait un sort qui passe mon attente;
Et de mes envieux confondus et surpris,
J'ai vu la troupe mécontente
Me rechercher d'un doux souris.
À tes bontés je dois cet avantage,
Reçois-en mes remerciemens,
Et pour d'autres succès anime mon courage,
Par de nouveaux commandemens. (1)

Dancourt goes on to remind his patron of the recent favours shown to his two daughters whom Monseigneur had accepted into the Comédie Française in the previous year :

Tes faveurs, il est vrai, ne me sont pas nouvelles,
Et ma jeune famille en ressent les effets.
À ce doux souvenir leurs mémoires fidelles
Le conserveront à jamais,
Tu les favorisas dès l'âge le plus tendre,
Permits-moi de le publier.
Que sur nous tes bienfaits puissent toujours s'étendre,
Et tous nos soins suffire à les justifier.

According to a contemporary report, the play was written for the entertainment of the royal family at Fontainebleau :

Le Jeudy 24 il y eut Chasse de Cerf, et l'on representa le soir pour la premiere fois la Comédie des Fées faite exprés pour Fontainebleau par le sieur d'Ancourt (2).

This account lends weight to Dancourt's claim that he was requested to compose the play. And Dangeau states that the Dauphin, as well as other members of the royal family favoured the play with their presence :

(1) Les Fées, Paris, 1699.

(2) Le Mercure Galant, October, 1699, pp. 134-5.

Le soir on joua ici pour la première fois une petite comédie qu'on appelle Les Fées... Monseigneur, messeigneurs ses enfants, madame la duchesse de Bourgogne, Monsieur et Madame y étoient chacun dans un fauteuil. (1)

A play written for a private entertainment, on the occasion of a visit by the Duchesse de Bourgogne in February 1700 to the home of Madame de Pontchartrain, the Chancellor's wife, was l'Opérateur Barry, described as 'une petite comédie que Madame la Chancelière avoit fait faire par M. Dancourt, exprès pour cette Fête' (2). The importance of this occasion can be deduced from a contemporary report. Among the guests at the fête in honour of the Duchesse were Monseigneur and Madame, the Ducs de Bourgogne, d'Anjou and de Berry, the Ducs de Lesdiguières, de Saint Simon, de La Meilleraie and d'Humières with their wives. It is stated that 'Il...entra dans la Salle de la Comédie...environ cent cinquante personnes' (2). This occasion had particular significance for Dancourt, as it indicates the reputation he enjoyed among influential members of the aristocracy whose favour was much sought after by writers of various forms of literature.

The next available piece of information concerning the Dancourt ménage is contained in a document of 1 July 1701 in which Marie Thérèse, with her husband's consent, accepted a rente of 1,000 livres from 'haut et puissant Seigneur M.eur Francois Marquis de Crequy Lieutenant general des armées du Roi demeurant en son hotel rue Saint Nicaise paroisse Saint Germain l'Auxerrois'. François-Joseph de Créqui (1662-1702), son of the Maréchal de Créqui, was one of the four Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre. He became a colonel of infantry in 1677, maréchal de camp in 1692 and lieutenant général in 1696⁽³⁾. The Chansonnier Maurepas describes him as the most handsome member of the Court, but notorious for his debauchery (4). His donation of a rente to Marie Thérèse was described in this document euphemistically as a token of his affection and esteem :

Lequel pour la consideration qu'il a pour damoiselle Marie Therese Lenoir espouse de Florent Carton Sieur Dancourt officier du Roy et pour l'amitié qu'il luy porte desirant luy en donner des marques a volontairement donné

(1) Journal, ed. E. Soulié, Paris, 1854-60, 19 vols., vol. VII, p. 157.

(2) Le Mercure Galant, February 1700, pp. 164-9.

(3) cf. Saint Simon, Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislisle, Paris, 1890-1930, 43 vols., vol. I, p. 271, note 1.

(4) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 12,688, p. 251.

...a ladite Demoiselle Dancourt a ce presente et acceptant autorisée a cet effet dudit Sr Dancourt son espoux pour ce present demeurans rue Saint Benoist paroisse St Sulpice Mil livres de rente au principal de vingt mil livres que ledit Seign(eu)r Marquis de Crequy promet et s'oblige de bailler et paier a lad(ite) Dam.lle en sa demeure a paris...par chacun an dont le premier des paiemens se fera dans une année de cejourd'huy...fait et passé a paris...L'an mil sept cent un le premier Juillet apres midi et ont signé

FRANCOIS DE CREQUY

MARYE THERESE LENOIR

F CARTON DANCOURT (1).

It is not certain whether Marie Thérèse continued to receive this rente, as her benefactor was killed in the battle of Luzzara in August of the following year, only six weeks after the first instalment was due.

In September 1701 Dancourt and his wife, intending to move from their house in the Rue Saint Benoist, negotiated a contract to take over the tenancy of an unfurnished house in the Rue de Condé near the Comédie Française (2). The previous tenant, Magdelaine Du Parc, widow of Louis Chevillet Sieur de Champmeslé (3) had received a nine-year lease from the landlord, Mathieu Pecquot 'prestre docteur de sorbonne et chanoine de l'Eglise de Paris', commencing at Easter 1699. The Dancourts agreed to accept the tenancy for the remaining period of six and a half years until the expiration of the lease in 1708, at a rental of 2,000 livres per annum :

moyennant la somme de deux mil livres pour et par chacune des six années et pour la demie année a proportion sur quoy lesdits Sr et D.lle Dancourt promettent et s'obligent solidairement...de payer a la descharge de lad(ite) veuve Chevillet audit nom par chacun an...auxdits quatre termes de l'an accoutumés. (4)

A brief description of the house is given in a document of 28 January 1708 in which the landlord 'demeurant rue des blans manteaux parroisse St Jean' agreed to allow the Dancourt couple to continue their tenancy for a further nine years at the same annual rental :

Une maison a porte cochere...Consistante en Cour escurie remise de Carrosse grand Corps de Logis contenant plusieurs appartemens , Jardin derriere, bastiment en aisle, Caves et greniers. (5)

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 159.

(2) situated in the Rue des Fossés Saint Germain, now called the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie.

(3) Brother of Charles Chevillet Sieur De Champmeslé the actor and playwright who was the husband of Marie Desmarest (the famous la Champmeslé).

(4) Minutier Central, XLIV, 160.

(5) Minutier Central, XCVII, 138.

It is known that Dancourt sublet part of this house to various people including la Dauvilliers, widow of the actor, to Georges Guillaume Lavoy, also an actor, and to his daughter, Mimi, and her husband on their marriage in 1712. As principal tenants of the house, Dancourt and his wife were responsible for the payment of an annual tax 'pour les boues, les pauvres et autres charges de ville et de police', and had the additional responsibility

d'entretenir les sousbaux si aucuns ont esté faits des appartements de lad(ite) maison plus de garnir Icelle maison de biens meubles exploitables a eux appartenants pour seureté dud(it) loyer, l'entretenir de toutes menues reparations locatives et necessaires...durant ledit temps et enfin d'iceluy la rendre en bon estat...Lesd(its) Sr et Dle Dancourt prennent a leurs risques les souslocataires de lad(ite) maison.

F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR

MAGDELENE DU PARC (1)

Dancourt was not always scrupulous about paying his rent on time ; as we shall see, he was later found to be nine months in arrears and obliged to pay his landlord the lump sum of 1,500 livres.

At the age of seventeen Dancourt's elder daughter, Manon, married Jean Louis Guillaume Sieur de Fontaine 'Commissaire Controlleur de la Marine et des Guerres au Departement de Flandre et de Picardie'. He was already twice widowed and thirty-six years old. The contract by which Manon was to receive an annual income of 500 livres as a dowry from her parents was drawn up on 29 October 1702 (2), and the marriage was celebrated on 4 November of that year at St. Sulpice :

a esté fait et solemnisé le mariage de Jean Louis de Guillaume Ecuyer Sr de Fontaine...Veuf en secondes nocces de Marguerite Dusac asgé d'environ trente six ans demeurant a Bayonne et autres endroits ou il n'a point acquis de domicile fixe et arrêté Avec Dlle Marie Armande Carton asgée de dix sept ans fille du Sr Florent Carton Sr d'Ancourt Bourgeois de Paris et de Dlle Marie anne Therese Lenoir presents et consentants demeurants rue de Condé. (3)

Those present at the marriage, apart from the bride's parents, were her sister, Mimi, her grandmother, Louise de Londy, her uncle, Pierre Lenoir de la Thorillière, her aunt, Marie Madeleine Lenoir Loiseleur, and various friends of the young couple including the actors Lavoy 'demeurant rue de Condé chez le Sr Dancourt',

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 160.

(2) A reference to this contract is contained in the Répertoire of the Minutier Central, XLIV, 164, but the actual document is missing. (cf. the cross reference XLIV, 271, 1721, June 14).

(3) cf. a collection of manuscripts attributed to the Duc de Caraman, Samuel Bernard sa vie et quelques autres, p.32 (Bibliothèque Municipale de Fontainebleau).

François de la Traverse and Jeanne de la Rue (la Desbrosses). After their marriage the couple went to live in Dunkirk, from where they returned to live in Paris in the Rue de la Sourdière.

During the tenure of their lease in the Rue de Condé the Dancourt couple obtained on June 14 1703 a mortgage of 5,000 livres from a créancier hypothécaire, Louis Hatté, to purchase a country residence in the village of Auteuil, then just outside Paris, from the owner of the property, Jean Antoine Bonnenfant, 'Marchand bourgeois de Paris'. The mortgage was obtained 'En et sur spécialement Une Maison seize au Village Dautheuil pres paris qui consiste en plusieurs Batiments enclos et jardin...moyennant la somme de Cinq mil livres'. (1). Dancourt and his wife promised to pay Louis Hatté 5% interest on this loan 'dont le premier terme de payement Eschera au dernier jour de septembre prochain'. Four days later, Marie Thérèse paid the 5,000 livres to Bonnenfant :

Lequel a reconnu...avoir eu et reçu de damoiselle Marie Therese Lenoir...La somme de cinq mil livres...De laquelle somme...led(it) sr Bonnenfant se contente et quitte lad(ite) dam.le Dancourt led(it) sr son mary qui est sa caution et tous autres...Declarant lad(ite) Dam.le Dancourt que ladite somme...par elle cy dessus payée est celle qu'elle a empruntée de Me. Louis Hatté...auq(ue)l elle et ledit sr son mary en ont constitué deux cent cinquante livres de rente par contract passé pard(avant) Prieur et son Confrere No(tai)res le quatorze du present mois.

BONNENFANT
F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR

DE SAVIGNY (notary) (2)

This is not an insignificant event in the couple's lives, and must not be viewed in isolation from later developments in their accumulation of landed property.

When Dancourt had produced La Famille à la Mode (1699), it met with little success, being performed only six times during its first run. After an attempt to revive the play under a new name, Les Enfants de Paris, he decided to have it published in 1704 with a dedication to the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilien Emmanuel, brother of the late Dauphine who had given her patronage to Dancourt in earlier years. It is ironic that the Elector had been the object of satire in Dancourt's Le Carnaval de Venise of 1690 at a time when he was an ally of the Emperor against

(1) Minutier Central, LII, 157.

(2) Minutier Central, XLIV, 166.

France. By 1703 the Elector had joined forces with Louis XIV in an attempt to gain a share in the Spanish Succession, but after suffering a defeat was forced to withdraw from the war and retired to France. According to Nicéron, Dancourt presented himself to the Elector in person :

Ayant fait un voyage à Dunkerque pour y voir sa fille aînée (Madame Fontaine) qui y demouroit alors, il en prit occasion d'aller faire sa cour à l'Electeur de Baviere qui se trouvoit à Bruxelles. Ce Prince le reçut fort bien; et apres l'avoir retenu assez long-tems pour qu'il eut besoin d'une prolongation du congé qui lui avoit été donné, il le renvoya en lui faisant présent d'un diamant de mille pistoles. Il ne le récompensa pas moins généreusement, lorsqu'étant venu à Paris Dancourt fit un divertissement pour lui. (1)

The exact date of Dancourt's visit is not known, but a document of 1703 shows that he was granted a few days' leave from the Comédie Française to make a journey to Dunkirk :

On a accordé a Mr. Dancourt et La Voy huit ou dix jours apres pasque pour un voyage qu'ils ont a faire a Dunkerque c'est a dire a Compter Depuis L'ouverture du Theatre. (2)

The dedicatory epistle which Dancourt addressed to the Elector opens with extravagant praise of the monarch whom he terms a 'demi-dieu' (one wonders what epithet he applied in his earlier satirical work which is lost) and with the conventional technique of self-abasement. Dancourt's reference to the Elector's interest in the theatre is borne out by the fact that he was patron of a troupe of actors from 1697 to 1711. The author's declared intention is to provide entertainment for the Elector :

C'est celui d'occuper les précieux moments
Que peut laisser ta gloire aux divertissemens,
Et d'adoucir les soins de ton âme héroïque
Par les amusemens de la scene Comique.
Ses innocens plaisirs ont pour toi des appas;
Et l'on t'a vû cent fois au sortir des combats
T'empresser à les prendre, et tranquille, sourire
Des traits ingénieux d'une heureuse satire.
Tes peuples, du spectacle ainsi que Toi charmés,
Par ton exemple instruits, par ton goût animés,
De tout ce qui te plaît sagement idolâtres,
Ont élevé chez eux de superbes Théâtres. (3)

The Elector is compared with Scipio through whose patronage the playwright Terence achieved fame. Dancourt hopes that a similar destiny will await him while at the

(1) J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., Vol. XVI, p. 287. The divertissement is the Impromptu de Suresnes (1713).

(2) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée, 1703, March 24.

(3) Les Enfants de Paris, Paris, 1704.

same time not despising a more tangible and immediate form of recognition for his literary talent :

GRAND PRINCE, honore-moi de ta protection,
 Tu me feras par elle un sort digne d'envie;
 Des ENFANTS DE PARIS reçois ma Comédie:
 Aux lieux de leur naissance, ils ont eu le succès
 Qui peut leur assurer par-tout un libre accès:
 Mais ce succès heureux ne peut les satisfaire
 S'ils n'obtenoient aussi le bonheur de te plaire.
 Dans ta brillante Cour ils osent se montrer,
 D'un favorable accueil daigne les honorer...
 Enfin, tout occupé du seul soin de ta gloire
 J'écrirai tes vertus au Temple de Mémoire.
 Heureux si, célébrant un nom tel que le tien,
 Des horreurs de l'oubli je puis sauver le mien!

To mark this occasion, Dancourt had his portrait painted by the eighteenth-century artist, Robert Gence (1), which is the only known authentic portrait of the playwright ; and is among the collections of the Musée de la Comédie Française :

A mi-corps, représenté de face; robe de chambre de velours clair, doublée de soie gorge de pigeon, chemisette garnie de dentelles. Assis devant son bureau, dans un fauteuil à haut dossier, le comédien-auteur a sous la main plusieurs volumes d'Aristophane, Plaute et Térence, et une feuille sur laquelle on lit: 'A Son Altesse Electorale Monseigneur le Duc de Baviere'. C'est le début de l'Epître dédicatoire des Enfants de Paris. L'Artiste a signé sur la pendule : Gence Pingebat anno 1704. (2)

It is of interest at this point to note the Frères Parfaict's description of Dancourt whom they knew personally :

M. Dancourt étoit d'une moyenne grandeur, la taille bien prise, avant que l'âge lui eut donné de l'embonpoint; il avoit les cheveux et les sourcils bruns, de beaux yeux, le visage agréable, et la physionomie noble et spirituelle. (3)

At a much later date, in 1713, when the Elector of Bavaria was residing in Suresnes, Dancourt decided to follow up his request for his patronage by composing, as Nicéron stated, a divertissement for his entertainment. It was customary for the troupe of the Comédie Française to give private performances in the residences of such dignitaries as the Elector :

Lorsque L'Electeur de Baviere se retira en France, il habita à Surenne, et y dépensa en maîtresses et en festes l'argent que le Roy luy donnoit pour

(1) cf. E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire Critique et documentaire des Peintres, Saint-Ouen, 1951, 8 vols., vol. IV, p. 201 .

(2) G. Monval, Les Collections de la Comédie Française, Paris, 1897, p. 44.

(3) Histoire du Théâtre François, Paris, 1735-49, 15 vols., Vol. XV, p. 56.

subsister. Les comédiens luy fournirent plusieurs divertissements faits exprés pour sa galante magnificence. (1)

The play, which was performed on 21 May 1713 during a visite to Suresnes, was a comédie-ballet, L'Impromptu de Suresnes, written specially for this occasion. Dangeau gives a colourful description of the celebrations of which this playlet was a part :

L'Électeur de Baviere donna une grande fête à Suresnes; plusieurs courtisans y allèrent diner et beaucoup de dames de Paris. Il y eut grand jeu l'après-dinée et à six heures on descendit dans le jardin où il y avoit six echafauds en différens endroits pour les violons et les hautbois...on fit commencer la comédie qu'on avoit fait exprés pour cette fête, et on avoit fait un assez joli théâtre au bout du jardin, sur une terrasse au bord de la rivière. Après la comédie les danses et le jeu recommencèrent jusqu'à six heures du matin. (2)

The scene of the Impromptu reflects this setting and is described thus in a preliminary note in the first edition (1713) : 'Le Théâtre est à Suresnes, sur une Terrasse ombragée d'Ormes, de Tilleuils, et de Maronniers, aux bords de la Seine.'

Returning to the year 1704, we find that the Dancourt couple and their daughter, Mimi, were present during the drawing up of a marriage contract on 6 December between Georges Guillaume Lavoy, still living with Dancourt in the Rue de Condé, and Anne Françoise Dauvilliers, daughter of the late actor Nicolas d'Auvilliers and Françoise Victoire Dauvilliers living in the Rue de Bussy.⁽³⁾ Only two days previously Dancourt had loaned Lavoy 841 livres (4). Also present were Louis de Rochebaron Duc d'Aumont 'pair de France Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre', Louis Sanguin Marquis de Livry 'premier maître d'hostel du Roy', the playwright Jean François Regnard 'Tresorier de France et general de ses Finances en la generalité de Paris' (5), Charles Duc de la Trémoille 'Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre', Pierre du Cambout duc de Coislin, a well-known courtier who, in Saint-Simon's words was 'fort du grand monde...et de la meilleure compagnie' (6), and

(1) R. d'Argenson, Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Geneva, 1966, vol. XLII, p. 179.

(2) Journal, vol. XIV, pp. 406-7.

(3) Minutier Central, XCVII, 128.

(4) This was repaid to Dancourt in full two years later, on 21 May 1706, cf. Minutier Central, XCVII, 133.

(5) cf. A. Calame, Regnard, sa Vie et son Oeuvre, Paris, 1960, p. 47. Regnard had bought in 1682 the post of 'Conseiller Tresorier de France general des finances et grand voyer en la generalité de Paris'.

(6) Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislisle, Paris, 1890-1930, 43 vols., vol. XIX, p.116.

the actors Antoine Dubocage and Jeanne de la Rue (la Desbrosses). The interest of this document is that it illustrates what must be regarded as a curious paradox in contemporary society - the mingling on a social basis of titled members of the aristocracy and members of the troupe. It is true that actors of the Comédie Française often came in contact with the upper classes during visites to their homes, but they were regarded as entertainers merely hired out for the day, and there was the inevitable social gulf which prevented them from consorting with their superiors on a friendly basis. Even the premiers gentilshommes who had close connections with the theatre had little personal contact with the actors, and used to transmit their order through an intermediary. Such a social gathering was by no means the order of the day.

A procuration of 23 February 1705 shows that Dancourt came to the assistance of a friend, Claude Thibaudet, 'fournisseur general de la Marine au port de Dunkerque y demeurant estant de present a Paris' in a matter concerning the termination of the latter's imprisonment in the Grand Châtelet :

Lequel a fait et Constitué son procureur general et Special la personne du Sieur florent Carton Dancourt l'Un des Comediens du Roy Auquel j'l donne pouvoir de retirer des mains du greffier de la geolle du grand Chastelet la somme de six mil Cinq Cent dix livres pour avoir liberté de sa personne Et sortir des prisons dud(it) Chastelet ou j'l avoit esté arrêté a la Requete du Sieur Claude Marie Receveur du domaine et bois de sa Majesté dans la generalité d'Amiens. (1)

In an interesting document of 1 December 1705 we see that Dancourt had sublet an apartment in his house in the Rue de Condé to d'Auvillier's widow, Françoise Victoire Poisson, who in turn had taken in her recently-married son-in-law, Lavoy, as a boarder. The document takes the form of a complaint made by the veuve Dauvilliers at the Châtelet against a certain huissier who, as a result of a misunderstanding, had proceeded to seize her furniture in payment of a debt of 300 livres owed by her son-in-law to a marchand, Langelet. Dancourt rushed to the widow's defence, attempting to restrain a determined and truculent huissier:

dans l'instant ayant fait avertir ledit sieur Dancourt principal locataire de ladite maison qui seroit monté et auroit certifié audit Fron huissier a

(1) Minutier central, XCVII, 129.

cheval que lesd(its) meubles n'appartenoient pas aud(it) Lavoie mais a ladite damoiselle Dauvilliers. (1)

But his attempts to placate the official only made matters worse, for, 'ledit Pron sans vouloir ecouter aucunes responses ni raison se seroit mis a jurer et a blasphemer le saint nom de Dieu les appelant bougres de chiens de comediens et mille autres injures'. This delightful passage illustrates only a mild incident compared with the scenes of violence in which Dancourt was to become involved in later years.

At this stage in his career Dancourt had succeeded in ingratiating himself with certain members of the nobility who in turn appreciated his talent in the dramatic field. His connections with the titled classes were of great significance, as through his association with the narrow circle of aristocratic society whose members formed an influential body in literary matters, he was enhancing his chances to establish a name for himself as a dramatist. Nicéron assures us that

les agrémens de sa conversation et sa politesse le faisoient...rechercher par tout ce qu'il y avoit de plus grand à la Cour et à la Ville, et les personnes les plus considérables se faisoient un plaisir de l'avoir chez eux, et de l'aller voir chez lui. (2)

Examples of the popularity he enjoyed in these circles are seen in the playlets he composed for private performances such as L'Impromptu de Livry (1705), described in a notice in the first edition as a 'Divertissement donné à S.A.S. Madame la Princesse Douairiere DE CONTY, à Livry-le-Château, le 12 Aoust, 1705(. She was one of Louis XIV's natural daughters, Anne Marie de Bourbon, formerly known as Mademoiselle de Blois (3). Later in the same year Dancourt composed a similar form of entertainment entitled Le Divertissement de Sceaux for a performance in the residence of the Duchesse du Maine, Louise de Bourbon (4) who was famous for the literary and political salon which was held at Sceaux from 1700 to 1750. (5).

(1) Archives Nationales, Y, 13191.

(2) J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., Vol. XVI, p. 287.

(3) She became princesse douairière on the death of her husband, Louis Armand de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, in 1685.

(4) (1676-1735) Grand-daughter of Le Grand Condé.

(5) Frequented by Voltaire, Fontenelle, Chaulieu, the Cardinal de Polignac, the President de Mesmes, and other dignitaries.

Returning to the already mentioned question of landed property, we find that on 5 May 1706 Dancourt and Marie Thérèse purchased from Claude Augustin Ollivier 'Jardinier demeurant a Auteuil et Francoise Greminy sa femme' a vineyard adjoining a piece of land owned by Boileau :

Un Tierceau de Terre seis au Terroir dud(it) Auteuil a present planté en Vignes lieu dit la Garenne Tenant d'un Costé et par hault au Sr Despreaux d'un bout Par hault aud(it) sr Dancourt et par bas aud(it) Sr Despreaux avec les Echalas qui sont dans lad(ite) Piece de Terre. (1)

Dancourt, who already had a small estate in Auteuil, was a country neighbour of Boileau who had bought a maison de campagne there in 1685 (2). The total purchase price of the piece of land was 416 livres, including the cost of the vine-supports :

Moyennant le prix et somme de quatre cent seize livres scavoir Trois Cens quatre vingt seize livres pour ledit Tierceau de Terre et vingt livres pour lesd(its) Echalas qui sont dessus...Convenant lesd(ites) Parties que si les(dits) Sr et dam.le Dancourt font arracher lad(ite) Vigne l'année prochaine lesd(its) Vendeurs seront Tenus ainsy qu'ils s'y obligent de reprendre lesd(its) Echalas pour la somme de vingt livres

F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR

AUGUSTIN OLLIVIER

Documentary evidence shows that Marie Thérèse, in her own right, engaged in buying house property in Auteuil which she was to re-sell at a later date. She purchased from Charles Didier 'escuyer Sieur de Chemin Con(seill)er du Roy Com(missai)re ordinaire des guerres et dame Elizabeth Jouan son Epouse', two houses in that village, one a modest dwelling on 31 January 1696, described as a 'Petite Maison et Jardin' and the other a large residence 'a porte cochere' in April 1707

Concistante en Une grande cour en entrant dans laquelle est un Corps de logis adroite apliqué par bas a Une Cour, Cuisine audessus qui a Veüe sur le jardin et sur une petite Cour de laditte Maison, Ecurie...et grenier audessus...au premier etage sont Chambres, Cabinets une grande Salle ou j'l ya Un Balcon et escalier pour descendre au jardin...Un grand Jardin planté d'arbres fruitiers par terre. (3)

In the following month Dancourt and his wife signed a statement to the effect that Marie Thérèse owed a creditor, Thomas Pouru, 'marchand de draps demeurant rue St Denis' 300 livres 'pour prest' (4).

- (1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 133.
- (2) Minutier Central, XXXIII, 1685, August 14.
- (3) Archives Nationales, S 1679, March 13 1717.
- (4) Minutier Central, XCVII, 136, May 12 1707.

Now that the Dancourts owned a considerable amount of landed property in Auteuil, they were entitled to the exclusive use of a pew in the parish church of that village, for which coveted distinction they paid 150 livres on March 23 1710. This information reveals an important facet of Dancourt's life. If he was not exactly the 'coq du village', at least he had succeeded in acquiring a good deal of prestige through his investments in landed property. It would seem from the following document that Dancourt, in order to enjoy this privilege of having a locking pew on the 'gospel' side of the altar, must have been regarded as a prominent figure in the village :

Furent presents Charles Morin marguillier en charge de l'oeuvre et fabrique d'autheuil Et Jacques Plissot aussy marguillier de lad(ite) fabrique demeurans en la paroisse Dud(it) Autheuil Lesquels en la personne et du consentement de m.re pierre Corbonois prestre Curé de lad(ite) Eglise et paroisse Dautheuil y demeurant Ont reconnu et confessé Avoir...abandonné a florent Carton Sieur Dancourt officier du roy et dam.le Therese Le Noir...demeurant ordinairement a paris rue de Condé...de p(rese)nt aud(it) Autheuil...Un banc fermant a clef situé dans la nef de lad(ite) Eglise d'Autheuil A gauche en entrant...Tenant d'un Costé au Sieur Machon d'autre Costé au mur de ladite Eglise pour dud(it) banc presentement accordé Jouir servir et disposer par lesd(its) Sieur et dam.le Dancourt de ce jourd'huy Et Continuer tant et sy longuement qu'ils auront une maison en propre dans led(it) lieu et paroisse Dautheuil et apres leurs deceds Lesd(its) Sieurs et damoiselles Leurs Enfants Jouiront de mesme dud(it) banc... Cette Concession Aussy faitte moyennant le prix et somme de Cent Cinquante livres

CORBONNOYE
CHARLE MORIN

F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR (1)

It is significant that Dancourt suppressed the title of 'comédien du roi' in ecclesiastical affairs as, indeed, on other occasions when the circumstances demanded it, but with the reputation he had by then acquired as an actor-author, he could not have failed to be known in the village as a man of the theatre. It is even more significant, then, that a person of his profession should occupy a place of honour in the parish.

In November 1711 Dancourt made provision for the marriage of his younger daughter, Mimi, aged 27, to his 51-year-old cousin, Samuel Boutinon, Sieur Des Hayes (2), 'ecuyer...demeurant a paris rue Beaubourg parr(oisse) St Nicolas Deschamps... etant venu exprez de la Rochelle a Paris dans le Dessein D'epouser Marie Michelle

(1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 144.

(2) Born in 1660, son of Dancourt's aunt, Judith Carton, and Samuel Boutinon.

Carton Dancourt'. Although the marriage contract was not officially drawn up until June of the following year, Dancourt and Boutinon came to an agreement on 25 November 1711 as to what arrangements would be made after the marriage. A four-page document written in Dancourt's hand and inserted in the marriage contract, sets out certain conditions relating to Boutinon and his future bride who

seront logez et nourris en la maison dud(it) Sr Dancourt avec un Laquais et une femme de chambre pendant l'Espace de trois annee moyennant quoy led(it) Sr Dancourt Jouira du produit de la part Journaliere et Emolumens de la Comedie revenante a lad(ite) D.lle Marie Michelle Carton pendant led(it) temps a Commencer du Premier avril prochain a la Reserve d'un quart de la part qu'elle touchera par chacun an pour ses habillemens et entretiens fait Double entre nous dit Florent Carton et Therese le Noir mon Epouse que J'autorise, et lad(ite) Marie Michelle Carton notre fille D'une part et Led(it) Sr Samuel Boutinon Deshayes D'autre qui promettons executer de bonne foy tout ce que dessus Celuy cy pour estre annexé a la minute du Contrat de mariage le 25e Novembre 1711

F CARTON DANCOURT
BOUTINON

THERESE LENOIR

MARIE MICHELLE CARTON D'ANCOURT (1)

The couple signed the marriage contract on 12 June 1712 in the presence of Dancourt and Marie Thérèse. It is stated in this document that Mimi will receive as a dowry 'pareille somme que celle qui a esté receue par lad(ite) Dam.le sa soeur ainée par son contrat de mariage...pour s'Egaler a elle'. No mention is made of what this amounts to, but we know from cross-reference to a document concerning the elder sister that it is 500 livres (2). On the other hand, Boutinon promises to provide a douaire of 600 livres :

Ledit Sieur futur Epoux a doué et doué lad(ite) Dam.le future espouse de six Cent livres de rente de douaire prefix a l'avoir et prendre sitost qu'jl y aura lieu sur tous les biens presents et avenir dud(it) Sieur futur epoux...Et pour la bonne amitié que led(it) Sieur futur Epoux porte a lad(it)e Dam.le...et a sa famille Il luy a par ces pr(ese)nt(e)s fait donation...de tout et Chacuns les biens meubles Immeubles et au(tres) generalmente quelconques qui se trouveront appartenir aud(it) Sieur futur epoux au jour de son decedz.

It seems paradoxical that, after the picture we have formed of Dancourt as a land-owner of some means, we find him served with a summons on 4 August 1712 for having failed to pay his creditor, Jean Dussol, 'procureur au C(ha)s(t)elet', the sum of 400 livres. What is more, he is alleged to have attacked the huissier

(1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 152.

(2) cf. Minutier Central, XLIV, 164.

priseur, Laurent Bonnard, who had called at his house 'pour constituer ledit Sr Dancourt prisonnier'. It appears that he had second thoughts after committing this indiscretion, for, on the following morning at eight o'clock he appeared in the étude of the notary, Lange, with the money he owed :

il a presentement montré et exhibé a la Veüe desd(its) no(tair)es souss(ign)és la somme de quatre cent vingt livres en ecus de cent sols...Declare qu'il va déposer lad(ite) somme es mains de Lange...protestant de nullité de tout ce qui pourroit estre fait au prejudice des pr(esen)t(e)s (1)

Dussol's representative, Jean Baptiste Petit, appearing for him, gave evidence of 'la rebellion qui a été commise par led(it) sr Dancourt en la personne de Laurent Bonard huissier priseur', but his statement was met with a vigorous denial from Dancourt who protested his innocence :

A quoy led(it) Dancourt a repondu qu'il n'a jamais refusé de faire ouverture de ses portes aux huissiers qui sont venus chez luy au sujet de ses affaires qu'il n'a point maltraité led(it) Bonnard qu'au contraire Il a été insulté chez luy par led(it) Bonnard auquel il a voulu payer le pr(incip)al a la reserve des frais extraordinaires qu'il vouloit exiger de luy que meme le proces verbal de perquisition du Jour d'hier ne contient pas verité etant sorti hier et ayant meme été a la Comedie Mais pour eviter lesd(ites) poursuites qui pourroient estre faites contre luy et finir toutes contestations Il a presentement payé compté nombré et reellement delivré aud(it) Sr Petit au nom dud(it) Sr Dussol qui reconnoist avoir receu dud(it) Sr Dancourt La somme de Quatre Cent quarante livres deux sols Scavoir Quatre Cent livres pour led(it) pr(incip)al Onze livres douze sols pour lesd(its) interests et vingt huit livres dix sols pour les(dits) frais

P CARTON DANCOURT

PETIT

It is interesting to note that this incident was to have its repercussions in later years when, in a similar document, Bonnard's assistant, Antoine Le Moyne, mentioned in retrospect Dancourt's behaviour on this occasion :

depose q(u'i)l y a environ cinq ans qu'estant assistant du sr Bonnard huissier priseur pour f(ai)re une saisie contre led(it) dancourt Iceluy dancourt auroit voulu prendre les papiers dud(it) Bonnard pour les deschirer l'auroit pris a la cravatte et par sa chemise lesq(ue)lles Il deschira et luy auroit porté plusieurs Coups de pied et de poings et deux Coups d'un Baston (2)

Fortunately for Dancourt, the injured party who had suffered this assault decided to drop proceedings against him without prejudice. An amicable settlement was reached on 8 August 1712 :

(1) Minutier Central, XCII, 361.

(2) Archives Nationales, Y, 13204, January 31, 1718.

Fut present Laurent Bonnard huissier priseur lequel s'est par ces presentes volontairement desisté et desisté de la plainte et information faite a sa requête de l'ordonnance de Mr le Lieutenant Civil par devant M.e Ch. Bizoton Commissaire au Chastelet les trois quatre et cinq du present mois a l'encontre du Sr Dancourt Comedien pour les causes et raisons enonçees en lad(ite) plainte et Information et proces verbal fait par ledit Bonnard led(it) jour trois du present mois consent que le tout soit et demeure nul comme non fait ny avenue sans pretendre de part ny d'autre aucun depens dommages ny interests. (1)

The information relating to this colourful incident was obtained from three different sources, and was pieced together to form a vivid picture of the event and its outcome.

Dancourt continued to seek the patronage of influential people in 1712 when he dedicated his play, Sancho Pança Gouverneur, to Louis II de Rochechouart, Duc de Mortemart (1681-1746) who, in 1710, had replaced the Duc de Beauvilliers, his father-in-law, as Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre. (2). The epistle addressed to Mortemart shows the author's concern with his reputation as a poet and playwright :

Dans l'espoir que quelques Ouvrages
Feroient passer mon nom à la postérité,
MORTEMART, je me suis flatté,
Que le tien, qui du tems ne craint point les outrages,
Consacreroit mes vers à l'immortalité. (3)

At this stage in his career, Dancourt aspired towards a prominent place among French writers of comedy, next only to Molière :

Trop heureux si...
Quand Moliere est assis le premier au Parnasse
Je pouvois prendre un jour mon rang si près du sien,
Qu'entre nous deux aucun autre n'eût place.

Dancourt requests his patron to follow the example of Colbert (Mortemart's father, Louis I de Rochechouart, had married in 1679 Colbert's third daughter, Anne Marie (4)) who used his influence with the King for the material benefit of people of talent :

Prends pour règle dans ta conduite
Cet exemple si proche et si digne de toi;
Fais tomber les grâces du Roi
Sur ceux qui par quelque mérite
Se distinguent dans leur emploi...
Ainsi par plus d'un titre autorisé, j'espère,
MORTEMART, même je prévois,
Que lorsque ton appui me sera nécessaire,
Tu voudras bien parler pour moi.

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 206.

(2) cf. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislisle, Paris, 1890-1930, 43 vols., vol. XI, p. 331.

(3) Sancho Pança Gouverneur, Paris, 1712.

(4) cf. A. Jal, op. cit., p. 1312.

Dancourt includes some interesting details about his past life, referring to the destiny which led him unexpectedly into a career in the theatre, when he could have chosen a different profession - in the army or the law :

Enfin, je t'offre tout ce que j'eus en partage;
 Un peu d'esprit que le Ciel m'a donné,
 Et que le sort a destiné,
 Pour un moins agréable usage
 Que celui pour lequel je croyois être né:
 Non que de mes talens follement idolâtre
 L'orgueil éblouisse mes yeux,
 J'ai donné quelques soins, des veilles au Théâtre,
 Je ne m'en repens point, mais j'ai pû faire mieux.
 Mars et Thémis m'offroient une carrière
 Où j'aurois pû me signaler.

In this way Dancourt was careful to draw a distinction between the position of the family from which he came and his present situation as member of the Comédie Française.

Marie Thérèse ventured further in her dealings in house property when on 2 March 1713 she bought, in her own right, a seigneurie, extensive property at Amirault and Croissy for the total sum of 68,500 livres from 'Messire Philippe Millieu Seigneur de Courtry L'Amirault et aut(res) lieux Et dame Marguerite Agathe Voisin son Epouse...demeurant rue neuve parr(oisse) Saint Paul who

ont vendu a Therese Lenoir...Le fief Terre et Seigneurie de Lamirault et ses dependances avec moyenne et basse Justice Concistant en La maison Seigneuriale dud(it) Lamirault entourée de fosses pont levis devant et derriere grand parc clos de murs grande avenue Commenceant au grand chemin plantée de Tilleuils et autres arbres...Plus une ferme petite maison terres prez et heritages seis a Croissy en brie Terroir dud(it) lieu et les Environs

F CARTON DANCOURT
 THERESE LENOIR

MILLIEU
 MARGUERITE AGATHE VOISIN (1)

Five days later, however, this contract of sale was annulled without any reason being given, and Marie Thérèse was repaid the amount she had paid out. Then, on 18 February 1714, she sold to Jean Glucq the two pieces of property in Auteuil which she had purchased in 1696 and 1707 from Charles Didier, and the plot of land in Auteuil which was jointly owned by her husband and herself and which they had acquired from Augustin Ollivier in May 1706 :

(1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 154, March 2 and 7, 1713.

Appartenans Lesd(ites) Maisons et heritages cy dessus auxd(its) Sieur et damlle Glucq Comme les ayans acquis de damlle Marie Therese Lénor... par Contrat passé devant Roussel et Tallot no(tai)res a Paris le dix huit fevrier mil sept Cent quatorze... Lesquels grande maison et jardin appartiennent a lad(ite) damlle Dancourt comme les ayant acquis de Pierre Gentil procureur au ch(a)st(e)let de paris au nom et comme Fondé de procuration de Charles Didier escuyer sieur de Chemin... Ladite Petite Maison et Jardin appartiennent aussy a lad(ite) damlle Dancourt au moyen de l'acquisition qu'elle avoit faite dudit sieur Gentil... le six avril mil sept cent sept... Et led(it) Terceau de Terre appartenoit Pareillement a lad(ite) damlle dancourt ainsy qu'il est Enoncé au Contract de Vente par elle faite auxdits Sieur et dame Glucq et avoit este acquis par lesd(its) Sieur et damlle Dancourt de claud augustin Ollivier et françoise greminy sa femme par contrat passé devant Roussel le cinq mai mil sept cent six. (1)

These three pieces of property were later re-sold, in 1717, to the famous eighteenth-century banquier, Samuel Bernard; Dancourt's elder daughter, Manon (Mme Fontaine), was his mistress.

Dancourt made early provision for his retirement from the Comédie Française by purchasing, in 1714, the château of Courcelles-le-Roi situated in what is vaguely described firstly by Nicéron and then by subsequent commentators on Dancourt's life as 'Le Berry'. This vagueness is an indication of the failure, for centuries, to pin-point the château in the vast territory of central France which covers several departments. Meticulous examination of detailed maps of the region has yielded valuable results, and we see that Courcelles-le-Roi, which still exists today, is in the department of Le Loiret, some five miles from the village of Beaulieu-sur-Loire. It is of some interest to note the circumstances in which the property was bought. During several successive generations this château ⁽²⁾ and its surrounding lands had been the property of the Du Faur family. On the death of the last surviving member of this branch of the family, Jean Louis Du Faur, the estate was inherited by a member of another branch, Dame Du Faur de Pibrac, (3), wife of Morogues de Fonfaye, who, as a new convert to Catholicism, was obliged to obtain special permission from the King to sell her property to Dancourt :

Laquelle ne pouvant la conserver, à cause d'importants retours de lots à payer à des cohéritiers, et des charges de succession à acquitter, dut, en sa qualité de nouvelle convertie, et pour se conformer aux Edits, demander au Roi l'autoris-

(1) Archives Nationales, S, 1679, March 13, 1717.

(2) For a history of the château cf. E. Huet, Promenades Pittoresques dans le Loiret, Orleans, 1920.

(3) She was a descendant of Guy Du Faur Seigneur de Pibrac, (1529-84), the magistrat and poet.

ation de l'aliéner, autorisation qui lui fut accordée le 8 juin 1714, par un brevet de permission sur parchemin, dont l'original signé Louis et plus bas Colbert, Marquis de Torcy et neveu du grand Colbert, se trouve dans le chartrier de Courcelles. (1)

On the following day, 9 June, a contract was drawn up between the parties concerned who are described as follows :

Messire françois Gabriel De Morogues Chevalier seigneur de Fonfaye procureur de dame Elizabeth Du faur sa femme...et Florent Carton Sieur de Dancourt avocat en parlement et dame Marie Therese Lenoir sa femme (2).

A description of the extensive property is given in the contract which also throws some light on the privileges which Dancourt was to enjoy in the capacity of seigneur :

C'est a scavoir la Terre et Seigneurie de Courcelles Le Roy Si^zue^z en Berry Concistante en haute moyenne et basse Justice Chasteau Entoure de fossés pont levis Cour basse court Collombier grange Ecurie Etables vinee pressoir et Jardin aubout duquel est la Chapelle dud(it) Chasteau Et maison du jardinier marais prez Etangs Terres bois Et vignes en dependans Isle dans la riviere de loire droicts de mouvance Cens rentes dixmes Terrages corvees droit de chasse et de pesche dans lad(ite) riviere de Loire Et autres droits seigneuriaux Et bestiaux qui sont actuellement dans le Chasteau a l'Exception neantmoins des Chevaux de Carrosse Et de monture meubles meublans Linges hardes obligations Contrats de Constitution Bled et Vins.

The total purchase price was 82,000 livres, including taxes, a sum which Dancourt settled in full that day :

A commencer La jouissance de Cejourd'huy a la Charge de payer par lesd(its) Sieur et dame acquereurs La taxe de la Capitation en qualité de Seigneur hauts justiciers au lieu et place dud(it) Sieur de Fonfaye...moyennant le prix et Somme de quatre vingt mil Livres de principal Et deux mil livres de pot de vin Le tout francs deniers aud(it) Sieur Vendeur aud(it) nom faisant ensemble la somme de quatre vingt deux mil livres Sur laquelle Somme led(it) Vendeur aud(it) nom reconnoist avoir reçu Comptant en louis d'or d'argent et monnoye ayans Cours desd(its) Sr et dame Acquereurs

MOROGUES DE FONFAYE
F CARTON DANCOURT
THERESE LENOIR

This transaction is an example of the contemporary tendency for rich bourgeois to take over seigneuries which had formerly belonged to the landed gentry.

Indeed, some went as far as buying up several domains to add to their other house property, while the wealthier and more enterprising ones, like Samuel Bernard and many early eighteenth-century financiers, dazzled their contemporaries by their

(1) P. Pinsseau, La Châtellenie de Courcelles-le-Roy, Orleans, 1921, p. 37.

(2) Minutier Central, XCVII, 164.

sumptuous hôtels and their display of opulence. The acquisition of the title of 'Seigneur de Courcelles' was the culmination of Dancourt's social ambitions in so far as it conferred on ~~him~~ the status of a nobleman. It is noteworthy that on this important occasion no mention was made of his profession of actor and playwright, as, in the eyes of contemporary society, this would have been a blatant incongruity. Similarly his wife was, by a stroke of the pen, elevated from the humble status of comédienne to the lofty position of Dame Thérèse Lenoir. Exactly what this new development added to Dancourt's life in real terms, say, of income, is not known. Generally, a seigneur enjoyed certain privileges in connection with his domain, though these varied from region to region. He was, for example, entitled to ~~income~~ derived from the sale of his corn and wine, while the income from the cens, though not usually a very significant one, could swell to an appreciable amount over a period of years. Often a seigneur who, like Dancourt, was absent for years from his domain, would leave the administrative side of affairs to an intendant, and entrust farmers with the task of exploiting the land. The purchase of this property did not, however, interrupt Dancourt's work at the Comédie Française where he and his wife continued to act until their retirement some years later.

In the same year, 1714, Dancourt dedicated Les Fêtes du Cours to the King of Poland's son, the 'Prince Royal et Electoral de Saxe' (1696-1736), described in the epistle as 'Digne fils d'un AUGUSTE pere'. He became Elector of Saxony and King Augustus III of Poland on his father's death in 1733. Not much information of a biographical nature can be gleaned from the dedication in which the author, after the conventional section devoted to laudatory comments on the Prince's rank and personal qualities, goes on to ask for his appreciation of his merit as a writer of comedy :

Que dans ta Gloire il te souviennne
De l'hommage qu'en France aux rives de la Seine
Une Muse comique rend
A tes Vertus encor plus qu'à ton Rang.
Qu'en sa faveur son zele te prévienne;
Content des soins que pour plaire elle prend,
En foule tout PARIS au Spectacle se rend;

A la voix du Public daigne joindre la tienne,
 Tu lui ~~peux~~ assurer le succès le plus grand,
 En l'honorant d'un glorieux suffrage.
 Rien ne la flatte jamais tant;
 De tes bontés c'est tout ce qu'elle attend.
 Pour l'immortaliser que faut-il davantage? (1)

As owners of Courcelles-le-Roi, the Dancourts found in March 1717 that they were under an obligation to pay an annual rente to some nuns in the neighbouring town of Gien. This rente, originally created in 1642, was the responsibility of each successive Seigneur de Courcelles who paid the sum of 27 livres 15 sols 6 deniers every year to the 'Dames Relligieuses Ursulines de la Ville de Gien':

Ont lesd(its) Sieur et dame Dancourt pour les causes cy dessus Enoncées promis et se sont obligez...de dorenavant payer et continuer auxdites Dames Religieuses ...absentes...lesdites vingt sept livres quinze sols six deniers de rente par chacun an a pareil jour que cejourd'huy dont la premiere annee de payement Eschera d'huy en un an et ainsy continuer d'annee en annee Jusqu'au rachapt de ladite rente que lesd(its) Sieur et Dame Dancourt pourront faire quand bon leur semblera en Vendant et payant auxdites Dames Religieuses en un seul payement et en les avertissant huitaine auparavant la somme de cinq cent livres pour le principal d'icelle rente. (2)

Dancourt paid the nuns, represented by François Trioubrousse, the sum of 123 livres, 13 sols, 3 deniers; this included outstanding arrears which had accrued since his purchase of the château in 1714 .

On 31 January 1718 Dancourt was sued on two counts : for the recovery of a debt and for assault on Thomas Moriceau, a huissier prisieur and his assistants who had come to his house 'a l'effet de saisir et executer les meubles dudit Dancourt'. Moriceau, representing Dancourt's creditor, Jules, stated at the Châtelet that he was 'porteur de deux sentences contradictoires...au profit du sieur Jules bourgeois de paris portant condamnation contre le nommé Carton Dancourt comedien de la Comedie Francoise d'une somme de cinq cent livres' (3). It is stated that Dancourt had already discharged only part of this debt, leaving a balance of 300 livres outstanding. But when the ill-fated Moriceau and his two assistants, Antoine Lemoine and Jean Vigneron, proceeded to seize his furniture in lieu of the amount due, they were assailed by a torrent of abusive language

(1) Les Fêtes du Cours, Paris, 1714.

(2) Minutier Central, XCVII, 179, March 1, 1717.

(3) Archives Nationales, Y, 13204.

and threats from Dancourt who, true to his nature, set about them with his fists. At the Châtelet Moriceau described the incident which had taken place that morning when, admitted by a lackey to Dancourt's bedroom, they found him 'couché dans son lit' apparently in a hostile mood and ready to give them his customary reception. It seems that their very presence was provoking to Dancourt who warned them that 'il n'avoit pas d'argent et qu'il ne vouloit pas que l'on saisisse ses meubles que si l'on le faisoit il les feroit bien sortir qu'il savoit les consequences de la rebellion mais qu'il ne s'en soucioit pas'. When the officials, undaunted, went ahead with their duties, Dancourt leapt out of bed, in a violent temper : ' (il) seroit sorti de sa chambre en robe de chambre comme un furieux', said Moriceau recalling this frightening spectacle,

et se seroit adressé aud(it) pl(aignant) en le traitant de bougre de gueux de fripon et de voleur aussi bien que ses assistans l'auroit pris par le collet en lui disant de sortir et que s'il ne sortoit pas il lui donneroit vingt coups de baston et a ses assistans et lui auroit en le poussant hors de la salle poussé un coup de poing de toute sa force derriere le dos et plusieurs coups de poing a ses assistans en les mettant a la porte.

In face of this formidable onslaught they were forced to beat a retreat without having fulfilled the functions of their office. As this was obviously not Dancourt's first offence of this nature, he was already a notorious figure among legal functionaries :

Et comme led(it) Dancourt est un homme fort violent qu'il luy a deja fait plusieurs violences et a autres de ses confreres en voulant faire les fonctions de leur charge et qu'il est coutumier du fait il a esté conseillé de nous venir rendre la presente plainte.

Additional evidence was furnished by Lemoine who testified to Dancourt's violence not only on this occasion but also to his behaviour during a similar incident which, as we have seen, took place in August 1712. Moriceau decided to follow up his accusation on 5 February by resorting to legal proceedings :

Plainte pour Th. Moriceau c(ontre) Dancourt
Et le Samedi Cinq(uiesm)e Jour dud(it) mois de fevrier mil sept Cent dix huit du matin Nous a esté mis es Mains la Requeste dont la Teneur suit,
A Monsieur Le lieutenant Civil
Suplie humblement thomas Moriceau huissier Comm(issai)re present au Chastelet de Paris Qu'jl vous Plaise luy permettre de faire Informer du Contenu en la plainte par lui rendu devant le Comm(issai)re Bizoton Le dernier Janvier dernier

au Sujet de la Rebellion a ~~auy~~ faite led(it) Jour par le Sieur Dancourt
 Permis d'jnformer de la rebellion pardevant le Commissaire Bizoton et a esté
 le proces Verbal de rebellion par nous paraphé fait le 4 fevrier 1718
 En execution de Laq(ue)lle ord(onna)nce Avons delivré la Nostre Pour faire
 Assigner Les personnes Et Temoins qui peuvent déposer des faits dont Il s'agit
 Lesquels Comparans nous avons d'un chacun separément redigé Les depositions. (1)

Subsequently Dancourt was obliged to settle the debt of 300 livres, as will be seen in a later document of July 1718, after his retirement from the Comédie Française which took place on 22 March of that year.

The last of Dancourt's plays to be performed at the Comédie Française before his retirement was La Métépsychose des Amours, first published in 1718. The dedicatory epistle is addressed to 'Son Altesse Sérénissime Monseigneur le Prince de Conti', Louis Armand de Bourbon (1695-1727), son of François Louis de Bourbon Prince de Conti who died in 1709 and Marie Thérèse de Bourbon to whom Dancourt had dedicated L'Eté des Coquettes in 1692. In 1713 the Prince de Conti married Mademoiselle (Louise Elisabeth) de Bourbon, great grand-daughter of Le Grand Condé. In the dedication Dancourt refers to the reasons for the play's lack of success on the stage and hopes to take advantage of the Prince's patronage against his enemies. Addressing his Muse, Dancourt claims to have already won the Prince's favour :

Sa bonté veut bien vous permettre
 De parer vos écrits de son nom glorieux,
 Qu'ici sans son aveu je n'aurois osé mettre. (2)

As a token of gratitude for the Prince's interest in his career, Dancourt assures his patron that the honour bestowed on him will not be forgotten in future generations. Again addressing his Muse, he goes on to say :

Qu'il sache seulement que dans tout l'avenir,
 Mes arriere-Neveux dès leur plus tendre enfance,
 Par vous instruits à la reconnaissance,
 Sauront de ses bontés garder le souvenir.

The exact reason, or reasons, why Dancourt decided to retire from the theatrical life at the age of fifty-six are not altogether clear. Nicéron is, as usual, the first to make known the opinion of Dancourt's family on the subject :

(1) Archives Nationales, Y, 13204.

(2) La Métépsychose des Amours, Paris, 1718.

'Des pensées sérieuses vinrent enfin dégoûter notre auteur du théâtre qu'il quitta entièrement à Pâques de l'année 1718', with the intention of devoting the remainder of his life to religious practices : 'il ne s'occupa plus que du soin de son salut' (1). There is concrete evidence, however, of some incidents which may have been a contributory factor to Dancourt's decision to leave the stage at this point, and which throw light on the strained relationships that existed around this time between the author and the rest of the company. It is true that Dancourt and his colleagues were occasionally at variance on different issues throughout his career at the Comédie Française, but, during the year before his retirement, he had suffered two rebuffs from members of the company in connection with his plays, La Métémpsycose des Amours and La Déroute du Pharaon, which led to his bitter attack, in the preliminary note of the latter play, on his colleagues' decisions (2).

From 28 to 30 July 1718, a cumulative sentence (3) was made against Dancourt for debts embracing a period of ten years and involving thirteen creditors. It was agreed that payment should be made directly to the creditors concerned by the Comédie Française who held the sum of 12,802 livres 14 sols in reserve for Dancourt 'a cause de sa sortie de ladite troupe'. A detailed account of the amount due to the creditors is set out in a fifteen-page document of 28 July. The theatrical company, represented by Antoine Chanterelle, Sieur Du Boccage, Claude Charles Botot Sieur Dangeville, Georges Guillaume De la Voye, and Jean Baptiste Maurice Quinault, paid on Dancourt's behalf the sum of 5,985 livres 14 sols to Gabriel Thomas Pouru, a cloth merchant, for a debt which had been outstanding since 14 March 1716. François Jules, to whom Dancourt owed 300 livres from March 1716 received repayment of this amount; he was represented at the proceedings by Pierre Le Page, 'cessionnaire'. Another creditor, Gabriel Bourdon, received 100 livres 'contenu au billet dud(it) Sr Dancourt fait au proffit dud(it) Sr Bourdon la datte de vingt cinq juillet 1717'. Jean Baptiste Massienne,

(1) J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., Vol. XVI, p. 287.

(2) This subject will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

(3) Minutier Central, XLIV, 244. A duplicate copy of this document is in the Archives de la Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

'Maitre Charron', received 506 livres for 'ouvrages de Charronnages' carried out at Dancourt's request at different periods, Jacques de la Creusette 'Intéressé dans les affaires du Roy', the sum of 1,300 livres, Philipes Le Gras, the sum of 700 livres, and Dancourt's landlord, the abbé Mathieu Pecot 'Chanoine...de l'église de paris', the sum of 1,500 livres for arrears of rent.

This formidable list of debts which had been settled on 28 July was quickly followed by yet more demands for settlements of accounts. On the 30th, the comédiens français were again obliged to discharge on Dancourt's behalf these additional sums : to Isaye Langraine De la Saussaye 'marchand de toille' the sum of 513 livres 6 sols 'pour fourniture particuliere'; to Renée Charlotte Le Bourlier 600 livres for 'fourniture de marchandises par elle faite ausd(its) sr et d.lle Dancourt'; to Marie Elisabeth Petit, 'Veuve d'André Balmont marchand orfevre' 250 livres outstanding since 15 February 1712; to Paul Lenormand 'marchand de vins' 200 livres owed since 26 June 1714 (the month in which Dancourt purchased his château); to Jacques Camusat 'marchand drapier' 366 livres, part of which included the cost of 'cinq aunes et demi de toile a Cinquante sols L'aune'; and to Jerosme Rousseau 'Maitre Macon', 305 livres 'causé pour ouvrages de Menuiserie en datte du six fevrier mil sept cent huit' (the week after the renewal of his tenancy in the Rue de Condé).

The total amount of these debts came to 12,626 livres which were deducted from Dancourt's share in the establishment of 12,802 livres 14 sols in order to satisfy each of the creditors concerned :

De laquelle somme receue par lesd(its) creanciers cy dessus nommés yls se contentent et quittent chacun a leur egard lesd(its) Sr et D.lle Dancourt lad(ite) troupe et tous autres.

Dancourt received only 176 livres 14 sols after deduction of his debts had been made :

Et led(it) dix neuf aoust aud(it) an mil sept cent dix huit avant midy est comparu pard(avant) les no(tai)res sous(sign)és Led(it) Sr Carton Dancourt denommé en quittance cy dessus Lequel apres avoir pris communication desd(ites) quittances et approuvé lesd(its) payemens faits par Icelles Montans ensemble a douze mil six cent vingt six livres qui estant deduit sur la somme de douze mil huit cent deux livres quatorze sols qui estoit es mains desd(its) comediens et qui luy revient pour sa part de l'hostel de la Comedie Yl en reste encore entre les mains desdits Srs Comediens la somme de cent soixante seize livres quatorze sols.

The creditors had threatened to enforce a seizure of Dancourt's property if his debts had not been fully paid, but they agreed not to adopt these measures on condition that a sum of caution money be deposited with a notary to pay off any unforeseen expenses found after the settlement of the above mentioned accounts :

Consentent qu'elles soient nulles et comme non faites a condition seulement que leursd(ites) saisies tiendront es mains de M. Moet No(tai)re au Ch(aste)let sur la somme de neuf cent quatre vingt six livres a Luy déposé par lad(ite) troupe et qui revient auxd(its) Sr et dam.lle Dancourt pour leur tiers de part journalliere retenue par lad(ite) troupe sur laquelle somme Ceux desd(its) Creanciers auxquels il se trouvera deus des frais apres l'arrest yceux doivent estre payés conformement au susd(it) acte de delegation. (1)

On 9 September of that year restitution of the money deposited with the notary, Moët, was made to Dancourt 'cy devant Lm des Comediens de sa Majesté' and Marie Thérèse; they received the sum of

neuf cent quatre vingt six livres treize sols quatre deniers qui reviennent (aux(dits) Sr et dlle Dancourt scavoir moitié qui est quatre cent quatre vingt treize livres six sols huit deniers aud(it) Sr Dancourt et l'autre moitié montant a pareille somme a lad(ite) dlle son epouse pour leur tiers dans une part qu'ils ont chacun dans les representations journalieres de la Comedie depuis le lendemain du jour de Quasimodo de l'annee derniere mil sept cent dix sept jusqu'au commencement du mois d'Avril dernier que le Theatre a Fermé (2).

When Dancourt retired to his estate of Courcelles-le-Roi in 1718, he did not lapse into complete obscurity. Various documents have come to light to form a fragmentary picture of some of his activities during his retirement. It appears from these that he took on a new lease of life in his role of seigneur, describing himself as 'noble floren carton dancourt' and, towards the end of his life, signed himself 'Dancourt de Courcelles'. It must be pointed out, however, that the adjective 'noble' attached to a person's name was not, in itself, an indication of nobility: it was often used in contemporary documents as a term of respect for some wealthy bourgeois.

In 1719 Dancourt made provision for his mother, Louise de Londy, then over ninety years of age, by giving her a large sum of money on which she could draw the interest in Paris and which she in turn could leave to her great grand-children, the eldest daughter of both Manon and Mimi. At his residence in Courcelles

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 244.

(2) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt, 'Quittance a Me. Moet et aux Comediens par M. Dancourt et sa femme'.

Dancourt gave his consent on 3 December to these arrangements, describing himself as 'avocat au parlement Seigneur de courcelle le roy demeurant ordinairement a paris rue de Condé', and signed the following document to this effect :

un contrat de la somme de huit mil huit cent livres en principal de rente que ladite dame de londy a a prendre sur l'hotel de ville de Paris...portant interest de trois cent livres par chascun an payable par moytié de six moids en six moids...ledit sieur constituant ne pourra disposer du fond de ladite rente pendant la vie de ladite dame de londy et...la dame de londy pourra substituer ladite somme...a la fille aisnée de guillaume fontaine et a celle de monsieur des Hayes (1)

F CARTON DANCOURT
GAUCHERY
MOUSSOIR (notaries)

These signatures are certified as authentic by Jacques Bourgeois 'procureur fiscal garde scel de la Justice Seigneurie et Chastellenie de Courcelle le Roy':

Nous...certifions a tous qu'il appartiendra pour l'absence de monsieur Le Bailly dudit Courcelle le Roy que l'Acte de procuration cy dessus est escrit et signé de la main de maistre francois moussoir nottaire de la Justice dudit Courcelle Leroy signé du seing manuel de monsieur florent Carton Dancourt seigneur dudit Courcelle Leroy et qu'il est aussi signé de maistre pierre gauchery notaire de ladite Justice que foy y doit estre aioutée tant en jugement que hors jugement en foy de quoy avons signé et scellé Le present acte a courcelle Leroy ce quatre decembre mil sept cent dix neuf et est ledit acte controllé

BOURGEOIS
Scellé ce quatre decembre mil sept cent dix neuf
Bourgeois garde scel (1)

It was necessary to take these precautions as the contract was sent up to Paris where, on 15 January 1720, Marie Thérèse , described as 'Dame...Lenoir Epouse de Noble florend Carton Dancourt avocat en parlement', was required to identify her husband's signature, and guarantee the payment of the annuity to her mother-in-law :

Laquelle promet...faire garantir fournir et faire valoir...a Dame Louise de Londy...Trois cents livres de rente annuelle et perpetuelle...que lad(ite) Dame Dancourt esd(its) noms promet et s'oblige...bailler et payer a ladite dame veuve Dancourt...aux quatre quartiers de l'an ardinaires...dont le premier pour portion de temps Eschera et se fera au dernier mars prochain et ainsy continuer a l'avoir et prendre speciallement sur la terre et Seigneurie de Courcelle le Roy a eux appartenante et generalmente sur tous leurs autres biens meubles et immeubles. (1)

Louise de Londy agreed to settle the entailed amount of 8,800 livres on her grandchildren, Manon and Mimi :

(1) Minutier Central, XCII, 421. (Husbands of Manon and Mimi).

Minutier Central, A. 11, 401

Declarant lad(ite) Dame veuve Dancourt qu'elle substitue le fonds et propriété de la rente presentement constituée a son proffit a lad(ite) Dame Marie Armande Carton Dancourt veuve de monsieur de fontaine, et a Dame Marie Michelle Carton Dancourt espouse de M. Des Hayes filles uniques desd(its) Sieur et Dame Dancourt ses petites filles

Manon signed the contract promising that, in the event of her parents' death, she and her sister would undertake to pay the 300 livres annually to their grandmother:

Promettant lad(ite) Dame Dancourt faire obliger a la garantie de moitié desd(ites) trois cents livres de rente...Laquelle s'est obligée envers lad(ite) Dame veuve Dancourt a la garantie des cent cinquante livres de rente apres le deceds desdits sieur et dame Dancourt ses pere et mere en cas qu'ils arrivent avant celui de lad(ite) Dame veuve Dancourt.

M THERESE LENOIR

LOUISE DE LONDY

M.A. ARMANDE CARTON

On 14 June 1721, Marie Thérèse, who had retired from the Comédie Française in the previous year and was living in Paris, signed a contract by which she and her husband reduced the annual amount payable to their elder daughter, Manon, under the terms of the marriage contract of 1702 (1). At this time Dancourt was still residing at Courcelles-le-Roi from where this contract was originally negotiated 'par acte passé devant Bourgeois et son adjoint Not(aire)s aud(it) Courcelles le vingt cinq may mil sept cent vingt'. The following amendment was made :

Lesquelles partyes ayant presentement compté entre elles des arrerages echeus depuis le quatre novembre mil sept cent deux jour de la Benediction Nuptialle desd(its) sieur et dame fontaine jusqu'au trois juin XVII C vingt de cinq cent livres de rente au capital de dix mil livres constitues par lesd(its) sieur et dame Dancourt a lad(ite) Dame leur fille pour partie de sa dot suivant son contrat de mariage passé devant le no(tair)e Savigny l'un des Notaires soussignés et son confrere le vingt neuf octobre de l'an XVII. C. deux yls se sont trouvez monter a huit mil sept cent quatre vingt onze livres treize sols quatre deniers dont...yl n'en reste plus que sept mil quatre cent vingt neuf livres trois sols quatre deniers dont lad(ite) Dame Dancourt...se confesse debitrice envers ladite dame de Fontaine qui a...reduit du denier vingt au denier cinquante lesd(its) cinq cent livres de rente qui n'auront plus cours par an a compter dud(it) Jour trois Juin XVII.C. vingt que pour deux cent livres rachetables desd(its) dix mil livres

M THERES(E) LENOIR

M.A. ARMANDE CARTON (2)

By this time Manon was, of course, widowed and the mistress of Samuel Bernard.

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 164 (Missing).

(2) Minutier Central, XLIV, 271.

There is evidence that, while in retirement, Dancourt pursued with vigour his old policy of resisting the authority of the law. In conformity with a decree of September 22 1722 requiring an 'Inventaire des Vins' to be made 'dans toutes les Villes, Bourgs et Lieux du Royaume', a number of officials under the supervision of Martin Giraud called at the château of Courcelles-le-Roi to make an inspection of the stock in the wine-cellars and levy a tax. They alleged that

jls auroient trouvé au chateau de Courcelles Le Roy dependant de lad(ite) paroisse de Beaulieu le Sr florent Carton Dancourt Seigneur de ce chasteau dans Lequel L'ayant requis d'y souffrir l'jnventaire des Vins et autres boissons qu'jl avoit en sa possession jl leur auroit refusé L'ouverture de ses Caves et Celliers et leur a dit que les chateaux et caves seigneurialles n'y etoient point sujets et ne devoient point etre compris dans cet Etablissement surtout a Une certaine distance des Villes (1)

This produced the required effect for the legal functionaries were nonplussed by this unexpected rebuff, and were obliged to desist from enforcing their authority in view of the technical hitch. It seems that they wisely did not force the issue with Dancourt and were fortunate enough to return to base unscathed. They pursued the matter instead at a safe distance :

duquel refus lesd(its) Commis ont dressé leur proces verbal Et comme ce refus est contraire aud(it) Arrest du Conseil du 22 Septembre 1722...Sa Majesté s'est Expliqué par deux autres arrests de Son Conseil des 14 fevrier et 3 Avril 1723... et en cas de refus les contrevenants condamnés en l'amende et en la confiscation des Vins qui se trouveront dans leurs caves et celliers non declarez.

A Meudon le sixieme Juillet 1723.

A special clause had to be appended to the above decree embracing the château of Courcelles and referring to Dancourt in particular :

Le Roy en son Conseil a ordonné et ordonne que les arrests des Vingt deux Septembre mil sept cent vingt deux, quatorze fevrier et quatre Avril mil sept cent vingt trois seront executez selon leur forme et teneur et en consequence que les jnventaires des Vins seront faits par les Commis de Martin Giraud dans le chateau de Courcelles le Roy dependant du bourg et paroisse de Beaulieu sur Loire ou lesd(its) jnventaires seront pareillement faits ainsi que dans toutes les maisons en dependantes Et en cas de refus de la part dud(it) Sieur Dancourt et des proprietaires desd(ites) maisons Sa Majesté les a des a present condamnez en trois cent livres d'amande qui demeurera encourue en Vertu du present arret et sans qu'il en soit besoin d'autre et en la confiscation des Vins qui se trouveront dans leurs caves et celliers non declarez.

If Dancourt was eventually forced to pay his taxes, at least he could boast of being the object of a specific royal decree.

(1) Archives Nationales, E 927, pièce 34, folios 160-162.

While in retirement Dancourt continued, of course, to receive his annual pension from the Comédie Française of 1,000 livres payable in monthly instalments of 83 livres 6 sols 8 deniers. The last piece of documentary evidence relating to Dancourt before his death is to be found on one of his pension receipts :

Je soussigné, confesse avoir reçu de Messieurs les Comédiens du Roy, par les mains de Messieurs du Boccage & du Chemin, la somme de quatre-vingt-trois livres six sols huit deniers, pour un mois de ma Pension échu le dernier jour du mois d'aoust dernier de laquelle somme de quatre-vingt-trois livres six sols huit deniers je quitte lesdits Sieurs, & tous autres. FAIT à Paris ce 2e 7bre 1723

DANCOURT DE COURCELLES (1)

Marie Thérèse died on 11 May 1725, about seven months before her husband. The Mercure de France reported her death :

Therese Le Noir, épouse de M. Carton Dancourt, est morte à Paris le 11 de ce mois âgée d'environ 64 ans. C'a été une des plus belles femmes et des meilleures Actrices du Théâtre François, qui dans un âge assez avancé, jouoit encore les rôles d'Amoureuses Comiques avec beaucoup de grâce, et de finesse. Elle avoit quitté le Théâtre en 1720. Elle étoit soeur du Sieur de la Torilliere, si chéri et si estimé du Public. (2)

In his declining years Dancourt is reputed to have composed a religious tragedy and to have translated the Psalms in verse, but no trace of these literary productions has survived. According to Nicéron :

Il y composa une traduction des 'Psaumes de David en vers' et une Tragédie Sainte qui n'ont pas été encore imprimées. (3)

The same source mentions Dancourt's preoccupation with spiritual values :

Lorsqu'il se sentit malade et proche de sa fin, il fit faire son tombeau dans la chapelle de son château et l'alla voir lui-même avec toute la tranquillité et la fermeté d'une âme absolument détachée des choses d'ici-bas et qui n'aspire plus qu'aux biens célestes et éternels.

Nicéron is, however, in error as to the date of Dancourt's death which he gives as 6 December 1726 instead of 1725. The acte de décès puts an end to all speculation on this matter by providing the date on which Dancourt was buried at Courcelles-le-Roi :

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

(2) Mercure de France, May 1725.

(3) J. F. Nicéron, op. cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

Septuante
de
Messire
Sept-vingt-cinq ans, en l'année de la chapelle
deuxième Messire f. bonnet-rouge de la couronne de
deux ans. En portement

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Son Excellence
Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur
Paris

carton
pneus chapeaux fette moureaux pour le sangny q. le empq unaire de l'aire l'un

[illegible]

Cinq-vingt ans
 en suppliant les saints est-
 proutant et de l'histoire pour l'usage de la messe

[illegible]

*L'histoire des tortues
meZ leur pour mury*



*Vaucluse
L. P. 1888*



Tidy

copy

2707

ARCE



DANCOURT'S ACTE DE DÉCÈS.

Le sept decembre de L'an mil sept cent vingt cinq a ete inhumé en la chapelle de courcelle Leroy Messire florent carton dancour seigneur dudit courcelle Leroy avocat en parlement agé danviron soixante et cinq ans Epoux en son vivant de defuncte dame therese Lenoir en presence de Messieurs bignan curé de chatillon rifet curé de Santranges guignet prieur de pierre fitte moriceau prieur de Savigny gile crepy vicaire de beaulieu de Maistre francois guyon avocat en parlement de Maistre joseph rifet et de Maistre jean baptiste paulmier praticiens La minute des presentes est signée

GUYON

RIFFÉ

PAULMIER

MALÉ, Curé

G CREPY, Vicaire (1)

An enigmatic inscription in the margin reads : 'Cette année jai faict planter trois chatagnis a la terre des tortoises priez dieu pour moi'. This could be an indication - although one cannot say for certain - that Dancourt may have bequeathed a piece of land to the Church, as was customary for wealthy parishoners who wished to have prayers said for them after their decease. It is significant that Dancourt should wish to be remembered by the titles of seigneur and avocat. There is no mention of the career to which he devoted most of his life as a comédien du roi. The chapel in which Dancourt was buried no longer exists, but his remains were reinterred in the present chapel of Courcelles-le-Roi on 31 July 1778 (2).

It is of interest to trace the descendants of Dancourt through the children of his younger daughter, Mimi, up to the time when the château of Courcelles-le-Roi passed out of the family hands and, on the other hand, to see how, by Manon's association with the notorious Samuel Bernard, there is a family connection between Dancourt and the distinguished member of the Dupin family, George Sand.

On the death of her father, the property of Courcelles was inherited by Mimi and her husband, Samuel Boutinon, Sieur des Hayes 'Ecuyer Seigneur de Courcelles Leroy demeurant ordinairement a Paris rue Saint Louis au Marais paroisse Saint Germain' (3). The couple are known to have had three children : Louis dit le Chevalier d'Assay, Françoise Catherine Thérèse Boutinon Deshayes who married the fermier général Alexandre Jean Joseph Le Riche de la Poupelinière and who, as the

(1) Archives de la Mairie de Beaulieu. The death was announced in the Mercure de France of December 1725.

(2) E. Huet, Promenades Pittoresques dans le Loiret, Orleans, 1920, p. 79.

(3) Minutier Central, XCVII, 208, January 29 1727. He died at Courcelles in 1728.

mistress of the Duc de Richelieu, became a notorious figure in eighteenth-century fashionable society (1), and Louis Marie Marc Antoine Boutinon Des Hayes who inherited the property of Courcelles in accordance with his contract of marriage with Louise Alexandrine Valmalette de Morsan (2). The only child of Marc Antoine Des Hayes inherited Courcelles; she was Alexandrine Boutinon de Courcelles (1714-1826) who married the Comte Apolline de Guibert, a member of the Académie Française. Guibert fought in the Seven Years' War and was made a Maréchal de Camp in 1786. The estate was given as a dowry to his grand-daughter, Charlotte de Guibert, on her marriage to François René de Vallet de Villeneuve (3). In 1806 it passed out of the family possession when it was sold to General Macdonald, later Duc de Tarente, during whose lifetime certain structural additions were made to the château which can be seen at the present day.

Dancourt's elder daughter, Manon, and her husband, Guillaume de Fontaine, are known to have had two children : Jeanne Marie Thérèse (1703-1725) (Mme de Barbançois), and Jules Armand (1709-1758), later to become Sieur de Passy, (the estate in the Paris region owned by Samuel Bernard.) The parish registers of St Roch where he was baptized on 5 April 1709 reveal some interesting details about his family connections. We see that his godfather was Paul Jules Mazarin Duc de la Meilleraye with the lengthy title of 'Pair de France Gouverneur de Port Louis en Bretagne Comte de Fereste Baron d'Altkirch Seigneur d'Issenghien demeurant au Palais Mazarin rue Neuve des Petits Champs' (4); his godmother was Magdeleine Bernard (5), wife of the famous seventeenth-century architect's son, Jacques Hardouin Mansart described as 'Chevalier Comte de Sagonne Conseiller du Roy Maître des Requestes ordinaire de son hotel Intendant de Justice Police et Finances en la Generalité de Moulins demeurant Place des Victoires.'

(1) Their relationship gave rise to the story in the Chronique Scandaleuse that she used to allow her lover to gain admittance to her house by means of a fire-place which had a secret passage leading to the adjoining house.

(2) cf. P. Pinsseau, op.cit., p. 44, i.e. on 19 May 1757.

(3) op.cit. p. 45, i.e. 'le 21 Germinal, an III'.

(4) Bibliothèque Municipale de Fontainebleau, Samuel Bernard sa Vie et Quelques Autres, Manuscript, p. 34.

(5) Incidentally she was daughter of Samuel Bernard. Cf. A. Jal, op.cit., p. 833.

It is a well-known fact that Samuel Bernard had as his mistress Madame Fontaine, but what is not so well known is that she was Dancourt's daughter, Manon. Bernard, it appears lavished on her some of his outstanding wealth :

il a donné à Mme Fontaine, sa maîtresse, la seigneurie de Passy, où il a fait faire un bâtiment de plus de trois cent mille livres. (1)

They had three daughters : Louise Marie Madeleine (Mme Dupin), Marie Anne Louise (Mme d'Arty) and Françoise Thérèse (Mme de la Touche), described by J.J. Rousseau as 'les Trois Grâces' (2). It is stated that Samuel Bernard 'a marié et bien établi trois filles de Mme Fontaine' (1). Mme Dupin, wife of the affluent fermier général who owned the Hôtel Lambert, Ile St. Louis, and the château de Chenonceaux, enjoyed a luxurious existence and entertained on a lavish scale; this is indicated by J.J. Rousseau who, for a period of time, was her secrétaire :

...les Grands, les gens de lettres, les belles femmes. On ne voyoit chez elle que Ducs, Ambassadeurs, cordons bleus. Mad.e la Princesse de Rohan, Mad.e la Comtesse de Forcalquier, Mad.e de Mirepoix, Mad.e de Brignole, Myladi Hervey pouvoient passer pour ses amies. M. de Fontenelle, l'Abbé de St. Pierre, l'Abbé Sallier, M. de Fourmont, M. de Bernis, M. de Buffon, M. de Voltaire étoient de son cercle et de ses dinés. (2)

Rousseau, who spent some time in Mme Dupin's home, regretted his indiscretion in declaring his love for her, and wrote two letters to this effect, one of 9 April 1743, addressed to Mme Dupin, and the other of 10 April to her husband. These letters, in which he asks to be forgiven and promises to become worthy of the couple's confidence, were published in 1884 by one of Mme Dupin's descendants, Gaston de Villeneuve-Guibert (3).

Dupin de Francueil, son of the preceding couple, also a fermier général, married Marie Aurore de Saxe, natural daughter of Maurice de Saxe, a member of the Polish royal family and widow of the Comte de Horn. It was this couple's son, Maurice Dupin who, by his marriage to Sophie Victoire Delaborde, was to become the father of Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, better known as George Sand.

The connection of Dancourt and his family with celebrated personalities is an important fact and one which adds yet another dimension to his biography.

(1) E.J.F. Barbier, Chronique de la Régence et du Règne de Louis XIV, Paris, 1866, 8 vols., vol. II, p. 148.

(2) J.J. Rousseau, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. E. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Paris, 1959-69, vol. I p. 291.

(3) Le Portefeuille de Mme Dupin, Paris, 1884 pp. 334-9. Cf. Rousseau's Correspondance Complète, ed. R. Leigh, Geneva, 1965-73, 18 vols, vol. I, pp. 182-6.

II. BIOGRAPHY : PART II -

... DANCOURT'S CAREER AT THE COMEDIE FRANÇAISE.

Dancourt's contribution to the theatrical life of the Comédie Française can be appreciated from more than one angle. It can be seen from his activities in that establishment that he was extremely energetic in the discharge of his duties and most assiduous in performing the functions of his various offices. As an actor, he devoted his energy and skill with unfailing regularity in the execution of the roles he was called upon to take. He had a natural talent for effectively playing comic parts, although there is evidence that, on occasion, he undertook roles of a more serious nature. As an author, Dancourt met the financial needs of his colleagues by providing them with a steady stream of theatrical productions during his thirty-three year career, while at the same time he netted a sizeable income for himself. As a member of the troupe, he undertook various responsibilities of an administrative nature which helped to ensure the successful management of the company's affairs. There is, however, the other side to Dancourt's career at the Comédie Française, one which does not represent him in such a favourable light. More particularly in the early part of his career, his colleagues occasionally complained in their feuilles d'assemblée of his rather too frequent absences from the company's regular meetings in which administrative affairs were discussed. On one particular occasion, on July 13 1693, for example, Dancourt fulfilled the conditions of attendance which required each actor to sign in before the meeting took place and which entitled him to a jeton for which he would receive some remuneration; but on account of his subsequent absence from the meeting, which did not go unnoticed by his colleagues, he forfeited his right to a jeton : 'Monsr Dancourt est sorty apres avoir signé et n'est point revenu aynsy l'assemblée a resolu qu'il n'auroit point de jeton', noted the actors in the feuilles d'assemblée with due circumspection. His relations with the other actors

were, from time to time, far from harmonious, and the animosity which existed between Dancourt and certain members of the ~~groupe~~ did, on occasion, lead even to violence. He was not infrequently found to be in debt, with the result that the Comédie Française was often called upon by his creditors to discharge the debts by deducting the amount due from his income as a shareholder in the establishment.

Dancourt as an Actor.

After their five-year period as provincial actors, Dancourt and his wife became members of the recently established Comédie Française, situated in the Rue Guénégaud, at the beginning of a new theatrical year in April 1685. In this year a reshuffle of the members of the troupe took place, with some being pensioned off and others newly recruited. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Marie Thérèse was accepted into the Comédie Française in November 1684, and she was officially admitted into the company at Easter 1685 on the same terms as Dancourt, that is, with a half share. On the retirement of the actor, Hubert, his share was divided between Dancourt and Raisin junior : 'Monsieur Dancourt et Mr Raisin cadet ont eu la part de Mr Hubert. Mr. Dancourt a payé 750^{fr} a Monsieur Hubert, et Me. la Dauphine a payé p(ou)r Mr Raisin 750^{fr} (1). From 1685 onwards, the total number of shares was restricted to twenty-three, of which fourteen were distributed that year among the seventeen male members of the troupe and nine among the twelve actresses.

A review of Dancourt's long and eventful career as an actor at the Comédie Française enables us to form an idea of the type of roles he specialized in and which were best suited to his talents. The Frères Parfaict who knew Dancourt as an actor commented on his achievements as well as his shortcomings :

Son principal talent pour le théâtre étoit les rôles du Haut comique, à manteau et raisonné. A l'égard de la Tragédie, il étoit froid et monotone, aussi jouoit-il le moins qu'il lui étoit possible dans ce dernier genre. (2)

And this was virtually all that was known of Dancourt as an actor. This vague

(1) C.V. de La Grange, Registre, ed. B.E. and G.P. Young, Paris, 1947, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 351.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, Paris, 1735-49, 15 vols., vol. XV, p. 56.

summary of Dancourt's acting ability can be substantiated by concrete evidence preserved in the Comédie Française, notably in the feuilles d'assemblée where the actors kept a record of roles assigned to individual members of the troupe, but also in the registers where they kept an account, though not always a regular one, of the distribution of a particular play. These two sources which do not, however, make a complete picture of Dancourt's career as an actor, on account of the inevitable gaps in the information supplied, show quite clearly that the number of comedies in which Dancourt performed exceed tragedies by an overwhelming majority. Of course, there remains the difficult question of deciding what kind of role he undertook in those plays which were neither straightforward comedies nor tragedies, such as mythological plays, tragi-comedies, pastorals and machine-plays, all of which contain a mixture of the grotesque and the sublime.

Dancourt made his debut at the Comédie Française on 11 May 1685 in the role of Caesar in Corneille's La Mort de Pompée. At this stage in his career Dancourt showed evidence of a keen interest in acting tragic roles. In his epistle to the Dauphine, composed about this time, which can be regarded almost as a treatise on the art of acting in tragedy, Dancourt reveals some significant pieces of information which characterize this period of his career. It is evident from the epistle that the young actor's aspirations were in the direction of noble and heroic parts :

En vain sur le theatre un Acteur téméraire
Croit se rendre fameux et trouver l'art de plaire,
S'il n'a pas cet esprit et ces airs engageans,
Que la nature avare accorde à peu de gens...
Il faut pour le Cothurne une âme grande et belle,
Qui puisse d'un Héros être un parfait modele...
Peu d'hommes, il est vray distinguez du vulgaire
Peuvent de ces Héros remplir le Caractere;
Il faut bien des talens qu'on n'a pas à la fois,
L'Air, la Taille, le Port, le Visage, la Voix...
On hait un Comedien qui fier d'un vieux merite
Croit bien représenter un Cid, un Hippolite...
Tout mauvais acteur d'amour propre aveuglé
Présume être applaudi quand même il est sifflé...
Voulons-nous d'un Héros soutenir la noblesse
Des hommes du commun évitons la bassesse,
Et tâchons de marquer jusqu'en nos moindres pas

Certain air de Grandeur que les autres n'ont pas...
 Il faut avoir la voix noblement familiere
 Imitons du Baron (1) l'élégante maniere,
 Ajoutons s'il se peut, et peut estre qu'un jour
 Nous servirons aussi d'exemple à nostre tour. (2)

Also it appears that, in Dancourt's eyes at this time, the art of successfully interpreting roles was perhaps more important than the art of writing plays; in this context he makes allusion to the talents of one of the most famous actresses of the seventeenth century, Marie Desmares (la Champmeslé), wife of the actor and playwright, Charles Chevillet, Sieur de Champmeslé :

Mais aussi bien-heureux et Racine et Moliere
 D'avoir eu pour leurs soins une digne matiere,
 Des Acteurs qui toujours prompts à les écouter,
 De leurs sages avis ont sceu bien profiter,
 Qui des plus fiers censeurs captivant les suffrages,
 Ont fait par tout le monde admirer leurs ouvrages,
 Car peut-etre qu'enfin dans ses tendres écrits,
 Racine eût moins charmé les coeurs et les esprits ,
 Si quand il nous fit part de ses sçavantes Veilles,
 La Champmeslé n'avoit enchanté nos oreilles.

These passages not only provide valuable information on Dancourt, but they are also a rare example of a seventeenth-century playwright committing to paper his ideas on the art of acting.

In November 1690 Dancourt and a colleague, Rosélis, were selected by the Dauphin to be each awarded a full share in the Comédie Française the next time there was a vacancy, in recognition of their services. Dancourt already held, since April 22 1686 (3), five-eighths of a share, and this order, issued by the Duc d'Aumont, the premier gentilhomme de la chambre to whom Dancourt dedicated La Parisienne, would enable him to gain a full share as soon as possible :

Nous...Certifions que Mgr. nous a ordonné de faire entendre a la troupe des Comediens françois qu'il veut que Dancourt et Rosely soient préférés a qui que ce soit de lad(ite) troupe et autres qui pourroient postuler pour y entrer a l'occasion de la place vacante pour jouir chacun d'une part entiere dans les vingt trois qui sont fixées par leurs Reglements a prendre dans la premiere part qui viendra a vacquer...suivant l'intention de Monseigneur C'est pourquoi nous avons signé le present certificat pour servir d'ordre auxd(its) Comediens (4).

By this time Dancourt showed a preference for playing comic roles, and tended to move away from his initial interest in tragedy. In 1689, he had been allotted

(1) Michel (le) Baron, Dancourt's brother-in-law, the well-known tragic actor.

(2) A Madame la Dauphine, n.d.n.p. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Ye. 2467).

(3) Comédie Française, Registre.

(4) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 145.

the role of Arius in Péchantré's tragedy, Géta (1), and, around this time, he was acting the part of Enchérius in Thomas Corneille's Stilicon, also a tragedy. He decided, however, in July 1690 to give up the latter part : 'Mr de Villiers Jouera dorenavant Encherius dans Stilicon dont Mr Dancourt A Remis la disposition a la Compagnie', wrote the actors in the feuilles d'assemblée. Then, in the following year he made arrangements with another colleague, Le Comte, to exchange two tragic roles and a part in a mythological play for three comic roles ; this again appears in the feuilles :

Monsieur Dancourt ayant proposé a la compagnie de changer quelques un de ses rolles avec Monr Le Comte savoir pherore dans Mariane, Mandricidas dans Zelonide et Iphicrate dans les Amans Magnifiques Monsr Le Comte luy donne Valere dans le Souper mal apresté Timante dans les Auberges et Melanie dans Crispin Musicien...plus Monsieur Dancourt jouera Valere dans L'Escolle des Maris...et Leandre dans l'Estourdy.

Also in 1691 Dancourt undertook to play the Prince d'Ilaque in Molière's Princesse d'Elide. In 1692 he continued to acquire more parts in comedies : Don Juan in Le Festin de Pierre, 'L'Ecolier' in Dom Japhet, 'le fils' in Tartuffe, Pontignas in L'Esprit Follet, 'le Comedien' in Esope, Clitandre in George Dandin, 'l'Amant' in his own Le Notaire Obligeant, Valère in Le Cocu Imaginaire, 'l'Amant' in Les Carrosses d'Orléans, and in Le Semblable à Soi-Même, 'l'Amoureux' in Le Cocher Supposé, and the Baron de Metz in his own La Maison de Campagne (1).

At Easter 1695 Dancourt addressed the following letter to his colleagues at the Comédie Française, requesting an extension of his annual leave in order to attend to what he describes as his 'affaires particulieres' . In his letter he refers to the playwright, Charles Rivière Dufresny, who had allotted him a role in one of his plays; this was no doubt the anonymous comedy, Le Jaloux Masqué, performed for the first time on 16 April of that year :

Messieurs,

Mes affaires n'ayant pû estre Terminées pendant cette quinzaine de Pasques Jay encor besoin de huit ou dix Jours pour les finir entierement. Il vous sera d'autant plus facile de me les accorder que vous avez a Jouer pendant cette Semaine deux pieces ou Je ne suis point necessaire, a l'egard de Mr Riviere Je lay prié de me faire donner son Rolle entier, sil prend la peine de me l'envoyer Je seray prest à le Jouer sans faute de mercredy en huit, Je vous demande bien pardon Messieurs de la necessité ou Je me trouve de preferer

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'assemblée.

mes affaires particulieres a celles de la Compagnie. Je ne le fais que dans la
Veüe de pouvoir dans la Suite Travailler avec plus de Tranquillité pour le bien
commun. Je vous prie d'estre persuadez que Je le feray autant que Je seray
capable de le faire, et que Je suis de tout mon coeur

Messieurs

votre tres humble et
tres obeissant Serviteur

ce lundy 11.^e Avril 1695

DANCOURT (1)

The feuilles d'assemblée show that, on July 30 1696, 'Monsieur Dancourt s'est charge du Rolle du comte dans la piece de la coquette' - one of Baron's comedies, but, on May 24 of the following year, he made an exchange of roles with his brother-in-law : 'Dancourt et Baron sont convenus scavoir que Mr Baron jouera le Comte dans La coquette et l'estourdy en seconde, et Mr Dancourt jouera l'estourdy en premier.' This piece of information throws some light on another aspect : comic roles were not normally associated with Baron who was well known for playing the lover in Corneille, Racine and Campistron.

Among his roles in comedy Dancourt had a predilection for the role of the dashing young lover, such as Valère in L'Ecole des Maris (1691), Léandre in L'Etourdi (1691), Valère in Le Cocu Imaginaire (1692), Don Juan in Le Festin de Pierre, 'l'amoureux' in La Thuillerie's Crispin Bel Esprit (1693), Horace in L'Ecole des Femmes (1701), and 'l'amoureux' in Montfleury's Femme Juge et Partie (1701). Another striking feature of his career is his ability to carry off the role of aristocratic characters who were traditionally represented on the stage as overbearing and bumptious, for example, his own Baron de Metz, the Marquis in Molière's Les Fâcheux (1701), 'Le Gascon' in La Parisienne (1701), the comte in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1701), the Marquis in Thomas Corneille's L'Inconnu (1703) the Marquis de Lorgnac in La Comtesse d'Orgueil (1709), and Le Roy in La Princesse d'Elide (1713) (2).

Examples of tragedies in which Dancourt took part are relatively few, and are for the most part confined to the earlier part of his career. Apart from the already mentioned roles in tragedy, he took the part of Varus in Campistron's Arminius (1709), and that of Mathan in Racine's Athalie (1716). He also performed

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

(2) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

in Circé in 1705 and in Pradon's Electre in 1708 (1), but it is not known what part he played.

In the latter part of his career Dancourt tended to ~~take~~ more staid roles, as befitting his more advanced age, such as the docteur in his own L'Amour Charlatan (1713), Le fleuve, one of the river-gods, in Psyché (1714), 'le père' in Th. Corneille's Dom Bertrand (1716), and La Brie in La Femme d'Intrigue (1716).

The registers of the Comédie Française show that Dancourt acted in the following plays, but there is no indication as to the role he filled in each case:

1687 - <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	1703 - <u>Andrienne</u>
1688 - <u>Amans Magnifiques</u>	1704 - <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
1688 - <u>Devineresse</u>	" - <u>Enfants de Paris</u>
" - <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>	1705 - <u>Crispin Musicien</u>
" - <u>Esprit Follet</u>	" - <u>Circé</u>
1689 - <u>Cid</u>	" - <u>Ménechmes</u>
" - <u>Dame à la Mode</u>	1707 - <u>Don César d'Avalos</u>
" - <u>Enlèvements</u>	" - <u>Comédien Poète</u>
" - <u>Jodelet Maître et Valet</u>	1708 - <u>Fille Capitaine</u>
" - <u>Débauché</u>	" - <u>Madame Artus</u>
1691 - <u>Parisien</u>	" - <u>Esope à la Cour</u>
1692 - <u>Merlin Déserteur</u>	" - <u>Mari sans Femme</u>
1693 - <u>Dépit amoureux</u>	" - <u>Electre</u>
1694 - <u>Avare</u>	" - <u>Démocrite</u>
" - <u>Misanthrope</u>	1709 - <u>Hérode</u>
" - <u>Amphitrion</u>	" - <u>Trois Cousines</u>
1695 - <u>Jodelet Prince</u>	1710 - <u>Jaloux</u>
" - <u>Important</u>	" - <u>Sérénade</u>
" - <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	1711 - <u>Homme à bonne fortune</u>
1698 - <u>Visionnaires</u>	" - <u>Fables d'Esope</u>
" - <u>Esope</u>	" - <u>Céphale et Procris</u>
1701 - <u>Menteur</u>	1712 - <u>Ingrat</u>
" - <u>Capricieux</u>	" - <u>Absalon</u>
1702 - <u>Opérateur Barry</u>	" - <u>Sancho Pança Gouverneur</u>
	1717 - <u>Métempsychose des Amours</u>

An important feature of Dancourt's theatrical life is the consistency and diligence with which he performed his numerous roles.⁽²⁾ It is noteworthy that periods of absence from the stage of one month or more are altogether exceptional during his long career. These are July 1714, July to October 1716, August and September 1717, and the first three months of the year of his retirement, 1718 - all at the end of his career. Apart from these relatively insignificant periods,

(1) Comédie Française, Registre.

(2) For details of Dancourt's acting career, see Appendix A, p. 363.

of absence, Dancourt appeared on the stage with unfailing regularity from the beginning of his career in 1685 to his retirement thirty-three years later. Indeed, there are many instances in which Dancourt acted every day, or almost every day of certain months, and even twice a day - at Versailles and in Paris - on other occasions. The registers show that he accomplished this demanding task on three occasions : on 17 December 1688 he acted in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme in Paris and in Le Cid at Versailles; on 3 January 1689 in Dame à la Mode in Paris and in Les Fâcheux at Court; and on 27 January 1709 in Le Cid in Paris and Les Femmes Savantes at Versailles. As a measure of his skill as an actor, he was often chosen to follow the court to Versailles or Fontainebleau for the winter season, when only the best actors of the troupe performed before the royal family.

Administrative duties.

One aspect of Dancourt's duties as a member of the theatrical company was to be present at the reading of new plays which, before being accepted for performance at the Comédie Française, had to be submitted for consideration by a selection committee whose members were drawn from the troupe. After the reading of a new play submitted in this way, the committee was required to vote for or against its acceptance. On some occasions individual members recorded in the minutes of their meeting their personal judgement of a particular play, and we find that Dancourt made the following entry in his own hand after a reading of Pradon's tragedy, Scipion, to the committee on 25 November 1696 : 'Je suis fâché quelle ne soit pas bonne et qu'elle ne puisse l'estre. DANCOURT'. Contrary to accusations launched at him by hostile commentators of his time, Dancourt's influence in the selection or rejection of a play was limited to a single vote during these auditions.

As a zealous member of the Comédie Française Dancourt was always keen to protect the interests of the company especially when the latter found itself in difficult circumstances. One of the major threats to the financial stability of the Comédie Française at this time was the competition offered by other

theatrical groups such as the Théâtre Italien which, however, was expelled from France in 1697 leaving the Théâtre Français with a monopoly of all theatrical productions in Paris until its return in 1716, and, more especially, the Théâtres de la Foire , a loosely organized band of actors who, by setting up makeshift theatres and attracting large crowds of spectators, were a constant source of irritation to the comédiens français. The vendetta against the forains began in 1697 after the expulsion of the comédiens italiens from France, and was to continue for more than a decade before coming to a head. Dancourt was, of course, in the forefront of events whenever there were eruptions of open hostility between the rival groups. On 9 December 1697 the troupe of the Comédie Française decided to take action against the forains, and asked Dancourt and De Villiers to express their grievances to the newly appointed lieutenant général de police, d'Argenson:

La Compagnie a prié Mrs Dancourt et De Villiers d'aller chez mr. Dargenson tant pour Recevoir ses ordres au sujet des desordres qui peuvent se Commettre aux portes et au parterre que pour solliciter un Reglement pour Empescher toutes sortes de Comediens a la foire St Germain et a la foire St laurent.(1)

In the following year Dancourt, together with some other colleagues, was appointed to appeal once again to d'Argenson for measures to be taken against certain forains who persisted in infringing the privileges of the Comédie Française:

On a nommé Ms de Champmeslé, de Villiers, du perier et dancourt pour aller prier Mr d'argenson de ne point permettre que les Joueurs de Marionnettes et autres Representent a la foire aucunes pieces de Theatre. (1)

This was another stage in the campaign launched by the actors of the Paris theatre against their incorrigible rivals in the entertainment field, and in which Dancourt was to become deeply involved in later years.

On occasion Dancourt acted as orateur for the troupe, a position he was certainly well qualified to undertake and which he apparently held with considerable success :

La facilité qu'il avoit à parler, et une éloquence naturelle qui animoit tous ses discours lui avoient fait déférer par ses camarades l'honneur de porter la parole dans toutes les occasions particulieres. (2)

(1) Comédie Française, feuilles d'assemblée.

(2) J.F. Nicéron, Mémoires, Vol. XVI, p. 287.

It must be noted, however, that the role of orateur did not confer any distinction on the person who undertook this task, according to a seventeenth-century source:

cet Orateur ne doit le plus souvent l'honneur de sa fonction qu'au pur hasard, sans que precisement le merite y contribue, et que d'ailleurs il n'a pas dans la Troupe plus de pouvoir ny d'avantage qu'un autre. (1)

It was customary among the troupe for individual actors to take turns in contributing in various ways to the successful administration of their affairs. It is of interest to note some of the tasks which Dancourt, as spokesman, would have been expected to carry out :

L'Orateur a deux principales fonctions. C'est a luy de faire la harangue et de composer l'Affiche...Le discours qu'il vient faire à l'issue de la Comedie a pour but de captiver la bienveillance de l'Assemblée. Il luy rend graces de son attention favorable, il luy annonce la piece qui doit suivre celle qu'on vient de représenter, et l'invite à la venir voir par quelques éloges qu'il luy donne; et ce sont là les trois parties sur lesquelles roule son compliment. Le plus souvent il le fait court, et ne le medite point; et quelquefois aussi il l'étudie quand ou le Roy ou Monsieur ou quelque Prince du Sang se trouve present...L'Affiche suit l'annonce et est de même nature: elle entretient le Lecteur de la nombreuse Assemblée du jour precedent, du merite de la piece qui doit suivre, et de la necessité de pourvoir aux loges de bonne heure, surtout lors que la piece est nouvelle et que le grand monde y court. (1)

The previous member of the Comédie Française to hold the position of orateur was Le Comte who succeeded La Grange in this office. It does not appear, however, that Dancourt exercised this office exclusively, as his predecessors had done, Nor is it known at precisely what date he first undertook duties of this nature. Earlier events show that Dancourt was already carrying out two of the functions of an orateur : in February 1696 he prepared a speech which he addressed to the Dauphin on the occasion of the latter's first visit to the new theatre, opened in 1689 in the Rue des Fossés St. Germain (2); and on 4 February 1698, performances at the theatre were suspended for one day following an announcement made by Dancourt to which the audience objected (3). As we shall see later, Dancourt was requested in July 1705 to convene a meeting of the troupe, which is another of the orateur's duties.

(1) cf. J. Bonnassies, La Comédie Française, Histoire Administrative, Paris, 1874, pp. 295-6.

(2) Le Mercure Galant, February 1696, p. 276 which quotes this speech.

(3) H.C. Lancaster, The Comédie Française, (1680-1701), Baltimore, 1941, p. 20.

Apart from acting at their Paris theatre and, on occasion, at Court, the troupe used to perform in private entertainments for some members of the aristocracy who would summon them to their residences for this purpose. As we have seen, Dancourt was requested on several occasions to provide some light form of entertainment by composing a playlet for which he would be rewarded financially. One of the keen theatre-goers of aristocratic circles was the Duchesse du Maine who held at her Sceaux residence a well-known literary and political salon. On 29 March 1700 Dancourt handed over to the Comédie Française the remuneration he received as a result of two private performances in her home :

Mr Dancourt a apporté a l'assemblée La somme de quatorze cens Livres qu'il a Receue de Monseigneur Le duc du Maine pour les deux Visittes qu'on a Jouées dans l'appartement de Madame La Duchesse du Mayne. (1)

On 20 September of that year Dancourt offered his services to the theatre in a practical way by arranging for the acquisition of a new carpet for the steps leading to the stage :

Il a este Reglé par la Compagnie que l'on feroit faire un tapis de marche pied neuf pour le Theatre. Mr Dancourt s'est chargé de ce soin. (1)

And, two months later, he undertook, together with a colleague, to draw up an estimate of the expenses involved in a revival of one of Th. Corneille's and De Visé's machine plays, L'Inconnu :

Mrs De Villiers et Dancourt ont este nommés et se sont vollontairement Chargez de faire un Memoire de la depense qui est a faire pour Remettre l'Inconnu pour la faire voir a la Compagnie. (1)

In 1701 he helped in the preparations for a revival of Molière's Princesse d'Elide assisted by his brother-in-law, Pierre Lenoir de la Thorillière, and another actor: 'Mrs de la Thorilliere Sallé et Dancourt se sont chargez de regler les Intermedes de la piece' (1).

In 1702 the troupe had reason to complain about the activities of a certain showman, Bertrand, who attracted public attention to his theatrical performances held at the fairs which constituted not only a breach of the Paris theatre's monopoly, but also a very real threat to its box-office receipts :

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

La Compagnie extraordinairement assemblée en son hostel le Mercredi 7e jour De Juin 1702 a delibéré que pour arrester Les Contraventions reiterées par le nomme Bertrand qui au prejudice des ordres de sa Majesté Continue de faire des representations de farces petites Comedies scenes et dialogues on se pourvoie contre ledit Bertrand et pour cet effet elle a nommé Les Sieurs Le Comte Dancourt duperier et Dufey pour faire Les diligences et procedures necessaires. (1)

As will be seen at a later stage, Dancourt and Dufey were particularly instrumental in taking legal action against Bertrand and other forains in order to curb their machinations.

At the beginning of a new theatrical year in April 1704, Dancourt and another actor, Dangeville, were jointly entrusted with the custody of the safe-keys of the Comédie Française, and had the additional responsibility of discharging on behalf of their colleagues any debts for which creditors would claim repayment:

On a Resolu de charger Mrs Dancourt et Dangeville de Retirer L'argent des particuliers Debiteurs des Remboursemens pour en compter a La compagnie a la descharge desdits particuliers a la charge que l'argent restera dans l'hostel dans un Coffre fort de la compagnie dont chacun de ces deux Mrs aura une clef. (1)

The appointment to this position was a new phase in Dancourt's career for, as we shall see in a later section of this chapter, he was hitherto usually one of the debtors on whose behalf such payments were made.

Dancourt contributed to the repertory of the Comédie Française not only by writing a large number of plays to be performed at the theatre, but also by remodelling or re-embellishing already existing plays which had been dropped from the repertory. His attempts to modernize plays which had lost favour in the eyes of the public often brought renewed interest to the theatre audiences, by providing a fresh approach to a worn-out theme. In 1703 Dancourt had written on the actors' request a new prologue for L'Inconnu and five divertissemens, one for each act, to serve as intermèdes. On July 28 he was remunerated for the additions he made to Molière's Les Amants Magnifiques which took the form of a prologue and three intermèdes. The play, thus embellished, was produced in June of that year :

La Compagnie a delibéré de Donner a Monsieur Dancourt La somme de trois Cens livres pour Les agréemens (sic) qu'il a faits aux amans magnifiques et a resolu

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

en mesme temps qu'a l'avenir on ne Donneroit plus Une vingt quatrieme part .
Comme on a fait a l'Inconnu et que ces sortes d'Ouvrages seront payez a la
discretion De la Compagnie, et qu'il n'y aura point De billet pour l'auteur.(1)

This modification of the method of remuneration for such compositions did not
deter Dancourt from continuing to produce embellishments of this nature, as, in
the following year he wrote, at his colleagues' request, additional pieces for
Th. Corneille's Circé.

On 10 July 1705 an order from the Duc de Beauvilliers, premier gentilhomme de
la chambre, was issued to Dancourt requesting him to inform the troupe of the
necessity to arrive at a final decision on a controversial issue which could be
resolved only by a majority vote in accordance with their time-honoured custom.
The question at issue concerned the modernizing of the machine play, Circé, which
Dancourt was ultimately to attend to :

Copie du present ordre a esté donné a Mr Dancourt pour le communiquer aux
Comédiens.

Du 10 Juillet 1705

Mr le Duc de Beauvillier ordonne que la pluralité des voix dans les assemblées
l'emporte.

M'ayant été rapporté que les comédiens du roi auroient résolu de
remettre au theatre Circé piece en machines, et qu'il y a eû entr'eux une
contestation les uns etant d'avis de conserver l'ancien prologue de ladite
piece et d'autres de se servir d'un nouveau avec de nouveaux divertissemens
en consequence de l'usage établi de tout tems dans leur compagnie et confirmé
par de nouveaux ordres de Monseigneur signés par nous quatre premiers gentils-
hommes de la chambre que Lorsqu'il arriveroit quelques contestations pareilles
entr'eux elles seroient réglées à la pluralité des voix dans une assemblée
g(e)n(er)alle qu'ils convoqueroient pour le sujet contesté et ladite assemblée
s'estant tenue et la pluralité des voix étant pour le nouveau prologue et les
agremens nouveaux ainsy qu'il nous est apparu par les signatures qui sont sur
les feuilles qui nous ont été présentées...

LE DUC DE BEAUVILLIERS (2)

At their meeting of 27 July the actors noted on their feuille d'assemblée :

Monsieur Dancourt a apporté a l'assemblée Deux ordres de Monseigneur signé de
Mr Le Duc De Beauvilliers l'un en date du 10e Juillet et l'autre du dix neuf
du mesme mois concernant La Piece de Circé.

It was decided by a majority vote to give a new attraction to the five-act tragedy
by having the original prologue and intermèdes altered. Dancourt responded to
the troupe's request by composing a new prologue and five divertissemens for the
play which, thus rejuvenated, was brought back into the repertory ten days later,
on 6 August.

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

(2) Archives Nationales, O¹, 844.

A contemporary journal, La Gazette de Rotterdam, reports that Dancourt was deprived of one of his responsibilities at the Comédie Française for misconduct :

M. le Dauphin a ôté aux Srs Dancourt et Guérin l'inspection qu'ils avoient sur la Comédie pour en avoir mal usé, et avoir aspiré à la maîtrise. (1)

No further information is provided as to the exact nature of the alleged offence which, as events were to prove, was not substantiated by concrete evidence; it is known, however, what the duties of an inspecteur at the theatre entailed :

L'Inspecteur, avec l'un des Contrôleurs, feront tous les jours...une visite de contrôle dans tous les Postes comptables de la Comédie; verront combien il y a de Personnes placées dans chaque Poste, soit payant ou gratis; feront compter devant eux les Billets et Contremarques, les enregistrent sur un Portatif...Ils feront note sur le côté blanc dudit Portatif de tout ce qu'ils appercevront être contraire aux intérêts de la Comédie. Dans le cas où ils trouveroient dans un Poste payant plus de personnes que de Contremarques ou plus que n'en doit contenir une loge à l'année, l'amende sera au double des places occupées sans payer: et dans les Postes où il sont deux, pour répondre du même, ils payeront ladite amende par moitié. (2)

Although Dancourt was not relieved of this post, one possible form of misdemeanour which he, as inspecteur, was in a position to commit was turning a blind eye to the presence in the theatre of spectators who had gained admission free of charge with either his active encouragement or at least his tacit consent. It is noteworthy that in the past Dancourt had, on occasion, been obliged to reimburse the theatre for tickets which he had generously distributed among his friends at the Company's expense. A note in the register of 1688, July 24 reads: 'Monsieur Dancourt a fait entrer 6 personnes et il n'avoit que deux billets de 4. reste pour Deux qui lui estoient deus de l'année passée et partant neant', and on 3 February of the following year the actors recovered 6 livres 'reçu depuis le compte de Mr Dancourt pour deux billets qu'il avoit donné de trop'. As an author, Dancourt was, of course, allowed a certain number of free tickets, but he was found to have overstepped the limits of this concession and, as we have seen, obliged to make good the loss to the theatre's revenue.

(1) Journal Historique (Gazette de Rotterdam), 1705, August 31.

(2) cf. J. Bonnassies, La Comédie Française, Histoire Administrative, Paris, 1874, p. 147: 'Nous avons reproduit un petit règlement pour les postes datant à peu près de 1725 et parlant d'un inspecteur. Nous ignorons si cet officier était de création récente, ou si c'était le même, sous un autre nom, que le contrôleur... Le 26 décembre 1689, l'assemblée avait créé une place d'inspecteur de la salle et du théâtre, qui fut donnée à Mlle Rosélis et qu'on stipula ne pas devoir lui survivre'. (pp. 308-9).

For some years yet Dancourt retained, co-jointly with Guérin², the managership of the theatre's financial affairs. A note written in his handwriting shows that in 1706 he still exercised this function :

Me Cavreau (caissière) payera a Mr Guerin La Somme de trois Cent Livres pour les Interests d'un billet de six mille Livres renouvelé aujourd'huy de la quelle somme de trois cent livres Je tiendray Compte sur l'argent des Particuliers fait a Paris Le 4e Janvier 1706

DANCOURT (1).

And, a little later, he dealt with the payment of a retirement pension due to Mlle Poisson :

Reveu de Mrs Sallé et Du Bocage La Somme de Cinq Cent livres pour une demi-année de la pension de Mlle Poisson laquelle demi-année escherra au 1er Aoust prochain de la quelle somme Je quitte La Compagnie et Lesd(its) Srs Sallé et Du Bocage fait a Paris Le 25e Mars 1706

DANCOURT (1)

But in July of that year he retained a quarter of this pension with a view to paying off her debts and those of her husband :

Jay receu de Mrs Du Bocage Fompré et Dangeville La Somme de deux Cent Cinquante Livres pour le quartier de la pension de Mlle Poisson Commencé Le 1er Avril de la presente année la quelle pension Je suis chargé de Recevoir pour les Creanciers de Mr et Mlle Poisson dont je quitte Mrs Les Comediens et tous autres fait a Paris Le 1er Juillet 1706

DANCOURT (1).

A document of 1706 concerning the acquisition of a quarter share in the Company by the actor, Nicolas Desmares, is a further indication of Dancourt's retention of his administrative post. In accordance with the regulations of the Comédie Française of that year, an actor who gained a full share was required to pay a total sum of 13,130 livres 15 sols 5 deniers, made up of 4,400 livres which were paid to his predecessor, and the remainder to the theatrical company (2). As Desmares was granted a quarter share on the death of Jean Baptiste Sallé, he was obliged to pay only a proportionate amount of the total sum :

En presence des Con(seill)ers du roy no(tai)res de Paris soussignés Florent Carton sieur Dancourt l'Un des Comediens ord(inai)res de Sa majesté Tant en son nom que Comme fondé du pouvoir des Comediens de sa Majesté suivant la delliberation de la Compagnie demeurant a Paris rue de Condé...a reconnu...avoir receu de Sieur Nicolas Desmares aussy l'un desd(its) Comediens demeurant rue

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt; all three documents are in Dancourt's hand.

(2) cf. C. Alasseur, La Comédie Française au XVIIIe siècle, étude économique, Paris, 1967, p. 38.

St Domingue...a Ce present qui luy a payé...La Somme de trois mil deux cent quatre vingt deux livres treize sols neuf deniers dont Led(it) Sieur Desmares est tenu pour le quart de Celle de Treize mil Cent trente Livres quinze sols Cinq deniers qui se paye par La troupe desd(its) Comediens a Chacque Comedien qui se retire de lad(ite) troupe ou aux her(itier)s de Ceux qui decedent Ce suivant les reglemens de Sa majesté...Et Ce au Moyen de Lequel led(it) Sieur Desmares a proffité pour Un pareil quart de la part qu'avoit deffunt Jean baptiste Louis Sallé...

F CARTON DANCOURT
DESMARES (1)

As we have seen, for many years the rivalry that existed between the troupe of the Comédie Française and the organizers of entertainments at the Foires continued to cause considerable concern to the comédiens français before coming to a head in 1709. The forains persisted in ignoring the orders of the lieutenant général de police to discontinue their dramatic productions, using devious means to side-track the prohibitions. As an author, Dancourt was particularly interested in ensuring that their farcical productions would not seriously endanger the success of his comedies, more especially as the forains had made a parody of his La Foire Saint Germain which was performed at the Foire Saint Laurent in 1707 (2). The comédiens français in general were determined to minimize the effects of this rival form of entertainment which, by attracting large crowds of spectators (its popularity was mentioned in Lesage's Critique de Turcaret (1709)), was making an appreciable difference to the revenue of the Comédie Française.

On 7 February 1709 Dancourt and his colleague, Louis Villot sieur Dufey, made a complaint at the Châtelet against the competition provided by Jeanne Godefroy, the widow of a former showman, Maurice von der Beck, who had taken over from her husband as director of the spectacles de la foire :

Lesquels nous ont tant pour eux que pour les autres comediens requis de nous transporter heure presente audit jeu de la veuve Maurice a l'effet de dresser notre proces-verbal des contraventions par elle commises aux sentences du Lieutenant general de police et arrêts du Parlement qui lui interdisent de jouer ses comedies.

F CARTON DANCOURT
VILLOT DUFÉY

DEMONCRIF (commissaire) (3)

- (1) Minutier Central, XCVII, 132, 1706, April 22.
- (2) E. Campardon, Les Spectacles de la Foire, Paris, 1877, 2 vols., vol. I, pp.117-8.
- (3) op. cit., p. 121. Archives des Commissaires, No. 3839.

Two days later, on 9 February, another complaint was lodged by the troupe, represented by Dancourt and Dufey, this time against a certain Dolet who, in spite of repeated warnings, persisted in carrying on his productions at the Foire Saint Germain which traditionally opened in February every year and continued until a fortnight before Easter :

Lesquels nous ont dit que au prejudice des sentences de M. le lieutenant general de police et arrêts confirmatifs d'icelles le sieur Dolet qui est meme condamné en l'amende en des dommages interests et aux depens par lesdites sentences et arrêts ne laisse pas d'y contrevenir et de jouer une comédie dans son jeu qui est dans le preau de la foire Saint Germain ce qui fait un tort et un prejudice considerable aux comparans lesquels...ayant un sensible interet de faire executer lesdites sentences et arrêts nous ont requis et requierent de nous transporter heure presente audit jeu a l'effet d'en dresser notre proces verbal

F CARTON DANCOURT
VILLOT DUFÉY
DEMONCRIF (1)

In March of that year Dancourt, accompanied by the actor, Paul Poisson, made another sally against the forains aiming particularly at Charles Dolet, Alexandre Bertrand and Antoine Delaplace 'danseurs de corde et joueurs de marionnettes'. The chief offender of the group seems to have been Dolet whose theatre was demolished in execution of a decree of the previous month. He is described in a document of 3 March 1709 as the most intransigent culprit who 'par une opiniatreté sans pareille une desobeissance manifeste et un mepris desdits arrêts n'a pas laissé de faire reconstruire son theatre de la meme maniere qu'il étoit et se vanter qu'il continueroit d'y représenter de veritables comedies' (1). This is an example of the type of situation with which Dancourt had to contend. At this point, a critical stage in the campaign was reached as the legal action which he took against the forains on this occasion led him into difficulties; one of them, Antoine Delaplace, threatened to gain revenge on Dancourt for thwarting his activities by resorting to assassination. On the same day, Dancourt made a separate statement at the Châtelet to this effect :

Lequel nous a fait plainte à l'encontre du nommé Delaplace joueur de marionnettes et dit que en haine des poursuites que les comédiens ont faites à l'encontre des joueurs de marionnettes de la foire St Germain des Prés en exécution des arrêts du Parlement...ledit Delaplace s'est vanté et a dit à plusieurs personnes

(1) E. Campardon, op.cit., vol. I, p.p. 259-60.

qu'il poignarderoit et assassinerait ledit sieur plaignant qu'il ne le prendroit pas en brave mais dans un tems et une occasion où il ne s'y attendroit pas et que le plaignant ne mourroit que de sa main Et comme le plaignant a intérêt de prévenir cet assassinat il nous a rendu la presente plainte

DEMONCRIF (1).

This accusation would, of course, reflect unfavourably on Delaplace whose offences in the theatrical field would be considerably worsened by his threats to pervert the course of justice by intimidation. The incident illustrates one of the many vicissitudes of Dancourt's dramatic career.

Dolet and his colleagues were not the only objects of the troupe's resentment, as the comédiens français, armed with a decree from the parlement, proceeded to have immediate action taken to demolish the theatres owned by Henry Holtz and Jean Godard 'suisse(s) de la garde ordinaire de monsieur le duc d'Orleans', who were 'propriétaires de deux loges scituées dans le preau de la foire saint germain des prez prenans le fait et cause des nommés dolet La place Bertrand et Collé...' (2). These two forains were regarded as a serious obstacle to the comédiens' profession as they employed actors to take part in their shows. Dancourt and Dufey encouraged two huissiers, Rozeau and Girault, to carry out the order of the parlement :

Les Sieurs Rozeau et Girault...se rendirent chez le Sieur Burette Procureur qui demouroit sous la porte de la Treille, derriere la Loge de Holtz. Ils y trouverent les Sieurs Dancourt et Dufay qui les attendoient...Les Sieurs Dancourt et Dufay, suivant les conseils du Commissaire Chevalier, et du Sieur Burette, signèrent une indemnité aux Huissiers du Parlement, pour les engager à exécuter l'Arrêt dont ils étoient chargés .(3)

This did not, however, quash the activities of the recalcitrant forains who promptly procured a decree from the Grand Conseil countermanding that of the parlement which had ordered the destruction of their theatre. At this stage the bitter dispute between the rival theatres began to degenerate into a farcical situation. Dancourt was fined 300 livres on 14 March 1709 for his part in the proceedings and for having brought about the humiliating set-back for the forains :

(1) E. Campardon, op. cit., Vol I, p. 234.

(2) Archives Nationales, V⁵, 688, 14 March 1709.

(3) F. and C. Parfaict, Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Spectacles de la Foire, Paris, 1743, 2 vols., vol. I, pp. 92-3.

Ayant aucunement égard aux Requetes desdits Holtz et Godard, afin de dommages et intérêts et de rétablissement, condamne lesdits Comédiens solidairement et par corps en 6000 livres de dommages et intérêts envers lesdits Holtz et Godard condamne Dancourt et Dufay en trois cens livres d'aumône applicable moitié à la Chapelle dudit Grand Conseil moitié au pain des Prisonniers détenus de l'autorité dudit Grand Conseil. (1)

Dancourt's next step, as can be expected, was to protest against this imposition and attempt to procure from the Conseil privé an order to overrule that of the Grand Conseil :

les huissiers du Grand Conseil...se transportent le même jour (28 mars 1709) chez Dancourt l'un des supplians en vertu d'une contrainte de Ferreau fermier general pour l'aumone à laquelle Dancourt Dufey et Poisson avoient été condamnés par l'arrêt...de payer ladite somme de 300 livres pour ladite aumône contenant le paiement fait de ladite somme pour éviter la continuation des contraintes violences et vexation faites et à faire par forme de consignation aux protestations faites par ledit sieur Dancourt et contenant son opposition à la délivrance de ladite somme. (2)

So much for the depredations of showmen at the Foire Saint Germain in 1709, but the comédiens français also had to face competition from the Foire Saint Laurent, held in the autumn of each year. On 5 September 1709 Dancourt and Dufey made a complaint at the Châtelet against a well-known forain, Alard, of whom Maurice von der Beck was a pupil, and who was responsible for theatrical productions at the Foire.

A similar situation arose as soon as the Foire Saint Germain opened in the following year; on 6 February 1710 Dancourt and Dufey lost no time in bringing to the notice of the authorities a repetition of breaches of the theatre's monopoly:

Les quels nous ont dit qu'au prejudice du privilege que le Roi leur a accordé de jouer seuls et représenter des tragedies et comedies plusieurs bateleurs danseurs de corde et autres...ont entrepris d'en jouer et représenter, que leur audace et temerité sont d'autant plus reprehensibles qu'il ne peuvent ignorer que l'année dernière lesdits comédiens ont obtenu différents arrêts et sentences qui ont fait défense...de représenter des comédies à peine de démolition de leurs théâtres et autres peines y portées Et...les comparans ont un intérêt très sensible de se pourvoir pour faire cesser un abus qui se multiplie et leur est préjudiciable.

F CARTON DANCOURT

VILLOT DUFÉY

(1) F. and C. Parfaict, op. cit., Vol I, p. 96.

(2) E. Campardon, op. cit., p. 280, Archives Nationales, V⁶, 815, Conseil Privé

The forains devised ingenious methods of exasperating their rivals by dodging their regulations while conforming to the strict letter of the law, often with amusing results. For example, when they were forbidden to have dialogue of any form in their theatres, they got around this prohibition by making their actors speak in monologue only, that is by rapid entrances and exits of the actors. When they found that this was unacceptable to the comédiens, they resorted to miming parts of which the corresponding words were presented on placards to the audience. Such was the reason for Dancourt's complaint on 15 March 1710 against two theatre owners operating in partnership in the Rue de Vaugirard - Guillaume Rauly, cousin of Maurice von der Beck, and, surprisingly Etienne Baron's wife, Catherine von der Beck, daughter of Maurice. Etienne Baron was, of course Michel Baron's son, and therefore Dancourt's nephew :

le nommé Rolly et la dame Baron associés avec des danseurs de corde au jeu de paume du Bel Air rue de Vaugirard où ils ont fait construire un théâtre continuent de faire représenter sur icelui en termes et postures la plupart dissolues obscènes et indécentes des comédies et pièces de théâtre qu'ils annoncent au public par des affiches ce qui leur attire un concours de monde prodigieux et rend la Comédie déserte et en cause la ruine. (1)

Dancourt and Dufey requested the conseiller Daminois who was taking legal action for them against these two offenders, to witness one of the controversial spectacles and return to the Comédie Française where he would be shown the box-office receipts for that day :

nous commissaire susdit étant retourné à la Comédie Française en la salle susdite lesdits Sieurs Dancourt et Dufey nous ont représenté un gros registre in folio couvert de basane verte sur lequel on écrit jour par jour la recette et dépense de chaque jour au sujet de la Comédie Et avons vu que la dépense de ce jourd'hui monte à 257 livres et la recette aussi de ce jour à 147 livres seulement Dont et de tout ce que dessus nous avons fait et rédigé le présent procès verbal.(1)

This document serves to illustrate the seriousness of the situation and explain the actors' anxiety to have this threat to their livelihood removed immediately.

(1) E. Campardon, op. cit., p. 302.

The year 1710 marked the termination of Dancourt's responsibilities for the theatre's financial affairs, as we see from the following note in the feuilles d'assemblée of May 5 :

Monsieur Dancourt a remis a la compagnie en assignations quatre mil trois cens cinquante livres et en billets De monnoye neuf mil cinq cent six livres cinq sols, Le tout appartenant a la caisse Des particuliers Debiteurs De la Compagnie Dont on a chargé Messieurs Beaubour dangeville et Du Boccage.

It seems that Dancourt's term of office had simply come to an end; there is no question of mismanagement of finances on his part, as suggested earlier in a libellous report. It was a perfectly normal procedure for members of the troupe to take turns in undertaking various administrative duties. There is no further mention in the feuilles or elsewhere of Dancourt being in charge of financial affairs, but the actors noted on 9 June 1710 that 'Mr Dancourt a raporté deux cent cinquante Livres qu'on luy avoit donné pour les pauvres'.

Financial Position

Before embarking on the subject of Dancourt's financial position at the Comédie Française it is necessary to take into account some important factors : the position of actors at the Comédie Française at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, and that of playwrights during this period when writing for the stage did not prove a lucrative career (1). Without giving undue credence to La Bruyère's well-known statement to the effect that 'Le comédien, couché dans son carrosse, jette de la boue au visage de Corneille qui est à pied', we can safely conclude that actors at the end of the seventeenth century were, by reason of their share in the royal subsidy to the Comédie Française, and their earnings on the stage, in a more secure financial position than the professional playwright who struggled to make a living with his pen and whose income depended on the unpredictable fate of his plays on the stage.

As an actor-playwright Dancourt was in the happy position of being in receipt of these combined forms of income, that is to say, he would have a secure and regular income as a member of the troupe in proportion to the share he held in the

(1) cf. J. Lough, 'The Earnings of Playwrights in Seventeenth-Century France', The Modern Language Review, July, 1947, vol. XLII, pp. 321-6.

Company, he would receive remuneration for taking part in plays and, in addition to these basic incomes, he would receive royalties from the actors for his plays performed at the theatre. There was, of course, the possibility for Dancourt to obtain additional remuneration for his plays in the form of gifts or a pension from some patron who would accept a dedication. A dozen or so dedicatory epistles scattered throughout his career at the Comédie Française illustrate his attempts to attract the attention of would-be patrons, with varying degrees of success. Precisely what reward he received for his efforts in this direction has not come to light, but he presumably succeeded in gaining the favours of such influential figures as the Dauphin and the Dauphine, the Duc d'Aumont, the Duc de Mortemart and the Elector of Bavaria who, according to Nicéron, bestowed on him a diamond worth 1,000 pistoles (1). Another source of revenue which the playwright of this period could obtain was the royalties paid by publishers who were not, however, enthusiastic about publishing dramatic works, or offering authors anything but meagre payments for them. Although the level of such payments are considered to have been low, it is probable that the income which Dancourt received from this source made an appreciable difference to his financial position, as he succeeded in having fifty of his plays published during his career. Dancourt's income, however, was ^{necessarily} not confined within the limits of the theatrical world, as there was a possibility for playwrights to invest their money in outside interests, like any other members of society. Exactly how better off Dancourt was financially as a result of his dealing in landed property is not known, but his possession of house property can be regarded as at least an added security.

It is clear, then, that Dancourt was not dependent for his livelihood as Racine, the Corneille brothers, Quinault and Campistron had been on the often inadequate and sporadic payments from actors who presented their plays on the stage, and that his various sources of income in the form of royalties, gifts or pensions, served to supplement his basic income at the Comédie Française which alone was sufficient to provide him with a comfortable means of existence.

(1) J.F. Nicéron, op.cit., vol. XVI, p. 287.

Actors at the Comédie Française were paid an annual salary in proportion to the share they held in the theatre. This income was determined by the amount of royal subsidy which the theatre received - usually 12,000 livres a year (1). A full share or a fraction of it was generally considered an indication of an actor's ability in the dramatic field : the more experienced and proficient he became, the more quickly he would be promoted to the status of a full share-holder, to his greater financial advantage. This process was gradual in Dancourt's case. It took him eight years, from 1685 to 1693, to rise to this position. This does not necessarily reflect on his merits as an actor as, on account of the strictly limited number of shares of which the Company was composed, actors were obliged to wait, in some cases for years, until a member of the troupe gave up his share in the establishment before they could hope to receive an increase in their share.

The amount of financial reward which an author could expect to receive from his play was limited to his share in the proceeds from its first run, during which time he received for a new one-act or three-act play one eighteenth of the net receipts, and, in the case of a new five-act play, one ninth. As there were strict rules which determined the time when a play had to be discontinued, the first run was very often a brief one and the profits derived from it correspondingly low. In view of the inevitable problem as to whether a particular play would be well received by the audience or not, playwrights of this period, as those of any other, could never predict with certainty how much financial reward their plays would gain for them, as this was largely dependent on the favour which they found with the small theatre-going public.

Throughout his long career at the Comédie Française Dancourt contributed substantially to the theatre's repertory by presenting fifty-seven plays, not all of which, however, were entirely of his own composition; he had no scruples about helping himself to other authors' ideas and producing a remodelling of an already

(1)cf. C. Alasseur, La Comédie Française, étude économique, Paris, 1967, for further details of an actor's financial position at the Comédie Française.

existing play under his own name. It is noteworthy that his plays which enjoyed a more lasting success were written with the collaboration of a willing - or unwilling author. In particular, by providing a light form of entertainment and dramatizing some event of the time, Dancourt often succeeded in attracting enough spectators to his one-act plays to keep the box-office receipts from falling below the amount stipulated in the regulations, until his share in the proceeds rose to exceptional heights. By the end of the century, Dancourt's total income from royalties for his thirty-nine plays performed between 1685 and 1700 was about 20,000 livres, an amount which far exceeded that of any of his contemporaries (1). If we take the period from 1701 to 1725 when he produced less than half the number of plays than in the first part of his career, we find that his total income from royalties was fairly consistent with the previous ratio, that is just over 8,000 livres.

Only two and a half years after joining the Comédie Française, and producing four plays which earned for him modest returns, Dancourt gained his first major success on the stage by presenting in 1687, in collaboration with Saint-Yon, a five-act comedy, Le Chevalier à la Mode. The royalties on this occasion, amounting to 1791 livres 4 sols were, as always with plays composed in collaboration, shared between the authors. Unfortunately, the registers of the Comédie Française do not give any indication as to what percentage of the part d'auteur Dancourt received, and it is impossible to give any precise figures on this score.

The next significant addition to Dancourt's income came in 1692 with the performance of Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, another five-act play composed in collaboration with Saint Yon. This brought the authors the sum of 1892 livres 2 sols during the brief period of its first run.

In 1695 Dancourt scored a striking success with his one-act La Foire de Besons, which earned for him 1749 livres 12 sols, and also in the same year he received 1815 livres 19½ sols for Les Vendanges de Suresnes. Together with the royalties

(1) J. Lough, op. cit., p. 332.

of 250 livres for his other production, Le Tuteur, Dancourt's income from his plays for the year 1695 alone, exceeding 3,800 livres, was an altogether exceptional figure for playwrights of the time. This was, of course, over and above his basic salary at the Comédie Française which would be in the region of 5,000 livres(1).

In contrast with these impressive figures, a number of Dancourt's plays were of little financial advantage to him, for example, La Gazette de Hollande, L'Impromptu de Garnison, both of 1692, L'Eclipse (1724) and La Belle-Mère (1725), for each of which Dancourt received less than 100 livres.

The registers of the Comédie Française for 1697 set out Dancourt's financial position during the previous theatrical year in an 'Etat general des sommes retirées...sur les acteurs et actrices debiteurs de La Troupe depuis le 30e Avril dernier Jusques et compris le 23e jour de mars de la presente année 1697'. From this source it can be seen that, on 15 April 1697, the actor Du Périer 'a Rapporté a l'assemblée...deux quittances a la descharge de la Compagnie De la part de Monsieur Dancourt par luy payee aux Creanciers Dud(it) Sr Dancourt'. As customary among the troupe, an official appointed to look after the company's affairs paid out at the end of each theatrical year sums of money on behalf of those members who found themselves in debt. The normal procedure was to deduct the debt from the annual income which a member was due to receive, and pay the amount directly to the creditor concerned. The two cases mentioned above in which Du Périer carried out this task on Dancourt's behalf, refer to the period from 1 April 1695 to 23 March 1697. On 18 April 1696 Du Périer paid Dancourt 4,960 livres 7 sols including his annual pension of 1,500 livres from April 1695 to 1696, and his creditor, 'dame paulmier', 120 livres; and on 15 April 1697 Du Périer paid 3,368 livres 9 sols 5 deniers to certain unidentified creditors of Dancourt, 1,500 livres to Dancourt for his pension from 1696 to 1697, and the sum of 382 livres 19 sols 9 deniers to the Comédie Française 'pour entier et parfait payem(en)t de Ce qu'il devoit de Reste pour l'Etablissement' :

(1) cf. J. Lough, op. cit., p. 331.

Monsieur Dancourt :

Premierement de l'Etablissement pendant le mois d'avril et mai

dernier.....91. 16. 6
De la Pension du Roy pour l'année 1695.....287. 4. 4

En tout 379. 0. 10

Ledit sieur devoit le 9e avril dernier.....379. 0. 10

Pour deux mois et demi d'interest.....3. 18. 11

En tout 382. 19. 9

Partant doit de reste ledit Sieur trois livres dix huit sols onze deniers qui seront payez par le sr du perier et mis dans le coffre de la Compagnie au moyen de quoy demeurera quitte led(it) Dancourt envers la Troupe.

Recepte : De Mr Dancourt.....;382. 19. 9

At the end of the theatrical year, on 22 March 1698, Dancourt was once more found to be in debt to certain unnamed creditors represented by André de la Fouchardière, 'bourgeois de paris dem(euran)t rue du fouare paroisse St Estienne Dumont' who claimed and received from François Dumouriez Sieur Dupérier payment of the amount due :

La somme de quatre mil huit cent vingt huit livres un sol faisant avec celle de quinze cens livres pour la pension dud(it) Sr Dancourt pendant l'année dernière seize cent quatre vingt dix sept la somme de six mille trois cent vingt huit livres Un sol pour la part Entiere qui revient aud(it) Sr Dancourt dans les Emolumens de la Comedie pendant ladite année. (1)

This document is of interest not only for its indication of Dancourt's debt, but also for the information it supplies on his income of 6,328 livres 1 sols in 1698 as a full share-holder. On May 5 Dancourt acknowledged the discharge of this debt on his behalf :

en l'assemblée generale a esté examiné Le Compte de la part de Mr Dancourt receue pendant l'année dernière par Mr Duperier montant a la somme de 6328^{tt} 1st Laquelle somme a esté par led(it) sr Duperier payee au Sr De La fouchardiere preposé par les Creanciers dud(it) Sr Dancourt La somme de 4828^{tt} 1st au dit Sr Dancourt pour sa pension de l'année Entiere Celle de 1500^{tt}.

DANCOURT. (2)

A similar situation occurred on 12 February 1699 when André de la Fouchardière 'preposé par les Creanciers de florent Carton Sr Dancourt et D.le Therese Le Noir' received from the comédiens, represented by Du Périer, the total of 7,012 livres 'pour le reste et parfait payement de Tout ce que lesd(its) Sr et D.le Dancourt devoient a leurs Creanciers' (3). This amount was made up of 5,563 livres 11 sols

(1) Minutier Central, XLIV, 142.

(2) Comédie Française, Registre.

(3) Minutier Central, XLIV, 146.

owed by Dancourt, 1,421 livres 2 sols owed by his wife, and 27 livres 7 sols presumably for expenses. It can be seen from this document that Dancourt's full share amounted to 7,630 livres 11 sols for the period from 1 April 1698 to 31 January 1699. When Dancourt's debt was deducted from his full share, he received the sum of 1,500 livres which represented his annual pension 'afirmée par son contrat d'abonnement'.

During the period when Dancourt was in charge of the theatre's financial affairs, there is no evidence of his being in debt, but immediately after giving up his post in 1710 he continued to incur various debts which were to dog his footsteps throughout the rest of his career and to bring in their wake the inevitable consequences of legal proceedings. It is ironic that Dancourt who had previously been entrusted with the task of regulating his colleagues' financial affairs and seeing to it that they dutifully paid their debts, should once again become embroiled with creditors of his own.

In May 1710 he was found to be heavily in debt to Pierre Darras, 'avocat en parlement', who obtained an order against him for the seizure of some of his property in lieu of Dancourt's debt of 4,300 livres :

A monsieur le Lieutenant Civil

Supplie humblement Pierre Darras avocat en parlement qu'il vous plaise luy permettre de faire saisir et arrester Florent Carton sieur Dancourt pour seureté de la somme de quatre mil trois cent livres portée en son obligation faite au profit du suppliant passée devant Dionis et Roussel No(tai)res a paris le premier mars mil sept cent neuf avec assignation aux debiteurs pour affirmer et vous feres bien

DE BOUGAINVILLE

Permis saisir et arrester fait ce 14 may 1710

LE CAMUS (1).

Darras followed up his request for payment of the amount due by obtaining two more orders against Dancourt, on 28 July and 6 November :

A la requete de Me pierre Darras avocat en parlement...soit sommé La Damoiselle De romanquant...de Constituer...procureur sur la saisie et arrest f(ai)ts en ses mains sur le Sr Dancourt aux fins de requetes et exploits des quatorze may et vingt huit juillet dernier sinon proteste ledit sieur Darras de prendre sentence aux ordonnances et luy adjugera ses conclusions Est fait la sommation et Interpellation cy dessus a Ladite Damoiselle de Romanquant...par moy henri

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

De Bougainville huissier priseur au Ch(astel)et...le six novembre mil sept cent dix Et baille la presente coppie.

LE BOUGAINVILLE (1).

Mlle de Romancan, wife of the actor Claude Romancan, was the receveuse de la porte d'entrée at the theatre. It was her duty, among other things, to furnish an account of the theatre's annual income whenever there was a dispute between the actors and their creditors, and to discharge debts. It is clear that Dancourt's creditor meant business, for, at the end of the theatrical year, on 27 March, 1711, he asked Mlle de Romancan to carry out her duty in respect of Dancourt :

ledit Darras est en etat d'obliger ladite Dlle de Romanquant de fournir son affirmation precise de ce qui revient et de ce qu'elle doit audit Sr Dancourt pour le tiers destiné a ses creanciers et par consequent audit Sr Darras... Sinon lesd(its) Sr et d.elle de Romanquant condamnés a payer aud(it) Darras en deniers...la somme de quatre mil trois cent livres de pr(incip)al les interests et frais dus aud(it) Sr Darras par led(it) Sr Dancourt.(1)

In this way the 4,300 livres would be deducted from his total annual income as shareholder in the Comédie Française and paid to the creditor by the official in charge of such duties.

On 19 October 1711 Dancourt was involved in a complicated situation in connection with two creditors, Claude Barbault and Nicolas Hauduroy, 'marchands de dorures' who were adamant in pursuing the cause of their just claim for the settlement of the overdue account 'n'estant causée que pour les marchandises qu'ils ont fournies a Dancourt pour les habits et ajustemens'. The comédiens were fond of spending large sums of money on their costumes even down to such details as plumes, gold trimmings and other accoutrements. Their panache was the envy of the comédiens italiens when they were in Paris, according to satirical remarks in Les Chinois (1692) (Act IV, sc. ii) in which reference is made to the French actors' well-stocked wardrobes and numerous creditors :

ARLEQUIN

quand un comédien françois n'auroit pour tout bien que sa seule garde-robe, il seroit plus riche que toute l'Italie ensemble et trouvera toujours une ressource chez le fripier. Le moindre petit confident a de quoi habiller dans un jour de triomphe toute la république romaine.

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

COLOMBINE

Cela est vrai. Mais si tous les marchands à qui ils doivent leur tiroient chacun leurs plumes, ils feroient le rôle de la corneille d'Esopé et seroient obligés de jouer les empereurs en pinchina.

ARLEQUIN

Je tombe d'accord qu'on doit quelque petite chose dans la rue Saint Honoré; mais une part entière rebouche bien des trous, et trente ou quarante ans de service acquittent plus de la moitié des dettes d'un comédien.

There was no comic exaggeration in Dancourt's case. Complications had arisen when a number of actors, on the instigation of Legrand, entered into a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and devised a scheme whereby the two creditors would be defrauded. When the latter had accused the troupe 'd'empêcher qu'ils ne soient payés de ce qui leur est dû par ledit Dancourt', it was alleged that the troupe had fabricated a délibération designed to give false information on the income of the Comédie Française :

Il ne faut qu'en examiner les clauses et les motifs pour faire voir évidemment qu'elle n'est autre chose qu'un projet illicite qu'ils ont concerté entre eux pour tâcher d'étonner leurs créanciers par les chicanes et les difficultés qu'ils leur présenteront et leur renier la portion qui revient à chacun d'eux dans le produit de leurs représentations. (1)

Mlle Romancau was requested to provide the creditors with a correct statement of the theatre's income so that they could claim payment through the official channels:

sinon lesdits Srs protestent de la p(resente) heure en son nom pour luy faire payer les causes de leurs saisies en p(rinci)pal int(erests) et frais et ou elle feroit une affirmation suspecte et conforme à l'esprit de la délibération prétendu des comédiens lesd(its) Barbault et Hauduroy se réservent leurs droits et actions tant pour faire nommer un sequestre et po(ur) recevoir la pension afférente de Dancourt dans le produit des représentations jusqu'en fin de payem(en)t de ce qui leur est dû que pour se pourvoir autrement.

The sum of money which the creditors were making every effort to recover from Dancourt was 190 livres, as can be seen in their request for legal action to be taken :

A Monsieur Le Lieutenant Civil

Supplie humblement Claude Barbault Et Nicolas Hauduroy Marchands en Compagnie q(u'i)l vous plaise pour sûreté Et confirmation de la somme de Cent quatre vingt dix livres de principal à eux dus par le Sieur Dancourt Comédien...leur permettre de faire saisir Et arrêter tout ce q(u'i)l(s) scauront estre dû et appartenir aud(it) Dancourt et ferez Justice...fait ce 19 octobre 1711.

D'AUTHUILLE
DARGOGNE (1)

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

Four days later an order was issued for Mlle Romancau to appear at the Châtelet on Dancourt's behalf :

L'an Mil sept Cens Vnze le vingt trois Jour d'octobre du matin en Valeur de l'ordonnance estant au bas de la Requête dont copie est cy dessus Et a la Requête desd(its) Sieurs Barbaut et Hauduroy Suplians y Nommez demeurans Rue du Roule...Jay Jacques Tourond huissier a Cheval au Chastelet de paris y demeurant...soussigné pour seureté et Confirmation du Contenu en lad(ite) Requête...saisi Et arrêté de par le Roy...sur led(it) S. Dancourt Comedien entre les mains de Mad.lle de Romancant Receveuse des droits et revenus de la Comedie demeurant rue de Guenegaud...Jay a ladite dam.lle de Romancant donné assignation a Comparoir dhuy en huitaine au Civil et Juge presidial du Chastelet de Paris

TOUROND (1).

Finally, on 15 December 1711, the troupe of the Comédie Française made a declaration to the effect that Barbaut and Hauduroy, together with Dancourt's other creditors, should receive payment of their accounts at the end of the theatrical year :

Et comme lesdits Sieurs Barbaut et Hauduroy ne sont pas les seuls Creanciers quy ont saisy sur ledit Sieur Dancourt, et quil y en a plusieurs autres, la troupe des Comediens n'empesche point que lesdits sieurs Barbaut et Hauduroy ne se pourvoient ainsi que les autres cfeanciers saisissants sur Ce quy se trouvera revenir pour le tiers de la part dudit Sieur Dancourt. (1)

At the end of the theatrical year, in March 1717, an assessment was made of Dancourt's financial situation over the two previous years so that his debts would be settled in full :

La troupe a avancé pour Monsieur Dancourt depuis le mois de may 1715 jusqu'au premier janvier 1716 la somme de huit cens soixante sept livres treize sols quatre deniers pour le tiers de sa part qui avoit été saisi audit temps et qu'il n'avoit point laissé retirer, et qui a été portée chez Mr Moet (notaire) avec les autres tiers que l'on a retiré depuis pour etre distribué a ses Creanciers cy

Interests de ladite somme pendant neuf mois montant a cy.....	867. 13. 4
doit en tout.....	39. 0. 9
Retiré la part de son établissement.....	906. 14. 1
doit.....	725. 19. 3
	180. 14. 10

Plus redoit la somme de trente livres dix huit sols six deniers pour frais qui ont été faits sur luy suivant le memoire de Mons.r Chupin quitancé le xi.e mars 1717 et qu'on a retiré de son etablissement cy.....

Partant doit en tout.....	30. 18. 6
	211. 13. 4

(2).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Dancourt was obliged to pay off in July 1718 debts which had accumulated in recent years, with the result that, apart from the 1,000 livres pension paid in monthly instalments, he left the Comédie

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

(2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9236, fo. 100.

Française with the meagre sum of 176 livres 14 sols instead of the lump sum of 12,180 livres which the Company paid to an actor in proportion to the amount he had contributed over the years to the expenses of the établissement or cost of the theatre built in 1689 in the Rue des Fossés Saint Germain :

La somme totale engagée dans l'établissement constituera le fonds (=capital) de la société et appartiendra en commun aux acteurs sur le pied de 23 parts. Chaque acteur, lors de son entrée dans la troupe, devra verser une somme constituant sa part du fonds...Quand un acteur mourra ou se retirera, la troupe lui remboursera, à lui ou à ses héritiers, sa part de fonds dans un délai de deux mois après son décès ou son départ. (1)

The last piece of evidence of Dancourt's fondness for incurring debts is seen in a document of 22 March 1720, two years after his retirement from the theatre, when an order was brought against the Dancourt couple for the recovery of an unspecified amount of money for which they were in debt the following month :

Appert Dame Louise Angelique de Bonnaire Veuve du Sieur françois Hersant M.e bourgeois de Paris, Estienne Antoine et Denis Hersant ses enfans...avoir donné pleine et entiere mainlevée de toutes les saisies arrests oppositions et empeissements faits a leur Requeste sur florent Carton sieur Dancourt et D.lle Therese Le Noir son epouze davec luy separée quant aux biens...et avoir consenty la nullité d'Icelles...extrait sur la minutte dud(it) acte par led(it) notaire (Desleures) soussigné ce seize avril mil sept cent vingt. (2)

Dancourt's relationship with his Colleagues.

Throughout his career at the Comédie Française Dancourt encountered several obstacles to a harmonious relationship with his colleagues. These ranged from relatively minor disagreements on an administrative basis, such as the dispute over the terms of his daughters' entry into the theatre, to a case of personal animosity culminating in an attempt on his life.

On 30 November 1706 Dancourt was involved in a violent incident which took place at the Comédie Française and which led to court proceedings. It appears from the evidence supplied that Dancourt narrowly escaped being murdered by his nephew, Etienne Baron who, for no apparent reason, made an unwarranted attack on him. Relations between the two colleagues appear to have been somewhat strained,

(1) C. Alasseur, op.cit., p. 38.

(2) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

judging by Dancourt's allegation that 'c'est une recidive continuelle que ledit Baron cherche a l'insulter dans toutes les assemblées et rencontres et meme que ledit Baron a dit plusieurs fois qu'il ne mourroit que de sa main et que meme il l'assassinerait'(1). It is not surprising then, that this sustained animosity should culminate in open conflict. In a statement Dancourt explained that while he was engaged with one of the creditors of the actor, Lavoy, a certain Sieur Pouru 'marchand de draps', he was subjected to Baron's insulting language and threatening behaviour :

dans l'instant ledit Baron auroit pris la parole et dit en ces termes en parlant dud(it) Sr Pouru Qu'est ce que c'est que cet homme la? d'ou vient qu'on le fait entrer? que luy ayant repondu que c'etoit a luy pl(aignan)t qu'il avoit affaire ledit Baron qui estoit appuyé contre la cheminée se seroit approché dud(it) pl(aignan)t en disant Cela est bien, luy auroit porté un coup de coude dans l'estomac avec violence

This was only the opening gambit, as we see from the rest of Dancourt's statement :

s'estant éloigné de luy croyant qu'il avoit bu et approché une banquette au long de la cheminée pour y faire asseoir led(it) pouru qui attendoit le sieur de Lavoye et que la comédie fut finie ledit Baron sans aucun sujet ny raison auroit encore d'un coup de pied renversé lad(ite) banquette sur les jambes de luy pl(aignan)t lequel l'ayant redressée pour s'asseoir dessus avec ledit Pouru led(it) Baron prit le p(laignan)t par le bras luy disant en ces termes, Vous etes un jean foutre.

The ensuing skirmish is vividly described in the plaintiff's terms. Those who rushed into the fray to separate the combatants included the actor, Claude Romancan, the playwright, Charles Rivière Dufresny, Chrysanthé Aubry, receveur du parterre, and other members of the Comédie Française :

Led(it) Baron se seroit retiré quelques pas de luy auroit mis l'épée a la main et en meme temps en auroit allongé un coup au pl(aignan)t qui auroit porté au coté du nommé Aubri receveur du parterre qui se seroit mis au devant pour empêcher led(it) Baron de continuer ses violences Lequel Aubri en passant auroit renversé le pl(aignan)t et lad(ite) banquette et marché sur le fourreau de son épée qu'il luy auroit cassé et...fut encore blessé de deux autres coups d'épée dud(it) Baron qui s'efforçait de percer le pl(aignan)t qui n'estoit pas meme en estat de defense Apres quoi led(it) Baron fut saisi par les sieurs Riviere et Pannetier qui survinrent et le firent sortir dud(it) comptoir pour éviter ses emportements et violences et en le tirant.

The incident, as described in this passage, contains many dramatic qualities which would provide material for a stage performance.

(1) Archives Nationales, Y, 13192.

The creditor, Thomas Pouru 'dem(euran)t Rue St Denise par(oisse) St Germain l'Auxerrois' whose presence had precipitated events and who was an innocent observer of the scene gave his version of the incident. He stated that he found Dancourt in the comptoir warming himself by the fire 'Enveloppé de son manteau rouge' and began to discuss Lavoy's financial situation with him when he was interrupted by the truculent behaviour of Baron 'a l'aut(re) bout de la Cheminée ' who, addressing Dancourt, 'se mit a luy dire plus(ieu)rs injures en marmotant dans ses dents Le traitant De jean foutre'. Chrysanthé Aubry, who was in the thick of events, and who even had scars to prove it, furnished more vivid and exciting details :

lors led(it) Dancourt estoit par Terre avoit l'epée dans son fourreau y estoit enveloppé De son manteau a Entendu Led(it) Baron Lorsqu'il retenoit son epée dire a luy depos(an)t Laissez moy luy passer mon Epée au travers du Corps en parlant dud(it) Dancourt, ne peut point dire Le sujet de leur querelle n'ayant point entendu Led(it) Dancourt repondre aucune Chose aud(it) Baron.

Another witness at the scene was Romancan's wife, Antoinette Loyer, 'Receveuse de la porte d'entrée a la Comedie dem(euran)te rue Guenegaud aagée De Vingt huit ans'.

Dancourt was, of course, determined to have some redress in face of this attack which almost cost him his life, and promptly made a request for justice to be enforced against his assailant :

A Monsieur Le Lieutenant Criminel

Suplie humblem(en)t F. Carton Sr Dancourt qu'il vous plaise luy permettre de faire Informer Des violences excédez et voyes de fait commis en sa personne par le Sr Baron dont Il a Cejourd'hui rendu plainte a M.re Bizoton Con(seill)er Pour Information faite et rapportée entre Comp(agn)ie a Mr Le Pr(ocureur) du Roy par vous ordonné ce qu'il appartiendra et vous ferez justice

Permis d'Informé

1 decembre 1706. (1)

It is not known exactly what measures were taken to protect Dancourt against a recurrence of Baron's violence. If the evidence supplied by the witnesses is a true account of what had taken place, it shows Dancourt in a very favourable light; normally a man of fiery temper, he appears to have shown remarkable self-

(1) Archives Nationales, Y, 13192.

restraint under sustained provocation. It is ironic that, after this attempt on his life and Baron's threats that 'il ne mourroit que de sa main', he attended Baron's funeral on 10 December 1711, when he was described as 'officier du roy' (1).

Another violent incident involving Dancourt took place in June 1711 in one of the foyers of the Comédie Française. This time Dancourt acted as peacemaker by intervening to stop fisticuffs between his colleague, Pierre Trochon Sieur de Beaubourg, and a certain Sieur Mey 'marchand bourgeois de paris', perhaps a creditor. Giving evidence in Beaubourg's defence, Dancourt stated at the Châtelet

que la veille de la grande fête de Dieu étant dans un des foyers de la Comédie il entendit le Sieur Mey élever sa voix et dire au sieur de Beaubourg qu'il étoit un plaisant juge de Pont-neuf sur quoi ayant tourné la tête il auroit vu ledit Mey qui tenoit ledit Beaubourg par les deux côtés de sa perruque Sur quoi luy déposant se leva et se mit entre eux deux pour les séparer (2)

Dancourt continued to incriminate the merchant by adding some information which he had obtained from the actor and playwright, Marc Antoine Legrand :

que lui déposant étant allé le même soir à Auteuil le sieur Legrand l'un de ses confrères le vint voir le surlendemain et en lui parlant de cette querelle ledit Legrand dit au déposant que le sieur Mey avoit été chez lui et qu'en présence d'un particulier il lui avoit dit que c'étoit lui qui avoit frappé le sieur Beaubourg.

F. CARTON DANCOURT

It appears that, at a later date, Dancourt had a difference of opinion with the actor, Moligny, over some obscure issue and that the troupe took Moligny's part in the dispute. On 25 September 1713 Dancourt found it necessary to justify himself in the eyes of the Company by writing on the feuille d'assemblée an explanation which does not, however, give the reader any idea as to the cause of his quarrel with Moligny :

J'ay dit au Sr Moligny en conformité de l'ordre que Mr le fevre (3) m'en a donné que Mr Le Duc De Mortemart (4) trouvoit mauvais qu'il se fit donner la liberté de luy escrire et sur ce que Led(it) sr Moligny m'a dit que Mr de Mortemart luy avoit donné un ordre Contraire Jay escrit cecy sur La feuille de L'assemblée pour Justifier que Je n'avance rien mal a propos

DANCOURT

Biffé du consentement de la Compagnie

QUINAULT.

(1) A. Jal, Dictionnaire Critique de Biographie et d'Histoire, Paris, 1872, p.466.

(2) E. Campardon, Les Comédiens du Roy, Paris, 1879, p. 25.

(3) Intendant des Menus Plaisirs.

(4) Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre.

The few lines which Dancourt had written in self-justification were crossed out by his colleagues who apparently refused to accept his explanations.

The actors' decision in August 1717 not to go to any extra expense in producing Dancourt's La Métémpsychose des Amours, a three-act machine play, was regarded by the author as a humiliating blow to what he described as 'le plus beau de (s)es ouvrages' (1). Although the play was accepted for performance on 15 June 1715 (2), for some unknown reason the actors had neglected to put it on the stage. More than two years later they decided to produce the play, but with reservations :

La piece de Mr dancourt intitulée la Metempsicose se jouera immédiatement apres L'obstacle jmprevû de Mr destouches, Et la Compagnie a arrêté que pour les agrements de cette piece on se servira des habits qui sont dans le magasin n'entendant faire aucune depense, fait a L'assemblée du lundi 2e aoust 1717. (2)

This incident apparently led to a coolness in Dancourt's relations with the rest of the troupe, as, still smarting under the humiliation, Dancourt was to express his resentment to this treatment in the avis of another play, La Déroute du Pharaon (1718) where he referred to 'le mépris qu'ils en ont paru faire, comme de la Métémpsychose des Amours'.

It is ironic that on the first day of performance of this play, the comédiens français who were so adamant in protecting their privileges against competition from the foires, were accused of having infringed the rights of the Opéra by introducing into it more than the permitted amount of musical entertainment and dancing. By a royal decree of 1672 the Opéra had been granted a monopoly of all musical performances whether vocal or instrumental, and of dancing. This was not, of course, the comédiens' first offence, as, like the forains, they had been guilty of repeatedly poaching on the preserves of their rivals in the entertainment field. (A previous example was the prologue of Dancourt's Les Trois Cousines).

Immediately before La Métémpsychose des Amours was performed for the first time on 17 December 1717, a member of the Académie Royale de Musique, Dushasne,

(1) La Métémpsychose des Amours, Paris, 1718, epistle to the Prince de Conti.

(2) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

'demeurant au magasin de l'opera rue St Nicolas' made a complaint early that morning at the Châtelet in order to have legal proceeding taken against the actors of the Comédie Française :

lui comparant a eu avis que lesdits comédiens françois au mépris de toutes ces lois dans la comédie qu'ils doivent donner aujourd'hui représentée pour la première fois sur leur Théâtre qui a pour titre Les d(i)eux Comédiens ou La Métamorphose des amours se sont proposés d'y mêler des intermèdes de musique et de danse d'appeler des voix et même des danseurs externes et plus grand nombre de violons qu'à l'ordinaire ce qui seroit une contravention auxdits privilèges et ordonnances plus marquée que les précédentes. (1)

The commissaire, Daminois, to whom Duchesne appealed, drew up a report of what took place on the stage during the first performance of the play in which Dancourt was acting :

Sur quoi nous Commissaire nous nous sommes ledit jour sur les cinq heures du soir transporté en ladite salle de la Comédie françoise où nous avons vu représenter ladite Comédie...Avons remarqué que le prologue a commencé par une descente de Mercure et une autre de la déesse de la Paix dans un char qu'il a été mêlé d'airs en musique à une voix de duos et trios avec accompagnement de neuf instruments de l'orchestre...dans lequel...il y avoit un particulier battant la mesure qu'outre trois danseurs habillés en Maures et trois danseuses en bergères, une jeune fille a dansé et chanté seule et un petit garçon déguisé en amour a aussi dansé, que dans le premier acte...les mêmes danseurs ont dansé...et deux autres déguisés en paysans comme aussi il y a eu deux duos de chantés avec lesdits accompagnemens, que dans le second acte il y a eu des danses de deux bacchants et de deux bacchantes de ladite jeune fille et de trois petits amours...et qu'il y a été chanté deux duos et un trio avec les mêmes accompagnements d'instruments, que dans le troisième...quatre danseurs...et trois danseuses...ont dansé, qu'un berger danseur a aussi chanté et qu'il y a eu deux duos chantés...Et finalement avons observé que toutes lesdites danses et chants ont servi d'intermèdes au prologue et trois actes de ladite Comédie

DAMINOIS .

It is obvious from this first-hand account that Dancourt had taken a lot of trouble in the composition and arrangement of these agréments for which elaborate props would be required. Normally plays of this nature which required machinery were more expensive to produce. It was a source of chagrin to Dancourt that his colleagues did not appreciate his work and considered any additional expense unjustified. There is another possible reason why Dancourt felt unjustly treated by his colleagues ; he was acting in the theatre's interests, as well as his own,

(1)E. Campardon, Les Comédiens du Roi, Paris, 1879, pp. 282-4.

by composing La Métémpsychose with the intention of stimulating public interest in the Comédie Française which at that time was faced with competition from the recently returned Théâtre Italien.

Shortly before his retirement in 1718 Dancourt had another disagreement with his colleagues over one of his plays, La Déroute du Pharaon, which the troupe refused to perform. An examination of the play reveals that it was an undisguised attempt to rehash one of his earlier comedies, La Désolation des Joueuses (1687). In fact, the author had made use of whole scenes from the earlier play without the slightest attempt to make any alteration, with the result that the remodelled version was, in places, merely a word for word copy of La Désolation des Joueuses. The company, no doubt being tired of producing dancourades for over three decades, would conceivably be reluctant to produce a work of such unoriginal inspiration. It seems strange, however, that after rehearsing the play and advertizing it to the public, they should refuse to put it on the stage. The author, embittered by this rebuff, had the satisfaction of getting his play published in that year. He was careful to precede it by a brief note in which he betrays contempt for the views of his colleagues who, he considers, were not competent to pass judgement on his work :

Je hasarde de donner au Public cette petite comédie que Messieurs les Comédiens du Roi ont négligé de représenter, quoiqu'ils l'eussent annoncée, mise dans leurs Affiches, et répétée même. Ils croient avoir pu pour cela de bonnes raisons: ce n'est point à moi de les déduire, ni de les combattre, encore moins de les justifier, et il ne me siéroit pas bien d'être leur Apologiste. La lecture de cet Ouvrage qui ne doit être regardé que comme un Vaudeville, fera connoître si le mépris qu'ils en ont paru faire, comme de la Métémpsychose des Amours, a été bien ou mal fondé; je me flatte que malgré les sages et solides décisions de leur savante Compagnie, il sera reçu favorablement, et qu'on ne me saura pas mauvais gré d'en avoir souffert l'impression. (1)

The unmistakable note of sarcasm which pervades this short passage suggests to the reader that Dancourt seized this opportunity of castigating his adversaries for having failed to appreciate his play. It seems, moreover, from the actors' last-minute decision to abandon the play that there was some further disagreement between Dancourt and his colleagues.

(1) La Déroute du Pharaon, Paris, 1718, avis.

It is perhaps significant that Dancourt's acting career at the Comédie Française came to an end three months before he decided to retire at Easter of that year, 1718. It was on this note of discord that Dancourt decided to break definitively with the theatrical world and retire to his estate at Courcelles-le-Roi after a chequered career of ~~thirty~~-three years at the Comédie Française.

Dancourt's retirement.

On 22 April 1718 Dancourt gained permission to retire from the Comédie Française, and was granted the annual pension of 1,000 livres in accordance with the Company's regulations :

ordre de 1000 de pension a M. Dancourt

Le Sr Dancourt L'un des comediens du Roy ayant demandé permission de se retirer de la Troupe et sa Majesté voulant luy donner des marques de la satisfaction qu'elle a des longs services qu'il a rendus a la comédie soit comme acteur, soit comme auteur de plusieurs pieces de theatre Luy a accordé et accorde par ces presentes La somme de mil livres de pension viagere par chacun an aprendre sur Le produit de la comédie non saisissable par ses creanciers attendu queble est destiné pour alimens et entretiens dud(it) Dancourt sa vie durant, de Laquelle somme de mille livres il est ordonné a lad(ite) troupe des comediens du Roy de faire jouir led(it) Dancourt a commencer de ce Jour d'huy...fait a Paris ce Vingt deux avril mil sept cent Dix huit.

LE DUC DAUMONT (1).

As we have seen, this amount was paid to Dancourt in monthly instalments for which he acknowledged receipt with his signature 'Dancourt de Courcelles' (2).

Meanwhile, Marie Thérèse remained a member of the Comédie Française until her retirement two years after that of her husband, on 19 March 1720 :

S.M. etant informée que la D.lle Dancourt s'est acquittée de son devoir a la Comédie a la satisfaction de la Cour et du Public, a ordonné et ordonne par ces presentes aux Comediens françois de faire jouir laditte D.lle Dancourt de la pension de 1000^l. (3)

The foregoing account of Dancourt's career as an actor covers some aspects of his contribution to the theatre as a whole. It remains to study what is perhaps the most significant contribution he made not only to the Comédie Française but also to literature : that is his prolific output of dramatic works, the large majority of which were performed at the Comédie Française with considerable success.

(1) Comédie Française, Dossier Dancourt.

(2) ibid. A number of pension receipts signed by Dancourt are preserved in the Dossier

(3) Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9234, p. 145.

III. DANCOURT'S PROLOGUES.

The prologues of many late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century comedies are an important source of information about the theatre of the time, as they illustrate not only playwrights' ideas on comedy, but also such important aspects as their attitude to their profession and their relationships with theatre audiences. The very existence of such informative prologues throws light on contemporary drama as a whole : they are, in themselves, evidence of a growing awareness among playwrights - many of whom were actor-authors - of their importance in society as professional entertainers. Their consciousness of aesthetic principles, coupled with the fact that they took their profession seriously, contrasts strongly with the unprofessional outlook of comic playwrights in the opening decades of the seventeenth century when conditions in the theatre were relatively poor, and when comedy was, with justice, regarded generally as a crude and insignificant form of entertainment, lacking in moral and aesthetic refinement.

Apart from reflecting the gradual change in attitudes of seventeenth-century playwrights as well as those of their interpreters and audiences and the conditions in which actors worked, many prologues of our period serve another significant purpose : they provide, alongside occasional references in plays, virtually the only source of first-hand information on the dramatic theories to which playwrights adhered. Indeed, the richest source of information on this aspect of classical literature is to be found not so much in the insignificant type of literary commentary afforded by such journals as the Mercure Galant which limited themselves chiefly to announcements and summaries of plays, or even in the works of theorists of drama, whose principles were often violated, but more specifically in the prefaces, prologues - and also texts - of many comedies. There we find,

among other things, the author's views on the purposes of comedy, his ideas on the morality or literary value of comedy as a genre, his opinion of contemporary playwrights and actors, his answers to adverse criticism, and his relationship with the audience. Since Molière inaugurated in La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes (1663) the fashion for using comedy as a vehicle for his opinions, prologues of comedies were frequently used by subsequent playwrights for similar purposes : combatting hostile criticism from the audience or rival authors, gaining publicity for their plays, and broadcasting opinions on literary or theatrical questions.

Most of the prologues which Dancourt wrote from 1699 to 1718 conform to the conventional pattern used by his predecessors since Molière's time. Apart from a few which are of relatively little interest, Dancourt's prologues are on the whole noteworthy for the information they supply on his ideas on comedy as a genre, the difficulties he encountered as a playwright, his colleagues at the Comédie Française, and types of people who frequented the theatre. Dancourt made use of his prologues to encourage public interest in the theatre, to assure the audience that their tastes were being catered for, to engender a feeling of good will between the actors and the spectators, and, perhaps most important of all, to flatter the tastes and judgement of the parterre.

Like many writers of comedy in the classical age, Dancourt indicated both by word and example an independent attitude vis-à-vis the principles of dramatic art as promulgated by literary theorists. His standards are based on those expressed by Molière in scene six of La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes : 'je voudrais bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n'est pas de plaire, et si une pièce de théâtre qui a attrapé son but, n'a pas suivi un bon chemin'. This idea was echoed in Hauteroche's preface of Crispin Musicien (1674) where the author puts forward his theory that the aim of comedy is primarily to please the audience, even if in order to achieve this, it would involve some unavoidable violation of the classical rules. Champmeslé, too, voiced his preference for

following the tastes of his audience. In the preface of Le Parisien (1682) he affects surprise at the success of his play achieved 'sans aucune étude que celle du monde', and acknowledges his debt to his interpreters, the actors of the Comédie Française.

When we turn to Dancourt we find that his views on dramatic theory expressed in some of his prologues had much in common with those of other playwrights of the period. He did not believe in a blind adherence to a rigid set of rules formulated by theorists of drama. Instead, he subordinated all considerations of doctrinaire theories to the golden rule of giving pleasure to the audience. This attitude is made clear in his epistle to Mortemart in which he sets out his aims as a playwright :

Près du Public je tâche à trouver grâce,
C'est son goût qui forme le mien;
Comme il lui plaît, j'ajoute, change, efface,
Dans tout ce que j'écris. (1)

In other words he was, above all, concerned with l'art de plaire, an ideal based on an indefinable, almost instinctive knowledge of what would be most likely to appeal to the tastes of his audience. There was thus no necessity for Dancourt to implement the classical regulations - they would be of no avail in the pursuit of this ideal.

In the light of this information Dancourt's views on this subject expressed in the prologue of Céphale et Procris (1711) are abundantly clear. Here he makes a strict distinction between two types of criticism which can be applied to his work. On the one hand there is

la censure

Des esprits solides et bons,
Qui savent décider par de justes raisons,

(1) Sancho Pança Gouverneur, Paris, 1712.

Louer, ou critiquer avec poids et mesure
 Pénétrer, et connoître à fonds
 Les traits de l'art et ceux de la belle nature.

This passage emphasises the value which Dancourt placed on the reactions of the audience who do not come to the theatre as literary critics - indeed, for the most part they lacked the education to act in this capacity - but simply to be entertained:

Je me fais un bonheur, un devoir de leur plaire,
 Je recherche avec soin leurs applaudissemens.

And, on the other hand, there is the criticism of the savants who based their standards on conformity with classical rules. Dancourt here refers to them contemptuously as

.... un tas de frondeurs pétulans,
 Critiques indiscrets, nation indocile,
 Usurpateurs du nom de beaux esprits du tems.

At the same time Dancourt was putting in question the value of their judgement based on merely doctrinaire principles. In addition to this sally against the tiny minority of influential savants, there is a comically ironic reference in the prologue to La Métempsychose des Amours (1717) to the inferiority of even the inhabitants of Parnassus to the followers of classical tradition in matters concerning public entertainment:

Au siècle où nous sommes
 Si fertile en beaux esprits,
 Les Dieux comme nous à Paris
 Sont à peine assez bons pour divertir les hommes.

Just how much of a rebel Dancourt was in relation to classical regulations is a subject of investigation not to be treated fully within the confines of this thesis, but we can safely say that, if Dancourt did not succeed in violating exactly every rule in the book, he at least made a gallant attempt to bend the rules to breaking - point when the occasion demanded. It is true, of course, that classical regulations were less rigorously applied to comedy than to tragedy, and that Dancourt was not expected to produce works of perfection, but he often took his own initiative in respect of dramatic principles to an extent that would have caused theorists to hold up their hands in horror.

If we take Boileau's precepts on comedy, particularly his Art Poétique and apply them to Dancourt's work, we find the inevitable discrepancy which is common in contemporary comedies. Examples of his flouting of classical rules are his frequent violation of the unities (except the unity of time which is often respected), the introduction of characters with no relevance to the denouement, the failure to link scenes in a logical evolution of the plot, the insertion of satirical thrusts of a personal nature, the cynical tone of some of his comedies where knavery is made attractive, the introduction of rustics in defiance of Boileau's advice to study only the manners of the city and the Court, and finally, Dancourt's violation of vraisemblance and the bienséances.

We see from the prologue of Le Diable Boiteux (1707) that the very idea of applying a set of rules to a creative work - and especially to one which depended for its success on such a spontaneous reaction as laughter - was utterly repugnant to Dancourt. In this prologue he attacks the attitude of ' un certain nombre de connoisseurs, qui ne veulent rire que de bonnes choses ne se divertir que par raison' , and adds in words which express his opinion of such critics: 'Oh, ces Messieurs- là sont bien incommodes, c'est une peste pour les pieces nouvelles'. Here again Dancourt was upholding the primacy of individual creativity in a work of literature.

Other prologues of Dancourt's composition reflect the author's desire to protect a particular play from an unfavourable reception by the audience. As authors were anxious to secure a good reception for their plays, they considered it a good policy to pander to the tastes of the most vociferous frequenters of the theatre, namely those who congregated in the parterre. Authors found themselves at the mercy of this rowdy element who would not hesitate to translate their disapproval of a play into a noisy and violent reaction. A number of prologues of the time contain references to the habit of sifflets as an expression of

disapproval by spectators in the parterre who were regarded, understandably, as the bugbear of every dramatist. The prologue of Baron's Rendez-Vous des Thuilleries (1685) was written with the intention of protecting the comedy from the possibility of such a reception. In 1691 Palaprat composed a sort of prologue or critique for Le Grondeur (1691), a comedy which he had written in collaboration with Brueys. The title of this critique, Les Sifflers, is self-explanatory, and was designed to protect the main play from an adverse fate. Another playwright who mentioned the presence of sifflers in the audience was Lesage in his Critique de Turcaret (1709). Difficulties of a playwright who presented his work to the public are mentioned in the prologue of Dufresny's Opéra de Campagne (1692) performed at the Théâtre Italien in which particular emphasis is placed on sifflers. Regnard, who had included flattery of the parterre in two plays given at the Théâtre Italien, La Coquette (1691) and especially Les Chinois (1692), composed at a much later date La Critique du Légataire (1708) in which he pays lip-service to the enlightened judgement of the parterre. Boursault, too, thought it necessary to appeal, in the prologue to Les Fables d'Esopé (1690) to the better nature of members of his audience, terming them 'juges équitables', although he does not specifically mention the parterre:

Messieurs les auditeurs, qui par votre suffrage
Rendez bon ou mauvais le destin d'un ouvrage,
Celui qui va paroître est d'un genre nouveau;
S'il vous blesse, il est laid; s'il vous plaît, il est beau.

In flattering the judgement of the parterre on whose good will the success of his plays often largely depended, Dancourt was using a technique to which, as we have seen, his predecessors had resorted on occasion. An example of this policy is seen in the new prologue to Th. Corneille's Inconnu which Dancourt wrote in 1703 with the intention of reviving the play which had been dropped from the repertory

in 1691. Two actors of this prologue are discussing theatrical affairs. In trying to establish who is responsible for a play's failure - whether actors or author - Dancourt is careful to include in his explanation some flattery of the parterre's enlightened judgement :

THALIE

Mais à qui d'une Pièce attribuer la chute?

CRISPIN

On en parle différemment.

(L'Auteur aux Acteurs l'impute,
Les Acteurs parlent autrement,
Le Parterre ordinairement
Est le juge de la dispute;
Et comme il juge sainement,
Il juge souverainement:
Ce qu'il a jugé s'exécute.

There is more ^{than} flattery in this passage, as it is a realistic avowal of the state of dependence in which contemporary authors found themselves on the goodwill of the parterre. This is brought out even more strongly in Crispin's reply to Thalie:

THALIE

... dites-moi de grace, à ces Acteurs nouveaux
Le Parterre est-il favorable?

CRISPIN

S'il ne leur étoit pas, ce seroit bien le diable.

In other words, it would be to the detriment of authors who failed to please the parterre. This explains why, in the prologue of Le Diable Boiteux Dancourt carried his complimentary remarks still further when he described the parterre as the personification of 'la fine critique'. Once again, the question is briefly mentioned in the prologue to La Métamorphose ⁽¹⁷¹⁷⁾ in which Dancourt intends to take advantage of the period of peace which the country was enjoying in order to promote the success of his play. His hope of pleasing the parterre, who are as much a menace to his success as the conditions of a war-torn country, is expressed as a pious wish:

Après les horreurs de la guerre,
Qu'une heureuse paix

Regne à jamais
 Sur la terre...
 Et nous puisse attirer la faveur du Parterre.

Failure to achieve favour from this part of the house was, of course, only one of the hazards in the path of a playwright's success.

Owing to the low esteem in which comedy as a literary genre was held, playwrights of the seventeenth century found it necessary to justify their compositions in the public eye by insisting on the high moral aim to which they ostensibly aspired. They took the opportunity of airing their views on the subject by incorporating into the prologues of their comedies such passages in praise of the genre which would represent it in the most favourable light. In the prologue of La Comédie de la Comédie (c. 1660) for example, Dorimond is anxious to let the audience know that the theatre was no longer a reprehensible form of entertainment, but a safe resort for even the most respectable members of society. He tries to convince his audience of the high moral tone of contemporary comedy by making a comparison between previous standards in this field and the present state of purified comedy. For the same reason, Molière tried to persuade the public that, far from being corrupted by the tone of his comedies, they would benefit from the moral instruction which they would receive from them. In the preface to Tartuffe Molière declares, though for obvious reasons, the innocence of his motives in composing the play and the edifying nature of comedy. A similar intention to foster the opinion that comedy was an entertaining instrument of moral instruction is echoed in the prologue to Jacques Robbe's La Rapinière ou L'Interessé (1683) where the author states that comedy is intended to 'corriger les deffauts en divertissant'.

The prologue of Dancourt's Les Fees, written for performance at Court, was intended to appeal to a more exclusive audience than those which attended the Paris theatre. In this prologue Dancourt expresses his concern about the dwindling popularity of drama with members of the royal household whose chief interests lay in the field of military affairs, before going on to under-

take a defence of the morality of comedy as a genre. The first scene consists of a monologue by La Fée qui préside aux Spectacles who acts as the author's mouthpiece and who regrets the passing of the favour she enjoyed with Louis XIV in former days before he ceased to attend Court performances:

Par quelle étrange destinée,
Moi, Souveraine des plaisirs,
Moi, de tous les mortels, l'amour et les desirs,
Me trouvai-je seule et presque abandonnée?
Quoi, la Scène est sans ornemens?
Suis-je donc cette même Fée,
Qui tant de fois aux yeux de la Cour étonnée,
Y fis briller mil agrémens?
Hélas! dans ces heureux momens,
Du plus grand des Héros j'étois favorisée,
Et quand pour travailler à ses amusemens
Ma puissance est presque épuisée,
Ose-t-on publier que j'en suis méprisée?
Par les soins importants qu'il doit à l'Univers,
Il est vrai, pres de lui, ma place est usurpée.

The author's insistence on the favour which comedy found at court and which, he states, it was in danger of losing through no fault of its own, is part of Dancourt's ploy to show how fitting an entertainment it was even for kings and members of the royalty who, in the minds of many people of the time, ought to be concerned with questions of a nobler and more heroic nature. He was careful to stress, too, the 'innocens plaisirs' which comedy afforded.

In the third scene of the prologue, Dancourt attempts to counteract the prevailing contemporary opinion that comedy was an improper form of entertainment by opposing the suggestion put forward by the Fée de la Sagesse to the effect that the 'charmes flatteurs' the 'douceurs' and the 'attraits enchanteurs' of comedy would be unsuitable material to present in august circles :

quand les charmes ne peuvent nuire,
Pourquoi s'en vouloir garantir?
Nous ne cherchons point à séduire,
Nous ne voulons que divertir.

The Fée de la Sagesse who represents all those opposed to comedy on moral grounds is eventually persuaded to relinquish her prejudice against comedy, and agree that la sagesse and les plaisirs are not always conflicting principles:

Les plus simples amusemens,
Sont les plus propres à surprendre :
En vain je cherche à me défendre
De vous donner quelques momens ;
Je sens un plaisir extrême
A demeurer avec vous.
Que le penchant doit être doux,
Qui force la Sagesse à céder elle-même !

This was an obvious attempt on Dancourt's part to dispel any fears in the minds of his spectators that there is anything reprehensible in such harmless amusements as theatre-going.

In the prologue of Le Diable Boiteux not only does the author attempt to instil a feeling of confidence among the spectators in the wholesomeness of drama as a form of public entertainment, but he also assures them that theatre-going is an edifying experience ; in the words of the lame devil :

Le devoir, la société, la bienséance rendent les lieux de spectacle très respectables et ceux qui s'y trouvent le deviennent, quand ils ne le seroient pas par eux-mêmes. Tout Diable que je suis, je me garderai bien de dire en face des vérités outrageantes, et de scandaliser en public d'honnêtes personnes qui n'ont presque point de défauts qui ne soient de ma façon.

In a much longer prologue, that of Céphale et Procris, Dancourt points out that contemporary dramatists, by following in the footsteps of Molière, have succeeded in raising the tone of comedy, and thereby achieving a victory over those who continue to denounce the genre. The muse of comedy defends this point of view against Momus, the patron of critics :

Je n'ai point eu, Momus, une espérance vaine,
La loi du Souverain, l'équité de Thémis,
Par un ordre absolu, m'ont mis
En droit de soutenir les honneurs de la scene ;
J'ai triomphé d'un monde d'ennemis,
Et malgré d'injustes cabales,
Avec les Muses triviales,
On ne reverra plus Thalie en compromis...
Les Racines et les Corneilles,
Momus, auront des successeurs ;
Et tels des modernes Auteurs,
Qui, par mes conseils, pour matiere
Ont pris la critique des mœurs,
Suivront, quoique de loin, les traces de Moliere.

Quand on ne peut atteindre au suprême degré,
 Il ne faut point rougir qu'un autre nous surmonte,
 A ce mortel illustre on peut céder sans honte,
 Et dans le second rang voir son nom consacré.

A number of significant points are illustrated in this passage. Dancourt is anxious to maintain a strict distinction between the farcical productions associated with the forains, represented by 'les Muses triviales', and contemporary playwrights of the Comédie Française whose interests are in the field of 'la critique des mœurs'. The 'injustes cabales' which Thalie mentions is no doubt an allusion to the unfair competition from entertainments at the Foires with which the comédiens français had had to contend for many years. The reference to Molière as a unique figure in the art of writing comedy is a reflection of the contemporary view that his level of achievement was unattainable. In order to reinforce his distinction between high comedy and farce, Dancourt puts into the mouth of the Muse some scathing remarks on the compositions of contemporary playwrights who, with some possible exceptions, produce uninspired works :

Mais pour ceux d'à présent, je crois
 Qu'il en est peu qu'on s'imagine
 Etre issus de race divine...
 Du Dieu des Vers enfans ou non,
 Ils usurpent ce droit dans le sacré Vallon,
 La plupart aujourd'hui n'ont point d'autre héritage...
 Ce sont des enfans sans aveu, sans mérite,
 Qu'Apollon méconnoît, ou bien qu'il déshérite.

The two mythological characters embark on a discussion of the morality of Céphale et Procris, a play dealing with the theme of marital infidelity to which Momus objects :

En sa faveur je suis mal prévenu.
 Sur la Scène à nos yeux quand un Poète étale
 Et l'amour dont l'Aurore a brûlé pour Céphale,
 Et les foiblesses de Procris,
 Forcé de débiter une étrange morale,
 Il s'embarrasse en un fâcheux Dédale;
 Et s'il s'en tire bien, je serai fort surpris...
 Mais s'il faut vous parler net,
 Je vous avoue avec franchise,
 Que sur votre théâtre un semblable sujet
 Me révolte et me scandalise.

Thalie, on the other hand, can see no cause for objection and defends the play on the grounds that such subjects had already been treated by Plautus and Molière:

Plaisante imagination!
Si l'on s'effarouchoit ainsi du caractère,
Jamais ni Plaute ni Molière
N'auroient traité l'Amphitrion.

She goes on to state that the author could hardly be accused of corrupting the morals of the public who were already aware of the absence of morality in the lives of mythological characters :

Ce n'est point moi qui rend leur conduite publique,
On la connoît partout, en Terre et dans les Cieux;
Hé, qui d'entr'eux à la cacher s'applique?...
De ces intrigues-là tout le monde est instruit,
Chacun sait ce qu'il en doit croire,
Et les défauts des Dieux ne font pas plus de bruit
Sur la Scène que dans l'histoire.

Another prologue in which Dancourt attempted to defend one of his plays, though from a different angle, is that of Les Trois Cousines (1700) which, according to the Frères Parfaits was added after the first performance. They go on to explain:

M. Dancourt suivant l'usage s'y critique pour avoir occasion de tourner en ridicule les objections de ses censeurs. (1)

The usage which Dancourt follows was firmly established by Molière who put on the stage empty-headed and prejudiced critics, usually drawn from aristocratic circles, to comment on the merits of his work. This type of mock-criticism by aristocrats was used by Delosme de Monchenay in his Critique de la Cause des Femmes (1688) where the author defended his comedy performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne in the previous year. Regnard's Critique de l'Homme à bonne fortune (1690) takes the form of a discussion between enlightened nobles and an educated bourgeois as to the merits of his Arlequin Homme à bonne fortune. Dufresny constructed the prologue of Le Double Veuvage (1702) on similar lines, choosing as his adverse critics a Marquis and a Chevalier whom he holds up to ridicule. The author expresses his own ideal of comedy which should contain

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, p. 179.

'des caracteres soutenus, une intrigue nette et suivie, des situations qui surprennent, quoi qu'elles soient préparées et de tems en tems quelque plaisanterie sans grossiereté'. At a much later date, in 1708, Regnard composed La Critique du Légataire in which his main play is attacked by a countess, a marquis, and a chevalier as well as by a financier, an apothecary and a poet, all of whom are portrayed as ignorant, pedantic and jealous of the author's success. In the Critique Regnard puts forward his aim as a comic playwright to write in conformity with the tastes of the audience and to 'divertir les gens d'esprit avec art'. The characters of Lesage's Critique de la Comédie de Turcaret (1709) which takes the unusual form of both a prologue and an epilogue, are not the traditional aristocratic figures but two characters from Lesage's novel, Le Diable Boiteux, Asmodée, the lame devil and Don Cléophas, a student. In the Critique Lesage defends his ideal of comedy by stating that character portrayal should be a playwrights primary concern, not the development of the intrigue.

The first scene of Dancourt's prologue to Les Trois Cousines, written on the conventional lines, begins with a conversation between two aristocratic ladies, Belinde and Menone, who not only complain about 'cette ennuyeuse, cette plate Comedie' they have come to see, but also about the objectionable^b company they meet in the loges. Belinde blames the ouvreuse for showing people to boxes where they are obliged to endure the company of undesirable persons :

...qui vous met^{inconsidérément} dans le même balcon, de certaines personnes, d'un certain rang, d'un certain mérite, avec d'autres certaines personnes, d'un certain dérangement, d'un certain caractère... je m'ennuye si fort dans ces foyers. On n'y voit point de jeunesse polie, point de petit Seigneur qui ait la conversation enjouée ni les manieres galantes. Oh! pour moi, une de mes grandes passions c'est d'aller un de ces jours au Parterre.

This last remark which Belinde makes about the parterre is rather comical in its absurdity; the very idea of her carrying out her intention to consort with spectators in the parterre would have provoked laughter, as this part of the house was a male preserve. In complaining about the ouvreuse's lack of consideration for individual tastes, Belinde was voicing an objection which was

shared by members of her class; this question was discussed in 1697 at one of the actor's assemblées when it was stated that 'les Ouvreuses placent indifferement toutes sortes de Personnes qui ne payent point, mesme jusques à des Domestiques', and that measures should be taken 'pour...empescher que les Personnes de Qualité ne se voyent confondues avec toutes sortes de gens' (1).

Criticism of Dancourt's play begins in earnest with the introduction of another aristocratic figure, the Baron de Fonfecq. The baron is portrayed as completely prejudiced against the play, and obstinately refuses to give the author credit for his success even in the face of evidence that the general public are attracted to the play :

Je n'ai pas (la rage) de la voir, c'est celle de la décrier qui me possède, et l'on n'a jamais été si fâché que je le suis de voir une mauvaise rapsodie de bagatelles toutes plus plates les unes que les autres usurper le nom de Comédie, et mettre tout Paris en mouvement...je me vais roidir contre le mauvais goût du public. Je le tirerai d'erreur sur ma parole, et l'Auteur aujourd'hui n'aura pas beau jeu...je suis un homme de lettres, connu pour tel, je veux me distinguer, et éviter autant qu'il m'est possible de décider comme fait tout le peuple, et de donner dans des sentiments qui me paroissent généralement reçus.

Nothing could be more calculated to alienate public sympathy for the baron's cause than his tactless condemnation of the 'mauvais goût' which he attributes to Dancourt's admirers. It is no coincidence that Dancourt describes him as an 'homme de lettres' of some renown, another example of his satire on savants.

A significant feature of the baron's criticism is his unwillingness to subscribe to opinions which are widely held by the general public. Belinde reinforces his opinion by expressing her contempt for what is accepted by the 'common herd' :

Il a raison. Il y a de certaines chose dont tout le monde rit qui me révoltent, moi...elles font rire tout le monde, cela est trop commun, cela me déplaît.

Additional criticism of both the author and his play is expressed by an intoxicated chevalier :

C'est un bon vivant qui aime la joie, la bonne chere, bon vin de Champagne, il nous a régalés...mais tout compté, tout rabatu, sa Comédie ne vaut pas le diable...je travaille avec lui; quand il a quelque ivrogne à mettre, c'est ordinairement moi qui sert de modele. Oh! ce garçon-là copie bien d'après nature.

(1) cf. J. Bonnassies, La Comédie Française. Histoire Administrative, Paris, 1874, p. 111.

The credibility of the chevalier's argument is considerably weakened by the fact that his judgement would be impaired by his state of inebriation. On the other hand, the chevalier excuses the author's ignorance in literary fields :

Oh, pour cela ce n'est pas sa faute, il n'a pas le tems, nous sommes toujours à table et puis pour les bagatelles qu'il fait, dit-il, il n'a besoin que du livre du monde, il y sait lire, il le connoît, il pille là-dedans comme tous les diables.

This piece of criticism must be considered in the light of the prejudice which was a characteristic of members of polite society against any show of learning which they described as pedantry.

The baron has grown tired of seeing dancourades :

Qu'il fasse donc voir quelque chose de nouveau, et qu'il ne tourne pas autour de lui-même, comme sur un pivot; toujours des Procureurs, des Bourgeoises ridicules, des nigauds, des Paysans, des Meuniers, des Meunieres. Cet homme-là est né pour le moulin, il ne le peut quitter.

He denies authorship of an epigrammatic quatrain against Dancourt :

Le public est fou, Dieu me damne,
De trouver à l'Auteur un esprit drôle et fin;
Ce n'est qu'un ignorant, je le garantis âne,
Puisqu'il est toujours au Moulin.

Far from refuting any of these criticisms, Dancourt subscribes to them in a manner calculated to disarm his adversaries. He provides himself with the opportunity of expressing his contempt for his critics' opinions by introducing a counter-attack through the medium of the chevalier's description of the author's reaction to this piece of satire :

il s'en moque, il s'en divertit...tout le monde rit des sottises qu'il fait,
il rit aussi des sottises que font les autres.

The prologue was discontinued in January 1701 as a result of the censorship exercised by d'Argenson, who found grounds for objection, but his order was not enforced without a certain amount of resistance from the parterre who apparently favoured the retention of the prologue :

Le parterre de la Comédie murmuroit beaucoup hier de ce qu'on avoit retranché le prologue des Trois Cousines, mais ce retranchement n'étoit pas moins nécessaire par rapport au privilege de l'Opéra, que convenable aux règles de la bienséance. Il fallut néanmoins que l'exempt qui commande la garde

rappelât aux spectateurs le souvenir des ordres du Roi, et aussitôt qu'il eut parlé, le tumulte cessa. (1)

Another important facet of Dancourt's prologues is the information they contain on points concerning the theatre and the actors. We have already dealt with the behaviour of the parterre and the presence of siffleurs in the audience, but in the prologue of Céphale et Procris there is an interesting reference to claqueurs. These were people who, on the instigation of an author, used to attend the performances of a play and attempt, by their boisterous reaction, to drown any opposition expressed by opponents. Momus puts the question to the muse :

Vous avez posté vos amis
Pour applaudir, battre des mains, et rire?
...C'est un usage permis,
Je vais tâcher des miens d'arrêter la satire,
De votre part les prier poliment,
Pour aujourd'hui de ne rien dire,
Pas même après le dénouement.

In the prologue of Le Diable Boiteux there is a summary reference to the manners of theatre-goers :

dans ces lieux-ci ordinairement la vanité et l'amour-propre sont sur le
Théâtre, le luxe et la coquetterie dans les loges, et la fine critique dans
le parterre.

All this is, of course, an allusion to the behaviour of the unruly crowd of young men who sat on the stage while the actors were performing, and whose antics often succeeded in diverting the audience's attention from the play; the presence of wealthy members of society, particularly women, in the loges; and the tastes of the parterre whose judgement often decided the fate of a play.

Dancourt also used the prologue of Céphale et Procris for the purpose of undertaking a defence of the actors of the Comédie Française who were apparently the object of criticism from the audience. The defence takes the form of a discussion between Thalie and Momus in which the spectators' objections are anticipated and answered :

MOMUS

... parlons un peu des Acteurs.

Par eux, sur le dégoût qu'ont eu les Spectateurs,

(1) cf. P. Mélése, Le Théâtre et le Public à Paris sous Louis XIV, Paris, 1934, p.221.
(note from d'Argenson to Pontchartrain of 16 January 1701).

Quelques réflexions ont-elles été faites?
 Je ne prétends en critiquer aucun,
 Du Public en cela j'évite la conduite.

Momus makes it clear that the actors' professional ability is not the subject of the spectators' displeasure, but he hints darkly at certain misdemeanours, without specifying what they are, which have given rise to public criticism :

Il n'en est point qui soit sans talent, sans mérite;
 Et sans vouloir flatter, je n'en connois pas un
 Qui, s'il demeurait dans sa sphere,
 Ne pût être placé dans quelque caractere
 A s'attirer des applaudissemens.
 Nous en voyons l'exemple à tous momens.
 Mais ce qui déplaît d'ordinaire,
 Ce sont certains derangemens
 Qu'on devroit éviter de faire.

Thalie takes the part of the actors against Momus who voices accusations made by certain spectators that they often ^{fail} to carry out their professional duties through lack of whole-hearted commitment to their task:

THALIE

Quelque droit que l'on ait d'y trouver à redire,
 Un Acteur bien souvent ne sauroit pas suffire
 A jouer tous les jours tous les rôles qu'il a,
 On a la poitrine échauffée.

MOMUS

D'un souper quelquefois poussé jusqu'au matin.

THALIE

Quelque migraine, ou la voix étouffée.

MOMUS

Ou quelqu'autre raison bonne ou mauvaise enfin:
 Les Spectacles comme les vôtres
 Des Peuples en tout tems feroient tous les desirs,
 Si vos Acteurs ne prenoient leurs plaisirs
 Qu'après avoir fait ceux des autres.

Momus does not, however, give any further details of the actors' behaviour off the stage and discreetly refuses to become embroiled in questions relating to their private lives :

Je fais profession de n'être point flatteur:
 Mais je ne veux lâcher aucun trait de satire;
 Si ma morale vous déplaît,
 Restons^{en} là pour éviter querelle.
 De vos Acteurs vous prenez l'intérêt,
 C'est bien fait.

The interest of these references lies in the light they throw on public opinion of actors. This aspect of the contemporary theatre was later more fully developed by Lesage in Gil Blas; here the author, who was not as personally involved in the theatre as Dancourt, did not mince words when, under the guise of satirizing Spanish actors, he was in fact levelling criticism at certain actors of the Comédie Française whom he terms 'gens vicieux' : 'L'envie, la colere, et l'avarice règnent chez les uns, la pudeur est bannie de chez les autres; ceux-ci s'abandonnent à l'intempérance et à la paresse, et l'orgueil de ceux-là va jusqu'à l'insolence' (1).

In his new prologue to L'Inconnu Dancourt chooses as his characters, apart from Thalie, members of the troupe of the Comédie Française who appear mostly under their own names. In so doing he was following in the tradition of Molière's Impromptu de Versailles which was also imitated by Raymond Poisson in Le Poète Basque (1668) and by Baron in the prologue of his Rendez-vous des Thuilleries. Another example of this technique was the prologue of Regnards' Bolies Amoureuses performed in 1704, the year after Dancourt's prologue, and in which several actors of the Comédie Française, including Dancourt, appear under their own names and discuss theatrical affairs. In Dancourt's prologue, the muse questions Crispin - a role normally played by Paul Poisson - as to the present situation of the theatre, the type of actors of which the troupe was composed, the contribution they make to entertaining the public, and other features of the Comédie Française. Crispin, wishing to gain the audience's confidence in the good will of the troupe, talks of the theatrical company with respect :

THALIE

Arrive-t-il souvent que l'on y réussisse?

CRISPIN

...pour peu qu'on nous applaudisse,
Nous redoublons nos soins, enfin nous sommes tous
Fort contents de Paris, quand Paris l'est de nous.

THALIE

De bons Acteurs la Troupe est-elle bien fournie?

(1) Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane, Paris, 1795, 4 vols., vol. I, p. 296.

CRISPIN

Troupe, Madame! on dit à présent Compagnie,
Malpeste! sur un bon pied
Nous avons mis la Comédie;
Et si par quelque heureux génie
Le Théâtre étoit appuyé...

He goes on to mention the obvious fact that if the audience has not enjoyed the first performance of a play they will refuse to see it again :

Une premiere fois par curiosité...
On vient voir en foule un ouvrage.
Quand...la premiere fois...on en est dégouté,
On n'y revient pas davantage.

The implication contained in this statement is that contemporary theatre-goers would attend the performance of a play several times, provided, of course, it was enjoyable.

Crispin insists on the newly recruited actors' desire to spare no effort in bringing pleasure to the audience :

Nous n'avons presque plus de ces originaux,
Que vous aviez formés vous-même.
Grand changement d'un tems à l'autre y a;
Et quand on n'a pas ce qu'on aime,
Il faut bien aimer ce qu'on a.
Nous nous formons sur le meilleur modele.
A vous faire la cour tous ardens comme moi,
Nous avons tous le même zele,
Pour réussir chacun dans son emploi.

He introduces to Thalie some actors who had recently joined the theatrical company :
Ponteuil, Sallé, and la Desmares, all of whom the muse wishes to take under her protection. Reference is made to the young La Thorillière whose father is stated to have been one of Thalie's favourites, and also to la Desmares, niece of the famous la Champmeslé :

THALIE

N'avez-vous pas le fils de la Thorilliere?

CRISPIN

Oui, dont vous aimiez tant le pere.

THALIE

De mes faveurs je l'ai toujours comblé,
Et sa famille aussi me sera toujours chere.

CRISPIN

Tant mieux. La famille a peuplé,
En voici de la jeune espee.
Vous aimiez fort aussi, dit-on, la Champmeslé?

THALIE

Assurément.

CRISPIN

Hé bien, tenez, voilà sa nièce.

THALIE

J'aime à voir dans cette jeunesse,
Des Acteurs que j'aimois avec tant de tendresse,
Le mérite renouvelé.

By this means, Dancourt was making the audience familiar with some members of the troupe and their well-known and talented forebears. He continues to manipulate popular opinion by preparing the audience to receive favourably the play which is about to be given. La Desmares recalls to the spectators the success of the recent revival of Psyché, for which Dancourt had devised some new embellishments :

...nous venons de remettre Psyché,
Avec tout le succès qu'on s'en pouvoit promettre...
En foule (le public) est venu la voir,
Et nous serions bienheureux d'en avoir
Une qui pût autant lui plaire.

Crispin mentions the popularity of vaudevilles with the audience :

Des pièces d'agrément sans Danse, sans Musique?
Autant vaut fermer la Boutique.

Thalie comes to the actors' assistance in their difficulty in finding a fitting subject with which to regale the audience :

Je me souviens autrefois d'avoir vu
Réussir certain INCONNU
Il ne seroit pas mal, je pense,
Après l'avoir si long-tems négligé
D'essayer sans trop de dépense
Si le goût du Public ne seroit pas changé.

It is decided to produce this play without the great expense which had been necessary for Psyché when the audience had grumbled at the price of tickets which had been doubled :

CRISPIN

...mais au double il a fallu la mettre,
Et le Public s'en est presque fâché...
De crainte d'accident, ne faisons pas grands frais,
Ne prendra-t-on que le prix ordinaire,
Ou le double, comme à Psyché?

THALIE

Non, le simple.

The prologue ends with Crispin's last attempt to create a genial atmosphere among the audience :

Messieurs, la Muse aime à vous plaire.
En sa faveur on vous fait bon marché;
En sa faveur aussi...voici ce qu'il faut faire:
Agréez nos efforts, louez, applaudissez,
Venez en foule, et souvent; c'est assez.

It was not until the end of his dramatic career that Dancourt found it again necessary to compose a prologue in defence of comedy which was suffering from the apparent apathy of theatre audiences. An important consideration affecting the popularity of the Comédie Française was the recent return of the Théâtre Italien and the competition it offered to the Paris theatre. The prologue of La Métamorphose des Amours (1717) in which Dancourt sets out to revive public interest in comedy, is divided into three scenes and ends with a divertissement. The scene represents a meeting of the mythological figures La Paix, Mercure, Thalie, Bacchus and l'Amour, who have descended from their celestial abode to provide entertainment for the citizens of Paris; this will take the form of the play which follows, in which the gods will figure :

Il faut dans ces commencemens
Descendre un peu de nos grandeurs suprêmes,
Pour mériter des applaudissemens.
Jupiter et Vénus, Junon même, s'apprentent
À secourir les jeux qu'ici nous préparons;
Et de concert avec nous ils se prêtent
Aux spectacles galans que nous y donnerons.

It is feared, however, that, in spite of all the attractions of drama, the theatre is no longer such a popular form of entertainment, and that the theatre-going public needs a new incentive :

LA PAIX

Mais, Mercure, aux plaisirs d'aimer, à ceux de boire,
On ne peut pas toujours donner tous ses momens;
Cherchons, si vous m'en voulez croire,
Quelques autres amusemens.

MERCURE

Il en est ici de charmans,
Et que tout le monde idolâtre

LA PAIX

Je les connois, ceux du Théâtre;
Mais on dit que depuis un tems
Ils sont devenus languissans.

MERCURE

Sans vous tout déplaît, tout ennuie.
Mais pour leur redonner de nouveaux agrémens,
Apollon consent que Thalie
Et la Muse de l'harmonie,
Donnent des spectacles galans,
Et puissent de concert exercer leurs talens.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Dancourt's efforts on behalf of the theatre in this instance were not fully appreciated by his colleagues.

The only other of Dancourt's prologues in which theatrical questions are mentioned is that of L'Opérateur Barry (1702). The scene is laid on the stage of the Paris theatre and the actors Dancourt, Le Comte and Mme de Champvallon appear under their own names to introduce and justify the one-act comedy based on Italian conventions. Dancourt finds it necessary to encourage the audience not to lose interest in the theatre during the absence of most of the troupe who were at Fontainebleau. He goes on to allay any fears in the minds of the spectators, voiced by his two colleagues, that the play which is about to be given would not be suitable for presentation in the French theatre.

Occasionally Dancourt took the opportunity of introducing into his prologues an element of social satire, for instance in that of Le Diable Boiteux where the Devil has escorted his two Spanish protégées, Thérèse and Sanchette, from Madrid in order to witness a scene from the life of a Parisian widow. Paris is described as 'la plus belle ville du monde', but its fashionable life fosters attitudes to which the Devil objects : 'les gens du monde (sont) esclaves du goût et de la mode'. Referring to courtly manners he points out that 'ce ridicule-là est

tellement reçu et si aveuglément approuvé, qu'il a le crédit de ridiculiser les meilleures manières des autres endroits du Royaume, la sagesse des étrangers même'. In this quotation the Devil is referring to the outlook of members of aristocratic circles who held in contempt the 'provincial' manners of those who lived outside Paris.

The prologue of Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux (1707) contains a touch of satire of the idea of spending one's life in the pursuit of financial gain. The Devil has taken under his protection a certain sous-traitant, M. Simon, who had devoted a lifetime to making and saving money; 'Je travaille jour et nuit à faire travailler mon argent, afin qu'il augmente'. The Devil advises him to reap the fruits of his labours instead of leaving his fortune to his frivolous young wife to fritter away after his death, and adds : 'voilà comme à Paris on porte le deuil d'un mari avare'. Similarly Lesage's Critique de la Comédie de Turcaret produced in the following year, contains a piece of satire on those who make a quick fortune at public expense and who are termed the devil's partisans.

Finally, there is the brief prologue of Les Fêtes du Cours (1714) which is of relatively little interest. It is set to music and consists of a dialogue between Choreada and Cynoedor who, using metaphors drawn from mythology, celebrate the return of peace :

Les soins du plus grand Roi du monde
Ont mis Bellone dans les fers,
Et par sa sagesse profonde
La Paix pour son séjour a vaste Univers.

The final lines of the prologue set the tone of the plays, the scene of which is laid at the Cours-la-Reine :

Tous les Dieux ensemble
Prêtent leurs secours
Au Dieu des Amours,
Pour ceux qu'il assemble
Cette nuit au Cours.

Like many playwrights of the time Dancourt left a legacy of valuable information in the prologues to his plays. It is through them that we can add to our

knowledge of him as an actor-author. The deepest impression they leave is that he was essentially a man of the theatre, anxious to uphold the interests of the Comédie Française not simply because he himself was an interested party, but because he regarded the theatre as a profession. We have seen in the previous chapter how deeply he was involved in the theatre's administrative affairs, and in this chapter some further examples of his efforts on behalf of the Comédie Française, generally of a more aesthetic nature : his attempts to defend the morality of comedy, to revive public interest in the theatre during difficult circumstances, to establish good relations between the actors and the spectators, and to defend the reputation of his colleagues in the face of public criticism. These prologues, through the information they provide on Dancourt's ideas on dramatic art, illustrate an important aspect of French classical literature : the reaction of many writers, particularly comic playwrights, against a blind adherence to a set of rules governing literary composition. From what we can learn in general of Dancourt from contemporary documents and in particular from his prologues, we can conclude that no seventeenth-century playwright was more fully conversant than he with the practical difficulties of life in the theatre.

IV. DANCOURT'S EVOLUTION AS A PLAYWRIGHT.

From a chronological study of Dancourt's dramatic productions, it is possible to trace certain patterns of development which the author followed throughout his career as a playwright. As Dancourt provided the Comédie Française with dozens of comedies for over three decades, any attempt to classify this prolific output into a number of rigid categories would, of course, give a distorted picture of his dramatic works and scarcely do justice to his flexible imagination which embraced a wide variety of subjects. Indeed, a striking characteristic of Dancourt as a playwright is his talent for improvisation, a task which was often imposed on him by the demands of the troupe.

A general survey of Dancourt's compositions during his long career would reveal a certain evolution in his choice of subject-matter and in his manner of presentation of these comedies. Bearing in mind the important consideration that there exists no clear-cut dividing-line to mark out stages of evolution, it is nonetheless possible to distinguish three periods in his career when he showed a marked preference for certain subjects and methods of presentation. This does not mean that at any stage in his career Dancourt showed an exclusive preference for any type of comedy, or that, while concentrating largely on one particular subject of composition, he entirely neglected other forms of writing. In fact, the theme of satire of Parisian society, recurring at every stage in his career, forms a unifying link in his total dramatic output.

For the first few years of his career, up to 1692 or so, Dancourt's attention centred chiefly around the manners of fashionable Parisian society. In portraying the attitudes and manners characteristic both of the titled classes and of the wealthier members of the bourgeoisie, Dancourt enters into the minutest details

of their daily life. His plays of this period are a rich source of information on the outlook, occupations, amusements and manner of dress which characterized members of the fashionable world at the time. His almost exclusive concentration on the misdemeanours of his characters and the critical comments which he occasionally introduces into these plays give them an unmistakable flavour of social satire. It has often been remarked that Dancourt had an almost fanatical desire to portray the seamy side of life. This is particularly true of this group of plays, in which the characters resort to almost every imaginable kind of subterfuge and chicanery more often than not in the pursuit of financial gain. It would be unusual to find a character whose actions were not motivated by an unworthy object.

The year 1692 was a turning point in Dancourt's choice of material for social satire, with the appearance in increasing numbers of peasant characters in his plays. Of his twenty-six plays performed between 1692 and 1704 inclusive, twenty-two contain a large number of peasant characters, but only one, Les Trois Cousines, however, is exclusively devoted to a detailed study of the rustic community. The scene for most of these plays is set in the outskirts of Paris. It will be at once apparent, however, that although Dancourt switched the scene from city life to a rustic setting, he did not renounce his satire of the Parisian bourgeois whom he pursued with relentless vigour into the villages and popular resorts in the Paris region. This phase in the development of Dancourt's choice of material is interspersed with four comedies resembling in nature the satirical works directed against the Parisian way of life which were characteristic of his earlier plays.

From 1704 to 1725 Dancourt tended to seek inspiration for his works from a variety of sources - mythology and contemporary French literature in particular. Naturally, he did not relinquish his favourite theme of satire of bourgeois manners, and there is in this period of his career one isolated example of a comedy portraying life in the provinces. In this group of plays Dancourt gradually

moved away from the preceding spate of bright, swiftly-moving one-act plays to embark on a more challenging type of play containing a greater number of acts and written in verse. It is clear from his lack of success in these more ambitious works that they were an unfortunate choice. His very obvious talent for presenting unpretentious, lively sketches of contemporary society by means of a variety of comic devices, did not adapt itself to dealing successfully with the weightier subjects through which he wished to establish a reputation for himself, in the dramatic field. While this period of Dancourt's career shows traces of his former methods of composition, especially in the more successful plays, the overall impression is one of gradual decline : his satirical vein became gradually less forceful, his imagination began to flag, and, perhaps worst of all, he sacrificed his original flair for the one-act playlet to his overweening ambition to undertake forms of composition which surpassed his ability.

Dancourt's first two plays, a tragedy, La Mort d'Hercule, and a comedy, Les Nouvellistes de Lille, both performed and published in the provinces in 1683, have little in common with the plays he produced as a member of the Comédie Française, and can therefore be considered apart from the main body of his compositions, but their importance lies in the fact that they throw light on the initial stages of his development as a playwright.

As already pointed out, Dancourt set out with the intention of making a name in tragedy but, as events were to prove, he did not continue to write tragedies, and showed little enthusiasm for taking part in them. La Mort d'Hercule, written in verse, is the only example of his attempts to produce a tragedy and consequently forms an incongruous element in his collection of plays. As it is totally unrepresentative of Dancourt as a playwright, it can be dismissed with a passing reference to its existence and its place in the evolution of Dancourt's plays. Tragedy was not Dancourt's métier as, no doubt, he realized at this early stage.

This play is studied in detail by W.H. Starr (1) who points out some borrowings from Andromaque and some very close parallels between Rotrou's Hercule Mourant (1632) and La Tuillerie's more recent Hercule (1681). It is of interest in this connection to point out that Regnard probably began his distinguished career as a writer of comedy with his tragedy, Sapor, which was never acted and was published posthumously in his collected edition of 1731. Like Dancourt's play this seems to have been a youthful and unsuccessful experiment in tragedy (2). Marivaux, too, began his dramatic career with a tragedy, La Mort d'Annibal.

On the other hand, Les Nouvellistes de Lille, also in verse, marks Dancourt's first attempt at satire of contemporary society, an aspect of his work which he was to develop in the course of time. The play is thought to have much in common with Hauteroche's lost Les Nouvellistes (1678) although the scene, as the title indicates, is at Lille. In it Dancourt presents in a ridiculous light the activities of contemporary newsmongers who take an interest in collecting and spreading news from different parts of the world. Argante, avid for information of any nature, prides himself on his accumulation of news which he has collected from a gazette, letters from abroad, travellers' tales and the ⁿunreliable gossip of his associates: 'De même qu'un Oracle on vient me consulter' (sc. v.). The comic part of the play is the newsmonger's gullibility; while his attention is distracted by fantastic accounts of travellers' experiences, Oronte proposes to his daughter, Angélique, and he readily accepts the 'news' that the husband he had intended for his daughter had died. The comedy ends, as with most of Dancourt's plays, with the marriage of the young lovers.

It will be seen from the following review of Dancourt's works that the plays reflecting various aspects of Parisian society fall chiefly into the first third of his dramatic career, but they are by no means exclusively confined to that

(1) Florent Carton Dancourt, (unpublished thesis) Johns Hopkins University, 1937, pp. 49-50.

(2) cf. H.C. Lancaster, A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, Baltimore, 1929-42, 9 vols., vol. IV, part II, p. 732. But Dancourt's play was, however, performed ^{Paris} much later, in 1704, under the title of La Mort d'Alcide. It enjoyed only six performances.

period. Examples of such plays recur from time to time at every stage of his career, and are to be found as late as 1718, the year of his retirement from the theatre.

Dancourt's first play to be produced at the Comédie Française was Le Notaire Obligé (1685), later renamed Les Fonds Perdus. Contrary to expectations, the play contains little that can be regarded as satire of members of the legal profession; the presence of a notary at the end of the play is merely functional, as he is needed to draw up the contract of marriage between Valère and Angélique. The subsequent title of the play would be more appropriate, as the plot is made up of a series of attempts made by the young couple, with the expert help of their servants, to extract money from their parents who are their rivals in love. The servants, Merlin and Lisette, are the instigators of the intrigue and take a prominent role in the play. There is a very obvious borrowing from Tartuffe in Act II scene v. where the heroine's mother, Mme Gérante, infatuated with Valère, intermittently makes the brief ironic comment 'le pauvre garçon' - as a variation on Molière's 'le pauvre homme' - on Merlin's lengthy description of Valère's robust appetite. The conventional plot, unrealistic situations, and lack of characterization mark the young playwright's amateurish attempts in the dramatic field.

At this early stage in his career, Dancourt was attracted to the idea of satirizing the Opéra, a popular form of entertainment in Parisian society. In Angélique et Médor, he uses the framework of one of Quinault's operas, Roland, performed earlier in that year, as a device to enable the young couple, Isabelle and Eraste, to elope. In the following year, Dancourt produced Renaud et Armide which, however, was not published until 1697. During the course of the play, unfavourable opinions of Quinault's Armide are expressed by the maid, Lisette, and her equally impudent counterpart, Lolive. In this play, Dancourt was probably the first French playwright to make use of a theme which was to become popular

among contemporaries - the fortunes of Parisian coquettes during summer months when, in the absence of their suitors who were engaged in military service, they were reduced to whiling away the time in the company of less desirable suitors. As the play was not published until 1697, it is not known whether the scene relating to this theme (scene iii) was actually included in the original manuscript version of 1686. The contrast between military and civilian suitors was to be widely used in the contemporary theatre, inspiring particularly the subject-matter of Le Concert Ridicule (1689) by Brueys and Palaprat, as well as that of Dancourt's own L'Été des Coquettes (1690), and furnishing much of the content of Dufresny's Adieux des Officiers performed at the Théâtre Italien in 1693, and of Dancourt's later Le Retour des Officiers (1697). Another noteworthy point about Renaud et Armide is Dancourt's conception of the wealthy widower, Grognaç, characterized by his constant bad humour and dissatisfaction with his associates. His name and attributes were borrowed by Regnard in Le Distrain (1697) where they are given to a female character who is intensely disagreeable to everyone with whom she comes into contact. Brueys and Palaprat devoted the whole of a three-act play, Le Grondeur, (1691) to the study of the character of a grumbler. If they were not influenced by Dancourt, in this respect, then at least they were preceded by him. The full satirical significance of both Angélique et Médor and Renaud et Armide will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The feuilles d'assemblée of the Comédie Française mention two plays of Dancourt's composition, Merlin la Chaconne and Le Brutal de Sens Froid which were both performed with modest success in May 1686, but which were never published and are lost.

The year 1687 was a milestone in Dancourt's career as a playwright, as it marked two important stages in his evolution. On the one hand, he produced a one-act play, La Désolation des Joueuses, which was his first attempt at satirizing the manners of the aristocracy, and on the other hand, of far greater importance, there is his chef-d'oeuvre, the five-act Le Chevalier à la Mode by which he was

to be best remembered.

The subject of La Désolation des Joueuses, the popularity of gambling among fashionable ladies, was far from being a novelty on the stage. An early example is Chevalier's Intrigue des Carosses, published in 1663, in which gambling forms a minor aspect of the plot. There is a scene concerned with cheating in card-playing and references to the popularity of académies with people who have stolen money or who wish to redeem pawned articles. In La Forge's La Joueuse Dupée, published in the following year, gambling is the dominant theme. In this play the author describes various devices for cheating and dramatizes the effects of gambling on a family. Dancourt's play offers some similarities with this one of which the scene is set in a fashionable milieu where the protagonist, Uranie, neglects her family to indulge her passion for gambling. Another play in which gambling receives a considerable amount of emphasis is Poisson's Les Femmes Coquettes, published in 1671. In it, the author's satire is directed against women with a passion for gambling who regard their husbands as sources of the necessary funds. A number of other plays on this subject which preceded Dancourt's were not published, and consequently nothing is known of their content or of the extent to which they may have influenced Dancourt. They are Hauteroche's La Bassette (1680) and Champmeslé's Les Joueurs (1683), both of which are lost. Baron introduced this theme marginally into Le Rendez-Vous des Thuilleries (1685) in which a marquise plays lansquenet with male friends into the early hours of the morning.

The theme continued to be used after Dancourt's example by Dufresny in his Lé Négligent (1692) where it is referred to as a fashionable pastime, and later in to a much greater extent, in his Chevalier Joueur (1697) and particularly in La Joueuse (1709) where confusion in a household is the result of Mme Orgon's obsession with gambling. Regnard's Le Joueur (1696), dealing with the effects of lansquenet on those addicted to it, differs fundamentally from Dancourt's play, as he dramatizes Valère's passion for gambling in conflict with his love for Angélique.

The other play produced in 1687, Le Chevalier à la Mode, occupies an important place not only in Dancourt's work, but also in the history of late seventeenth-century comedy. It was composed in collaboration with Saint-Yon, an obscure individual apparently of a philosophical turn of mind, author of a single play, Les Moeurs du Tens (1685). The Frères Parfaict describe him as 'secrétaire de M. de la Faluère, Grand-Maître des Eaux et Forêts' (1), and add that he was a self-effacing character, unconcerned with questions of literary reputation. It is not, of course, possible to identify each author's personal contribution, as one could quite easily do with an operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan. A comparison between Les Moeurs du Tens and Le Chevalier à la Mode would prove simply nothing, and to attribute any discrepancies between the two plays to Dancourt's composition would be a gross over-simplification. After all, as the two playwrights were no doubt acquainted with each other, one cannot rule out the possibility that some ideas in the earlier work which are not used in Le Chevalier à la Mode may have been originally suggested by Dancourt, and that others, again of Dancourt's inspiration perhaps, which appeared in Saint-Yon's play, may have been re-used in Le Chevalier à la Mode. It would indeed be foolhardy to attempt to sort out this intricate problem.

Le Chevalier à la Mode was the most significant contribution to social satire since Molière's time, with its outstanding qualities of characterization and dramatic art. Since Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme there was no dramatic work produced in the Paris theatre which placed so much emphasis on the social ambitions of the bourgeoisie as Le Chevalier à la Mode. The anonymous La Bourgeoise Madame contains, however, a certain amount of this type of social satire, but as it was never played in Paris and as it was published in Bordeaux (1685) there is little likelihood that Dancourt was influenced by it. There is moreover only a slight resemblance as to details of plot and characterization. Dancourt's protagonist can be regarded as the female equivalent of M. Jourdain, though as a partisan's widow, she is immensely more wealthy, and consequently more offensively flamboyant in her expenditure and way of life. The portrait of the chevalier d'industrie, a much

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, pp. 273-4.

better developed character than the Dorante of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, resembles that of the chevalier in Les Moeurs du Temps, and has even more in common with Baron's 'Homme à bonne fortune' who appeared in a play of that name in 1686.

Dancourt's play furnished some ideas for contemporary playwrights in the field of satire of nouveaux riches. A significant detail in Le Chevalier à la Mode - Mme Patin's insistence on being addressed as 'Madame' - was echoed in later plays, for example, in Hauteroche's Bourgeoises de Qualité (1691) where the wife of a procureur, carried away by her intense admiration for the aristocracy, addresses her husband as 'Monsieur' and objects to being called 'ma femme'. Dancourt was again to use this comic technique in La Fête de Village (1700) where La Greffière insists on being addressed as 'Madame' by her family. And there is a similar incident in Boursault's Mots à la Mode (1701) where the parvenue, Mme Josse, whose husband had purchased a title of nobility, gives instructions to be called 'Madame' instead of 'ma femme' or 'ma soeur'. By the emphasis placed on the theme of the parvenue and by the forcefulness of Mme Patin's character, Le Chevalier à la Mode can be said to have given a valuable boost to social satire after Molière.

This play was followed by La Maison de Campagne (1688) in which Dancourt made a fresh approach to the theme of social pretensions. Although it has a rustic setting, the play is intended to be a satire on the claims of the gens de robe to be recognized as members of the genuine aristocracy. It is interesting for its variety of characters who represent different sections of the nobility of the time. In this category are included the provincial gentry who receive, however, less emphasis here than in some of Dancourt's later works.

The next play which Dancourt wrote was La Dame à la Mode, later called La Suite de la Coquette, but as it remained unpublished and the manuscript is lost, we have no means of ascertaining the nature of its subject-matter.

Here and there among Dancourt's plays we find a comedy which has very little relevance to contemporary manners and which relies for its success mainly on a carefully developed intrigue. Such, for example, is La Folle Enchère (1690) which traces the efforts of a young man to overcome his mother's opposition to his marriage

and obtain from her by trickery the money necessary to pay a notary engaged in his service. The unrealistic plot, based on a series of disguises, is one of the weak links in the chain of Dancourt's dramatic productions. There appears to have been some confusion over the authorship of this play, and it is not altogether clear whether in this instance Dancourt could be accused of plagiarism or whether another author was attempting to appropriate his play.

It was not until six weeks after the first performance of La Folle Enchère which took place on 30 May 1690 that we find the first clue as to a possible collaborator. During this time Dancourt had been receiving a part d'auteur amounting to 189 livres, but on 14 July the actors found it necessary to state in their feuilles d'assemblée that a certain Mme Ulrich (incidentally notorious for her licentiousness and her relationship with La Fontaine) who apparently had claimed the play as of her own composition and was no doubt contending for some financial reward, was not to be regarded as the author of the play:

On a Resolu que Mle. Ulric qui est Entrée pendant les Representations de la Folle Enchere ne continuera point a Entrer parceque la compagnie n'est pas persuadée que la piece soit de sa Composition et aussy quil ny a pas apparence quelle Continue a travailler pour le Theatre Comme est dit dans les Regles.

However, the fact that she was allowed this concession in the first place suggests that the actors recognized that she had some stake in the claim to authorship, however slight.

It appears that Mme Ulrich continued to dispute the issue even after this date, for in the following year she had the play published and was granted a privilège, as we see from the first edition :

Il est permis à M*V* de faire imprimer, vendre et débiter une Piece de Théâtre de sa Composition, intitulée La Folle Enchère, Comedie.

On the face of it, it seems probable that Mme Ulrich had some part in the composition of the play and that Dancourt used her ideas as a basis for his own play, a technique which he adopted on several other occasions.

Later in that year Dancourt made up for the inferior quality of this work with his entertaining L'Été des Coquettes which dramatizes the behaviour of Parisian ladies of the aristocracy who spent the summer months disporting themselves with civilian admirers while awaiting the return of their suitors from the army. This situation gives the author excellent opportunity for portraying the animosity that existed between the upper classes and members of the aspiring bourgeoisie. It was the only play which Dancourt devoted wholly to this theme of summer courtships, but there are throughout the rest of his work, numerous similar situations involving the summer escapades of coquettes. The play is noteworthy, too, for the novelty of one of its characters - an abbé galant, who appears for the first time on the stage of the Comédie Française, that is if we do not count the bogus abbé in La Tuillerie's Crispin Bel Esprit (1681) who is really Valère in disguise.

The only piece of information which we have on the nature of the next play, Merlin Déserteur (1690) is that it was a one-act comedy with a military flavour. H.C. Lancaster suggests that it was written to create the title role for J.B. Raisin, one of Dancourt's colleagues. The play was never published, in spite of its moderate success, and, like the next play, Le Carnaval de Venise, is lost. However, from the Frères Parfaicts' description of it as a 'comédie heroïque' it appears that in the latter play Dancourt was attempting a work which differed widely from his usual light-hearted comedies. This designation is synonymous with the tragi-comedies of Corneille's time which presented some august persons in a non-tragic way; but as the term tragi-comedy had become by Dancourt's time a mark of the past, it was replaced by the term 'comédie heroïque'. Although nothing is known of the plot, it is certain that it contained political allusions and personal satire directed at the Elector of Bavaria and the Duke of Savoy.

Another play which contains hardly any satire on prevailing social conditions is La Parisienne (1691) which, like La Folle Enchère, depended largely for its

success on its colourful intrigue and lively dialogue. Dancourt constructed La Parisienne on the well-worn theme of a young girl brought up by an elderly guardian in complete confinement and sheltered from would-be suitors. That Dancourt was imitating Molière's L'Ecole des Femmes is seen in the similarity between Arnolphe and Damis who wishes to marry his ward on account of her supposed lack of 'esprit' (sc. viii), and ~~and~~ the girl's ability to intrigue her way out of her predicament. There is, too, a similar comic revelation of the ingénue's real character, and she triumphs in the end. One departure from Molière's pattern is her entertaining no less than three suitors for good measure. In Montfleury's L'Ecole des Filles, published in 1666, the scene in which a guardian is deceived into helping his rival to safety is thought by the Frères Parfaict to have inspired a similar incident in La Parisienne :

Il ne faut pas oublier la scène d'un Amant qui reconduit son rival (sc. xvi) sans le connoître pour tel; Scène prise de L'Ecole des Filles de Montfleury... et que sans doute Dancourt a cru faire passer pour un coup de son imagination. (1)

There is also a resemblance between a scene in Molière's L'Avare where Harpagon who wishes to marry a young girl is complimented on his manner of coughing by Frosine, and the first scene of La Parisienne in which sixty-four-year-old Damis, also the victim of a hacking cough, is flattered by his valet into thinking he is an eligible suitor for a young girl. With so much evidence of borrowing from other authors, and so little original inspiration, the play ranks among the poorest of Dancourt's productions.

As for Le Bon Soldat, produced in the same year, 1691, Dancourt, as the Frères Parfaict point out, did no more than reduce Les Foux Divertissans (1680), a comedy by Raymond Poisson, from three acts to one :

Comédie en vers, en 1 acte, de M. Poisson (Raimond) accommodée au Théâtre par M. Dancourt...cette petite Comédie est entièrement tirée d'une autre en 3 actes du même Auteur, intitulée Les Foux divertissans à quelques vers de liaison près, et cela compose une pièce assez passable. (1)

It is clear that Dancourt altered Poisson's play very little, omitting the scene of the asylum and the intermèdes, but retaining the rest of the work which concerned

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François vol. XIII, pp. 246, and 253-4.

the quartering of a soldier on a bourgeois household where an elderly guardian is deceived into releasing his ward by a demonstration of pseudo-magical powers by the soldier.

As an illustration of the social conditions of the day La Femme d'Intrigues (1692) is of considerable interest. In this five-act play we are introduced to the home of a Parisian bourgeoisie, Mme Thibaut, who makes a lucrative business out of a number of underhand dealings, among which figure those of matrimonial agent, pawnbroker and fence. Although the play consists of several interlaced intrigues, it is primarily a comedy of manners intended to dramatize the daily affairs of Mme Thibaut and her clientèle. The characters who frequent her house represent a cross-section of the society of the time, and include an impoverished army-officer, a poet struggling to make a living with his pen, a précieuse, and the inevitable marquis who, since Molière's time, was a stock character on the stage. Above all, the play brings out the fundamental rivalry that existed between the two types of aristocracy: the noblesse d'épée and the noblesse de robe, and their common dislike of the bourgeois way of life.

Dancourt's next play, La Gazette (1692), takes us into a completely different world, that of a newspaper editor. Its subject closely resembles that of Boursault's Comédie Sans Titre (1683) in which the affairs of an editor are dramatized by means of a series of disconnected interviews with various callers. Both authors indulge in satire of a contemporary journal and the use made of it by members of the public seeking publicity for various reasons. Boursault's five-act play, which deals with thirteen separate interviews at the editorial office, has many advantages over Dancourt's one-act playlet as far as character portrayal and references to contemporary manners are concerned. It is clear that Dancourt had not the same scope in his more modest production to develop his ideas. There is a similarity between the two plays in each author's choice to place the main emphasis not on the editor himself but on a person who deputizes for him. Dancourt, however, adds a

sub-plot concerned with the difficulties encountered by an officer to enlist men into the army, and the forcible methods to which they often resorted. Although there is much to suggest Boursault's influence on the framework of La Gazette, Dancourt could not be accused of a slavish imitation of the Comédie sans Titre but his play lacks both the depth and variety evident in the earlier production.

Another play produced in 1692, one of Dancourt's most productive years, helps to illustrate the wide variety of topics which Dancourt treated. L'Impromptu de Garnison forms an exception to the type of comedy one normally associates with Dancourt, as it concerns the fortunes of a young Parisian officer in Namur during the siege of that town by French troops. There is, too, even a flavour of nationalism in the unfavourable comparisons made between the French and foreigners, particularly the Spanish. The presence of the play is accounted for by the fact that Dancourt had merely adapted it for the Paris stage after it had been written by an anonymous author in Namur, as we see from a preliminary note in the first edition :

Cette Comédie n'est pas de Monsieur d'Ancourt, elle a été envoyée de Namur à Messieurs les Comédiens du Roi. Mais, comme elle n'étoit pas en état de paroître avec succès sur leur Théâtre, Monsieur d'Ancourt, pour faire plaisir à sa Compagnie, et à l'Auteur, a bien voulu prendre la peine de la retoucher et de la rendre comme elle est.

H.C. Lancaster points out that the original play was later published in Holland in 1694, and that Dancourt had not altered the one-act form but had slightly enlarged it and improved the dialogue.

Once again, Dancourt and Saint-Yon collaborated to produce another five-act satire on parvenues, Les Bourgeoises à la Mode (1692). There is, however, a considerable difference between the level of wealth enjoyed by Mme Patin and the socially ambitious bourgeois who convert their home into a gambling establishment with the intention of inviting guests of a higher social standing. An example of a recent play on the subject of parvenues is Hauteroche's Les Bourgeoises de Qualité (1690) in which Anselme, son of a prosperous merchant, is a foil for the social ambitions of his wife and daughter who are affected by the contemporary craze to be

regarded as genuine aristocrats. Dancourt's play imitates this basic structure of the antagonism between a level-headed husband and his extravagant wife and the daughter in his portrait of the Simon couple and their daughter, Mariane. But he complicates the intrigue by adding another couple at variance, Griffard and Araminte. A rare theme in seventeenth-century comedy is the maternal instinct of Mme Amelin, a pawnbroker, and her tenderness for her incorrigible son, Janot, disguised as a chevalier who refuses to recognize her ; her attitude is brought out with the words :

Comme le voilà brave! Tu as beau faire, Janot, je suis ta mere, et quoique tu sois un méchant enfant, bon sang ne peut mentir, je t'aime toujours, Janot, mon pauvre Janot! (...) Qu'il a bonne mine! Mais est-il possible que j'aie fait ce garçon-là? (Act I, sc. x.)

The maternal bond had been ridiculed in Champmeslé's Le Parisien (1682) where Mme Jérôme deplores her son's unruly conduct though she is nonetheless compelled to love him. (Act IV, sc.i.). There is, however, no resemblance between the way each mother expresses her feelings, for in Champmeslé's play there is much satire of the language of tragic emotion, whereas Dancourt's character speaks in a more realistic and convincing manner.

The year 1692 was to see yet another production, L'Opéra de Village, which is the first of Dancourt's plays to deal with everyday life in a rural community. The composition of this one-act playlet was an important development in several respects: it marks a change in the author's choice of characters and setting and also the start of a series of one-act comédies-vaudevilles. With its emphasis on patois-speaking peasants presented in their native habitat, the play represents a new stage in Dancourt's evolution, and with its final divertissement consisting of dances and songs related to the main theme of the play it represents a fresh approach to dramatic structure.

Peasants had, of course, previously appeared in a number of seventeenth-century French plays from as far back as Cyrano de Bergerac's Le Pédant Joué, published in 1654, the first play of the century to put on the stage a peasant who speaks patois. In this play linguistic forms used by Gareau were to become characteristic of later stage peasants. One of Brécourt's plays, La Nopce de Village (1666), is an early example of a purely peasant play, important for its portrayal of rustic manners and

its extensive use of patois. Molière's best-known peasants are those who appear in Dom Juan, Pierrot, Charlotte and Mathurine, whose dialect is used for comic effect, but others are excellently portrayed also in Le Médecin Malgré Lui and in George Dandin. In Les Fragnens de Molière which may have been performed as early as 1674, Champmeslé imitated the peasants of Dom Juan and added two more who, however, do not speak in dialect form. Montfleury devoted much attention to a variety of peasants in Crispin Gentilhomme, as did Hauteroche in Les Nobles de Province, both performed about 1675. Gradually the rustic scene began to occupy whole plays, like Baron's Enlèvements (1685), Champmeslé's Coupe Enchantée (1688) and Le Secret Révélé (1690) by Brueys and Palaprat. Thus peasants were already quite popular on the stage before Dancourt took to adding his contribution.

Similarly, many comedies before 1692 already contained elements of music and dancing. This was particularly the case with machine-plays and Molière's comédies-ballets, but other well-known instances are two three-act plays, Poisson's Foux Divertissans and Hauteroche's Crispin Musicien where each act ends with musical entertainment; and music and dancing were always an important ingredient in many comedies given at the Théâtre Italien. But what was distinctive about Dancourt's comédies-vaudevilles was the fact that whereas previously these entertaining elements had been arranged in a different way, that is, interspersed throughout a longer play in the form of interludes, many of Dancourt's playlets lead up to a final divertissement consisting of dancing and songs usually relating to some theme of purely topical interest. His use of vaudevilles, based on faits divers, which constitute the climax of many of his one-act plays, contributed in large measure to their popular appeal so much so that this type of comedy came to be associated with his name.

It is interesting to note that Dufresny, whose plays of this period performed at the Théâtre Italien show a striking resemblance in subject and form to those of Dancourt, had produced a few months previously to L'Opéra de Village a comedy on a similar theme called L'Opéra de Campagne, but without a divertissement. It was only in his later plays, for example L'Union des Deux Opéras (1692) and La Nopce Interrompue (1699) that he introduced this entertaining type of ending to round off his plays in imitation of Dancourt's idea. The technique of having a final

divertissement was also adopted by other playwrights - Regnard in Le Bal (1696) and Les Folies Amoureuses (1704), Nicolas Boindin in Les Trois Gascons (1701), and much later, Legrand in L'Amour Diable (1708), La Famille Extravagante (1709) and L'Usurier Gentilhomme (1713).

Before going on to deal with the other peasant plays of Dancourt's composition, we must consider the unpublished one-act comedy in prose produced in 1693, La Baguette. The Frères Parfaict state that it dramatized the adventures of a man with a divining wand who was a topic of conversation at the time. A similar theme had been treated by Regnard and Dufresny in their collaborated work, La Baguette de Vulcain performed at the Italiens two months before Dancourt's play. This may have been of some influence on Dancourt who always kept a watchful eye on activities in the rival theatre, but, on the other hand, the possibility cannot be excluded of Dancourt composing his play before the production of the Italian version.

Les Vendanges (1694) resembles L'Opéra de Village in its rustic setting and characters, and in its divertissement which in this instance, however, celebrates the vintage season. It contains a touch of satire on the pretentiousness of peasants trying to infiltrate into a more sophisticated section of society. The socially ambitious peasant was to figure largely in Dancourt's other rustic plays.

Although Dancourt's next play, Le Tuteur (1695), is chiefly concerned with the stock theme of a guardian who plans to marry his young ward, and the intrigues of a suitor to capture her for himself, Dancourt has left room for some lightly-drawn sketches of the peasant, Lucas, who acts as a spy for his master and aspires to acquire enough money to own a carriage. He is a type of peasant who is to reappear in later plays and whose character Dancourt was to develop in greater detail. The Frères Parfaict point out that the demouement in which the lovers elope and the guardian is ambushed by his adversaries was taken from one of La Fontaine's Contes, 'Le Cocu, battu et content' in which a husband, disguised as a woman, goes to a rendez-vous with his wife's lover, and is beaten up. (1)

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, p. 417.

The subject of La Foire de Besons (1695), Dancourt's next play, is not, as one would expect, concerned with the manners of those who inhabited this village situated north-west of Paris. Although peasants do appear, they take their place in the background of events which revolve around what d'Argenson describes as 'des aventures communes a Paris parmy la plus basse bourgeoisie' (1). The manners described are those of visitors from the city whose intentions in visiting the village are based on attractions other than those afforded by the fair. The familiar characters of the chevalier, financier, notary and young lovers take part in an equally familiar plot to bring about the marriage of the young couple by deception. This play inspired a parody, Le Retour de la Foire de Besons which Gherardi attributes to himself performed at the Théâtre Italien a few weeks after Dancourt's version. Apart from the obvious similarity of the title and the location, there are several allusions to Dancourt's characters : the financier, Griffard, Cidalise and a bailli whom Dancourt mentions, while the peasants, referring to Dancourt's treatment of them, protest against being made the laughing-stock of theatre audiences for 'quinze sols'. The denouement is reached in a similar manner to Dancourt's with the use of a marriage contract which a father is tricked into signing .

The title of Dancourt's next play, Les Vendanges de Suresnes (1695), is identical with that of one of Du Ryer's comedies of 1636, but, contrary to the statement by Maupoint that Dancourt produced only a revised version of the earlier play, there is no similarity between the content of the two plays. Dancourt's composition is primarily a comedy of intrigue in which there appears some satire of provincial families. The plot consists of a series of attempts, sometimes helped by disguise, to thwart the plans of a country squire who wishes to dispose of his daughter by marriage. The intrigue to bring about the marriage of the prospective bride who is secretly engaged to a young man of her choice, is brought to a successful conclusion by the allied forces of the gardener, Thibaut, who

(1) R. d'Argenson, Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Geneva, 1966, vol. XLII, p. 177.

sells his help to the highest bidder, a rogue who boasts of his illicit business, a woman who runs a boarding house and arranges marriages 'sans Curé ni tabellion', and a suitor who resorts to bribery to obtain his bride. The ensuing marriage is celebrated in the final divertissement which takes the form of dancing and singing of vendangeurs and vendangeuses.

Two years were to elapse before Dancourt once again wrote a play with a rustic atmosphere, but in the meantime he devoted his attention to a variety of other topics not always confined to the Parisian scene. In La Foire Saint Germain (1696) Dancourt gives a description of the activities of the fair which was an annual event in Paris, and a colourful background for intrigues of various kinds. The characters are no more than silhouettes who represent familiar types : the penniless chevalier who seeks to build up a fortune, a grisette who pretends to be an aristocrat, a rogue with a criminal record and with as many aliases as he has committed offences, and a stall-holder who tries to conceal her dubious past by adopting an assumed name. Regnard and Dufresny had produced a play of the same title at the Théâtre Italien in December 1695, a month before Dancourt's production. Both plays dramatized the activities of the fair with its stall-holders, amusements and visitors, using it as a background for amorous intrigue. But just as with La Baguette there is no evidence to indicate to whom could be attributed the original idea of the topic, whether to Dancourt or his rival at the Italian Theatre. At a much later date, in 1709, Legrand, who was personally involved in the campaign against the forains, produced his Foire Saint Laurent, but with a different object in mind : satire of the forains themselves, not simply a portrayal of the fair. Lesage, too, had referred sarcastically to the popularity of the fairs, although only very briefly, in his Critique de Turcaret earlier that year.

Dancourt was not the original author of the next play, Le Moulin de Javelle (1696). Circumstantial evidence points strongly to the fact that Dancourt virtually appropriated a manuscript by an obscure author, Michaut, who had presented

it to the selection committee of the Comédie Française for consideration. On May 7 1696 the actors recognized Michaut as the original author of the play which, however, they did not consider suitable for performance :

On a accordé a M Michault de qui on a lu a l'Assemblée une petite Piece intitulée Le Moulin de Javelle, d'entrer a la Comedie gratis, pendant l'annee 1696, quoique la Piece n'ait pas été acceptée, afin de l'encourager a travailler, et qu'il puisse connoitre le Theatre, en voyant la Comedie, et cela sans tirer a consequence pour d'autres sauf a la fin de l'année a deliberer autrement. (1)

Then, in the following month, on 18 June, they noted that 'On a leu une petite Comedie Intitulée le Moulin de Javelle de Monsieur Dancourt qui a été acceptée. (1) One can only presume that what had taken place in the interval was that Michaut's manuscript had fallen into the hands of Dancourt who, no doubt after making a few alterations and additions, produced the play on July 7 as a product of his own imagination. This comedy ranks among his most successful plays, enjoying twenty-seven performances during its first run and bringing him fairly substantial financial returns. On the other hand, Dancourt may not have been totally unjustified in accepting the honour or the financial rewards of the play as, with his greater experience as a playwright and his sensitivity in matters concerning l'art de plaire, it is possible that he may have made a significant contribution to its success. This one-act comédie-vaudeville contains much that recalls Dancourt's earlier fondness for satirizing the nouveaux riches. This time he chooses a male character, Ganivet, who wishes to profit by an inheritance in order to buy himself a title of nobility. The other characters include a chevalier d'industrie, a 'countess' of humble birth and two lawyers who fall victims to their wives' machinations. The interest of the play lies in the manners of Parisian bourgeois who visited the restaurant at Javelle then just outside the city. The double plot concerning the owner of the establishment and the fate of the two lawyers leads up to a divertissement.

The subject of the next play, Les Eaux de Bourbon (1696), the behaviour of Parisians at a health resort, was not a new one. A previous example is Les Eaux

(1) Comédie Française, Feuilles d'Assemblée.

de Pirmont (1669) by Chappuzeau who dealt with the behaviour of visitors at a watering-place. Both plays have much in common - characters such as the physician, members of the nobility, women more interested in finding male companions than partaking of the curative waters, and a love intrigue in which the young couple are successfully married. Boisfran produced his Bains de la Porte S. Bernard at the Italiens two months before Dancourt's play, in which he devotes a good deal of attention to the Parisian custom of visiting a watering-place. As in Dancourt's play, there is satire of bourgeois manners, references to gambling, and a love intrigue. The plot of Les Eaux de Bourbon which forms the main element of the comedy centres around the rivalry of a baron and his son who are suitors of a physician's daughter. The denouement is brought about by the deception of the baron who is tricked into signing the marriage contract for his son. The final divertissement contains songs which celebrate the waters of the spa.

Although the action of Dancourt's next play, Les Vacances (1696), takes place in Gaillardin, a village in the region of Brie south-east of Paris, a good deal of the play is devoted to a satire of the Parisian procureur. In his portrait of the procureur Dancourt made an important contribution to social comedies of the late seventeenth century. Although in Molière's time hommes de loi occasionally appeared on the stage, playwrights did not concern themselves with what characterized these legal gentlemen or what significance their profession had in the public eye. The notary was a stock figure in comedy of the time, whose part in a play was generally only functional : he was used as a means to end off a comedy by drawing up a marriage contract. Examples of representatives of the law in Molière's plays are the notary in L'Ecole des Femmes who cheerfully prattles away in his complicated jargon, Pourceaugnac who is described as a man 'Qui a étudié en droit' (Act I scene iii), the conseiller in La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas who uses a comically incongruous mixture of legal jargon in his professions of love for the countess, and Loyal, a 'huissier à verge' and L'Exempt in Tartuffe, both of whom play very insignificant roles. Really strong criticism of the legal profession is found

in Fatouville's Grapinian ou Arlequin Procureur (1681) where the protagonist is characterized as utterly unscrupulous in his pursuit of financial gain. Boursault's Comédie Sans Titre contains a satire on the unethical conduct of two expressively named lawyers, Sangsue and Brigandau, procureurs from the Parlement and the Châtelet respectively. They are, however, merely episodic characters who exert little influence on the plot and seem to have been introduced simply as an outlet for the author's satire. But their value as stage characters lies in the fact that they bring out an aspect of the legal profession that was the object of public criticism: their ability to enrich themselves at the expense of the public. Although Dancourt's procureur is presented not at work, but on holiday in the country, the author gives some revealing glimpses of his professional life. Most important of all, is the change of emphasis in the treatment of legal gentlemen in comedies since Molière's time. In Les Vacances Dancourt takes the opportunity of portraying Parisian townfolk against the background of a village setting, and gives a broad picture of the structure of contemporary society represented by the conflicting members of the landed gentry, bourgeois who had recently made a fortune, and the inhabitants of the village. Soldiers who are beginning to return from the army play an important part in the plot, and it is through their instrumentality that the seigneur of the estate is bribed into giving his consent to the marriage of his daughter and a young officer. As in the previous play, there is a final divertissement; it consists of songs and dances to celebrate the new seigneur's coming into possession of his château.

In La Loterie (1697) Dancourt's attention was once more temporarily diverted from the rustic scene when he reverted to dealing with an exclusively Parisian theme in a manner which he had adopted in his earlier plays. He had not made use of his outspoken and light-hearted maid, Lisette, since Les Bourgeoises à la Mode (1692); she now comes to the fore as the instigator of the subordinate plot to secure a husband for her mistress. Nor does Dancourt embellish his play with a divertissement which was characteristic of the other plays of this period. The

main theme of the comedy is the successful attempt of an Italian merchant to induce the public to subscribe to his lottery with the intention of giving them very little return for their money. The subject of a bogus lottery had been dealt with as a minor aspect of Montfleury's Gentilhomme de la Beauce (1670) in which it is pointed out that such schemes to extract money are invitations to the uscrupulous organizers of lotteries to hoodwink the public. In 1669 De Visé produced his three-act Intrigues de la Lotterie in which he portrayed different types of dishonesty connected with lotteries, their popularity both at court and among the general public, and the articles they offered as prizes. De Visé used the lottery as a device for promoting the interests of the young lovers. A more recent production was Bordelon's Lotterie de Scapin published in 1694. As in Dancourt's play the denouement is reached when the promoter of the lottery gives his daughter and a dowry as the gros lot. Dancourt's La Loterie contains a mixture of farcical situations and a study of contemporary manners illustrated by the sharp practices of the lottery promoter and his touts, and the easily deceived members of the public. There are references to the army, to fraudulent bankruptcy and to superstitions common among peasants.

Later in that year, 1697, Dancourt produced his next peasant play, Le Charivari of which the scene is in Auteuil. The most interesting character is the peasant, Thibaut, who is tired of being Mme Loricart's gardener, and sees in a marriage with her not only a means of acquiring money but also the opportunity of climbing the social ladder, his most cherished ambition. Mme Loricart, characterized by her desire to deliberately oppose the will of others, was a forerunner of Mme Oronte in L'Esprit de Contradiction (1700), the most successful of all Dufresny's plays. Both authors draw comic material from the captious temperament of a middle-aged woman in love with a youth, but Dufresny gave the subject much more emphasis, developing it into the main theme of his play. Dancourt, on the other hand, preferred to concentrate on his peasant characters, Thibaut and the maid, Mathurine. The comedy ends with a 'divertissement du charivari' of which the last song is

described by d'Argenson as 'fort célèbre'(1).

Le Retour des Officiers (1697) is noteworthy for its emphasis on the parvenu, Rapineau, originally a peasant who has risen in the world to the status of a sous-fermier. His name and character resemble those of Jacques Robbe's protagonist who gave his name to the five-act play La Rapinière ou l'Intéressé (1682). Whereas, in the earlier play, the emphasis is placed on the abuses of tax-farming practised by La Rapinière, Dancourt prefers to concentrate on the social ambitions of his wealthy tax-collector. Another interesting character is Mme Thomas, a level-headed bourgeoisie (a rare commodity in Dancourt's plays) who disdains social pretensions and who wishes to find husbands for her daughter and niece. There is an obvious imitation of M. Jourdain's 'Vous n'êtes point gentilhomme, vous n'aurez pas ma fille' (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, (Act III, sc. xii) and Mme Thomas's refusal of her niece's hand to the disguised conseiller, Des Baliveaux with the words : 'Vous n'êtes pas Conseiller, vous n'aurez pas ma nièce' (sc. xvi). In addition to these points Dancourt makes use of the familiar theme of officers returning from the front to be greeted by Parisian coquettes. As the play was timed to celebrate the end of the War of the League of Augsburg, the divertissement celebrates the return of peace.

Dancourt continued with the theme of relations between military and civilians in Les Curieux de Compiègne (1698), the scene of which is laid in the famous camp visited by Louis XIV in that year. Although events take place outside Paris the play does not dramatize provincial life. The author ridicules Parisian visitors to the military display in Compiègne, choosing for the object of his satire a socially ambitious bourgeois and contrasting him with two impoverished officers who resort to violence to obtain their ends. The divertissement is appropriate to the theme of the play and ridicules cowardly bourgeois who wear officers' uniforms only in peace time.

The next play, Le Mari Retrouvé (1698) is largely devoted to a study of rustic manners. Dancourt based the plot on a recent court case, which will be discussed

(1) R. d'Argenson. op.cit., p. 171.

in the next chapter. This provides the author with ample opportunity to satirize the legal profession represented particularly by an ignorant and prejudiced village bailli. The idea of a mésalliance between a provincial nobleman and a peasant girl had been used in Baron' Enlèvement (1685). The plot, of which the most amusing aspects are the miller's attempts to commit bigamy and his painstaking efforts to spread the rumour that he has been murdered by his wife, lead up to the final divertissement in which the couple are eventually reconciled.

Dancourt did not produce his next peasant play until two years later. In the interval he turned to subjects of a completely different nature, as illustrated, for example in his three-act comédie-ballet, Les Fées (1699). This type of comedy which included in its structure a number of ballet and musical interludes had been inaugurated by Molière. Dancourt's play was composed for performance at Fontainebleau but it was later given at the Comédie Française in October of that year. In 1697 Dufresny in collaboration with Louis Biancolelli, had produced at the Théâtre Italien Les Fées ou les Contes de ma mère l'Oye, a burlesque of the genre of fairy-tales which were in vogue at that time ; in it, the authors resort to the appropriate techniques of magic, such as transformations, surprise appearances and disappearances, and miraculous escapes. Dancourt, however, imitated this play only in its title, and sought inspiration from the works of Charles Perrault in his Contes de ma mère l'Oye (1697) and the comtesse d'Aulnoy, author of the Contes de Fées (1697), both of whom were at the height of their popularity in the salons (1). Dancourt made use of the framework of the fairy-tales for the construction of his play, preferring to reduce the supernatural element to a minimum in favour of a study of the more down-to-earth aspects of a seventeenth-century court. These practical considerations bring the spectator down from the realms of fantasy to a realistic scene in the court of an uncouth monarch and his equally earthy retinue. In presenting royal personages on the stage in a ridiculous light Dancourt was making a very daring and unusual departure from the bienséances, but his example was soon followed in two other satires

(1) cf. M.E. Storer, La Mode des Contes de Fées (1685-1700), Paris, 1928 .

of court life : Regnard's Démocrite (1700) and Boursault's Esope à la Cour (1701) both of which will be studied in relation to Les Fées. In Dancourt's play the suiivante and the court jester correspond to his earlier interpretations of the astute and warm-hearted Lisette and the intriguing valet who are active in looking after the interests of those they serve. The play is preceded by a musical overture and interspersed with intermedes of singing and dancing in the manner of comédies-ballets.

Later in that year Dancourt brought out a five-act play, La Famille à la Mode (1699), the first of his productions at the Comédie Française to be written in verse. The choice of this medium, which was to be used in some of his later productions, was not suited either to his talents or to his subject-matter. Why Dancourt adopted this new form is difficult to determine, but it may be because he was trying to emulate Regnard's recent success with his five-act verse plays, Le Joueur (1691), Le Distrait (1697) and Démocrite (1700). La Famille à la Mode, successively entitled Finette and Les Enfants de Paris, deals with an episode in the life of a wealthy Parisian usurer, Harpin, who wishes to dispose of his spendthrift son and young daughter. The Frères Parfaict point out a striking resemblance to L'Avare :

rien ne peut le justifier d'avoir pillé maladroitement une grande partie du sujet et des caracteres de L'Avare de Moliere, avec cette différence que chez lui tout est admirable et que chez Dancourt tout est défiguré. (1)

As in L'Avare, a tight-fisted father is a rival of his son for the hand of a young girl, and unwittingly lends him money at his usurious rates of interest. He, like Harpagon, is vain enough to be flattered by an intrigante into thinking that his advanced age would render him more attractive than his son in the eyes of his intended. One character who has no counterpart in Molière's play is Finette, the artful maid who helps bring about the marriage of the young couple. There are occasional references to the manners of the day, but the play is mainly a comedy of intrigue and not, like Molière's, a comedy of character. In contrast with most of Dancourt's plays in this period, it does not end with a divertissement.

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, p. 338.

In 1700 Dancourt composed a one-act play, l'Opérateur Barry for a private performance in the home of Mme de Pontchartrain, the Chancellor's wife, but it was not acted at the Comédie Française until two years later. The famous opérateur, renowned for his combined profession of charlatan and director of a travelling troupe, appears only in the brief prologue, which, however, has no connection with the actual play. In his portrait of an opérateur, Dancourt was preceded by Legrand in scenes x and xi of Le Carnaval de Lyon, published and performed in Lyon in 1699. In this play the charlatan boasts of the effectiveness of his elixir, a remedy for excesses of drinking, gambling and love. There is no evidence, however, of Dancourt being directly influenced by this play which was acted and published at such a distance from Paris. The unoriginal plot of Dancourt's playlet centres around a love intrigue in which two suitors contend for the hand of Isabelle, daughter of the French farce-actor, Gaultier-Garguille. Apart from the character of Jodelet borrowed from earlier French farces, most of the characters are types taken from the Théâtre Italien : Spacamonte and Mostelin the rival suitors, and Zerbinette, the entremetteuse. The prologue of this play will be studied in the next chapter as an illustration of Dancourt's satire of rival forms of entertainment.

In La Fête de Village (1700) (1), (renamed in 1724 Les Bourgeoises de Qualité in imitation of Hauteroche's play of that name performed in 1690), Dancourt combines the earlier theme of satire of fashionable bourgeois life with a portrayal of rustic manners. The peasants, however, take only a modest part in the play of which the chief emphasis is placed on the absurd pretensions of bourgeois. The divertissement which contains peasant songs and an atmosphere of merrymaking ends on a moralizing note somewhat at odds with Dancourt's habitual vein; it deplores the disappearance of chivalrous behaviour, and directs a blatant piece of satire at the morals of contemporary Parisian bourgeois.

Up to 1704 Dancourt produced a group of peasant plays which were to enjoy a considerable success. There is something distinctive about Les Trois Cousines (1700)

(1) A note in the feuilles d'assemblée of the Comédie Française of June 14 1700 shows that the original title of the play before its performance was Les Bourgeoises Ridicules.

in comparison with Dancourt's other rustic plays; it contains a larger element of singing and dancing introduced not simply at the end of the play, but at the end of each of the three acts in the manner of comédies-ballets. Referring to this play the Frères Parfaict state that they received information from hearsay that it was not originally Dancourt's creation, but they hold that he had no doubt contributed much to its success by alterations and additions :

Une personne qui possède beaucoup d'anecdotes sur le Théâtre nous a assuré que la Comédie des 'Trois Cousines' n'est point de Dancourt, mais d'Un nommé Barrau qui avoit été Receveur du Roy de la Chambre de Justice à la Rochelle, et qui fit mal ses affaires. En supposant que Barrau est le premier Auteur de la Comédie des 'Trois Cousines', il n'en seroit pas moins vrai que Dancourt y a plus grand e part, tant pour la correction de l'intrigue, que la marche du Théâtre, et le ton du dialogue, car rien ne caractérise plus le stile de ce dernier, que la Comédie qui fait le sujet de cet article. (1)

Their suspicions of the dual authorship of the play ~~are~~ confirmed by the actors of the Comédie Française who, in their feuilles d'assemblée of September 27 1700, describe Les Trois Cousines as a play 'accommodée au Theatre par Mr Dancourt', but without mentioning the original author. The manners portrayed are those of the villagers of Creteil - a miller's wife, a bailli, a mill-hand and three precocious girls who successfully pit their wits against their parents to overcome their opposition to their marriages. As with other plays, Dancourt no doubt added the essential ingredients which were to make the play a success.

The title of the next play, Colin-Maillard, (1701) had already been employed by Chappuzeau for a play performed in 1662. The resemblance between the two comedies is limited, however, to the title and the denouement in which a marriage is facilitated by means of a game of blind-man's-buff. Whereas the chief character of the earlier play is a prosperous cook and innkeeper, and there are many references to Parisian manners, Dancourt used the conventional theme of a young girl who escapes from her guardian's custody to marry her lover. There is no foundation for d'Argenson's judgement :

Cette pièce est d'un nommé Chapuseau, et parut en 1662. Dancourt ne fit que l'habiller à la moderne. (2)

The play, typical of Dancourt's choice of background and characters, is made up

- (1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, pp. 180-1.
- (2) Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, p. 171.

of an intrigue which encompasses a country nobleman who plans to marry his ward, an ingénue, an officer who, with his valet's help, plans an elopement, an aunt who assists the young couple in their enterprise, and two peasant girls whose racy comments add to the gaiety of the play. The songs of the divertissement which are appropriate to the ^heme of the play illustrate the fact that many lovers are as easily deceived as the guardian.

Le Galant Jardinier (1704) is the last of Dancourt's plays for some years to have a rural setting. Apart from the inevitable love intrigue which recurs in almost every one of his comedies, the author devotes much of the play to a satire of peasants who, though of crude and naive appearance, are unmatched by their city neighbours in the art of deception. He gives references to the way of life led by bourgeois in their country houses, the custom of bringing up girls in a convent, and the return of soldiers from the war in Germany. A form of entertainment consisting of songs sung by peasants, a gypsy girl and people dressed as Italian actors, takes place just before the denouement is reached. This play completes the period devoted to rustic themes and heralds a new phase in Dancourt's evolution. From then on he turned to fresh subjects which, it seems, were suggested to him less from his own inspiration than from ready-made frameworks and plots of other plays. In so doing he was falling in line with the tendency of early eighteenth-century playwrights to make adaptations of various forms of literature, Latin, Spanish or French; Boursault in his Esope à la Cour (1701) made use of some of La Fontaine's fables, the former actor Michel Baron who had retired in 1691, adapted l'Andrienne (1703) from Terence's Andria, and Les Adelphes (1705), subsequently called L'Ecole des Pères, from Adelphoe; Regnard's Les Ménechmes (1705) was an adaptation of Plautus's Menaechmi, while two of Lesage's less well-known plays, Le Point d'Honneur and Don César Ursin were adapted from Rojas's No hay amigo para amigo and Calderón's Peor está que estaba. And there are, as we shall see, numerous variations on the theme of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

In the following two plays which are one-act comedies-ballets, Dancourt made use, for the first time in his career, of a mythological theme. The first of these, L'Impromptu de Livry (1705), was composed for a private entertainment at the château of the Marquis de Livry. The actual play which was performed on this occasion was never published; all that remains of this piece of light entertainment are the introductory invitation addressed by Flore for fauns and shepherds to join in the fête which is followed by a 'marche des pâtres et des sylvains', a speech made by the 'capitaine du château' in very prosy style, songs sung in praise of the beauty of the surroundings, and a final divertissement composed of ballet entries, songs and a 'danse en rond' to celebrate the marriage which was the conclusion of the main play. However, a résumé of the plot is inserted in the published edition between Flore's songs which introduce the 'petite comédie' and the divertissement. There is a striking similarity between the subject-matter of this lost play and that of Les Vendanges :

Le sujet est d'un Fermier de Livry qui, par l'adresse de sa femme, se trouve engagé de donner sa nièce à un jeune homme de Paris, quoiqu'il l'eut promise au Collecteur. Le moyen dont la femme se sert est qu'elle feint d'être amoureuse de l'Amant aimé de sa nièce. Elle fait même éclater cette feinte passion aux yeux de son mari qui, pour éviter les suites et les inconvénients, manque de parole au collecteur, fait épouser en hâte sa nièce à son Amant, qu'il croit aimé de sa femme. Le divertissement qui suit sert de prélude à la Noce.

The scene which is appropriate to the pastoral theme of the introduction is described thus :

Le Théâtre dressé dans le grand Vestibule de la Colonnade qui est au-dessous du Sallon, représentoit un des plus beaux endroits du Jardin, fermé par des Palissades assez hautes pour cacher les Acteurs, ouvert par plusieurs endroits par des Portiques, du ceintre desquels pendoient des festons de fleurs au-dessus de plusieurs Orangers, entre lesquels sont des Guéridons et des Torchères, avec des Girandoles garnies de quantité de lumières. Après l'ouverture, Mademoiselle SALLÉ sous le nom de Flore, invite...les Faunes et les Pâtres à venir contribuer à la Fête.

Later in the same year, Dancourt wrote a similar form of entertainment entitled Le divertissement de Sceaux for the Duchesse du Maine to be performed at her residence. As in the previous playlet, the scene is set in beautiful gardens and songs are sung to celebrate the natural beauties of the surroundings. Crispin

makes a faltering speech in honour of the Duchesse, followed by more songs in praise of the court, a comedy of which the text is lost, and a 'branle pour danser en rond, apres lequel le Bal commence'. This final divertissement contains references to Greek mythology illustrated by the theme of carpe diem.

In October 1707 Dancourt produced a one-act comedy, Le Diable Boiteux, the title and certain details of which were obviously borrowed from Lesage's novel published a few month previously. This in turn was adapted from Vélez de Guevara's El Diablo Cojuelo (1641), a satirical novel giving a close-up view of daily life in Madrid. Lesage used the framework and characters of the novel to offer a similar picture of Parisian life, thus providing Dancourt, though to a limited extent, with the fundamental idea of his comedy. The Frères Parfaict sum up the matter thus :

Le Roman du Diable Boiteux de M. Le Sage, qui parut au commencement de l'été de 1707, eut un succès des plus marqués à la Cour et à la Ville. M. Dancourt toujours prêt à saisir les Vaudevilles du temps, ne négligea pas cet événement et composa la Comédie du Diable Boiteux. (1)

Dancourt's version of the lame devil differs from the original conception of Asmodée: he is one who befriends coquettes and inspires them with the art of deception. As in the novel, the devil shows his companions an unflattering portrait of contemporary manners, choosing for this purpose a scene from the house of a Parisian procureur. The similarity with Lesage's novel ends with this brief introduction to the main plot which, according to the Frères Parfaict, was derived from De Visé's Veuve à la Mode (1667). Both plays are concerned with the hypocritical reactions of a recently bereaved widow whose main preoccupation is with financial gain and the desire to shine in fashionable society. There are references to the customs observed during mourning, the rivalry between military and civilian suitors, and a slender thread of romance which ends, as usual, on a happy note for the young couple. Among Dancourt's personal contributions to the play is the character of the credulous widow, Mme Lucas, whose superstitious nature adds to the comic effect.

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, pp. 451-2.

Less than three weeks later Dancourt followed up the success of this comedy by presenting Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux which is not, as one might expect, simply a sequel to the preceding plays. It is a comedy of manners written in the unorthodox form of two acts, containing strong elements of social satire mingled with farce, an unexpected tendency to moralize on the vanity of riches, and a new development in character-study seen in the person of Simon, a sous-traitant who, unlike other tax-collectors of contemporary comedy, is not given to lavish display of his wealth. He is made an invisible onlooker at his own home, through the magical power of the lame devil, and is thus able to observe the antics of his wife who, under the illusion that he is dead, intends to make her widowhood as brief as possible and live henceforth on a luxurious scale. As in the preceding play, Le Second Chapitre ends with songs and dances.

In the same year as Dancourt produced his version of Le Diable Boiteux, he repeated the procedure of adapting works by French authors by putting on the stage what was little more than a versified form of Lesage's play, Le Traître Puni (1700), itself derived from a Spanish source. The Frères Parfaict quote from an edition of Lesage's collected plays :

Cette pièce qui a pour titre en Espagnol: La traicion busca castigo (La trahison cherche le châtement) est de D. Francisco de Rojas. Je la traduisis en 1700 et la fis imprimer telle qu'elle est ici. M. Dancourt dans la suite la mit en vers, et la donna au Théâtre François sous le titre de La Trahison Punie. (1)

This five-act play is perhaps the least representative of all Dancourt's comedies as far as the plot is concerned; with its theme of jealousy leading to murder it leaves little scope for developments of a comic nature, while the emphasis placed on such noble sentiments as the point of honour gives it a flavour of the type of tragi-comedy which flourished in Corneille's time.

Similarly, with his next play, Madame Artus (1709) written in verse and in five acts, Dancourt showed little sign of inventiveness. According to the Frères Parfaict the play owed much of its composition to two existing comedies :

(1) op. cit., vol. XIV, p. 454. (Note from Volume I of Lesage's Recueil de Pièces mises au Théâtre François, Paris, 1739).

Une partie de l'intrigue et des personnages des Façons du Temps ont servi de fondemens à cette comédie de M. Dancourt, et pour n'en pas faire a deux fois, en fait de pillage, il a ajouté sur le tout le caractere de Madame Artus qui n'est qu'une très-mauvaise copie de l'excellent original du Tartuffe de Moliere. (1)

Dancourt's debt to Tartuffe is indeed quite evident both from some expressions which find their counterpart in Molière's play (for example Dorante's criticism of Mme Artus : 'Voilà je vous l'avoue une étrange personne' (Act IV, sc. viii) and Orgon's criticism of Tartuffe : 'Voilà je vous l'avoue un abominable homme! (Tartuffe, Act IV, sc. vi.), and from the character of the protagonist, Mme Artus, who resembles Tartuffe in the contrast between her pious remarks and her overriding desire to embroil members of a family and turn their dissension to her own pecuniary advantage. A significant omission is the satire on religious hypocrisy ; Dancourt always avoided such controversial subjects. It is more difficult to estimate the extent of Dancourt's borrowing from Saint-Yon's comedy, ~~also~~ called Les Moeurs du Temps, as many of the themes used, for example that of a youth being pursued by an older woman, while coinciding with those of the Moeurs du Temps, had become far too commonplace to justify the Frères Parfaict's assessment.

At a time when the rivalry between the Comédie Française and the théâtres de la Foire had come to a head, Dancourt composed a three-act play, La Comédie des Comédiens (1710) which contains an inner play entitled l'Amour Charlatan. The first two acts constitute a satire of the banished Théâtre Italien whose methods had been adopted by the forains. This marks Dancourt's attempt to revive public interest in the Comédie Française whose resources were seriously affected by the illegal competition afforded by the Foires. The idea of introducing into a play - as Dancourt does in this instance - actors who appear under their own names and talk about theatrical affairs, was not a new one. Similar techniques had been adopted by playwrights before Molière's famous example of L'Impromptu de Versailles - Gougenot in La Comédie des Comédiens (c. 1632), Scudéry in a play of the same name and Quinault in La Comédie sans Comédie (1655) , and as recently as Regnard in La Critique (1) op. cit., vol. XIV, p. 484.

du Légataire (1708), although in this play there are a greater variety of characters. According to a contemporary account, Dancourt sought inspiration for the inner play from the Greek author, Lucian :

Ce dernier acte auquel l'Auteur a tâché de lier les deux premiers les passe infiniment par l'idée ingénieuse qu'il a si heureusement traitée, que tout le monde est convenu que l'ouvrage est dans le goût de Lucien, et on a su de Mr. Dancourt que c'étoit après s'être échauffé l'esprit par la lecture de cet original, qu'il avoit jeté sur le papier tous les traits qu'il a mis sur la scène, et qui ne lui ont coûté tout au plus que trois jours de travail. (1)

It has also been suggested that another possible influence was the ballet, Les Fêtes Venitiennes by Danchet and Campra performed at the Opéra on June 17 1710.

This opinion is reinforced by Maupoint who claims that the idea of L'Amour Charlatan originated from one of the entrées of this ballet, called L'Amour Saltinbanque (2).

The mythological figures, Momus, Mercure, Jupiter and L'Amour were familiar at the Théâtre Italien, as well as the traditional characters of the docteur, Pierrot, and Spinette. The role of the amour charlatan, anxious to sell his wares and boast of his prowess, recalls the brief sketch of the opérateur, Barry, which Dancourt gave in 1700.

Quite distinct from these recent productions is Les Agioteurs (1710), an outstanding piece of workmanship in this otherwise uninspired period of Dancourt's career. This three-act play dramatizes the nefarious schemes of early eighteenth-century speculators. The unscrupulous Trapolin is Dancourt's first detailed portrait of a money-dealer. He had, of course, already allotted minor roles to those engaged in financial transactions of various natures : the usurers, Topase in La Désolation des Joueuses, a sinister figure who hovers around the gaming table, and Harpin in Les Enfants de Paris whose children are considered a financial burden on him, the financiers, César-Alexandre Patin in L'Eté des Coquettes, Griffard in La Foire de Besons, Farfadel in La Foire Saint Germain, and the tax-farmers, Rapineau in Le Retour des Officiers and Simon in Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux. But never before had he devoted a whole play to the theme of sharp practice in the financial arena.

(1) Le Nouveau Mercure de Trévoux, January, 1711, p. 54.

(2) Bibliothèque des Théâtres, Paris, 1733, p. 79.

Apart from Dancourt's examples, situations involving financiers are found in earlier comedies where they belong, of course, to a different generation, but they, too, reflect the way of life for which these nouveaux riches were notorious - their high living and ^msuptuous residences which are an only too transparent camouflage for their uncultured manners. The financier as such did not receive much attention from Molière; he gave a role of minor importance to Harpin, a receveur de tailles in La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas. But the task of satirizing the habits of financiers was left to other authors. An exceptionally early example is Chappuzeau's Le Riche Mécontent, published in 1662, of which the leading character, Raymond, a socially ambitious taxcollector, had amassed a fortune at the expense of the public. There are also Robbe's La Rapinière (1682) in which the protagonist is a 'fermier général des droits de la république de Gênes' whom we see going about his shady affairs, and, to a smaller degree, two plays by Boursault : La Comédie Sans Titre (1683) where a scene is devoted to an appropriately named commis des Gabelles, Longuemain, who admits to having embezzled 200,000 francs without any qualms of conscience, and Esope à la Cour (1701) portraying the financier, Griffet, who solicits Esope's aid in procuring him a ferme.

More important than any of these plays in relation to Les Agioteurs is Lesage's Turcaret performed in the year before Dancourt's play; in it a traitant is accorded a role of unprecedented significance on the French stage. It must not be assumed, however, that merely because Turcaret is concerned with the fortunes of a person engaged in financial pursuits that the play exerted on Dancourt anything more than an influence of the most general kind. There are wide differences between the two 'money plays' which preclude any attempt to establish a direct influence in matters of plot and characterization. Whereas Lesage stressed the manners of the parvenu traitant, an image of many early eighteenth-century financiers (for example Paul Poisson de Bourvalais (1)) who spent their riches conspicuously, Dancourt chose to turn the spotlight on the private business of the agioteurs, placing greater emphasis on the character of the protagonist, Trapolin, through the medium

(1) cf. J. Saint-Germain, Les Financiers sous Louis XIV, Paris, 1950.

of his financial dealings. There are a number of characters in Turcaret who have no counterpart in Dancourt's play : the troublesome maid, Marine, dismissed for being too outspoken and her successor, Lisette, rebuked for being too 'complaisante', the chevalier d'industrie who lives off the bounty of his mistress, the province-bound Mme Turcaret, attempting to ape the manners of fashionable Parisian life, her sister-in-law, Mme Jacob, a revendeuse à la toilette, and, of course, Turcaret himself who lavishes expensive presents on a young baronne, and whose character is reminiscent of Dancourt's M. Patin of L'Eté des Coquettes. The similarities which are very few are limited to the portrait of M. Rafle who runs Turcaret's 'bureau d'usure'; his character could have suggested to Dancourt ideas for his Zacharie who acts in partnership with the leading agioteur, and each play has in common a conventional marquis boasting of his affability, social graces and good taste.

Les Agioteurs must be regarded primarily as a work of Dancourt's individual creation with only the minimum of influence from previous plays, including Turcaret. Its chief merit - and here it is unparalleled in the contemporary theatre - is in the penetrating character-study and ingenious financial intrigues which combine to make it one of the masterpieces of Dancourt's compositions.

In sharp contrast to this play is Dancourt's next production, Céphale et Procris (1711), which is greatly inferior to it. Here Dancourt demonstrates his inability to cope with a theme taken from mythology. The play, written in three acts and in verse, dramatizes some incidents in the life of two figures of Greek mythology, Cephalus and Procris, who had been the subject of Duché's opera of the same name (1694). H.C. Lancaster suggests that probable sources for the play were Hyginus or Book VII of Ovid's Metamorphoses, and that the subordinate plot concerning the attendant's love-affair may have been taken from Molière's Amphitryon. The hero of Céphale et Procris attempts to test his wife's fidelity by the use of disguise and welcomes the opportunity her guilt affords him of abandoning her for a goddess

who has lured him to her domain. The play is disappointing from the point of view of character-study and vraisemblance. Greater emphasis was laid on the visual effect of the stage setting which represents a magnificent palace standing in beautiful grounds, and prominence was given to the three divertissements which end each act.

Dancourt turned once more to a subject taken from Spanish literature for material for his next play, Sancho Pança Gouverneur (1712). Themes borrowed from Cervantes were a subject of popular interest and had been used by French playwrights before Dancourt. In 1641, Guérin de Bouscal had based his play, Le Gouvernement de Sancho Pança on the section of Don Quixote devoted to the activities of Sancho when he becomes invested with the imaginary post of ruler of an island. Dufresny's unpublished three-act comedy, Sancho Pança, performed in 1694, was derived from the same episodes dramatized in the previous play. Destouches produced Le Curieux Impertinent in 1710; written in five acts and in verse, it uses details from another part of Don Quixote, the story of 'El Curioso Impertinente', the theme of which is more akin to Céphale et Procris, with its emphasis on a husband's morbid curiosity about his wife's fidelity. Other works from Cervantes include Bellavoine's Sancho Pança, in prose, performed at the Foire Saint Germain in 1706, and Fuselier's Sancho Gouverneur de l'Isle de Barataria, also performed at the Foire in 1711 (1).

In the preface of Sancho Pança Gouverneur Dancourt mentions his debt to a previous play on the same theme, but without specifying which one :

Il y a eu plusieurs Pièces sous le même titre; et j'en ai trouvé une, entre plusieurs autres, dont la versification quoique très ancienne, m'a paru assez bonne pour en conserver des morceaux, où j'ai fait peu de changement.

The Frères Parfaict elucidate this point by supplying the information that the play on which Dancourt based his plot was Guérin's Gouvernement de Sancho Pança.

In the dedicatory epistle Dancourt readily admits extensive borrowing from Cervantes and from his main source :

(1) These plays are discussed in relation to Dancourt's play by M. Bardon, Don quichotte en France au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècles, Paris, 1931, and E.J. Crooks, The Influence of Cervantes in Seventeenth-Century France, ~~Baltimore~~, 1931.

Ces portraits que j'ai su tracer
 D'après le plus habile maître
 Que l'art de bien écrire aura jamais peut-être,
 Je les ai rendus tels qu'il nous les a montrés,
 Tels en effet qu'ils doivent être:
 Ma Muse sur la scène en les faisant paroître,
 Ne les a point défigurés,
 Guidé par un si bon modèle,
 Je crois n'avoir pu m'égarer;
 J'ai suivi, sans rien altérer,
 Sa simplicité naturelle,
 Ses naïves expressions.
 D'un si grand homme admirateur fidelle;
 J'ai respecté ses moindres fictions.
 Si pour accommoder le sujet à la scène
 J'ai fait des changements, quelques additions,
 On ne les connoît qu'avec peine.
 Apollon semble avoir pris soin
 De faire couler au besoin
 L'esprit de l'auteur dans ma veine,
 Et de nous verser l'eau de la même fontaine.

A detailed comparison between the two comedies (1) reveals that the additions and changes which Dancourt made with regard to the original play were significant contributions. H.C. Lancaster suggests that these may be the whole or parts of Act I, scenes i and ii, Act II, scenes iv to vii, and Act V, scenes xv to xvii, which give Don Quixote a larger part in the play. Dancourt did not limit himself to using second-hand material, but took details from Cervantes' novel which were not included in Guérin's play, namely the third legal case over which Sancho presides, the theme of Dulcinea's enchantment, a reference to the Cave of Montesinos, and the character of the sorcerer, Archelaus. A most unusual ending for a five-act play is the divertissement which normally rounds off Dancourt's one-act playlets. The songs of which this is composed relate in brief the main theme of Don Quixote.

Dancourt's next play, L'Impromptu de Suresnes (1713), is a comédie-ballet containing allegorical figures and elements of singing and dancing. Before being acted at the Comédie Française, it was performed during a visite to Suresnes, which is used for the scene of the playlet. A brief prologue which is sung by

(1) Cf. M. Bardon, op. cit., pp. 511-20.

peasant characters celebrates the return of peace and fertility to the land, as a result of the partial termination of the War of the Spanish Succession. After this a one-act comedy in prose follows, the chief emphasis of which is placed on the follies and weaknesses of mankind. Bacchus, La Folie and L'Amour are considered the three mainsprings of all earthly activity and are seen rubbing shoulders with the mortals who make up the rest of the cast : two young Parisians who are determined to marry their sweethearts, a miserly wine-merchant who is at loggerheads with Bacchus, a chevalier who marries a socially ambitious widow, and an elderly coquette who loves a disciple of Bacchus. Each of the Divinities has an important part in the plot; Bacchus's contribution is to bring gaiety to the scene by granting an abundance of wine and harvest products, thwarting the usurious practices of the wine-merchant and increasing the number of drunkards and vandals. L'Amour and La Folie act hand in glove to inspire both young and old alike with their precepts. One of the girls on whom these divinities have exerted their joint influence protests against her father's opposition to her marriage into a higher social class and attributes this to his fear of being looked down upon by his in-laws as a nouveau riche. The play ends with a divertissement composed of various types of dances, a menuet, passe-pied, rigaudon, and branle, and songs in praise of the successfully married couples and 'la bonne chere'.

Les Fêtes du Cours (1714) recalls to a certain extent Dancourt's earlier fondness for the one-act play dramatizing a contemporary event and ending with a divertissement. There is a slight difference in form seen in the prologue composed in vers libres and made up of a conversation between the allegorical figures of Venus and Bacchus who set the tone of the play. Dancourt shows little imagination in devising a plot which he rounds off in a slipshod manner. The subject of the play concerns the outdoor pursuits in which Parisians indulged during the summer nights of 1714; the promenades and masked balls which took place on the Cours-la-Reine - then just outside the boundaries of the city - gave excellent opportunity for intrigues of various kinds, and Dancourt bases his plot on those of a

particularly amorous nature. This play gave rise to a parody performed at the Théâtre de la Foire in the same month, September 1714, entitled Arlequin au Bal du Cours. The substantial success which Dancourt's play enjoyed in contrast to the other longer productions of the previous decade, showed the continued popularity of the comédie-vaudeville.

The next play, Le Vert Galant (1714) also a one-act play ending with a divertissement, resembles many of Dancourt's earlier works in its brief sketch of a bourgeois household and its farcical incidents. The plot takes the form of a trap laid by a Parisian dyer, Jérôme, to surprise his friend, Tarif, with his wife. The main event of the comedy is the punishment meted out to Tarif who is immersed in a bath of green paint, thus explaining the title. Tarif, the villain of the piece, is an agioteur by profession, but this aspect of his character has no particular significance in the plot, except perhaps to represent him in an unfavourable light.

Little is known of La Guinguette de la Finance, performed at the Comédie Française four times in May 1716 and never published. The Frères Parfaict describe it as a 'Comédie en prose, en 1 Acte, précédée d'un Prologue, et suivie d'un divertissement'. No information is given as to the subject-matter of the play, but a contemporary report gives an indication that the prologue was constructed on a mythological theme in which Jupiter, Juno and the Amours took part (1). Quoting from this report in the Mercure Galant, the Frères Parfaict state with good reason that 'Le Sieur le Fèvre, en qualité de Journaliste, auroit plus contenté le Public en donnant un petit extrait de cette Pièce, qu'en se livrant d'une façon peu mesurée à l'envie de dire du mal de M. Dancourt' (2). Although Le Fèvre denounces the play as a 'détestable Pièce' and its author as an amoral if not a distinctly immoral playwright, he does at least give us enough information to come to the conclusion that the prologue of La Guinguette formed the basic idea of Dancourt's later La Métempsychose des Amours.

(1) Le Mercure Galant, May 1716, pp. 292-95.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre Français, vol. XV, pp. 238-40.

The last play which Dancourt devoted to a study of life in the provinces was Le Prix de l'Arquebuse (1717) written on the occasion of the centenary shooting competition held in the town of Meaux. This play stands apart from the other rustic plays not only on account of the number of years which separate it from them, but also because the rustic element is considerably reduced. In it Dancourt embraced a wider variety of provincial characters, ranging from impoverished though haughty hobereaux to simple patois-speaking types, inhabitants of the provincial town. It is particularly noteworthy for the prominence given to the country nobleman who received his share of treatment from Dancourt as he did at the hands of Dancourt's predecessors. From the mid-seventeenth-century on, this social type became an increasingly popular figure in comedy. A well-known satire on the provincial nobility is R. Poisson's Le Baron de la Crasse (1662) in which the protagonist, expressively named, is mocked on account of his ignorance of etiquette when he visits the Court after a long absence. Poisson again took up this theme in a later play, L'Après-souper des Auberges (1665). Perhaps the best known play in which the rustic nobility appear is Molière's George Dandin where the proud and impecunious Sotenville couple boast of their ancestry and look contemptuously on the upstart peasant to whom they married their daughter. Pourceaugnac, too, contains a satire of the provincial nobleman, as did De Visé's Gentilhomme Guespin (1670); in the latter play the question is approached from two angles. On the one hand, there is the typically rustic Vicomte de la Sablonnière who married a Parisienne, Lucrèce, and in contrast with him, Boix-le-Roux who has lived so much at Court that he is undistinguishable from a courtier. In Montfleury's Gentilhomme de la Beauce (1670) the hobereau, Courteville, is regarded by Parisians as an intruder from the provinces and is quickly sent packing, but not before being mocked for his plans to marry a Parisienne. One of Hauteroche's best known plays, Les Nobles de Province (1678) is a satire on the manners of the aristocrats in Vivarais. The chief character is Fatencour who claims to be able to trace his ancestors back to the fifteenth century, and who has an absurdly exacting code of honour which he is

prepared to defend with the sword. Baron, in his only peasant play, Les Enlèvements (1685), gives us a glimpse of the penury of certain rural aristocrats who do not raise any objection to a mésalliance; they see it as the only means of securing a standard of living commensurate with their noble status. La Nopce interrompue (1699) by Dufresny has much in common with Baron's play: the author dramatizes the domestic difficulties of poverty-stricken members of the provincial nobility, and a mésalliance between Dorante, a country gentleman, and a village girl, which is accepted by all concerned as a perfectly normal procedure.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Mme de Sévigné also found amusement in the manners of the country gentry. Writing to her daughter from the Orleans district on 8 May 1680, she describes with a touch of patronage how she made acquaintance with an hobereau, 'le véritable portrait de M. de Sottenville', and his wife whose quaint manners afforded her hours of delight : 'Nous fûmes deux heures en cette compagnie sans nous ennuyer, par la nouveauté d'une conversation et d'une langue (entièrement) nouvelle pour nous' (1).

Thus, when Dancourt took to satirizing the provincial nobility in Le Prix de l'Arquebuse, the type was already a well-established conventional dramatic figure. Another important aspect of the play is the character of the socially ambitious inhabitant of the town who had succeeded in rising to the prominent position of prévôt and simultaneously acquiring a bad reputation on account of the fortune he amassed in the course of his professional duties.

In 1717 Dancourt produced a machine play, La Métamorphose des Amours, also called Les Dieux Comédiens; it was written in three acts and in verse, and contained interludes of singing and dancing. The play is concerned with the efforts of Jupiter to win the heart of a young shepherd-girl, Corine. As his plans are frustrated by the mischievous Amours acting under Juno's orders, he deprives these cherubs of their immortality but, relenting of his irrevocable decision, he gives them power to be reborn. In January 1718 the Italians gave a performance of La Métamorphose d'Arlequin, no doubt a parody of Dancourt's play.

(1) Lettres de Mme de Sévigné, ed. Gérard-Gailly, Paris, 1953-57, 3 vols. vol. II, pp. 690-91.

Dancourt's last play to deal with the theme of satire of Parisian manners was written in 1718 when he attempted to revive the subject of La Désolation des Joususes (1687) by adapting portions of the comedy for a new composition, La Déroute du Pharaon which, however, the actors of the Comédie Française refused to perform. The 1718 edition shows that the one-act comedy was little more than an adaptation of the earlier play, the subject of which was the prohibition of certain card-games and the effects of this on gamblers. But Dancourt does, however, introduce a fresh element; whereas, in the earlier play, most of the characters are drawn from aristocratic circles, the protagonist of La Déroute du Pharaon is a parvenue addicted to gambling who is continually rebuked for her conduct by her brother, a successful agioteur whose profession is not, however, dramatized.

The two remaining plays, performed at the Comédie Française some time after Dancourt's retirement from the theatre in 1718, pose a problem as to the date of their composition. L'Eclipse is a one-act comedy in prose acted for the first time on June 8 1724, six years after Dancourt had retired to his château. It is unlikely that Dancourt continued his output of comedies up to this date in view of the fact that he had long since abandoned the stage and was far removed from theatrical affairs. The occasion for the performance of the play was no doubt provided by the occurrence of an eclipse a fortnight previously, on May 22. A note in the feuilles d'assemblée shows that on May 31 the actors accepted the play for performance; but it is probable that it had been composed at a much earlier date and that they had retained the manuscript until they thought fit to produce it. Whatever the reasons for the surprise appearance of the play in the company's repertory, the fact remains that on two out of the three performances in June 1724 Dancourt was allotted a part d'auteur.

Few plays of the period are devoted to astronomical themes; Molière introduced these marginally into Les Femmes Savantes to illustrate one of the many idiosyncrasies cherished by contemporary women, and into Les Amants Magnifiques for comic

effect. Fontenelle's La Comète (1681) was the first French play to be primarily concerned with activities in outer space. His play is a satire on the popular belief that such vagaries of the solar system as comets are omens of human disaster. The astrologer is portrayed as a ridiculous figure and resembles the bumptious docteur of L'Eclipse, a self-styled intellectual who is duped by an astute maid. In both plays the celestial event is linked up with a domestic question, the marriage of the two young people in spite of opposition from their elders. At the Théâtre Italien Delosme de Monchenay produced Mezzetin Grand Sophy de Perse in 1689, a satire on the belief in astrology. Dufresny's three-act Le Faux Instinct (1707) was the first to introduce the phenomenon of the eclipse; the object of the play was to satirize the widespread contemporary belief in such superstitions as dreams, horoscopes and the cri du sang.

Two manuscript versions of a play called L'Eclipse have survived, although neither is in Dancourt's hand. In comparing the two versions it will be noticed that they resemble each other only in title, and in the use made of the eclipse to facilitate a marriage, though in different circumstances. One of these versions, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, is wrongly attributed to Dancourt by S. Pitou (1) who bases his assertions as to the authorship of the play on mere assumption. The other manuscript, a copy of which is preserved in the Comédie Française, is that of Dancourt's play, and differs widely in subject-matter, choice of characters and number of scenes. This suggests that the previous play, since the scene is laid in Italy and since it contains a character called Arlequin, was the same play that was performed in French at the Italian Theatre on 24 June 1724 under the title of L'Effet de l'Eclipse.⁽²⁾ The characters in Dancourt's comedy are a docteur who speaks in pseudo-technical jargon on astrological subjects, a foolish marquise, Belise, who is overawed at his display of erudition and pretends to be interested in such subjects, and her recalcitrant niece, Lucinde who refuses to marry the docteur on the grounds that she plans to marry Valère, the traditional

(1) 'Observations on Dancourt's L'Eclipse', Modern Language Quarterly, 1961, vol. XXII, pp. 149-52.

(2) C.D. Brenner, The Théâtre Italien, its Repertory, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961,

suitor. The young couple rely on the maid, Lisette, (played by Mimi Dancourt), and a marchand de contrebande who takes advantage of the temporary spell of darkness caused by the eclipse to help the lovers elope and obtain consent for their marriage.

A similar problem presents itself when one tries to estimate the date of composition of Dancourt's past play, La Belle-Mère, performed at the Comédie Française on April 21 1725, some months before the author's death. Apart from the previous play there is a considerable gap between this and his last production at the theatre in 1717, a fact which suggests that both L'Eclipse and La Belle-Mère belonged to an earlier period of his career. Dancourt merely adapted La Belle-Mère from one of Bruey's comedies, La Force du Sang ou la Belle-Mère. This may have been the play under a slightly different title, La Belle-Mère Supposée, which was given for the first time at the Italian Theatre in July 1716 (1) or, perhaps more probably, La Force du Naturel, first performed at that theatre in 1717. The difficulty arises from the fact that Brueys had written two separate manuscripts one of which found its way into the hands of the comédiens français, and the other into the hands of the comédiens italiens. An agreement was reached between the rival theatres that Dancourt's version and the Italian version should be played at the respective theatres on the same day 'et que celle des deux qui auroit le plus de représentations resteroit au Théâtre qui l'auroit représentée, et que l'autre seroit supprimée. Le jugement fut exécuté le 21 avril 1721 (1725) et le Théâtre des Italiens eut l'avantage sur celui des François' (2). The feuilles d'assemblée show that on 29 April 1724 the actors had accepted a play entitled La Force du Sang which was read to the assembly by Quinault. It was not until April 1725 that it was finally performed under the title of La Belle-Mère, but it was never published.

The Mercure Galant for April 1725 gives a résumé of Dancourt's five-act play which concerns two step-brothers who, as infants, were substituted for each

(1) cf. C.D. Brenner, op.cit., and Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français, 9310, La Belle-Mère Supposée.

(2) D.A. Brueys, Oeuvres de Théâtre, Paris, 1735, 3 vols., vol. III, p. 173. Preface to La Force du Sang. The Italian version was entitled La Force du Naturel.

other by their mother and nurse, and who followed widely different careers in life, one joining the army and the other becoming a privileged lay-about on the strength of a large income. It is through the nurse's confession that the soldier eventually triumphs over his usurping step-brother. The *Frères Parfaict* note a resemblance between this play and *Le Sot toujours Sot* by Brueys and Palaprat (1693) and Montfleury's *Crispin Gentilhomme* in which two boys are substituted for each other; one of them joins the army, and a peasant is raised to the status of a nobleman but his identity comes to light in the end.

The general impression which this review leaves of Dancourt is that of a comic writer who was the most prolific playwright among his contemporaries. Inevitably, his work, like that of many other authors, did not attain consistent perfection, and contained contrasting elements of mastery of his art and shoddy workmanship, of creative ability and unashamed borrowings, of high comedy and sheer farce, of universal appeal and merely seasonal interest, of captivating novelty and tiresomely repetitive dramatic techniques. On the one hand, his work reflected the general trend of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century comedy with its dominant influence from Molière, its emphasis on portrayal of manners, the popularity of the one-act prose form usually performed after a longer play and the use of music and dancing, although it must be kept in mind that Dancourt helped in a significant way to determine the direction of contemporary comedy. And on the other hand there is the more important aspect of Dancourt's work - his originality. All of the literary influences combined - whether plays, *libretti* or novels - pale into relative unimportance in comparison with the inspiration he received from contemporary society which he reflected in three decades of permutations. Variety is the key-note to Dancourt's plays as regards the types he portrayed, the subjects he treated, his manner of presentation, and the devices he used to provoke laughter. Of all his contemporaries, he was the one most interested in the *fait divers*, and his exploitation of contemporary events forms an appreciable part of his works and an important ingredient of his popularity

during his lifetime as well as of his posthumous fate as a playwright.

Versatile entertainer, social satirist par excellence and recorder of the contemporary scene, Dancourt has made a significant contribution to comedy after Molière . Quite apart from their documentary value, his works viewed as a whole illustrate aspects of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century theatre which often tend to be eclipsed by the three giants of the stage, Corneille, Racine and Molière.

V. PLAYS OF CONTEMPORARY INTEREST.

Several plays of Dancourt's composition are characterized by their ephemeral nature in the sense that they were based, wholly or partly, on some incident or topic of contemporary interest and intended for an audience ~~who~~ were alive to the significance of the situations he portrayed on the stage. Dancourt's policy of providing the audience with themes and incidents with which they were familiar was largely responsible not only for this type of play's immediate success, but also for their lack of appeal to subsequent audiences. This explains why they would not be readily understandable to modern spectators without some prior explanation of the background from which they sprang.

Dancourt was not, of course, the only playwright of his time to make use of the fait divers in his works. Various writers, from the mid-seventeenth century to nearer Dancourt's time did exactly the same thing. Chevalier based his Intrigue des Carrosses à Cinq Sous (1663) on the short-lived form of public transport, and his Désolation des Filous (1662) on a recent prohibition against the carrying of fire-arms. Fontenelle's La Comète (1681) was, as we have seen, primarily concerned with a celestial event, the arrival over Paris of Newton's comet. In Les Bouts-Rimez (1682) Saint-Glas held up to ridicule the popular amusement of composing sonnets for prize-winning competitions. Dufresny showed some interest in actualités with his satire of the opera expressed in L'Opéra de Campagne (1692) and L'Union des Deux Opéras (1692), his Adieux des Officiers, given in April 1693, timed to coincide with the opening of the spring campaign when officers took leave of their sweethearts, and his satire on the popularity of fairy-tales in Les Fées (1692). But no seventeenth-century playwright could compete with Dancourt in his exploitation of topics of contemporary interest.

Exploitation of Contemporary Events.

One of Dancourt's earliest plays, La Désolation des Joueuses (1687) was, according to the Frères Parfaict, inspired by a recent decree which made lansquenet illegal : 'La défense de jouer au Lansquenet occasionna la petite Comédie de la Désolation des Joueuses.' (1) The exact date of the decree in question is not known - there were several arrêts du parlement against gambling in the reign of Louis XIV - but the Mercure Galant for October 1687 points out that the play was 'un Impromptu qu'il fit dans un tems que l'on défendit le Jeu et qui a extrêmement diverty tous ceux qui l'ont veu!'

Gambling was not simply a diversion or a relaxing pastime; it was pursued with frenzied enthusiasm as a means of gaining money. The passion for gambling was particularly rife in Court circles. Persons of great prominence like ^Mme de Montespan thought nothing of losing a fortune at one session. Dangeau elicited admiration from his contemporaries on account of his uncanny propensity for winning large sums of money. The regular gambling parties bred fripons de jeu, so that any huge gains were always viewed with suspicion. The extravagant preoccupation with gambling was infectious, and gradually spread to the general public with the result that frequent interventions of the police were needed to prevent it becoming epidemic. But as usual the decrees were directed only against the common people, and did not penetrate into the Court which always remained impregnable in matters concerning the law. The inevitable consequences of playing for high stakes were financial ruin and, for a nobleman, abject dependence on the King. Some courtiers were so impoverished that they were even reduced to leaving the Court and retiring to the provinces. These considerations will have been uppermost in the minds of the spectators when they attended Dancourt's play with the recent decree fresh in their memory. Indeed, many of them would have no doubt identified themselves with Dancourt's characters who react vigorously to the prohibition which threatened their freedom to engage in the particular form of gambling to which they were addicted. Clitandre, one of the gamblers in the play, notes that lansquenet was the only card-

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, p. 46.

game to be affected : 'Mais cela me passe, en effet. Attaquer directement ce pauvre Lansquenet, et souffrir tous les autres jeux.' (sc. xi.), and the penalty for refusing to conform to the decree was 'mille écus'. (sc. vii.)

This theme is echoed in Dancourt's last play to dramatize contemporary events, La Déroute du Pharaon (1718). D'Argenson states that Dancourt took advantage of a recent decree banning card-games and gambling parties: 'La dernière deffense célèbre a été vers 1719 et cette pièce a pu être faite alors.' (1) This is confirmed with greater accuracy, if in less strong terms, by Dangeau who noted that on December 11 1717 the Parlement re-issued a decree to this effect :

L'ordonnance pour défendre les jeux publics fut publiée à son de trompe et affichée. Les dés, le hoca, le pharaon, la bassette, le lansquenet, et la dupe sont défendus, et il paroît qu'on a résolu de faire exécuter à la rigueur les arrêts qui furent rendus sur cela il y a quelque temps par le parlement. (2)

The play, however, never reached the boards, and so Dancourt was deprived of the satisfaction of seeing what success it might have had with theatre audiences.

Some of Dancourt's plays reflect the fondness of Parisians for excursions into the country. There were a variety of resorts to suit all tastes. Whereas the annual fair at Bezons tended to attract crowds of the less genteel sections of society, those with more fastidious tastes and well-lined purses went further afield in search of quiet amusement and select company to the numerous spas, at Forges, Cauterets, Bourbon, Pirmont, Barèges and Vichy, for example. Some notable personalities were frequenters of spas : Scarron in 1641 and Boileau in 1687 (3) resorted to Bourbon, Mme de Sévigné spent the summer of 1676 at Vichy from where she describes the regime, and Mme de Montespan went frequently to her favourite haunt at Bourbon 'sans besoin des eaux' (4), and was satirized by La Bruyère (5) for her morbid anxiety about her health.

The visitors to the spa in Dancourt's Les Eaux de Bourbon (1696) have come for other than hygienic reasons, as one of the songs in the divertissement puts it :

Tous les buveurs d'eau de Bourbon,
N'ont pas besoin d'Apotiquaire;
Ces eaux sont dans l'occasion,
Un prétexte fort salulaire.

(1) Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Geneva, 1966, vol. XLII, p. 172.

(2) Journal, ed. E. Soulié, Paris, 1854-60, 19 vols., vol. XVII, p. 211.

(3) cf. his poem 'Sur la fontaine de Bourbon', Oeuvres, ed. Pléiade, Paris, 1966, p. 259.

(4) Dangeau, op.cit., vol. XI, p. 381. (Note by Saint-Simon).

(5) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, Paris, 1882-92, 5 vols., vol. III, Part I, p. 294.

Their 'anxiety' about their health disappears particularly in the evenings when it is time for social enjoyment. The Baron de Saint Aubin describes the atmosphere of the place :

C'est ici un pays de liberté où l'on vit sans façon et sans contrainte. Ah, l'aimable séjour! On donne une partie du tems au soin de sa santé, et le reste au plaisir et à la galanterie. Les malades se divertissent mieux à Bourbon, que les gens bien sains ne font ailleurs. (sc. ii.)

The Chevalier fits into this comically paradoxical situation, as we see from a remark made by the peasant, Blaise, who looks askance at the way in which he continually wins at the gambling-table :

il aime itou bian ce pays-ci, stilà; il viant aux yaux deux fois l'année, et l'an ne sait pour queu maladie. Morgué, s'il a la goutte, ce n'est pas au bout des doigts. (sc. ii.)

As for the childless couple who are hoping that the waters will bring fertility, the peasant has a different view on this subject :

quand des maris amenont ici leurs femmes pour ça, les yaux n'y font rian: quand les femmes venont toutes seules, les yaux operont que c'est des merveilles. (sc.ii)

A similar idea had been expressed in Chappuzeau's Les Eaux de Pirmont (1671) in which the doctor gives his expert opinion that 'les eaux minérales font plus de cocus qu'elles ne guérissent de malades', and where the atmosphere is far from being restrictive :

quand on est sur le lieu (i'ay vu le badinage)
On va passer les nuits à l'ombre du bocage,
On se leve à midy, l'on donne des cadeaux,
On iouë, on danse, on rit, c'est là prendre les eaux. (Act I, sc. vi.)

Gaiety is the key-note, ironically, of life at the spa in Dancourt's play, much to the chagrin of the doctor, Grognet, who fears that the high life may prove mortal to his patients. It is the peasant, however, who does most to bring out the comic qualities of the play by describing the health resort as if it were a holiday camp :

Un bal aux yaux! Morgué, que je varrons danser de fluxions et de rhumatismes! (sc. iv.)...Tatigué, que j'allons nous divertir, vela toute l'infirmerie de Bourbon... des poumoniques qui jouont de la flute, des enrhumés qui chantont, et des boiteux qui font la capriole. (sc. xxx.)

and he goes on to comment on the complaints made by the Présidente that the waters are not doing her health any good : 'Morgué, la vieille Présidente crévera de

débauche, et les yaux de Bourbon en auront le blâme'. (sc. vii.) This was a far cry from the more staid description of life at Bourbon given by Scarron in his epistle to Madame Hautefort (1), but Dancourt's comic presentation of the spa and its frequenters was of a nature to provide amusement for his audience, many of whom would be familiar with such places.

In 1698, while France was enjoying a period of peace, the establishment of Louis XIV's camp at Compiègne provided not only Parisians, but also many notable Europeans, with an occasion to visit the town some sixty miles from Paris. The magnificent display of military tactics, laid on for propaganda purposes, could not have failed, by the impact it made on Parisians and foreigners alike, to stimulate Dancourt's interest in this spectacular event. In fact, it furnished him with the basic idea of Les Curieux de Compiègne (1698). Saint-Simon, an eye-witness at the proceedings, gave a description of the pageantry :

C'étoit le plus beau coup d'oeil qu'on pût imaginer que toute cette armée et ce nombre prodigieux de curieux de toutes conditions, à cheval et à pied... cette innombrable foule d'assistants de tous états...le Roi témoigna qu'il comptoit que les troupes seroient belles et que chacun s'y piqueroit d'émulation ...Non seulement il n'y eut rien de si parfaitement beau que toutes les troupes et toutes à tel point qu'on ne sut à quel corps en donner le prix; mais leurs commandants ajoutèrent à la beauté majestueuse et guerrière des hommes, des armes, des chevaux, les parures et la magnificence de la cour, et les officiers s'épuisèrent encore par des uniformes qui auroient pu orner des fêtes...Jamais spectacle si éclatant, si éblouissant, il le faut dire : si effrayant...Jusqu'aux bayeurs les plus inconnus, tout étoit retenu, invité et comme forcé par l'attention, la civilité et la promptitude du nombre infini de ses officiers...tout cela formoit un spectacle dont l'ordre, le silence, l'exactitude, la diligence, et la parfaite propreté ravissoit de surprise et d'admiration. (2)

In Dancourt's comedy, produced on October 4, only a fortnight after the event had come to an end, Mme Robin, a wealthy bourgeoise visitor from Paris, describes the scene in superlative terms :

Nous vîmes avant hier passer tous les équipages de l'armée; il n'y a point d'Ambassadeur qui en ait un si beau (...) quel agréable tintamarre! la satisfaisante chose! quel ordre! quelle magnificence! Cela plaît, cela charme, cela ravit; que cela est beau, que cela est grand, que cela est excellent, que cela est superbe(...) y a-t-il rien de plus gracieux que tout ce que j'ai vu? Ce mélange de bataillons confus, ces escadrons épars, ces officiers, ces valets, ces Vivandiers, ces gens de condition. (sc. ix.)

(1) cf. P. Scarron, Poésies Diverses, ed. M. Cauchie, Paris, 1947, 2 vols., vol. I, pp. 129-45.

(2) Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislisle, Paris, 1890-1930, ^{43 vols.} vol. V, p. 352..

Dancourt did not, however, concentrate on the visual aspects of the camp, with its panoply, mock sieges and battles, or its costly trappings described by Saint-Simon as

des maisons de bois meublées comme les maisons de Paris les plus superbes... des tentes immenses, magnifiques, et dont le nombre pouvoit seul former un camp; les cuisines, les divers lieux, et les divers officiers pour cette suite sans interruption de tables et pour tous leurs différents services, les sommeleries, les offices...(1)

He was more interested in the manners of certain Parisian bourgeois who had made their way from the city to be present at the proceedings, the treatment they received from the townsfolk, and their relations with officers they met at the camp. The attraction of the event for Parisians is indicated by the following description in Saint-Simon : 'Ainsi ce fut, à proprement parler, comme une procession depuis Paris jusques à Compiègne, où l'on ne trouvoit point à se loger pour son argent'.(2) By introducing into his play two officers, Clitandre and the Chevalier de Fourbignac, both without means, Dancourt brought out the ruinous financial after-effects of the military activities at Compiègne, as described by Saint-Simon :

Il n'y eut point de régiment qui n'en fut ruiné pour bien des années, corps et officiers...Ce camp acheva de ruiner les officiers qui commençoient déjà bien à l'être par la dépense qu'il leur avoit fallu faire pendant la guerre. (3)

The skirmishes between the two officers and their Parisian acquaintances, Valentin and Mouflard, are stated to have been based on actual events which took place at the camp. The Gazette d'Amsterdam pointed out that it was a play 'dans laquelle on représente plusieurs petites aventures qui sont arrivées au Camp'. (4) This statement is borne out in one of Mme du Noyer's letters of 1698 in which she mentions that 'Dancourt a tiré sa comédie de quelques aventures bourgeoises qu'on dit estre arrivées à ce camp.' (5) The recency of the splendid occasion, coupled with the fact that the effects of it were still sizzling in the minds of the audience, accounted for much of the play's seasonal appeal.

(1) Mémoires, ed. A. de Boislise, vol. V, p. 352.

(2) ibid., p. 590.

(3) ibid. pp. 374 and 591.

(4) October 1698.

(5) cf. P. Mélése, Répertoire Analytique, Paris, 1934, p. 206.

Dancourt sought inspiration from the popularity with Parisian bourgeois of the annual fair of Bezons situated north-west of the city. When he produced La Foire de Besons (1695), the village fair which took place on 30 August had, in recent years, reached a peak of popularity :

depuis trois ou quatre années les assemblées y ont tellement cru, que la confusion y a toujours fait naître quelque désordre divertissant: ce qui a donné lieu à faire une espece de comédie-vaudeville. (1)

As the play was performed for the first time on 13 August, it preceded the opening of the fair, but during its first run Dancourt inserted additional scenes into his comedy which were inspired by an accident involving Parisian visitors travelling to the village by boat via the Seine, as was customary in those days :

On a ajouté dans les dernières représentations de nouvelles scènes qui ont extrêmement plu, parce que ce sont des aventures véritables de la foire de Besons... Bien des gens qui avoient vu représenter la comédie ont esté à la vraie foire, pour voir si la représentation estoit conforme à la vérité de la chose : la foule y estoit prodigieuse, le bac estoit tellement chargé de monde qu'il s'est ouvert. Bien des gens, hommes et femmes pele-mele sont tombez dans l'eau, mais personne n'a esté noyé. (2)

The account of the capsizing of the ferryboat and the consequences of the accident occupy scenes vii to xi. The abbe is the first to bring news of the event :

L'ABBE

Nous l'avons échappé belle, Madame. Et l'aventure qui vient d'arriver...

GUILLEMIN

Comment? Quelle aventure?...

L'ABBE

Le même bac qui nous a passé vient de s'ouvrir en abordant de ce côté-ci, il y avoit dedans plus de trois cens personnes.

MME ARGANTE

Au secours, au secours, miséricorde! Hé! n'y a-t-il personne de noyé?

L'ABBE

Non, Madame, la plupart n'ont pris que le demi bain même: à la vérité il y a quelques chapeaux et quelques fontanges qui prendront le bain tout entier, et qui pourront bien aller jusqu'à Rouen porter des nouvelles du naufrage. (sc. vii.)

Writing at a much later date, the Frères Parfaict noted that

La mode d'aller à la Foire de Besons est passée depuis plusieurs années, le public se contente de se rendre le jour de cette Foire à l'Etoile du Cours, et de s'y promener, et la populace danse dans une pelouse qui est en cet endroit.

(1) Le Mercure Galant, September, 1695, p. 308.

(2) J.N. Du Tralage, Notes et Documents sur l'Histoire des Théâtres à Paris, Paris, 1880, p. 30.

(3) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, p. 421.

Dancourt reflected this change of venue mentioned by the Frères Parfaict when he produced Les Fêtes du Cours in 1714. 'Promenades' in the Cours-la-Reine ^{however} and the Tuileries had for years been a favourite pastime with Parisians, and had given rise to criticism ; as we see from Bourdaloue's opinion of

Ces promenades pour lesquelles on se dispose comme pour le bal, et où l'on apporte le même esprit et le même luxe...ces promenades changées en comédies publiques, où chacun, acteur et spectateur tout à la fois, vient jouer son rôle et faire son personnage...ces promenades dérobées, où le hasard en apparence mais un hasard en effet bien ménagé et bien prémédité, fait de prétendues rencontres et de vrais rendez-vous. (1)

It was no coincidence that in the language of preciosity it was termed 'l'empire des oeillades'. La Bruyère depicted these 'promenades' as something approaching a fashion parade where people passed up and down with a critical eye to the details of one another's appearance :

L'on se donne à Paris, sans se parler, comme un rendez-vous public, mais fort exact, tous les soirs au Cours ou aux Tuileries, pour se regarder au visage et se désapprouver les uns les autres...selon le plus ou le moins de l'équipage ou l'on respecte les personnes, ou on les dédaigne. (2)

The scene of Dancourt's play is laid in the Cours-la-Reine in order to evoke the atmosphere of the summer nights when Parisians used to frequent this spot for the purposes of taking an evening stroll or indulging in the less innocent recreations afforded by the masked balls which had recently been introduced :

La beauté des nuits des mois de Juillet et d'Août de cette année (1714) engagea beaucoup de personnes de la Cour et de la Ville à profiter de la fraîcheur de la promenade dans les allées du Cours et dans celles des Champs-Élysées; chaque carrosse étoit éclairé par plusieurs flambeaux, portés par des domestiques, ce qui formoit un coup d'oeil tout-à-fait gracieux. Au bout de quelque tems on s'avisa de joindre à ces promenades des danses qui duroient jusqu'au matin, et ces plaisirs furent continués jusqu'à la fin du mois de Septembre. (3)

This passage from the Frères Parfaict can be confirmed from contemporary sources. Saint-Simon noted in 1714 that 'on se mit à s'aller promener au Cours, à minuit, aux flambeaux, à y mener de la musique, à danser dans le rond du milieu' , and in 1715 that

On a vu la folie qui prit de l'un à l'autre de se promener les nuits au Cours, et d'y donner quelquefois des soupers et des musiques. La même fantaisie

- Versailles, 1812,
- (1) Oeuvres Complètes, vol. V, p. 341.
 - (2) Oeuvres, Vol. II, p. 187.
 - (3) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XV, pp. 173-4.

continua celle-ci (cette année-ci); mais les indécentes qui s'y commirent, et quelque chose de pis, malgré les flambeaux que la plupart des carrosses y portoient finent défendre ces promenades nocturnes, et qui cessèrent pour toujours au commencement de juillet. (1)

The use of the Cours as a place of conviviality was not, however, discontinued in that year, but certain modifications were made :

Il s'étoit établi une coutume dès l'année passée (1714) qu'on alloit se promener au Cours après minuit, et on recommençoit à prendre ce train-là; on a eu des raisons que nous ne savons point qui ont obligé à faire donner l'ordre qu'à dix heures du soir les portes du Cours fussent fermées. (2)

Later, the Marquis d'Argenson, in characteristic style, noted that behaviour at such gatherings was far from exemplary : 'alors en 1714, tout Paris alloit se promener au Cours pendant la nuit; cela alla jusqu'à la folie, puis vinrent des querelles et des indécentes, le feu Roi le deffendit'. (3).

When Dancourt produced Les Fêtes du Cours in September 1714 the social jollifications had gone on unhampered and spirits were not dampened by restrictive measures; people could enjoy the masked ball to their heart's content and even do 'quelque chose de pis' without the authorities breathing down their necks. Dancourt presents the situation in a comic light and introduces us to coquettes in search of adventure who find the masked ball an excellent opportunity for deception. In the words of one of the characters :

On y prit des Grisettes pour des Dames de conséquence, et des Bourgeois pour des Seigneurs; cela déranga les parties faites: cela en forma de bizarres qu'on avoit intérêt de cacher, et qui furent découvertes. (sc. iii)

The atmosphere of the play is summed up in the divertissement :

La liberté règne en ces lieux,
On n'y craint point la médisance.
Les jaloux et les ennuyés
Y sont dupés par l'apparence.
Des Argus les plus curieux
On y trompe la vigilance.
Jolis propos, discours joyeux
S'y débitent sans conséquence.
L'Amour pour y combler nos vœux
Est avec nous d'intelligence.
Tel y veut trop ouvrir les yeux,
Qui voit souvent plus qu'il ne pense.

(1) Mémoires, vol. XXVI, p. 239.

(2) Dangeau, Journal, vol. XV, p. 448, July 7.

(3) Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, p. 176.

Another annual fair, this time located in the city, provides the setting for La Foire Saint Germain first produced at the Comédie Française at the beginning of 1696, about three weeks before the opening of the fair which took place near the theatre. A contemporary description of the fairground gives an idea of the background against which the plot takes place :

La Foire Saint Germain...compte parmi les plus grands plaisirs de Paris. Elle se tient dans le faubourg Saint-Germain, non loin de l'abbaye dont elle porte le nom. Son emplacement est formé par des balustrades en bois, et elle est garantie de la pluie par une sorte de toit. Les tentes y sont disposées de telle façon qu'elles forment rues...on trouve les plus belles denrées, les plus riches vêtements des fabriques de Paris...la plus grande partie des marchandises consiste en galanteries, confitures et café. La foule n'y arrive pas avant huit heures du soir, alors que les Spectacles et les danses de corde sont finies. Toutes les boutiques sont éclairées par des chandelles très bien rangées et à ce moment-là la presse est si grande qu'on a de la peine à se frayer un passage. Là, tout est pêle-mêle, maîtres, valets et laquais, filous et honnêtes gens se coudoient. Les courtisans les plus raffinés, les filles les plus jolies, les filous les plus habiles sont comme entrelacés ensemble. (1)

Dancourt's play reflects this setting in detail; the activities which are carried on among the booths of the fair include the selling of various commodities such as articles of dress, refreshments, trinkets and haberdashery. The entertainments given at the fair take the form of rope-dancing and a miniature opera consisting of 'figures parlantes'. There are references to the motley crowd who frequent the fair, the depredations of pick-pockets, and the amorous intrigues of coquettes who give the fair the reputation of a 'Foire aux mariages' (sc. xxx.)

Dancourt chose as the subject of his one-act play, Le Prix de l'Arquebuse (1717), the centenary shooting competition held in 'une Ville de Brie', presumably Meaux, according to the following account :

Le 28 (août) on commença, auprès de Meaux, à tirer le prix, ou plus de 1,200 chevaliers de l'arquebuse de plusieurs provinces du royaume s'étaient assemblées, tous superbement vêtus. M. le Prince de Soubise, comme gouverneur de la province de Brie, tira le premier coup. (2)

In order to create a suitable atmosphere for the festivities, Dancourt added to the cast an anonymous 'troupe de Chevaliers de l'Arquebuse: et d'Amazones, Joueurs d'Instrumens, etc.' One of the inhabitants of the town describes the modd of the

(1) J.C. Nemeitz, op.cit., p. 100.

(2) J. Buvat, Journal de la Régence, Paris, 1865, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 298.

occasion in patois :

Le Bourg est plein de monde, an ne sait où les loger, il y a morgué plus de deux Cens Tireux, qui ont presque tous amené chacun leur Tireuse; et ces Tireuses-là avont après elles d'autres Tireux qui les suivont par bandes, et qui avont amené avec eux des Ménétriers, des Violons, des Haut-bois, des Flutes. Depuis la cave jusqu'au grenier tout est rempli dans les cabarets, an se divartit bian, an fait bonne chere, et an ne manquera pas si-tôt de provision, ni pour la panse, ni pour la danse. (sc.iii)

An incident which furnished material for one of Dancourt's plays, Le Mari Retrouvé (1698), was a well-known court-case in Châtillon-sur-Indre which began on 5 September 1697 and lasted for almost four years (1); it appears that a certain Mme de la Pivardière, falsely accused of having murdered her husband, found great difficulty in being acquitted of the alleged crime even after her husband's re-appearance in court, as the judge considered him to be an impostor. It was not until 14 June 1701 that the court was finally to recognize Pivardière as the husband of the accused. Dancourt made use of the basic idea of this law suit for the creation of some of his characters, as the Frères Parfaict point out :

M. Dancourt a fait usage dans sa Comédie des événemens de ce Procès. Sous le nom du Meunier Julien, il a peint le Sieur de la Pivardiere, et placé fort ingénieusement le mariage que celui-ci contracta à Auxerre, avec la fille d'un Cabaretier de cette ville. Le Bailly de cette Pièce est le Juge de Châtillon sur Indre, qui ne vouloit pas reconnoître le Sieur de la Pivardiere. Les autres personnages sont relatifs à la même affaire, et n'en sont pas moins comiques. M. Dancourt, en employant un fait particulier, a eu l'art d'en composer un sujet de tous les temps, et qui est fort réjouissant. (2)

It was as if Dancourt were handed the ingredients for a comedy from this amusing real-life situation. It remained for him to give dramatic expression to the incident, a task which he undertook without detracting from the comic side of the affair.

The Frères Parfaict state that a scene in La Gazette de Hollande (1692) refers to an incident arising out of a recent case of mistaken identity. It appears that J. Delosme de Monchenay's comedy, Le Phénix, produced at the Théâtre Italien on 22 November 1691 had, by its satirical vein, given offence to certain individuals who took revenge by resorting to violence on the person, not of the author as intended, but by mistake on his unfortunate brother :

(1) of. F. Gayot de Pitaval, Causes célèbres et intéressantes, Paris, 1737-53, 20 vols., vol. III, and J. Gendebien, Etudes sur les moeurs judiciaires du XVIIe siècle, Brussels, 1846, pp. 164-8.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, pp. 105-6.

M. de Losme de Monchenay, Auteur de différentes Comédies pour les anciens Comédiens Italiens, avoit fait quelques portraits satyriques dans une de ses Comédies, qui attirèrent par méprise une maligne influence sur les épaules de son frere cadet. La réparation de cet affront fut poursuivie vigoureusement et accommodée avantageusement au profit du Plaignant. Mais ce profit revint à M. De Losme malgré les plaintes ameres et publiques que son frere en fit. (1)

In Dancourt's play, one of the callers at the editorial office, Chonchon, wishes to make known the fact that a similar misfortune had befallen him :

On m'a fait une friponnerie dont on se repentira. J'ai un frere(...) qui fait des ouvrages (...) pour se gausser des uns et des autres; il invente je ne sais combien de sottises qui font rire (...) mais comme tout le monde n'aime pas à rire, il y a un petit mutin qui m'a donné des coups de bâtons, à moi, à cause de l'esprit de mon frere (...) il a été bien attrapé; car il a pris l'un pour l'autre (...) je n'en ai pas eu le profit.(...) En vertu des coups que j'ai reçus, moi, on a baillé de l'argent à mon frere, cela n'est pas juste (...) Si mon frere ne me baille pas ma part de l'argent, je lui baillerai sa part des coups de bâton, moi. (sc. xviii.)

Without the clue provided by the Frères Parfaict, the significance of this scene which was obvious to audiences of the time, would no doubt have remained a mystery.

Le Retour des Officiers (1697) marks an event of historical importance, the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick in September of that year. The divertissement which d'Argenson describes as 'une kermesse qui a fait remarquer cette piece' is devoted to songs sung by people of different nationalities who celebrate the return of peace to France. The play itself is, however, based on the popular theme of 'summer' coquettes who despise bourgeois admirers when officers return from the front.

Personal Satire

In the course of his dramatic career, Dancourt occasionally took the opportunity to satirize in his plays certain individuals who had acquired some sort of reputation or notoriety in the public eye. The victims of his satire range from well known public figures who had distinguished themselves in various fields to obscure individuals of merely passing interest. In exposing the misdemeanours or the shortcomings of these figures, Dancourt's intention was not so much to denounce their dubious characters or the sharp practice to which they resorted, as to take advantage of public interest in such affairs in order to attract spectators to a play which made comedy out of topics of conversation.

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, pp. 269-70.

The unpublished play, Le Carnaval de Venise (1690), the manuscript of which is lost, is known to have contained a satire of two of the European princes who were allied against France in the War of the League of Augsburg :

On a eu dessein de se moquer de l'entretien de quelques Princes qui se fit à Venise dans le tems du Carnaval en 1687 et où l'on jeta les fondemens de la ligue qui a éclaté depuis. On y joue le duc de Savoye et l'électeur de Baviere sans témoigner beaucoup de respect pour leur caractere et pour le rang qu'ils tiennent dans le monde. (1)

Not surprisingly, the play was considered unfit for presentation on the stage as, according to Louis XIV's code of censorship, comedy (or even a comédie-héroïque like this play) was not a suitable medium in which to present contemporary monarchs or to exploit political ideas. In affairs concerning censorship of dramatic works, Louis XIV had appointed Pontchartrain to supervise theatrical productions and inform the lieutenant de police, La Reynie, of any offensive elements to which the public would be exposed or which could have repercussions in the political field. Acting on the King's orders, Pontchartrain addressed a letter from Versailles to La Reynie requesting that the play be suppressed :

Le Comte de Pontchartrain à la Reynie :
A Versailles, le 6 decembre 1690

Je croyois vous voir aujourd'hui, j'avois bien des choses à vous dire; ce sera pour une autre fois. Celle qui presse le plus est que, le roy estant informé qu'on doit jouer au premier jour une Comédie dans laquelle on fait entrer tous les princes de l'Europe liguez contre la France, d'une maniere burlesque et ridicule, S.M. ne juge pas à propos d'en souffrir la représentation, et cependant, comme il ne faut pas qu'il paroisse que S.M. en a esté informée, ny que c'est par son ordre qu'on ne la joue point, il faut que ce soit vous qui, de vostre chef, et sans bruit, mandiez quelques uns des comédiens pour les obliger de vous donner cette piece à lire, apres quoy, de vous-mesme, et sous d'autres prétextes, vous leur direz de ne la pas jouer. (2)

An extract from La Reynie's reply of 9 December shows that the play would be authorized only in a revised form, that is, stripped of its harmful element which was contained in the intermèdes :

Sur le comte que j'ay rendu au roy de vostre lettre d'hier, S.M. m'a dit à l'esgard de la comédie intitulée Le Carnaval de Venise qu'elle seroit bien aise par rapport aux comédiens, qu'ils puissent la jouer, et s'il n'y a que les

(1) Le Mercure Historique et Politique, The Hague, January 1691, vol. X, p. 61.

(2) G.B. Depping, Correspondance Administrative sous le Règne de Louis XIV, Paris, 1850-55, 4 vols., vol. II, pp. 611-12.

intermedes de mauvais, il faudroit tâcher de les supprimer et laisser jouer la pièce, ce que S.M. veut que vous examiniez avec eux...(1)

The play was eventually performed on 29 December 1690. That Dancourt's irreverent treatment of the Elector of Bavaria was an indiscretion which he later regretted is shown by his subsequent attempts to gain the Elector's patronage, when he 'promoted' the monarch to the status of a 'demi-dieu'.

L'Opéra de Village (1692), a burlesque of the type of entertainment given at the Opéra, is thought by the Frères Parfaict to have been composed with the intention of satirizing two particular members of the Académie Royale de Musique :

Cette Comédie est peu de chose, et n'a ni intrigue ni dénouement, aussi n'est-elle qu'un Vaudeville, où l'auteur a voulu désigner la personne qui étoit alors titulaire du privilege de l'Academie Royale de Musique, et de peindre d'une façon extrêmement maligne Pécourt, compositeur des ballets de l'Opéra, sous le nom de Galoche. Ces traits satiriques étoient occasionnés par les nouvelles défenses faites aux comédiens d'avoir à leurs gages aucuns chanteurs ni danseurs et qui supprimoient quelques symphonistes et leur orchestre. (2)

The first-mentioned person, whose name is not given in the passage, is no doubt Lully's son-in-law, Francine, who held the position of directeur de l'Opéra from 1687 to 1704. Guillaume Louis Pécourt (1653-1729) was a leading ballet-dancer of the time, and is described as 'maitre a danser des pages de (la) chambre (du Roy) et compositeur de ses ballets' (3).

The character who is meant to represent Pécourt does not play a prominent role in the comedy; his task is to help in the supervision of the village opera which is to be given in honour of the newly arrived squire. Galoche is described as a 'prévôt d'opéra', and is invited by the farmer, Thibaut, to help organize the festivities. He is exposed to the uncomplimentary remarks of the valet, La Flèche, who, in addition to delivering insults, hints at his dubious private life :

Quelque coup de mousquet ou dans les reins, ou dans les jambes, gâteroit furieusement votre fortune: dans la tête encore, ce ne seroit qu'une bagatelle, et vous n'y perdriez pas grand'chose (...) vous êtes fait à la raillerie, il y a longtemps que vous l'entendez; c'est ce qui vous a le plus fait connoître (...) vous vous melez de plus d'un métier, Monsieur Galoche (...) Nous savons un peu vos allures, vous êtes bon Prince (...) vous connoissez bien peu les gens de qualité, vous les réjouissez, ils vous souffrent dans leurs débauches; ils vous noïeroient le lendemain, pour satisfaire leur moindre caprice. (sc.iv.)

(1) ibid., pp. 611-12.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, pp. 270-71.

(3) A. Jal, Dictionnaire Critique de Biographie et d'Histoire, Paris, 1872, p. 951.

During one of the performances of L'Opéra de Village, an unfortunate incident occurred in the theatre involving Dancourt and one of the spectators. The Marquis de Sablé, son of the well-known Abel Servien, Surintendant des Finances, apparently took offence at the introduction of the word 'sablé' in a line of the village opera:

Le Marquis de Sablé, ci-devant General de L'Arriere ban d'Anjou, sortant d'un repas ou l'on pretend qu'il avoit beu plus que de raison, vint voir une comédie qui se representa sur le Théâtre François, intitulée L'Opéra de Village, et comme il y a un endroit ou l'on dit: 'les vignes et les prés seront sablés' croïant qu'on se moquoit de lui en plein théâtre, donna un soufflet au sieur d'Hancourt, comédien, en présence de plusieurs personnes; on ne doute pas que cette affaire étant publique, la Cour n'en soit bientôt informée. (1)

This was a more serious incident than it might at first appear, as, according to the customs of the times, an author, or in Dancourt's case, an actor-author, who happened to offend a nobleman ran the risk of being beaten up by hired thugs. This assault was quite in keeping with the disdainful attitude of the aristocracy towards professional writers and actors. Moreover, on account of the social gulf between Dancourt and the Marquis, it would be impossible for Dancourt to have any redress. This was not, of course, a case of deliberate personal satire, but the incident serves to illustrate how careful playwrights had to be in order not to offend the susceptibilities of the aristocracy.

Little is known about the unpublished play, La Baguette (1693), apart from a scanty piece of information provided by the Frères Parfaict that Dancourt dramatized the practices of a well-known contemporary impostor who claimed to be a diviner: 'Cette Pièce fut faite sur Jacques Aymard, dont il fut beaucoup parlé en 1692' (2). Aymard, a peasant from Saint-Véran in Dauphiné, enjoyed such a reputation for producing magical effects with a wand that, according to a contemporary account, 'Jamais chose ne fit plus de bruit et ne donna occasion à tant de livres'. Having been summoned to Paris to demonstrate his art, he was publicly exposed as an impostor on the failure of his supposedly magic feats at the Hotel de Condé in 1693:

le principal de ces devins à la baguette ayant fait l'été dernier à Lyon des épreuves surprenantes de son art, a été mandé à Paris, et...sur ce grand théâtre il a fait tant de découvertes, qu'il a obligé bien des gens à dire que nous

(1) Recueil de Nouvelles, Amsterdam, July 7, 1692.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, p. 284.

voilà plus en état qu'on n'y fut jamais de décider par des phénomènes incontestables, que les démons produisent cent choses, pourvu qu'on les y détermine par le jeu de quelques causes occasionnelles, comme est l'application d'un certain bâton...M. le prince de Condé, dont les lumières ne peuvent être que fatales aux imposteurs et aux crédules...a renversé tous les trophées des partisans de Jacques Aymar. Ce pauvre homme a échoué d'une manière si pitoyable dans les essais qu'on a voulu faire de ses forces à l'hôtel de Condé qu'il y a perdu toute sa réputation. Le public a su comment les choses s'y étoient passées: il n'y a plus de lieu à chicaner sur l'incertitude; puisque c'est par l'ordre de ce grand prince que le monde a été informé de ce détail. (1)

As a result of this failure, the magician became so notorious that not only was he a popular subject of gossip at the time, but his fame spread outside the country; a contemporary Dutch journal reports :

Les témoignages d'un grand prince et la lettre d'un des premiers magistrats du Châtelet sont de si fortes preuves contre Jacques Aymard qu'aucun de ceux qui ajoutent foi aux effets prétendus de la baguette n'a osé les contredire. (2)

Dancourt seized this opportunity to present the public with a subject of topical interest by composing a comedy which dramatized these events.

In La Loterie (1697) Dancourt drew material from the Italian custom of traders disposing of their old merchandise by lottery. The Frères Parfaict hold that he had in mind a particular Italian merchant, Fagnani, who promoted a raffle of his stock, promising the public that all tickets would draw a prize and who gave the public useless trifles in return for their money :

Un Italien nommé Fagnani, s'étoit établi à Paris, à titre de Marchand curieux et Brocanteur...Au bout de quelques années, cet aventurier obtint la permission de faire une loterie de ses effets à raison d'un écu chaque billet...ce fut sur cet événement que M. Dancourt bâtit sa comédie où Fagnani, sous le nom de Sbrigani, n'est pas épargné. (3)

This opinion is shared by the Marquis d'Argenson :

Dancourt ne manquoit guères les petits événements du tems dont on parloit beaucoup; et il les faisoit venir comme il pouvoit à sa scène. Ici le sujet véritable est peu déguisé: Fagnani napolitain, célèbre broquanteur, et grand fripon, fit alors une lotterie de bagatelles, dont les billets étoient fort chers, parce qu'ils étoient tout noirs, cette nouveauté lui attira tout l'argent de Paris. On n'eut que des bagatelles, tout Paris fut affronté, et peut-être l'auteur comme les autres, car il paroist fort animé contre le broquanteur. (4)

The relevance of this situation to theatre audiences is pointed out by the Frères Parfaict :

- (1) P. Bayle, Dictionnaire Historique et Critique, Paris, 1820, vol. I, pp. 9-18.
- (2) Le Mercure Politique, The Hague, May 1693, p. 565.
- (3) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, pp. 67-8.
- (4) Notices sur Les Oeuvres de Théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, vol. XLII, p. 170.

La plupart des spectateurs se divertissoient à voir représenter une aventure dont ils avoient payé les dépens. (1)

Lotteries were popular amusements in Court circles since 1660, but, throughout the reign of Louis XIV, there were a number of public lotteries promoted by the King which, as a form of gambling, developed into a mania leading, in some cases, to financial ruin. As for private lotteries of the type depicted in Dancourt's play, they were forbidden by decree, but were nonetheless frequent. (2)

In La Loterie Sbrigani is portrayed as the villain of the piece and mercilessly lampooned. Judging from the maid, Lisette's, outspoken remarks, Italians, especially Neapolitain merchants, had already a bad reputation for resorting to unscrupulous means to build up a fortune at the expense of the unsuspecting public. Lisette describes Sbrigani as 'un habile homme' and adds: 'il n'y a rien qu'il ne mette à profit.' She affects surprise that his daughter, Mariane, is not totally committed to the pursuit of wealth :

Est-il possible qu'une fille Napolitaine, formée (je ne dirai pas du plus pur ni du plus noble sang de ce pays-là, mais du plus subtil du moins, la fille de Monsieur Sbrigani, en un mot, connoisse une autre passion que celle de son intérêt, et qu'elle puisse être sensible à quelqu'autre chose qu'à sa fortune? (sc. i.)

It is true that the early years of the seventeenth century had seen an influx of Italian financiers who, through the expertise acquired in their native cities, helped to build up the country's economy and to feather their own nests in the process; this no doubt gave rise to the popular attitude described in comic terms by Lisette. In the last lines of the play Dancourt was warning Parisians against such practices as lotteries promoted by Italians : 'Si jamais quelque Napolitain est assez hardi pour faire une Loterie, que les Parisiens ne soient pas assez fous pour y mettre.'

Dancourt was accused of ridiculing a number of persons in Les Vendanges de Suresnes (1695), but it is difficult to establish whether he had in mind any particular individuals when he was creating his characters for the comedy, or whether the names he chose merely coincided with those of some contemporaries who, for no

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, pp. 67, 68.

(2) cf. M. Marion, Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Paris, 1923, p. 343.

justifiable reason, believed themselves to be the object of a personal attack. Mme Du Noyer, for example, was convinced that she had inspired Dancourt with the idea of including a certain Mme Thomasse in the play :

Dancourt, le comédien et l'auteur de la petite piece Les Vendanges de Suresnes ayant remarqué (Mme du Noyer) comme les autres, sa figure lui parut si comique qu'il projetta de l'insérer dans sa piece, sous le nom de Mme Thomasse. (1)

The accusation becomes all the more inexplicable as the first edition of Les Vendanges de Suresnes does not include a character of this name . Perhaps a clue to the enigma is that one of the characters, Mlle Thomasseau, whose name is the nearest approach to that of Mme Thomasse, is presented in such an uncomplimentary light that she becomes the object of unpleasant remarks from other characters in the play.

On the other hand, it appears that the Thomasseau family may have been a target for personal satire; referring to two characters in the play called Thomasseau and Vivien, d'Argenson pointed out that 'La famille des Thomasseau a eu grande reputation; on ne connoît pas moins Mr. Vivien de la Chapponardiére'(2). About sixty years after the first performance of Les Vendanges de Suresnes, (during this period it was still popular with the audience) the abbé Thomasseau de Cursay published a pamphlet in which he objected to Dancourt's disrespectful treatment of some distinguished families of the time, particularly his own :

On se choqueroit vainement de voir porter son nom à des gens qui semblent le déshonorer par la bassesse de leurs conditions, ou de leurs moeurs. Personne n'ignore qu'aucun Auteur n'a l'intention ni le pouvoir de nommer, ou de personifier qui que ce soit...Les Frondeurs ignares qui ont osé appliquer, à qui il leur a plu, les noms et les personnages de cette Comédie, peuvent-ils croire que l'emprunt de ces noms puisse offenser (ces) Maisons?

As a counter-measure he proceeded to outline the genealogies of the people he considered to have been the object of Dancourt's satire, whom he claims to be 'aussi célèbres par leur ancienneté, les grades militaires, et leurs illustrations, que par leurs alliances avec les plus grandes Maisons du Royaume'.(3) The names he set out to defend were Thomasseau, Vivien, Thibaut, Dubuisson, Desmartins, Rousseau, Forelle and Darlu : 'Ces Maisons ou Familles connues, dont les Noms se trouvent

(1) Mme du Noyer, Lettres Historiques et Galantes, Amsterdam, 1720, 8 vols. vol. VII, p. 57.

(2) Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, p. 186.

(3) L'Homonymie dans les Pièces de Théâtre prouvée par la Comédie des Vendanges de Suresnes du sieur Dancourt, Paris, 1756, p. 1.

empruntés dans cette Comédie, suffisent pour prouver l'Homonymie dans les Pièces de Théâtre.' With special reference to his namesake in the play the abbé states that 'le véritable Thomasseau de cette Comédie y fait constamment le personnage d'un honnête-homme; le Thomasseau supposé, et sa fille, y caractérisent seuls le ridicule'. He goes on to outline his family connections, describing the Thomasseaus as an

Ancienne famille d'Angers, qui a produit des Hommes distingués dans les Sciences et le Barreau, y en ayant eu plusieurs dans les Tribunaux de cette Ville dans les XIVe et XVe siècles; et opulents dans les biens de la Fortune, possédants depuis longtemps des Fiefs Nobles dans la Province d'Anjou. (1)

Another character whom Thomasseau considered to be satirized was Vivien, 'Chevalier Seigneur de Saint Mars, dont la Famille a produit plusieurs personnes distinguées par leurs services, et a l'honneur d'être alliée aux Maisons de Rohan, de Bouillon, La Trémouille...'

In Les Vendanges de Suresnes Vivien de la Chapponardièrre, portrayed as a puny representative of a provincial family, shows unreasonable pride in his ancestry : 'C'est une des bonnes (familles) de la Province...nous avons eu tout de suite quatre Baillifs de Gisors, et autant de Médecins, tous de pere en fils. Cela est beau...' (sc. ix.) Although he is the son of the bailli of Gisors, he is anxious not to be regarded as 'un nigaut, qui est frais émoulu de la Province' (sc. xii.), and introduces his country cousin to Mme Dubuisson as a lackey with whom he has only very tenuous family connections :

C'est un petit gueux du país que j'ai amené à Paris par charité, pour le déniaiser seulement...il n'est mon parent que de fort loin. C'est le petit fils de la fille d'un batard, qui étoit le fils d'une batarde de notre famille (sc. ix.)

Vivien is subjected to a tirade of abuse first from Lorange who impersonates his prospective bride, and then from the gardener and Mme Dubuisson. Thibaut, pretending to be Thomasseau, acts in a manner which would scarcely do honour to the Vivien family on whom he casts aspersions :

Comment se porte le bonhomme de pere? est-il toujours aussi libartin, aussi ivrogne que de coutume? (...) vous ly ressemblez comme deux gouttes d'iau et n'an dit que vous ne valez pas mieux que ly. (sc. xi.)

(1) ibid., pp. 3-4.

Mme Dubuisson, ostensibly intending to reassure Vivien that ~~his~~ family were not the last word in degradation, delivers a subtle blow at the Thomasseau family with her remark : 'Oh, dame, la maison de Thomasseau n'est pas si noble que la vôtre, il y a bien à dire'. (sc. xi.) In an interview with Thomasseau whom he does not recognize, Vivien freely airs his opinions on Thomasseau and his family :

pour mes péchés je suis venu ici dans le dessein d'épouser la fille d'un Monsieur Thomasseau, qui est le plus grand coquin le plus grand maraud(. .)il a une fille qui est la créature la plus maussade, et la plus effrontée(. .)et un coquin de cousin qui est un homme à pendre: c'est bien la plus détestable famille que cette famille-là. (sc. xvii.)

All this is, of course, expressed with a good deal of comic exaggeration, and Dancourt was more concerned with making his characters conform to the dramatic exigencies of his plot than with giving an accurate portrait of the famous families mentioned. However, the appearance of their names in the play would have held some significance for theatre audiences, and the satire expressed was strong enough to rouse the indignation of the abbé.

According to d'Argenson, Dancourt based the plot of Le Vert Galant (1714) on a piece of gossip that was circulating at the time concerning a flirtatious abbé who was punished by a Parisian dyer for courting his wife. The play was composed

à l'occasion de l'aventure véritable d'un teinturier de Paris, qui teignit, dit-on en verd un abbé galant de sa femme, ce qu'on appela depuis 'l'abbé verd'. On dit que cela arriva à l'abbé de Forsia. Dancourt...saisissoit volontiers ces nouvelles de la ville pour en donner des farces au public. ((1))

The Fortia family, of noble origin, were natives of Catalonia who had settled in France during the fifteenth century; the disreputable member whom d'Argenson mentions was not, however, well-known. The Frères Parfaict describe the incident as 'un événement vrai ou faux, qui se répandit dans le public au commencement de l'Eté de cette année (1714) (qui) occasionna la composition de cette Comédie'. (2) They quote a passage from the Mercure Galant written by a hostile journalist, Le Fèvre, accusing Dancourt of having invented an anecdote about an abbé galant and spreading this unfounded piece of scandal in order to arouse public interest in the play he was about to produce :

(1) Notices sur les Oeuvres, de Théâtre, p. 186,

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XV, p. 180.

M. Dancourt lût aux Comédiens, il y a environ un an, la Comédie du Vert Galant; ses Camarades qui la trouvèrent mauvaise, refusèrent absolument de la jouer. Quand il vit qu'ils n'en vouloient point, il la négligea, et quelque tems après il avoua à ceux qui étoient de son parti qu'il avoit fait courir dans le monde le conte de l'Abbé Vert, pour donner plus de crédit à sa Pièce: voila ce qu'on appelle inventer à propos des Vaudevilles pour le Théâtre, ils réussissent s'ils peuvent, qu'importe? Les esprits sont toujours prévenus, et voilà Le Vert Galant.

(1)

This accusation which the Frères Parfaict attribute to Le Fèvre's 'noire malice' and 'sa haine pour M. Dancourt', is not entirely without foundation; the feuilles d'assemblée for October 12 1713 show that Dancourt's play was in fact rejected by a majority vote :

Lecture : Le Verd Galand :

apres avoir Entendü la lecture du verd galand, on s'est servis (sic) du scrutin pour Laisser la liberté de dire son sentiments (sic), Les feves noires qui estoient pour refuser se sont trouvées au nombre de dix contre six feves blanches.

It was not until almost a year later, on 17 September 1714, that the play was finally accepted for performance on 24 October of that year. In the interval, Dancourt may have simply revised the play and presented it in a more stageworthy form. It is hardly likely that he was responsible for circulating rumours of an anti-clerical nature as, in the past, he exercised discretion in his portraits of abbés, and the philanderer in Le Vert Galant is not an abbé, but an agioteur.

In the prologue of L'Opérateur Barry Dancourt ridicules an early seventeenth-century showman, Barry, director of a theatrical touring company who had acquired international fame for his medical cures. The combined occupations of entertainer and charlatan earned him the title of opérateur :

ces joueurs d'instruments qui, à leur métier de ménétrier, joignaient un petit commerce de pommades, d'élixirs, de collyres, de poudres pour les dents, et qui, pour attirer le populaire, chantaient des noëls bouffons ou de grosses chansons grivoises, en s'accompagnant du luth ou du violon, ou bien encore jouaient, avec quelques compagnons, des scènes dont tout le mérite étoit dans la naïveté du plaisant qui les débitait, ou dans l'esprit salé dont elles étoient assaisonnées.

(2)

The interest of this subject with audiences of Dancourt's time lay most probably in the resemblance of Barry to the Italian stock character of the docteur and the obvious parody of the type of production given at the Foires which consisted of a

(1) October 1714, pp. 350-1.

(2) A. Jal, op.cit., p. 123.

mixture of Italian themes and subjects drawn from old French farces.

The Frères Parfaict describe Barry as

un grand homme de fort bonne mine, portant une longue barbe avec des cheveux courts. Il étoit habillé d'une soutane de satin noir, avec des boutons d'or et un manteau traînant de la même étoffe. (1)

In Dancourt's prologue, the actress Mme de Champvallon, addressing Barry, remarks on his outlandish appearance :

Est-ce que vous êtes sorcier, mon ami? Vous en avez assez la mine; et vos figures choquantes, et vos visages hétéroclites ne sont point faits pour ce Théâtre-ci.

Barry and his troupe had set up a theatre 'au bout du Pont-Neuf, du côté de la rue Dauphine' (2). Presumably he is referring to this theatre when, in the prologue he states 'je me borne présentement au seul honneur de vous donner en impromptu le divertissement d'une espece de petite Farce, telle que J'en faisois autrefois représenter assez près d'ici'. Dancourt makes allusion, with a good deal of comic exaggeration, to Barry's advanced age, and his vast medical experience. The charlatan describes himself in grossly exaggerated terms :

Vous voyez, Messieurs et Mesdames...le plus grand personnage du monde...vous voyez, vous dis-je, de vos propres yeux, un Médecin Méthodique, Galénique, Hyppocratique, Pathologique, Chimique, Spagyrique, Empirique.

JODELET

Et un Médecin qui fait de la médecine, cela n'est pas commun.

BARRY

Je suis, Messieurs et Mesdames, ce fameux Melchisidech Barry. Comme il n'y a qu'un Soleil dans le Ciel, il n'y a ^{aussi} qu'un Barry sur terre. Il y a quatre-vingt-treize ans que je faisois un bruit de diable à Paris, n'y a-t-il personne ~~ici~~ qui se souvienne de m'y avoir vu? En quel lieu de l'Univers n'ai-je point été depuis? Quelles cures n'ai-je point faites? Informez-vous de moi à Siam, on vous dira que j'ai guéri l'Eléphant blanc d'une colique nefrétique. Que l'on écrive en Italie, on saura que j'ai délivré la République de Raguse d'un cancer qu'elle avoit à la mamelle gauche. Que l'on demande au grand Mogol qui l'a sauvé de sa dernière petite vérole? c'est Barry. Qui est-ce qui a arraché onze dents machelières, et quinze cors aux pieds à l'Infante Atabalippa? quel autre pourroit-ce être que le fameux Barry?

(1) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, p. 280.

(2) ibid., p. 292.

Satire of Rival Forms of Entertainment.

It was by no means an uncommon experience in the latter half of the seventeenth century for composers of various forms of public entertainment to have their works satirized by rival authors. Satire of the Opéra, the Théâtre Italien, the Comédie Française, the productions of the Théâtres de la Foire and the genre of tragedy were indulged in by Dancourt's predecessors and contemporaries in order to discredit rival forms of entertainment in the public eye. Not all of this hostility was due, however, to feelings of ill-will on the part of envious rivals; some of it was based on a healthy spirit of competition or the desire to protect one's monopoly of a particular form of entertainment from unauthorized competition. By Dancourt's time, satire of the Opéra was already a well-established convention, if not on the stage at least in other forms of literature. From the early 1670's when they were beginning to become popular, the spate of operas performed in France in the following decade or so gave rise to satirical works from various authors.

Boileau spoke unfavourably of this form of entertainment in an avertissement to his Fragment d'un prologue d'opéra, probably composed about 1678⁽¹⁾ after the failure of Quinault's Isis (1677) ~~(1)~~, in which he stated that

on ne peut jamais faire un bon opéra, parce que la musique ne sauroit narrer; que les passions n'y peuvent être peintes dans toute l'étendue qu'elles demandent; que d'ailleurs elle ne sauroit souvent mettre en chant les expressions vraiment sublimes et courageuses.

It may seem strange that he was composing a type of work which he basically disagreed with ('auquel je travaillai trois ou quatre jours avec un assez grand dégoût'), but he explains this paradoxical situation by stating that Racine had begged him to write a prologue for an opera on the subject of Phaeton which he had in mind because, it was claimed, 'Mme de Montespan et Mme de Thianges, sa soeur (étaient) lasses des opéras de M. Quinault.' (2)

La Fontaine satirized the popularity of opera in his amusing epistle to the musician, Pierre de Niert, one of Louis XIV's quatre premiers valets de chambre :

(1) cf. Oeuvres Complètes, ed. A. Adam, Paris, 1966, p. 1057. (Published in 1713).

(2) ibid., p. 277.

On ne va plus au bal, on ne va plus au Cours:
Hiver, été, printemps, bref, opéra toujours;
Et quiconque n'en chante, ou bien plutôt n'en gronde
Quelque récitatif, n'a pas l'air du beau monde.

He points to the possibility of a breakdown of the machinery used to facilitate aerial flights of celestial beings which has the corresponding effect of destroying the illusion of other-worldliness :

Souvent au plus beau char le contre-poids résiste;
Un dieu pend à la corde, et crie au machiniste;
Un reste de forêt demeure dans la mer,
Ou la moitié du ciel au milieu de l'enfer.

What characterized these spectacular shows was, according to La Fontaine, their intellectual shallowness and their failure to sustain public interest in the way that the theatre did :

Des machines d'abord le surprenant spectacle
Eblouit le bourgeois, et fit crier miracle;
Mais la seconde fois il ne s'y pressa plus;
Il aime mieux le Cid, Horace, Héraclius.
Aussi de ces objets l'âme n'est point émue,
Et même rarement ils contentent la vue. (1)

More than these two authors, Saint-Evremond concentrated on satire of the opera from two different angles : his critical treatise 'Sur les Opéra' composed between 1676 and 1677, and his satirical comedy, Les Opéra. In his dissertation he has three main objections to opera - the lack of intelligibility caused by the unhappy mixture of spectacle, dialogue and music, the presentation of fabulous characters who render the work ridiculous and unrealistic, and the inability of this form of entertainment to satisfy the intellectual needs of the spectators. The effect of all this on the author is boredom :

J'avoue que leur magnificence me plaît assez...mais il faut aussi m'avouer que ces merveilles deviennent bientôt ennuyeuses. Après le premier plaisir que nous donne la surprise, les yeux s'occupent et se lassent ensuite d'un continuel attachement aux objets. Au commencement des concerts, la justesse des accords est remarquée...quelque temps après les instruments nous étourdissent. (2)

As for his comedy, Les Opéra, composed about 1676, Saint-Evremond brings out

(1) Oeuvres, ed. H. Régnier, Paris, 1884-1925, 12 vols., vol. IX, pp. 154-63.

(2) Oeuvres, Paris, 1740, 5 vols., vol. III, pp. 244-5.

the ridiculously unnatural effect produced by a theatrical representation entirely sung. This play was probably the earliest satire of opera in dramatic form, but as it was not acted, and published posthumously, it could have had no influence on late seventeenth-century plays devoted to this theme.

La Bruyère was not a devotee of opera, as we see from his brief though penetrating criticism in 'Des Ouvrages de l'Esprit' : 'Je ne sais pas comment l'Opéra, avec une musique si parfaite et une dépense toute royale, a pu réussir à m'ennuyer'. (1)

While some playwrights limited their efforts to parodying opera in general, others embarked on a blatant satire of specific works; it was inevitable that those of Quinault, the most prolific writer of libretti, should come under fire the most. In Poisson's Les Foux Divertissans (1680) opera is attacked as a cause of insanity, and a passage from Quinault's Proserpine is used for comic effect. Quinault's Armide is parodied by Delosme de Monchenay in Mezzetin Grand Sophy de Perse, given at the Théâtre Italien in 1689. Le Concert Ridicule (1689) by Brueys and Palaprat contains a parody of Quinault's Festes de l'Amour et de Bacchus, and remarks about other operas of Paris and Lyon, while Le Ballet Extravagant (1690) which Palaprat composed on his own contains satire of the opera on a large scale. Personal satire of the two operatic singers, Du Mesnil and La Rochois, is found in Dufresny's L'Opéra de Campagne (1692). The chief emphasis in this play is on the parody of Quinault's Armide, although there are minor references to Fontenelle's Thétis et Pelée and Quinault's Alceste. Dufresny repeated his attack on opera in Le Négligent (1692) and in Le Départ des Comédiens (1694) which features actors from a rural opera-troupe much in the same way as Dancourt's Opéra de Village (1692). He was to take up this theme again at a later date in Le Double Veuvage (1702). Before joining the Comédie Française, Marc Antoine Legrand turned to satire of the opera when he wrote La Chute de Phaëton (c. 1694) for performance in Lyon in which he makes fun of the failure of Quinault's Phaëton in that town. This opera had inspired the theme of Boursault's five-act Phaëton performed in Paris in 1691.

(1) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. II, p. 45.

Dancourt was one of the earliest playwrights to satirize opera, and his two plays on this subject, Angélique et Médor and Renaud et Armide, performed in 1685 and 1686 respectively, can be regarded as novelties. In fact, he made an original contribution to comedy by introducing a new method of satirizing opera, that is by including in Angélique et Médor part of the plot of the opera which he parodied :

Voici une nouvelle forme de Parodie. C'est une intrigue particulière, dans laquelle on fait entrer celle d'une autre Pièce, dont on fait la critique. Subligny, à la vérité, avoit entamé ce genre critique dans sa Folle Querelle, mais c'étoit d'une façon si peu Théâtrale, qu'il n'avoit fait aucune impression; aussi on doit regarder Dancourt comme l'inventeur de ce genre comique, qui est d'un foible mérite, mais cependant plus raisonnable que celui des Parodies données depuis aux Théâtres Français, et aux nouveaux Comédiens Italiens, dont toute la critique consiste dans quelques couplets burlesques, sans rien changer au fonds du sujet, ni aux caractères des personnages. (1)

In this comedy Dancourt's satire was aimed particularly at Quinault's Roland (1685), but references of a disapproving nature are made to four others of Quinault's composition : Endimion (1673), Atys (1676), Alceste (1674) and Amadis (1684).

The trite theme of a young girl, Isabelle, forcibly betrothed to a man imposed on her by her mother in spite of the girl's preference for Eraste is made to coincide with scenes taken from the recent opera in such a way that the latter is used as a means for the young couple to elope. Eraste and his valet, Merlin, are introduced to the unwelcome suitor, Guillemin, in the guise of opera-singers who offer him their services in the entertainment which he wishes to provide for Isabelle. Merlin comments on Guillemin's request for musicians :

Voilà une marchandise bien rare. Il n'aura pas de peine à en trouver, toutes les rues en sont pleines; ce n'est pas que les bons se font valoir, et l'on n'en trouve pas comme on veut. (sc. i.)

Guillemin is so impressed by Merlin's pretended knowledge of opera that he puts him in charge of the entertainment and decides to give a performance of Roland. This provides Merlin with the opportunity for some outspoken remarks on the spectacular element in operas :

Oh, monsieur, quelque méchant que soit un Opéra, il ne manquera pourtant jamais d'y avoir du monde, et il y a un certain commerce et une certaine liaison des troisièmes loges avec le Parterre qui attire bien des gens. Venons à Roland.

(1) F. And C. Parfaict, op. cit., vol. XII, p. 485.

Il faudra bien du monde là-dedans. Il y a des Troupes d'Insulaires, des Troupes d'Indiens, d'Amours, de Sireines, de Dieux, de Fleuves, d'Amans enchantez; des Troupes de Bergers, et de Fées, sans compter les ombres des Heros. (sc. xi.)

It is during a rehearsal of the mock-opera which is chosen for Isabelle's entertainment and in which Isabelle and Eraste take part that the couple take advantage of a situation in Roland in which they ask to be led away, to make their exit not only from the stage but from Isabelle's house. When Guillemain learns of their elopement, he becomes, in the opinion of the servants, Lisette and Merlin, the counterpart of Roland in his demonstration of fury. Dancourt's idea of using scenes from an opera by Quinault in order to facilitate a marriage was adopted by Dufresny in his Opéra de Campagne (1692). Another play in which an elopement is connected with a situation in an opera is Palaprat's Le Ballet Extravagant (1690).

Dancourt followed up Angélique et Médor with another play of similar nature, entitled Renaud et Armide (1686) : 'Le succès de la Comédie Angélique et Médor engagea sans doute M. Dancourt d'en composer une autre sur l'Opéra d'Armide qui parut la première fois le 15 février 1686'. (1) This time the satire is limited to one opera. The intrigue centres around the rivalry between an elderly woman, Mme Jaquinet and her niece, Angélique, who are both in pursuit of a young man, Clitandre. The situation is complicated by the fact that Angélique's father, Grognac, has unwittingly betrothed her to her suitor's father, Filassier, and by Clitandre's plans to court Mme Jaquinet for her money while secretly declaring his love for Angélique. The opera, Armide, is presented in a burlesque fashion and is used as a device for combatting the designs of Angélique's father and aunt respectively. The two servants, Lolive and Lisette, convince Grognac and Filassier that Clitandre has lost his reason as a result of his interest in opera. His pretended insanity is attributed to the effects of opera; this device of associating insanity with an interest in opera had been used by Saint-Evremond in Les Opéra and also by Poisson in Les Foux Divertissans. The intriguers stage a burlesque act in which lines from Armide are parodied and characters are grotesquely represented by Clitandre as Renaud, Lolive and Lisette as Ubalde and the Chevalier Danois, Mme

(1) F. and C. Parfaict, op. cit., vol. XIII, p. 22.

Jaquinet as Armide and Angélique as La Gloire. Marriage with Angélique is agreed upon by all but Mme Jaquinet as the only remedy for Clitandre's state of mind. Under this pretext the young couple gain their fathers' consent to their marriage and make a hasty retreat from under the watchful eye of Mme Jaquinet. Satire of the opera, Armide, is expressed by Lisette :

J'ai vu Armide trois ou quatre fois avec Madame Jaquinet(...) Je n'en ai gueres retenu. Je ne suis pas fort pour la musique, moi. Le Prologue m'ennuie, le premier Acte m'assoupit, cet endroit du Sommeil m'endort, et je ne me réveille qu'à ce grand tintamarre de la fin. (sc. xv.)

In this brief criticism Dancourt mentioned some of the main objections which writers of other forms of literature had voiced against opera : that it was unintelligible, boring and an assault on the ears.

The genre of opera is again burlesqued in L'Opéra de Village (1692), in the scenes devoted to the preparations for an entertainment made by the inhabitants of a village near Lyon in honour of the new squire's arrival. Comic material is drawn from the peasants' version of an opera in which the normal conventions are ignored, and the suggestions made by the more knowledgeable Parisians, Galoche and La Flèche, who help in organizing the festivities. The farmer, Thibaut, explains gruffly :

Oh, Dame, nos Opéra ne sont pas daines des vôtres. A gens de Villages, trompettes de bois, monsieur Galoche, vous vous gobargerez de nous peut-être: mais qu'importe? aux champs, comme aux champs, je sommes à la campagne; je chanterons, je danserons, avec votre permission, da, Monsieur Galoche: je ferons tout ce que je pourrons. (sc. ii.)

His reference to 'trompettes de bois' which, through their low, unpleasant sound would not be suitable for an orchestra, recalls M. Jourdain's preference for the 'trompette marine'. Thibaut has the unenviable task of trying to call to order the group of musicians who, under the influence of drink, are on the point of coming to blows over a difference of opinion. The scene of their quarrels recalls those scenes of professional rivalry in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme :

THIBAUT

Oh, ça, Monsieur notre Magister, par où faut-il que je commencions, s'il vous plaît?

LE MAGISTER , ivre

Il faut commencer par le commencement, Monsieur Thibaut, et nous finirons par la

fin. Je réglerai cela, laissez-moi faire.

LA FLECHE

Monsieur le Magister se porte bien.

LE CARILLONNEUR, ivre

Vous réglerez ça! de quel droit, s'il vous plaît? c'est à moi de régler; car j'ai fait la musique, moi, et la musique...

LE MENESTRIER, ivre

Monsieur le Carrillonneur, je ne serai donc qu'un sot, moi qui ai fait la danse? Est-ce que la danse est une carogne, à votre avis?

LA FLECHE

Tout votre Opéra est ivre, Monsieur Thibaut, je vous avois bien dit d'y prendre garde. (sc. xiii.)

Thibaut relinquishes responsibility for the opera into the hands of Galoche who reluctantly takes over from the farmer in a scene which illustrates Thibaut's ignorance of the subject :

GALOCHE

Voïons d'abord votre Prologue.

THIBAUT

Qu'est-ce que c'est que le Prologue? m'est avis que je n'avons point de ça...

GALOCHE

Vous n'avez point de Prologue?

THIBAUT

Non, palsangé, et qu'est-ce ~~que c'est~~ qu'un prologue?

GALOCHE

C'est l'essentiel d'un divertissement, qui suit immédiatement l'ouverture, et qui sert de base à plusieurs actes qui sont mêlés d'intermèdes, ou d'especes de fêtes qui conviennent au sujet.

THIBAUT

Vela morgué bian des affaires que j'avons oubliées, Monsieur le Magister. Je vous le disois bian tantôt, Monsieur Galoche, je n'y charchons point tant de façons, ablativo tout en un tas, j'avons tout mis ensemble. Allons, donc morgué cette ouverture...

GALOCHE

Hé bien, quelle danse avez-vous? voïons.

THIBAUT

Quelle danse? palsangoi je fons danser tous les Etats du Village. Notte Carrillonneux danse pour la Justice, notte Ménétrier pour les Dixmes, Monsieur de la Fleche danse pour la Noblesse, le neveu Colin pour les Bourgeois, ly; stanpandant ils font quatre, ça ne fait-il pas le compte, Monsieur Galoche? (sc. xiv)

The rehearsals for the opera take up the last three scenes of the comedy accompanied by Thibaut's jovial comments as he directs the proceedings :

allons, enfans, baillez-vous du meilleur, et que les Ménétriers brimballiont un peu l'ouvarture (...) Allons, à vous, Messieurs, le jaret souple (...) courage, et trémoussons-nous bien ~~tous~~ d'importance. (sc. xiv.- xvi.)

In the prologue of L'Opérateur Barry (1702) Dancourt ridiculed the type of entertainment which was produced at the Foires in defiance of the numerous decrees which were designed to protect the monopoly of the Comédie Française from such competition. Barry, an Italian showman and charlatan, represents the forains who entertained the public by their crude performances of a farcical nature. The opérateur wishes to hire the stage of the Comédie Française in order to give the audience a sample of his entertainment, but he encounters a hostile reception from some of the actors who object to his presence in the French theatre. Dancourt alone welcomes the opérateur as a means of keeping the audience amused during the theatre's slack season when most of the troupe were in Fontainebleau, but he considers it appropriate to excuse himself to the audience for having invited Barry and proposed a farce which did not conform to the standards of comedy in the Paris theatre.

1. La Comédie des Comédiens ou l'Amour Charlatan (1710) was composed at a time when rivalry with the type of production given at the Théâtres de la Foire had come to a head. The three-act comedy is a medley of satire directed not only against the forains but also against the techniques which they had inherited from the banished Théâtre Italien which they used in their performances, and the entertainment given at the Opéra. As we have already seen, the inner play of this comedy, L'Amour Charlatan, was inspired by an entrée of one of Danchet's ballets, L'Amour Saltimbanque.

In the first two acts of the play Dancourt's brother-in-law, Pierre Lenoir de la Thorillière and Paul Poisson appear under their own names, while the actors, Beaubourg and Etienne Baron, Dancourt's nephew, take the part of the young lovers, Eraste and Léandre. Dancourt employs the technique of choosing a prejudiced

character to express criticism of the Comédie Française. Grichardin, a retired apothecary, is a wealthy, though unenlightened, person who fails to appreciate the qualities of the French theatre; his chief objection is to the monopoly which the Comédie Française enjoyed :

Je me récrie, je me récrie, parceque je n'aime point ces Messieurs-là (...) Ils veulent être seuls à divertir le public, et il semble qu'ils prennent à tâche de l'ennuyer (...) ils ont un privilege de ne faire rien qui vaille, parcequ'ils sont seuls, de mal jouer les anciennes Pieces et de n'en point donner de nouvelles qui ne soient mauvaises. Voilà un privilege bien soutenu! Morbleu, si j'étois le maître de cela, moi et bien d'autres (...) je les corrigerois bien, s'il dépendoit de moi! (...) Je ne leur veux point de mal d'ailleurs...mais pour ne me pas déchaîner contre leur paresse et le peu d'attention qu'ils ont à mériter l'approbation du public, oh! je vous baise les mains. (Act I, sc. v.)

This passage brings to light what sort of criticism was made by the successors of the Italian actors, and can be borne out by parallel examples taken from comedies performed at the Théâtre Italien in which the Comédie Française is satirized.

Grichardin's attitude is explained by the statement that he was formerly an enthusiastic spectator at the Italian theatre : 'Il y a peu de gens qui s'y connoissent mieux que moi. J'étois un des meilleurs appuis du Théâtre Italien, je leur ai bien fait gagner de l'argent.' (Act I, sc. v.) As for his reference to the 'worthlessness' of new plays given in the Paris theatre, this kind of criticism had been made in Arlequin Jason (1694) in the 'Scene des Comédiens' where the French actor is made to admit that 'nous ne mettons que des nouveautez sur le Théâtre (...) et avec tout cela, nous ne gagnons rien', and complain of the rivalry offered by the Italians: 'Nous ne faisons plus rien depuis que les Italiens ont donne Protée, le Banqueroutier, l'Empereur dans la Lune (...) et avec ces Farces et ces Enfilades de Quolibets, ils attirent tout le monde.' (1)

In Dancourt's play it is agreed to play some scenes similar to those given at the Théâtre Italien, the denouement of which would involve the unsuspecting Grichardin; he would be induced, under the pretext of play-acting, to sign the marriage contract of his daughter, Angélique, and his niece, Isabelle, with their respective suitors.

(1) Le Théâtre Italien , Amsterdam, 1695, p. 189.

Dancourt puts into the mouth of Marton, the instigator of the intrigue, words which express contempt for the Italian heritage : 'ce n'est pourtant pas une bagatelle que ce que j'entreprends, et ce sera peut-être une chose assez ennuyeusement ridicule de travestir ainsi la Scène Française. (Act I, sc.viii.) Having assigned the role of an homme d'affaires to La Thorillière who objects on the grounds that the part is totally irrelevant to their play, she comments : 'Le grand malheur! ce sera une scène détachée, et cela en ressemblera mieux à une Comédie Italienne'. (Act II, sc. v.) The criticism is sustained when Poisson, who normally plays the part of Crispin, is given the role of Scaramouche. This occasions a comparison between the two comic figures of the Comédie Française and the Théâtre Italien. As Marton points out :

de tous tams...les vrais Crispins ont bien valu les Scaramouches(.)sans un Arlequin, une comédie italienne ne vaudra pas le diable(...)c'est le rôle le plus facile qu'il y ait, le masque joue de lui-même; il n'y a jamais eu de mauvais Arlequin. (Act II, sc. iv.)

Dancourt attacks the Italian method of acting which was based largely on improvisation, and which differed from the French method of repeating the words dictated by the author of the play :

POISSON

Mais, à propos d'imaginer, de quoi est-il question, s'il vous plaît? Faut-il étudier quelque rôle, ou jouer de tête? Je ne réussis jamais si bien que quand je parle de moi-même; j'ai plus d'esprit que de mémoire.

ERASTE

Tant mieux. Nous conviendrons entre nous du sujet, et chacun fera son rôle à sa fantaisie.

POISSON

Cela pourra bien n'être pas trop bon. (Act II, sc. iv.)

The fundamental differences in methods of acting had been a subject of criticism from the Italians, as we see from Gherardi's low view of the comédiens français expressed in the avertissement to his 1695 collection of plays. His main criticism is that the rival actors have more 'mémoire' than 'esprit', and that their performances on the stage can be considered as mimicry rather than expressive interpretation of their roles. He compares them to 'Ecoliers qui viennent repeter

en tremblant une leçon qu'ils ont apprise avec soin', or to 'Echos qui ne parleroient jamais, si d'autres n'avoient parlé avant eux' and even to a 'bras paralytique': 'Ce sont des Comédiens de nom, mais inutiles et à charge à la Compagnie'. In contrast to this uncomplimentary picture, he paints a highly flattering portrait of the Italian actor : 'Qui dit bon Comédien Italien, dit un homme qui a du fond, qui joue plus d'imagination que de mémoire, qui compose en jouant tout ce qu'il dit...', and adds that

la plus grande beauté de leurs Pièces est inseparable de l'action. Le succès de leurs Comédies dépend absolument des Acteurs, qui leur donnent plus ou moins d'agrément, selon qu'ils ont plus ou moins d'esprit, et selon la situation bonne ou mauvaise où ils se trouvent en jouant.

We gather from Dancourt's play that these attitudes between the rival entertainers persisted in the minds of the successors of the Italian actors.

The author hints at difficulties involved in organizing rehearsals for a play, and criticises some actors who are unwilling to co-operate by refusing to accept the roles allotted to them; explaining Léandre's delay, Eraste remarks :

Ne le blâmez pas tant, Mademoiselle Marton, il est occupé à persuader ceux de nos acteurs dont il a besoin; ce n'est pas une chose bien facile, et nous ne sommes pas toujours tous également disposés à faire plaisir. (Act II, sc. ii.)

The interlude of Act II takes the form of a divertissement in which characters from earlier French comedies and Italian figures sing and dance. In introducing these characters Dancourt's aim is to make clear to the audience the difference in standards of comedy accepted at the Comédie Française and the Théâtre de la Foire. As we have seen, the type of production given at the Foire contained a mixture of early French farces and themes taken from the Théâtre Italien. Gros-Guillaume expresses the hope that the spectators will enjoy the inner play which is about to be given and which is constructed on the basis of the former Italian farces :

Nous étions jadis
L'honneur du Théâtre,
Notre jeu folâtre
Charmoit tout Paris.
Le bon goût se renouvelle,
On nous rappelle.
Avec un plaisir extrême
Nous revenons en ces lieux;

Si l'on nous y revoit de même,
O combien nous serons heureux!

He is no doubt referring to the popularity of this type of entertainment at the Foires which had reached a peak in 1710. One of the traditional characters of the Italian theatre, Mézétin, reinforces this wish :

Honneur au Bourgeois sensé
De qui la raison rappelle
Le bon goût du tems passé;
Prenons le tous pour modele,
C'est le fameux Grichardin
Qui connoît ce qui doit plaire;
Il aime mieux Trivelin
Que tout ~~Com~~neille et Moliere...
Suivons donc ce goût de tems
Conformons nous à l'usage,
Du public nos soins constans
Peut-être auront le suffrage.

The third act which constitutes the comedy of L'Amour Charlatan is a parody of Italian methods of acting. The mythological characters, Momus, Jupiter, Mercure and Amour were familiar figures at the Théâtre Italien, as well as Pierrot and the docteur. The buffoonery, illogical situations and series of scenes unrelated to one another, form a parody of the techniques used by the rival theatres of the Foire. The character of the docteur and the amour charlatan, anxious to sell their wares and boasting of their prowess, recalls the brief sketch of the opérateur, Barry, which Dancourt gave in 1702. A scene of pseudo-Italian introduced in the second act provides^{an} additional feature of the parody of the Théâtre Italien.

In reading these plays of topical interest in the light of the background to which they referred, we recapture something of the spirit of the times and recognize a variety of attitudes and outlooks peculiar to Dancourt's contemporaries. Dancourt does not, of course, give a graphic description of everyday life as he saw it, but rather a colourful panorama of many of the ways in which people used to spend their leisure hours. Some of the people about whom he wrote enjoyed only a short-lived popularity, although their names were household words in their

day. Dancourt's treatment of rival forms of entertainment was undertaken from the point of view of one deeply committed to the interests of the Comédie Française, and his plays devoted to this theme throw light on contemporary attitudes towards opera, the Italian theatre, the Comédie Française and the Foires.

The people and events are seen through the eyes of a comic playwright. Bourdaloue might thunder from the pulpit, La Bruyère moralize with polished wit, Saint-Simon and Dangeau record with nice attention events which took place in the Court, but it was Dancourt's métier to make people laugh. Sensitive to the value of dramatic situation, he transposed on to the stage various aspects of the social scene with which he was familiar, and in so doing he turns the spotlight on the essentially comic side of affairs.

Although these plays are of limited appeal on account of the ephemeral nature of their subject-matter, they have nonetheless a lasting value in that they are vivid and enjoyable documents on the social life of the time. They illustrate the fact that Dancourt drew much of his inspiration from the fait divers, that is from direct observation of contemporary manners rather than ready-made literary forms or out-worn ideas. Their essential quality is their 'actualité', and in this they have a certain freshness about them of ideas dramatized from first-hand experience which can be re-appreciated only in the light of historical research.

VI. SATIRE OF THE ARISTOCRACY

Satire of the aristocracy occurs particularly in the first decade or so of Dancourt's dramatic career. In this period he wrote a number of plays exclusively or largely devoted to this section of society, even going so far as to penetrate into Court circles. This is a significant fact as it illustrates the late seventeenth-century tendency for comedy to include within its scope members of the upper classes of society.

The term 'aristocracy' is full of complexities and obscurities, which makes it impossible to reduce the subject to a strict classification without oversimplifying the whole question. Those who made up this section of society must not be regarded as a monolithic class, as there were many facets of this elite group whose members were subject to social and economic pressures which helped shape and modify their way of life. The aim of this chapter is not to give an exposition of all the grades of nobility which existed in the Ancien Régime, from the blue-blooded members of the noblesse d'épée to the rather ludicrous figures who comprised the noblesse de cloche, but to explain within the context of contemporary society those aspects of the aristocracy which Dancourt chose to dramatize.

For the purposes of illustrating Dancourt's treatment of the aristocracy we can conveniently distinguish three loose categories which correspond roughly to the types depicted in his plays : the noblesse d'épée, the noblesse de campagne and the more recently created noblesse de robe. Whereas the first two groups shared a common bond, if not a kindred spirit, that of belonging to the old feudal aristocracy (although their circumstances were often widely different)

there was a glaring discrepancy between the concept of nobility embodied by the original aristocracy ('original' in the sense that they preceded the noblesse de robe often only by a few generations) and the last group, of bourgeois origin, contemptuously referred to as the noblesse moderne. Although all members of the nobility shared, at least in theory, the privilèges of their class, feelings often ran high when it came to recognizing equality of social status.

This basic distinction, which receives much attention in Dancourt's plays, must be viewed against the background of contemporary society in which great value was attached to considerations of noble lineage - the more ancient the better. Indeed, many who laid claim to the distinction of noble birth were quite unable to provide concrete evidence of it, and, moreover, considered it an affront to be required to do so. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, as a result of changing economic conditions and Louis XIV's policy of stripping the nobility of any effective political power, most of the original landed aristocracy found themselves deprived not only of their former wealth but also of their predominant position in society. They still held nevertheless many privileges among which were important positions in the army, attendance at Court (both of which were regarded as essential ingredients in the making of an aristocrat), and nomination by the King to high positions in the Church.

These were not, of course, the only conditions which were part and parcel of a nobleman's way of life. It was imperative in order not to 'déroger' to lead a 'style de vie noble'. Although often in dire financial straits many aristocrats attempted to keep up appearances by frequenting the Court, dressing expensively, entertaining on a lavish scale, living on credit and indulging in such expensive amusements as gambling which were bound to bring disastrous results. Indeed, the situation of many noblemen was considerably worsened by their refusal

to live within the limits of their incomes. As an antidote against hard times they would have recourse to that classic remedy, a mésalliance. The literature of the time bears abundant witness to all this. There is, for instance, Boileau's well-known satire of the 'Noble altier pressé de l'indigence' who having pursued a ruinously expensively way of life 'pour soutenir son rang et sa naissance', seeks to rectify matters by marrying the daughter of some wealthy bourgeois :

Par un lâche contract vendit tous ses Ayeux,
Et corrigeant ainsi la fortune ennemie,
Rétablit son honneur à force d'infamie. (1)

Among the many contemporary references to the impoverished members of the old feudal aristocracy repairing their financial losses by a lucrative marriage with a bourgeoisie, there is the noteworthy remark by La Bruyère on the attitude of such noblemen towards prosperous roturiers to the effect that 'les grands, qui les dédaignoient, les révèrent : heureux s'ils deviennent leurs gendres.' (2) It was precisely such situations and attitudes that Dancourt was to exploit on the stage.

It can be seen from the fate of the noblesse de campagne or hobereaux, as they were somewhat ungenerously called, that the term 'aristocrat' depended - in many people's minds - on more than the key factor of noble lineage; it was generally only applied in any meaningful sense of the word to those who were accepted in Court circles or who, to use a contemporary expression, could at least afford to 'vivre noblement', that is, without having to earn their living by undertaking some paid employment. Noblemen, no matter how imposing their genealogy might be, who were unfortunate enough to be reduced, through

(1) Oeuvres, ed. A. Adam, Paris, 1966, pp. 32-33.

(2) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, Paris, 1882-92, 5 vols., vol. II, p. 259.

poverty, to abandoning the Court and to living in the provinces were regarded with condescending pity : such a fate was suggestive of that of courtiers who were banished by the King from his presence, the ultimate disgrace for an aristocrat. The country nobleman, ignorant of Court etiquette and often obliged to till the soil of his domain, lost much in prestige as far as his Parisian cousin was concerned and, what is more, became a comic centre-piece in the contemporary theatre. The hobereau, generally in reduced circumstances but nonetheless proud of his birth was, as we have seen in a previous chapter, widely depicted by dramatists before Dancourt. La Bruyère, too, brought out forcefully their chief characteristics and their attitude towards the noblesse de robe :

Le noble de province, inutile à sa patrie, à sa famille, et à lui-même, souvent sans toit, sans habits et sans aucun mérite, répète dix fois par jour qu'il est gentilhomme, traite les fourrures et les mortiers de bourgeoisie, occupé toute sa vie de ses parchemins et de ses titres, qu'il ne changeroit pas contre les masses d'un chancelier. (1)

In contrast to the declining noblesse d'épée was the essentially bourgeois noblesse de robe who were regarded by the genuine aristocracy as mere usurpers of the title of nobility, an accusation which they staunchly rejected. It was possible for socially ambitious bourgeois to become nobles principally by two means: either by lettres d'anoblissement on payment of a large sum of money or, more commonly, by the purchase of charges of various kinds for example high posts in the judiciary, the civil service or the financial world. It is hardly necessary to mention that none of these posts could be acquired unless the candidate had a considerable fortune. As various forms of contemporary literature show, mere acquisition of a noble title did not always satisfy the social ambitions of some gens de robe who were anxious to disown their bourgeois origins as these would belie their claim to social equality with the noblesse d'épée. Their resentment at the

(1) ibid., vol. III, Part I, pp. 61-62.

exclusiveness of the higher nobility and their contempt for the class from which they themselves sprang were known as the 'morgue de la robe'. La Bruyère's comments on the servile imitation of the higher nobility by the gens de robe are worth quoting in this respect :

Un homme de robe à la ville et le même à la cour, ce sont deux hommes. Revenu chez soi, il reprend ses mœurs, sa taille et son visage, qu'il y avoit laissés : il n'est plus si embarrassé, ni si honnête. (1)

He goes on to condemn the feelings of hostility between the two types of nobility on the grounds that each had an important role to fulfil in the community :

La noblesse expose sa vie pour le salut de l'Etat et pour la gloire du Souverain; le magistrat décharge le prince d'une partie du soin de juger les peuples: voilà de part et d'autre des fonctions bien sublimes et d'une merveilleuse utilité; les hommes ne sont guères capables de plus grandes choses, et je ne sais d'où la robe et l'épée ont puisé de quoi se mépriser réciproquement. (2)

Just as the noblesse d'épée liked to preserve a distinction between those who frequented the Court and those who lived in the provinces, there were areas of disagreement as to social equality within the ranks of the noblesse de robe. Once again La Bruyère pointed out the fatuous nature of such attitudes which Dancourt was to turn into subjects of comedy :

Il y a dans la ville la grande et la petite robe; et la première se venge sur l'autre des dédains de la cour, et des petites humiliations qu'elle y essuie. De savoir quelles sont leurs limites, où la grande finit, et où la petite commence, ce n'est pas une chose facile. (3)

Aspects of this social hierarchy within the legal world are brought out in Dancourt's portraits of members of the profession from a provincial président and various conseillers to their humbler ^{bourgeois} colleagues of the petite robe.

Outstanding among Dancourt's plays on aristocratic society is the three-act comédie-ballet, Les Fées (1699) which was composed for performance at Court. This play differs from his other productions in a variety of ways. By putting on the stage members of a royal household, including a king, and introducing satirical

(1) ibid., vol. II, p. 192.

(2) ibid., vol. II, p. 264.

(3) ibid., vol. II, p. 189.

comments on Court life, Dancourt was skating on thin ice; anyone who cast reflexions on the behaviour of royal persons, even by implication, was liable to retaliatory action, the classic example being the recent expulsion of the Théâtre Italien ostensibly for such an offence. Dancourt consequently takes precautionary measures by placing his court not at Versailles but in such an other-worldly atmosphere as fairy-land, thus warding off any accusations of personal satire. What is more, episodes from the lives of the royalty, considered fitting material for tragedy, were not, according to the bienséances, suitable to be dramatized in comedy. Here again Dancourt was venturing into a field which would not be, at least on paper, in accordance with the social ethos of the time. Another unusual feature about the play is its moralistic tone and its emphasis on ethical questions. Thus it approaches more closely the concept of comedy of character than any other of Dancourt's plays except Les Agioteurs. There is a corresponding tendency too, to introduce long sentences containing philosophical reflections on life which contrast strongly with Dancourt's usual racy dialogue.

It is, of course, La Bruyère whose name, more than anyone else's in the period we think of in connection with Court satire, but he had his imitators on the stage in Dancourt, Boursault and Regnard, all of whom attempted to hold up to ridicule, though from a very different standpoint, the morals of the contemporary Court.

A few months after Les Fées was performed at the Comédie Française, Regnard produced his Démocrite in January 1700 which contains areas of similarity with Dancourt's play. Regnard also thought it wise to choose as the setting of his play somewhere far removed in time and place from Versailles : Athens in the time of the Greek philosopher, Democritus. This production was followed fairly soon after by a play on a similar theme, Boursault's Esope à la Cour (1701), the only difference being in its far more trenchant satire directed not only at the person of the King - ostensibly the legendary Croesus - but also at the whole

quality of life at Court. In this respect Boursault comes nearer than his two contemporaries to the moralistic tone of La Bruyère's 'De la Cour'.

To take Dancourt's play as the first of the trilogy of Court satires, we can sum up thus the aspects of Court life which he criticises : the observance of ceremony, the pursuit of pleasure, the lack of sincerity in human relations, and the use of an artificial and affected form of expression. One of the main objections which the king, Astur, formerly a peasant, raises against the Court is the necessity to conform to strict conventions which he considers an imposition. In a conversation with his two daughters, Inégilde and Cléonide, he is relieved to find himself in the family circle where he can give free vent to his feelings:

Comme j'ai à vous parler d'affaires réjouissantes, mes enfans, je suis bien-aise de ne voir auprès de moi que des visages qui me réjouissent, et devant qui je ne sois pas obligé de garder une incommode gravité, qui m'a terriblement gêné depuis que la Fée votre mere s'avisa de me faire Souverain.

- to which the suiivante, Finette, replies with outspoken conviction :

Oh! pour cela, Seigneur, vous avez bien raison et je vous sais bon gré de vous dépouiller ainsi quelquefois de l'éclat qui vous environne: un Prince, toujours esclave de sa grandeur, vit moins pour lui que pour les autres; et c'est un adoucissement à la fatigue d'être Souverain, que la liberté de pouvoir un peu devenir homme dans sa famille. (Act I, sc. ix.)

This theme of the rare opportunities at a king's disposal to relax and chat familiarly with his family and associates has its parallel in La Bruyère's 'Du Souverain' :

Le plaisir d'un roi qui mérite de l'être est de l'être moins quelquefois, de sortir du théâtre, de quitter le bas de saye et les brodequins, et de jouer avec une personne de confiance un rôle plus familier. (1)

This outlook was echoed in Démocrite where the peasant, Thaler, dressed as a marquis and disillusioned with his new environment, complains about his lack of freedom and the denial of personal privacy in Court circles :

Quoi! si je veux tousser, cracher, moucher, que sais-je?
Et de jour et la nuit faudra-t-il que quelqu'un
Tienne de tous mes faits un registre importun? (Act II, sc. iv.)

Like Astur, his lack of sophistication and blunt manners form a comic contrast with the way of life associated with the Court; as his friend, Strabon, informs him:

(1) op. cit., vol. II, p. 290.

Malgré tes beaux habits, ton air gauche et sauvage
Tient encore à mes yeux quelque peu du village. (Act II, sc. iii)

Comic material is drawn from Astur's confrontation with his daughters who have adopted Court manners and whose conversation is hardly intelligible to him. The two girls are saddened by their gouvernante's choice of husbands for them, and express their feelings in terms which are beyond his comprehension:

CLEONIDE

Mes sentiments, Seigneur, seront toujours soumis aux vôtres. Si le choix de la Fée se trouve contraire à mes désirs, votre volonté suffira pour me déterminer à les vaincre, et je sacrifierai le bonheur de ma vie, à celui de vous marquer une parfaite soumission.

ASTUR

Hem, comment?

INEGILDE

Pour moi, Seigneur, je mets toute ma gloire à vous obéir: je me sens incapable de manquer au respect que je vous dois; et si vos ordres m'imposent la nécessité d'accepter un époux, pour qui mon coeur ait de la répugnance, la mort ne tardera pas à me délivrer de la violence que mon devoir aura su me faire.

ASTUR

Cela me paroît fort bien dit: mais je n'y comprends pas grand'chose. Tant que j'ai vécu Berger, je me suis si fort accoutumé à des manières simples et à des discours naturels, que le langage de ma Cour ne m'est presque point intelligible: l'entends-tu mieux que moi, dis Finette? Que m'ont-elles voulu répondre?

FINETTE

Que le mariage ne leur déplaît pas: mais que les maris pourroient ne leur pas plaire .

ASTUR

Hé bien, cela est clair, j'entends cela. (Act I, sc. ix.)

When, in a later scene, Inégilde refuses point blank to accept a husband not of her choice, Astur remarks on the clarity of her speech: 'Ce discours est plus clair que celui de tantôt'. Finette's reply contains a piece of satire against affected speech: 'C'est qu'il est plus naturel et plus vrai, Seigneur'. (Act III, sc. i.) This satire recurs in a conversation between Astur and Prince Zirliphin who asks for the hand of Inégilde when, once again, Astur is at a loss for words:

ZIRLIPHIN

...et dans l'espoir que vous me donniez d'apprendre les lieux où elle est, vous voulez bien, Seigneur, me permettre de chercher à lui rendre au plutôt un hommage qu'on se fait un plaisir de lui renvoyer.

ASTUR

Quoi, moi? Mais écoutez donc, Prince, il y a des circonstances...où il seroit à propos de réfléchir sur la manière...par exemple...dans la primeur de ma Souveraineté...ce n'est pas par rapport à moi que je vous dis cela... mais il est pour certain que jadis...c'est pour vous dire; et voilà Darinel qui vous dira par merveilles...Oh parbleu, mettez-vous à ma place, vous trouverez que des Filles et des Fées sont des animaux fort embarrassans. (Act III, sc. v)(...) Dans des affaires sérieuses, ordinairement, je ne sais ce que je dis: tu devrois m'aider un peu quelque fois, toi, Darinel.

DARINEL

Vous venez de vous exprimer fort élégamment, Seigneur.

ASTUR

Tout de bon?

DARINEL

On ne peut rien de mieux, vous avez beaucoup d'esprit.

ASTUR

Je ne m'en étois pas encore aperçu. (Act III, sc. vi.)

Such flattery as Darinel lavishes on the King was even more strongly criticised in Esope à la Cour :

Ce n'est point pour les rois qu'est la sincérité:
Tout se farde à la cour jusqu'à la vérité...
Et l'on étale aux rois d'un plus tranquille front
Les vertus qu'ils n'ont pas que les défauts qu'ils ont. (Act I. sc. iii)

Dancourt makes an undisguised attack on the shallowness of life at Court when he puts into the mouth of Prince Astibel the following words :

Ah, que j'ai fait un impertinent voyage! et que la sagesse de ce pays-ci est différente de celle du nôtre!(..)Je ne vois rien ici qui me convienne, tout m'y paroît faux et affecté(..)Le trouble règne dans tous les coeurs, une fausse tranquillité masque les visages; et peu soigneux de corriger les vices, on se contente de les savoir cacher(..)Quel séjour étranger pour moi! et que je serois surpris et charmé d'y trouver seulement un coeur sincère, digne de l'attachement d'un Sage. (Act III, sc. x.)

Once again, there is a similarity between Dancourt's interpretation of certain aspects of contemporary life and observations made by La Bruyère who made the following reference to the superficial joys of Court life :

Il y a un pays où les joies sont visibles, mais fausses, et les chagrins cachés mais reels. Qui croiroit que l'empressement pour les spectacles, que les éclats et les applaudissements aux théâtres de Molière et d'Arlequin, les repas, la chasse, les ballets, les carrousels couvrirent tant d'inquiétude, de soins et de divers intérêts tant de craintes et d'espérances, des passions si vives et des affaires si sérieuses? (1)

(1) op. cit., 'Les Caractères', Vol. II, pp. 236-7.

Cléonide, too, is in search of 'la vraie sagesse' which she considers to be lamentably absent in that milieu :

que d'éternels plaisirs sont ennuyeux! On a beau, pour les varier en cent manieres, les faire succéder les uns aux autres, cette apparence de diversité ne suffit pas pour remplir l'inclination naturelle que nous avons au changement : il faut un contraste plus sensible pour former le vrai bonheur de la vie: et les chagrins, les périls, les malheurs même sont nécessaires, pour mieux faire goûter l'avantage de les avoir évités. (Act I, sc. viii)...élevée par la Fée des Plaisirs, ennuyée d'en avoir fait un trop long usage, outrée d'un moment de chagrin que je viens d'avoir, je forme le projet d'une vie heureuse, où l'on tienne un milieu si juste entre les plaisirs et les peines, qu'en ne s'attachant trop aux uns, on soit toujours exempt des autres. (Act III, sc. x.)

A similar passage is found in the 'Voyage dans l'île des plaisirs', one of the contes which Fénelon composed for the instruction of the young Duc de Bourgogne:

fatigué de tant de festins et d'amusements, je conclus que les plaisirs des sens, quelque variés, quelque faciles qu'ils soient, avilissent, et ne rendent point heureux. Je m'éloigne donc de ces contrées en apparence si délicieuses; et de retour chez moi, je trouvais dans une vie sobre, dans un travail modéré, dans des mœurs pures, dans la pratique de la vertu, le bonheur et la santé que n'avoient pu me procurer la continuité de la bonne chère et la variété des plaisirs. (1)

Boursault's Esope, for his part, had similar criticism to make on the Court which, although it was 'le séjour de l'art et de la politesse', was steeped in hypocrisy, debauchery, jealousy and self-interest :

Mais combien de chagrins y faut-il essuyer,
Et sur quelle parole ose-t-on s'appuyer? (Act I, sc. iii)

Having been invited by King Crésus to 'réformer les abus de (s)a cour', Esope eventually decides to give up this thankless task :

que ferois-je à la cour, moi qui ne suis, seigneur,
Hypocrite, jaloux, médisant, ni flatteur? (Act V, sc. iv.)

In Les Fées, Dancourt brings out the hypocrisy prevalent among courtiers when Darinel offers to find out Zirliphin's true feelings for Inégilde :

Laissez moi faire, Madame; je suis, grâce au Ciel, assez bon Courtisan; je l'aborderai par maniere de devoir, j'entrerai par maniere d'acquit dans sa confidence: et comme ce n'est que par curiosité que vous vous y intéressez, je vous en informerai seulement par maniere de conversation. (Act II, sc. iii)

Darinél had as much suavity and ingenuity as he had little principle, and could

(1) Oeuvres, Paris, 1838, 5 vols., vol. III, pp. 574-7.

therefore draw out Inégilde to talk by assuming a kindly interest in her; pretending to be her confidant, the more effectively could he play the traitor.

Dancourt also makes fun of the way in which fashionable ladies used to spend their time; Finette replies to Inégilde's confession that she believes in dreams:

c'est une des sérieuses affaires des femmes du monde que ces chimères-là;
et après le jeu, l'amour, la bonne chère et l'ajustement, elles n'ont rien
qui les occupe davantage que les Devineries et les songes. (Act I, sc. v.)

He does not, however, go as far as Boursault was to do in advising the monarch as to the best way to govern his people. There is no parallel in Les Fées to Esope's daring exhortations for the King to pursue a policy of peace, to give opportunity for national prosperity, to patronize the arts and to protect his subjects :

...pere de son peuple est un titre plus grand
que ne le fut jamais celui de conquérant. (Act I, sc. iii)

This last quotation is an echo of La Bruyère's opinion on the duties of a king :
'Nommer un roi PERE DU PEUPLE est moins faire son éloge que l'appeler par son nom, ou faire sa définition' (1).

The other characters whom Dancourt chooses as representative of the various facets of the aristocracy conform, on the whole, to fairly conventional types. There are a number of instances in which he brings out, with the help of various comic devices, what can be regarded as broadly characteristic of the attitudes, outlook, and way of life associated with the noblesse d'épée. Molière had, of course, led the way with his occasional glimpses of high society, but another important influence in this respect was that of Michel Baron who in his plays concentrated on fashionable society. His Rendez-Vous des Thuilleries (1685), L'Homme à bonne fortune (1686) and La Coquette (1686) all contain satirical references to the manners of the upper classes and give an account of some of their pastimes, such as gambling, gossip, the theatre and opera.

We are introduced to an aristocratic milieu in Dancourt's L'Eté des Coquettes (1690) which, as we have seen, deals with the popular theme of summer amusements

(1) 'Du Souverain', in Oeuvres, Vol. II, p. 296.

indulged in by Parisian coquettes while their suitors, officers in the army, are on active service. The irony of the situation is that, in the absence of young noblemen whom they consider eligible suitors, aristocratic ladies find themselves reduced to entertaining admirers from a lower social class whom they would not even recognize under normal circumstances. As the leading character of the play, Angélique, puts it rather bluntly : 'Faute de meilleure compagnie, on s'accoutume à ces Messieurs-là'. (sc. ix.) Throughout the comedy, Dancourt stresses the class-conscious outlook which dominated the contemporary social scene. Angélique, an inveterate coquette, is particularly representative of the upper classes in her disdainful attitude towards the rest of society, even towards members of the noblesse de robe. Her attitude is betrayed in the unfavourable comparisons which she makes between the true aristocracy and other social classes. Referring to M. Patin, 'un Financier fort bon à décrasser', Angélique remarks in terms which picture her as a dispenser of social graces : 'C'est à moi qu'il est redevable du peu de noblesse qu'il commence à mettre dans ses manières.' (sc. iii) This quotation illustrates her innate feeling of superiority and her condescending approach to those outside the narrow circle of polite society. Her social circle is one where 'on polit un homme de Robe, on apprend à vivre à un Abbé, on met un jeune homme dans le monde'. (sc. i.) In conversation with her friend, Cidalise, she declares light-heartedly : 'Tu vois les plaisirs innocens que je me donne pendant l'absence du beau monde'. The less desirable suitors who pay court to the ladies are M. Des Souds, a singing-teacher, who has composed a pastoral poem to be set to music, M. Patin, a wealthy financier who is tolerated for his magnanimity but despised on account of his bourgeois class, l'abbé Cheurepié, a flirtatious dandy who chose his vocation as a soft option to military service during war-time, and a young officer, Clitandre, temporarily off duty, described as a 'petit gentilhomme' (sc. xiv) and 'd'une famille de Robe...mais (qui) ne laisse pas d'aller à l'armée'. (sc. v.) With the exception of Clitandre, the

other suitors are the butt of scathing criticism from the ladies. Cidalise's remarks illustrate the way in which members of the bourgeoisie were regarded by polite society :

Ces petits Messieurs sont fanfarons, ils ont trop peu d'esprit pour s'apercevoir qu'on les raille, et trop bonne opinion d'eux-mêmes pour ne pas croire qu'on les aime. Ils se font un honneur de le publier, et ne trouvent que trop de personnes qui, par bêtise ou par malice, sont faciles à persuader. (sc. viii.)

The play ends with news of the military suitors' return from the front; their arrival will be hailed by coquettes as a welcome resumption of their normal way of life, as we see from Angélique's statement : 'L'Hiver vient insensiblement, et on se trouve dans son centre.' (sc. i.) The result of their arrival is that bourgeois admirers will have to make a hasty retreat : 'Tout le monde revient, et les Bourgeois n'ont qu'à déguerpir.' (sc. xxiv.)

La Désolation des Joueuses (1687) dramatizes the reactions of a party of gamblers to the recent prohibition of lansquenets. The chief characters are drawn from aristocratic circles and include Dorimène, who allows her house to be used as a gambling establishment, a comtesse, a marquis, the wife of an intendant who ranks as a member of the noblesse de robe, and a chevalier who pretends to be a Gascon nobleman but who in reality is the son of a barber of Falaise. Gambling was an important aspect of social life in these circles; it was considered that

Un homme de qualité qui veut profiter de son séjour à Paris doit aller dans le monde. Or, comme on ne trouve guère à Paris de sociétés où l'on ne joue, il ne sera pas bien reçu que s'il sait jouer. (1)

Apart from being an opportunity to gain a fortune, gambling was a means of attaining social distinction : 'Il n'y a rien', commented La Bruyère laconically, 'qui mette plus subitement un homme à la mode et qui le soulève davantage que le grand jeu : cela va de pair avec la crapule.' (2) It was something to which women in particular were addicted. A German traveller visiting Paris in Dancourt's time noted that 'Les François et surtout les dames aiment fort cette distraction.' (3) This is also made clear by the already mentioned plays on the theme which feature women

(1) J.C. Nemeitz, in A. Franklin, La Vie Privée d'autrefois, Paris, 1887-1902, 27 vols., vol. XXI, p. 120.

(2) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. III, Part I, p. 168.

(3) J.C. Nemeitz, op. cit., p. 120.

gamblers. Boileau, too, added his contribution to satire of the joueuse :

Chés elle, en ces emplois, l'aube du lendemain
Souvent la trouve encor les cartes à la main:
Elle plaint le malheur de la nature humaine,
Qui veut qu'en un sommeil où tout s'ensevelit
Tant d'heures sans jouer se consomment au lit. (1)

Dancourt went further than merely portraying a group of card-players in full session. He brings out with a touch of humour the effect of gambling on their private lives by depicting the obsessive nature of gambling, the depths of despair to which gamblers descend, and the neglect of family interests which it often brought in its wake. The immediate effect of the ban on lansquenet on his party of gamblers is portrayed in the following scenes :

LA COMTESSE

...cela ne se peut pas, et c'est comme si l'on défendoit de dormir.

CLITANDRE

Pour moi, j'aimerois autant qu'on m'eût défendu le boire et le manger.

DORIMENE

Il est vrai qu'il vaut autant mourir.

LA COMTESSE

Mais cela ne se peut pas, vous dis-je encore une fois. (sc. vii.)

* * *

L'INTENDANTE

Ah! le moïen de vivre, après un coup comme celui-là. On ne jouera plus au lansquenet! (sc. viii.)

One faints, another threatens to commit suicide, yet another nearly loses his reason, and all pit their wits to find a way of recouping their losses in spite of the prohibition. This is not simply a question of comic exaggeration though the characters are presented in a humorous light, as a number of contemporary sources testify to outlandish behaviour induced by heavy losses at the gaming table. In her Correspondance Madame described the reactions of gamblers in Court circles who had lost 'des sommes effrayantes' :

L'un hurle, l'autre frappe si fort la table du poing que toute la salle en retentit; le troisième blasphème d'une façon qui fait dresser les cheveux; tous paraissent hors d'eux-mêmes, et sont effrayants à voir. (2)

(1) Oeuvres, ed. A.-Adam, Paris, 1966, pp. 68-9.

(2) Correspondance Complète de Madame, Paris, 1879, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 15.

In a more moralistic tone Bourdaloue described the effects of gambling on addicts, in his treatise 'Sur les Divertissements du Monde' : 'de là les emportements et les désespoirs dans la perte...de là les colères et les transports, les blasphèmes et les imprécations'. (1) And La Bruyère pointed out the fanatical zeal with which his contemporaries pursued this so-called recreation :

Mille gens se ruinent au jeu, et vous disent froidement qu'ils ne sauroient se passer de jouer : quelle excuse! Y a-t-il une passion, quelque violente ou honteuse qu'elle soit, qui ne pût tenir ce même langage? Seroit-on reçu à dire qu'on ne peut se passer de voler, d'assassiner, de se précipiter? Un jeu effroyable, continuel, sans retenue, sans bornes, où l'on n'a en vue que la ruine totale de son adversaire, où l'on est transporté du désir du gain, désespéré sur la perte, consumé par l'avarice, où l'on expose sur une carte ou à la fortune du dé la sienne propre, celle de sa femme ou des ses enfants, est-ce une chose qui soit permise ou dont l'on doive se passer? (2)

In Dancourt's play the prohibition has brought a period of calm, if only a temporary one, to the relief of Dorimène's daughter, Angélique, and her maid :

LISETTE

Cela est tout confirmé, il n'est encore venu ni Joueur ni Joueuse d'aujourd'hui. Voilà déjà la cohue écartée, Dieu merci, et je sais bien pour moi, que si j'avois gouverné la Police, il y a long-tems que l'affaire seroit faite, et qu'on ne parleroit plus de ces maudits Jeux qui causent tant de désordre, et qui m'ont fait passer tant de nuits sans me coucher.

ANGELIQUE

Ce ne sont point les veilles qui me fatiguent et le Jeu même ne me déplairoit peut-être point si fort, si l'on jouoit ailleurs que chez ma mere: mais que cette maison soit une Académie ouverte à toutes sortes de gens; que tout ce qu'il y a de fainéans, de ridicules, et d'extravagans, pour ne rien dire de plus fâcheux, soient les bien-venus dans ce logis; que dans mon cabinet, et à ma toilette même, je sois éternellement obsédée de quelque visage désagréable à qui je n'ose dire : 'Vous me fatiguez', parce qu'il perd quelquefois son argent avec ma mere : en vérité, c'est un supplice dont je serai bien-aise d'être débarrassée. (sc. i.)

It was true that fashionable ladies often virtually turned their homes into 'académies de jeu', not always, however, for the purposes of enjoying a few rounds of lansquenet in genial company :

(1) Oeuvres Complètes, Versailles, 1812, 16 vols., vol. V, p. 336.

(2) Oeuvres, vol. II, pp. 181-2.

Aussi trouve-t-on certaines maisons où tout le monde peut aller jouer sans avoir été présenté. Ces maisons retirent chaque année un grand bénéfice du jeu, et même quelques personnes de condition n'ont pas honte de donner ainsi à jouer chez elles. (1)

D'Argenson had something a little stronger to say about these 'vieilles coquettes', as he terms them, 'qui rendent leur maison publique pour avoir le profit de ces assemblées diaboliques'. (2) As for the disruption of family life which Dancourt attributes directly to the passion for gambling, Bourdaloue waxes eloquent on this subject :

Parce qu'on ne peut accorder ensemble le jeu et l'entretien d'une maison, on abandonne la maison, et l'on ménage tout pour le jeu...on sacrifie à son jeu les droits les plus inviolables et les intérêts les plus sacrés...l'on fait du jeu sa première loi...pour ne pas se détacher du jeu on se détache de toute autre chose; et...dans la concurrence de toute autre chose avec le jeu, quelque essentielle qu'elle soit par elle-même, on retient le jeu et l'on renonce à tout le reste. (3)

Although Dancourt's play is not, like Bourdaloue's sermons, an invective against gambling, he does portray, in a comic light, certain effects of gambling on society as, for example, in the following scene where Eraste, one of the party, regards lansquenet, ironically, as a 'valuable' service to the public :

il faut savoir à combien de choses et à combien de gens le Lansquenet étoit utile (...) Une Dame recevoit-elle un bijou considérable de quelque amant, le mari n'avoit rien à dire, sa femme l'avoit gagné au Lansquenet (...) Un fils de famille empruntoit à grosses usures, faisoit une dépense enragée, le pere ne s'embarrassoit pas de cela. Il admiroit le bonheur de son fils et l'utilité du Lansquenet. (sc. x.)

This kind of 'utilité', of doubtful value, is here given an ironic twist for comic effect; the reality of the situation was that lansquenet, which caused the financial ruin of so many people, was prohibited to protect the public. On the other hand, Bourdaloue did not have his tongue in his cheek when he preached against the effects of gambling on society :

Une femme qui, dans un jeu, dont les plus fortes remontrances ne l'ont pu déprendre, dissipe d'une part tout ce qu'un mari amasse de l'autre, qui se tient en embuscade pour le tromper, et détourne pour son jeu tout ce qui peut venir sous sa main;...un mari qui, tour à tour, passant du jeu à la débauche et de la débauche au jeu, expose jusqu'à ses fonds et fait dépendre d'un seul

(1) J.C. Nemeitz, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

(2) Notices sur les Oeuvres de Théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Geneva, 1966, vol. XLII, p.172.

(3) Oeuvres, Complètes, vol. IV, pp. 331-2.

coup la fortune de toute sa famille;...un jeune homme qui, sans ménagement et sans réflexion, emprunte de tous les côtés et à toutes les conditions, et, ne pouvant encore se dépouiller d'un Héritage qu'il n'a pas, se dépouille au moins par avance de ses droits, et ne compte pour rien toute une succession qu'il perd, pourvu qu'il joue. (1)

The comtesse in Dancourt's play, reluctant to come to terms with the situation, is convinced of the prohibition only after much persuasion :

Oh, pour moi, je vous réponds que si on ne rétablit le Lansquenet, j'apprendrai à jouer à la paume, assurément. Car enfin, il faut bien qu'une femme de qualité joue, et je ne comprends pas qu'il y ait d'autres jeux pour les gens de qualité que la Paume et le Lansquenet. (sc. xi.)

The irony of her remark is contained in the fact that, although paume was a favourite sport with the aristocracy, including Louis XIV in his younger days, it was not a pastime associated with ladies, and moreover, was by then declining in popularity, as we see from the closing down of several jeux de paume in Paris. Nevertheless it still had its value in aristocratic circles :

le jeu de paume est pratiqué par des rois et des princes, il faut donc qu'un homme de qualité s'y exerce, surtout s'il compte s'établir un jour dans quelque cour. (2)

Falling back on the privileges and exemptions which the aristocracy as a class enjoyed, the comtesse remarks that the decree could not possibly apply to the elite. : 'Ces publications sont pour le peuple, pour les laquais, pour la canaille, à qui l'on fait bien de défendre certains jeux qui ne sont faits que pour les gens de qualité. (sc. vii.)

There are references to the susceptibilities of the gens de robe who not only deny their bourgeois origins but also despise members of the class from which they rose:

CLITANDRE à la Comtesse.

Vous le voyez, Madame, la publication est pour tout le monde, et vous ne pouvez pas dire qu'une Intendante ne soit une personne de fort grosse qualité.

L'INTENDANTE

Hé, mon pauvre Clitandre, que me sert-il d'en avoir la qualité? Ai-je plus de privilège que les autres?...

LISETTE

Madame a raison; quoiqu'elle soit femme de qualité, le Lansquenet n'est-il pas aussi-bien défendu pour elle, que pour sa belle-soeur, qui n'est que la femme d'un Apoticaire? (sc. viii.)

At a much later date, in 1718, Dancourt treated a similar theme in La Déroute du Pharaon, but this time the recent legislation was directed against the playing of several

(1) Oeuvres Complètes, vol. V, pp. 334-5.

(2) J.C. Nemeitz, op. cit., p. 53.

card-games : pharaon, lansquenet and bassette. One of the characters, the self-styled Baron de Garbatacase, although of humble origin, represents the aristocracy by assuming a Gascon accent and by adopting attitudes and manners associated with this class. He describes himself as 'un homme de distinction, un homme de permission' (sc. iv) on the grounds that members of the privileged classes were exempt from observing the common law of the country. Armed with this assurance, he at first refuses to believe the rumours about the prohibition, confident that it does not apply to people of rank : 'Les défenses ne sont pas faites pour les personnes qui savent se permettre-ré-tout.' (sc. iv) His reaction illustrates a social reality : the privileged position of the old feudal aristocracy vis-à-vis the law which, in many cases, they could break with impunity. Consequently, they considered themselves largely unaffected by various royal decrees. On this subject La Bruyère noted with studied understatement : 'Il n'y a rien à perdre à être noble : franchises, immunités, exemptions, privilèges, que manque-t-il à ceux qui ont un titre?' (1). However, it is true that by the end of the seventeenth century their judicial rights and their many privileges were being slowly undermined by the Monarchy.

The comtesse, also one of the gamblers in Dancourt's play who were affected by the ban, echoes the Baron's views before she is at last convinced that notices to this effect have been posted up around the town : 'il me semble que si les défenses étoient pour les ^{personnes} ~~gens~~ de condition, ils valent assez la peine qu'on leur signifie la chose chez eux, sans la leur publier au coin des rues.' (sc. xvi) (2). As in La Désolation des Joueuses, a pseudo-aristocrat is unmasked : the Baron's identity is revealed as Mathieu Membrin, 'fils d'un barbier de Falaise', who, after appropriating a large sum of money, followed the profession of a fripon de jeu. The presentation of this sharper of low birth is in line with the following extract :

(1) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. III, Part I, p. 168.

(2) This quotation is exactly the same as that found in scene vii of La Désolation des Joueuses.

Le jeu est un moyen de s'introduire dans les meilleures sociétés...combien d'exemples n'a-t-on pas de gens qui en dépit de leur basse extraction se sont introduits par le jeu auprès des princes et des grands seigneurs, et ont ainsi fait leur fortune. (1)

The Baron, however, does not succeed in his attempt to win a fortune, as he is caught red-handed cheating his fellow gamblers and even attempting to make off with the kitty; as a result, he is expelled from their parties.

The stock figure of the marquis, immortalized by Molière, appears in some of Dancourt's plays where he takes on the usual characteristics of a foppish courtier. The marquis in La Maison de Campagne, an impertinent and overbearing character, dominates practically the first half of the one-act play when he arrives with other guests at the country residence of Bernard, an homme de robe. He begins by taking on himself the duties of host to the company, ignoring the exasperated Bernard, and urges the guests to enjoy themselves. He invites a neighbouring baron to stay for a few days with the breezy remark : 'Nous sommes ici bonne compagnie, renvoie ton équipage, et passe quelques jours avec nous,' (sc. x.) and goes on to extend the invitation to the baron's relatives, orders a meal for the company, makes suggestive remarks to Mme Bernard in her husband's presence, and generally does the honours of the occasion. In addition to this the marquis prides himself on his sociable manner and influence at Court : 'Vivent, vivent morbleu les gens de chez nous, pour être francs et genereux; depuis que je suis à Paris, j'ai réformé moi seul la moitié de la cour.' (sc. xiii.)

An even more bumptious marquis appears in a scene of La Femme d'Intrigues where he is portrayed as a fashionable dandy who boasts of his popularity at Court and who is obsessed with the idea of impressing onlookers with his appearance and possessions. These aspects of his character are brought out in a conversation with the intrigante, Mme Thibaut, whom he asks to find him a marriage partner of some means :

(1) J.C. Nemeitz, op. cit., p. 120.

vous m'avez vu dans mon carrosse? il est remarquable, oui, mon carrosse; et je suis autant connu de tout Paris par mon équipage qu'estimé de la Cour par mes manières (...) En avez-vous remarqué la beauté? (...) Je donne toujours dans le beau : j'ai des chevaux, morbleu, qui tourneroient sur la pointe d'une épée, un Cocher qui a du poitrail, et pour le moins une once et demi de barbe : Pour moi, j'ai toujours aimé cela. Un Cocher qui remplit bien son siège, et qu'il a tous ses crins, donne un merveilleux relief à la surface d'un équipage (...) j'ai deux grisons, un coureur et quatre autres laquais : ce ne sont pas des géants à la vérité; mais de larges bassets qui ne meublent point trop mal le derrière d'un carrosse : pour le dedans, c'est moi qui l'occupe. Je ne sais si je suis d'une tournure à faire dire que le poisson dément la coquille. (Act III, sc. xii.)

The petit-maître tries to avoid the question of his financial position on the grounds that 'nous autres gens de qualité, nous ne nous piquons guère de savoir ce que nous avons de bien, cela est trop bourgeois.' La Bruyère, too, noted this characteristic of the upper classes of society :

les grands négligent de rien connoître, je ne dis pas seulement aux intérêts des princes et aux affaires publiques, mais à leurs propres affaires...ils ignorent l'économie et la science d'un père de famille, et...ils se louent eux-mêmes de cette ignorance...ils se laissent appauvrir et maîtriser par des intendants. (1)

An anti-climax is reached when the marquis admits, though in a roundabout fashion, that most of his possessions had been acquired on credit and were not paid for.

His attitude towards money matters is similar to that of the marquis in Les Agioteurs ^{who,} although he is 'le fils d'un riche financier', ~~he~~ holds the agioteurs' profession in contempt, and boasts of his ignorance of financial affairs, as befitting a person of his status. He explains to the procureur, Durillon, that

vous prenez les devans pour disposer les choses, afin que je n'aie qu'à signer et prendre de l'argent, car je n'entends que ces deux choses-là, moi, dans toutes les affaires de la vie, et je ne vois pas, quand on est ce que je suis, qu'il faille en savoir davantage. (Act III, sc. ix.)

Another ironic note is struck when the marquis admits that he is unwilling to live up to his social status as he is too cowardly to embark on a military career. His only ambition is to 'galoper un peu sans contrainte dans les terres de la belle galanterie' leaving his parents to make good the numerous debts he acquires.

Dancourt offers another unattractive portrait of a petit-maître in L'Impromptu de Garnison, criticising the vanity and affected manners of these young fops :

(1) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. II, p. 258.

ce sont de jeunes gens entêtés de leur qualité, badins, folâtres, enjoués, qui parlent beaucoup, et qui disent peu, soupirant sans tendresse, amoureux par conversation, magnifiques sans biens, généreux en promesses, prodiges d'amitié, inventeurs de modes, et des airs surtout (...) des airs à la mode. L'étourderie d'un Ecolier, la brusque valeur d'un enfant de Paris, fracas d'équipage, tabatiers de quinze différens volumes, gros noeuds d'épée, perpétuel maniement de perruque, distractions continuelles, gestes affectés, éclats de rire sans sujet, mots favoris placés à l'aventure, se piquant d'esprit, et de bon goût, et disant quelquefois de bonnes choses par hazard: grands épouseurs surtout. Voilà...ce que c'est que les Petits-Maîtres. (sc. xi.)

This passage finds its counterpart in *La Bruyère's* description of court hangers-on:

Les cours ne sauroient se passer d'une certaine espèce de courtisans, hommes flatteurs, complaisants, insinuants, dévoués aux femmes...ils font les modes, raffinent sur le luxe, et sur la dépense, et apprennent à ce sexe de prompts moyens de consumer de grandes sommes en habits, en meubles et en équipages; ils ont eux-mêmes des habits où brillent l'invention de la richesse...Dédaigneux et fiers, ils n'abordent plus leurs pareils, ils ne les saluent plus; ils parlent où tous les autres se taisent, entrent, pénètrent en des endroits et à des heures où les grands n'osent se faire voir...ils embrassent, ils sont embrassés; ils rient, ils éclatent, ils sont plaisants...personnes commodes, agréables, riches, qui prêtent, et qui sont sans conséquence. (1)

Although people of noble birth held in contempt a career in trade or financial affairs, some of them considered it worth while to pocket their pride and enter bourgeois professions which seemed profitable enterprises. Such is the case of the comte in *La Fête de Village*, described as 'un homme ruiné qui n'a pas le sol', (Act II, sc. viii.) He intends to marry the wealthy widow of a greffier and, on the strength of the income he will gain from this marriage, purchase a lucrative post as a tax-farmer. Referring to his prospective bride, the comte explains his plans to exercise this bourgeois post, much to the amazement of his friend, Naquart :

LE COMTE

Elle a des rentes, des maisons, vingt mille écus d'argent comptant, dont je deviendrai le maître, je me mettrai dans les affaires.

NAQUART

Un homme de votre qualité dans les affaires?

LE COMTE

Pourquoi non? Les gens d'affaires achètent nos terres, ils usurpent nos titres et nos noms même; quel inconvénient de faire leur métier, pour être quelque jour en état de rentrer dans nos maisons et dans nos charges? (Act III, sc. iv.)

This scene illustrates the comte's hankering after the declining prestige of the nobility and their former position of wealth and influence in society. It also dramatizes the dilemma which impoverished aristocrats were faced with in order

(1) *ibid.*, pp. 214-5.

to maintain a high standard of living, and the resentment which they felt against wealthy bourgeois who, by gradually taking over landed property, were gaining the upper hand in society.

A similar situation is portrayed in Les Agioteurs where a Parisian nobleman with an assumed Gascon accent gives a brief indication of his present position. Like many others of the time who found themselves in dire financial straits, Dargentac, faced with hardship, was obliged to take an unattractive career as an intendant. In this way he was reduced to a subordinate position in the house of an influential and wealthy family where he was responsible for looking after their administrative and financial affairs. He describes the situation :

Noble famille, s'il en est au monde; mais le malheur du tems m'a pourtant réduit à me faire Intendant d'une maison, dont le bisayeul étoit Intendant de la mienne...(Act II, sc. ix.)

In the previous year Lesage had pointed out a similar reversal of fortune in the life of his marquis; this is brought out in Act III scene v of Turcaret where the marquis makes some revealing remarks on the traitant's past :

Il étoit laquais de mon grand-pere; il me portoit sur les bras. Nous jouyons tous les jours ensemble; nous ne nous quittions presque point. Le petit ingrat ne s'en souvient plus.

Unlike Dargentac, however, this marquis is unwilling to earn his living by taking up some paid occupation. Dargentac goes on to justify his swindling the nouveaux riches for whom he works : 'jé vange imperceptiblement mes ayeux, et jé mé raproprie mon patrimoine....Jé ruine qui m'avoit ruiné'. This explanation illustrates, with comic exaggeration, one of the paradoxes of contemporary society in which the original feudal lords found themselves at the mercy of low-born and wealthy individuals. The ambition of these impoverished nobles, who retained staunchly their pride in their ancestry, was to batten on the wealth of prosperous bourgeois by various means : marrying into their families, consorting with them on a friendly basis, or, very exceptionally, as in Dargentac's case, by managing the household affairs of a wealthy family and embezzling their capital in the process, or, even more exceptionally, by entering a bourgeois profession such as

tax-collecting. Many aristocrats justified themselves by regarding their actions as a sort of restitution to their ancestors who formerly enjoyed a predominant position in society.

Not unlike the conventional marquis of contemporary comedies in many ways is Dancourt's presentation of another frequenter of Court circles, the chevalier, of which there is only one fully developed portrait in his plays, that of the protagonist of Le Chevalier à la Mode. In this play Villefontaine embodies some of the attributes of the chevalier in Saint Yon's Moeurs du Tém (1685) as well as of the fashionable dandy, the Marquis de Moncade, in Baron's Homme à bonne fortune (1686). This is seen on the one hand in his attachment to a rich widow and several young women for purely financial reasons, and on the other hand in his amorous schemes carried out to satisfy his vanity and his propensity for a gay life. Although it is true that some of Dancourt's chevaliers are bogus noblemen masquerading under an assumed title, we have no reason to doubt the authenticity of Villefontaine's nobility.

In the play he is portrayed as a carefree adventurer who regards women as the dispensers of all the necessities of life and who exploits their infatuation with his noble title, his good looks and social graces. There are several references to the dubious reputation he enjoyed which throw some light on his character. Particularly noteworthy is the opinion of the chevalier put forward by the conseiller, Migaud, from which we gather that he leads a 'style de vie noble' at the expense of his many female admirers :

C'est un caractere d'homme fort particulier. Il a...ordinairement cinq ou six commerces avec autant de Belles. Il leur promet tout-à-tour de les épouser, suivant qu'il a plus ou moins affaire d'argent. L'Une a soin de son équipage, l'autre lui fournit de quoi jouer, celle-ci arrête les parties de son Tailleur, celle-là paie ses meubles et son appartement ; et toutes ces Maîtresses sont comme autant de Fermes, qui lui font un gros revenu. (Act III, sc.ii.)

This recalls a similar passage from Les Moeurs du Tems in which we learn that Araminte is willing to provide financial assistance ^{to meet} ~~for~~ the cost of the chevalier's regimental horses, while other female admirers supply him with clothes, finery and arms (Act II, sc. ix.).

The frivolity of Dancourt's chevalier is emphasized by criticism from Migaud, an homme de robe, and particularly from the maid, Lisette. Migaud refuses to believe that a person of the chevalier's character would be capable of seriously considering marriage :

C'est un Avanturier qui n'en a pas le tems, un jeune extravagant qui n'a pas cent pistoles de revenu, qu'on ne connoît à la Cour que par le ridicule qu'il s'y donne et qui n'a pour tout mérite que celui de boire, et de prendre du tabac.

LISETTE

Boire et prendre du tabac, c'est ce qui fait aujourd'hui le mérite de la plupart des jeunes gens. (Act I, sc. v.)

A few years later, in La Folle Enchère, Dancourt was to introduce similar criticism of the manners of these young fops; in this play his chevalier describes himself: 'Je suis insolent avec les gens de robe, bonnête et civil pour les gens d'épée; pour les abbés, je les désole, je prends force tabac d'assez bonne grâce, et je serois parfait jeune homme, si je pouvais devenir ivrogne' (sc. viii).

At a later stage in Le Chevalier à la Mode, Lisette, acting as the author's mouthpiece, voices some strong criticism of the noblesse de cour, referring to their fickleness in love and their precarious financial position as well as their vulnerability to the wiles of cunning usurers ; she describes chevaliers as 'de grands fripons en matiere d'amour' who, through their riotous life are on the road to financial ruin :

Croïez-vous qu'un homme de Cour puisse être riche au tems où nous sommes? Les Courtisans mal-aisés ne s'enrichissent point; et ceux qui sont le plus à leur aise, ne sont pas difficiles à ruiner. (Act III, sc. ix.)

The chevalier is unperturbed by this criticism . He even goes so far as to confirm these adverse remarks with typical nonchalance and disregard for public opinion. Asked if he intends to choose a bride from among the ladies dancing

attendance on him, he replies : 'Je les ménagerai toutes, autant qu'il s'en présentera, le plus long-tems que je pourrai, et je me déterminerai pour celle qui accommodera le mieux mes affaires.' (Act I, sc. vii.) Like Baron's Moncade he is never ruffled, even in the face of imminent exposure; overconfident in his powers of deception, he fails to realize that his victims eventually see through his knavery and bring about his final discomfiture.

Examples of chevaliers are found in other plays by Dancourt, but none are given so much prominence as in Le Chevalier à la Mode. There is, for example, the bogus chevalier in La Désolation des Joueuses who seeks to gain a fortune not so much by philandering as by frequenting the gambling parties of the rich. He is described as 'un aventurier tombé des nues, qu'on ne connoît que par le jeu, et qui ne subsistoit que par-là, comme mille autres de son caractere.' (sc. ii.) The only other chevalier in Dancourt's plays worth mentioning in this respect is the one who figures in Les Bourgeoises à la Mode; he is in reality only a pretentious upstart masquerading under the title of chevalier, endowed with the ability to turn even the most financially ruinous situations to his material advantage, as we see from the words of his valet, Frontin : 'Le jeu, les femmes, tout ce qui sert à ruiner les autres, est ce qui lui fait faire figure, et tout son revenu n'est qu'en fond d'esprit.' (Act I, sc. ii.)

There are throughout Dancourt's plays numerous penniless officers who, having grossly overspent their incomes in equipping a regiment, return from the army without any means of subsistence. They stalk through Dancourt's plays in search of every available opportunity to gain a livelihood with total disregard for the consequences of their actions, earning for themselves the title of chevaliers d'industrie. Not only is the character of the army officer a conventional one, as several examples had previously appeared on

the French stage, but he is also generally involved in a stock situation, with perhaps some slight variations. On leave from the army and divested of all means of subsistence, he seeks to court some wealthy widow of fairly advanced years who lavishes on him all the necessities of life, whereas in fact he loves a niece of hers. That such a situation was not entirely a figment of playwrights' imaginations is borne out by La Bruyère's reference to the relationship between young cavaliers (not necessarily in the military sense of the word, however,) and women of mature age :

Il y a des femmes déjà flétries, qui par leur complexion ou par leur mauvais caractère sont naturellement la ressource des jeunes gens qui n'ont pas assez de bien. Je ne sais qui est plus à plaindre, ou d'une femme avancée en âge qui a besoin d'un cavalier, ou d'un cavalier qui a besoin d'une vieille. (1)

One of the earliest examples of officers-chevaliers d'industrie is found in Montfleury's Crispin Gentilhomme (c. 1675) in which elderly Araminte fondly imagines she has attracted a young lieutenant, Cléomédon, who is really in love with her niece, Hélène. This is the central theme of Campistron's Amante Amant (1684) where it receives such prominence that it can be regarded as a forerunner of Saint-Yon and Dancourt. In this play, the young officer is, however, a girl in disguise with whom Dorimène falls in love. In 1685 Saint-Yon produced Les Moeurs du Temps in which an officer, with an eye to equipping his regiment, forms a liaison with an elderly and, of course, wealthy coquette, Araminte, while his affections are reserved for her niece, Angélique. The statement that 'on ménage les vieilles pour avoir de quoi plaire aux jeunes, c'est la manière d'à présent' (Act II, sc. iii.), sums up the central theme of the play. It was at about this point that Dancourt stepped in with his first chevalier d'industrie, the young officer, Clitandre, in Renaud et Armide (1686) who, wishing to marry Angélique, niece of the widowed Mme Jaquinet, temporarily courts the older woman for financial reasons. His namesake in L'Été des Coquettes (1690) forms a relationship with the Comtesse de Martin-Sec, a woman of mature age from whom he obtains money ostensibly to equip his regiment. Later, in La Foire de Besons, the valet, l'Olive, mentions the attraction of young officers for women like Mme Argante, a 'vieille coquette' who is in love with his master, Eraste :

(1) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. II, p. 89.

Sont-ce des épouseurs que les Officiers, et les Officiers de Dragons encore?(..)
 Au retour d'une campagne ils ne sont pas fâchés de trouver chez des Madame
 Argante toutes les commodités de la vie. Ils regardent cela comme une espece
 d'auberge; bonne table, bon équipage; crédit chez les Marchands, bourse bien
 garnie. Tant que cela dure, on a des empressemens pour elles; soins, complais-
 ances, égards, assiduités, rien ne manque; le Printemps vient, le mois de Mars
 arrive, le dénouement approche, il est question d'épouser, ohé, ohé, l'amour
 s'envole, le Cavalier décampe, et la Dame enrage. Oh ça, le mariage est une
 espece de conclusion qu'on ne connoît point parmi les Troupes, et la plupart
 des jolies femmes ne s'embarrassent pas de le supprimer. (sc. xiii.)

In La Gazette Dancourt makes allusion to the strained relations that existed
 between young officers spending their winter quarters in Paris, and members of
 the bourgeoisie. The behaviour of these young men was often viewed with repugnance
 by respectable citizens. Clitandre, a capitaine d'infanterie, has fallen in love
 with a book seller's daughter with the result that he has neglected to enlist
 soldiers into his regiment. His sergent, whom he entrusts with the difficult
 task of equipping the regiment, criticizes Clitandre for shirking his responsibilities:

LE SERGENT

Il auroit bien mieux valu faire vos affaires de bonne heure, que vous amuser
 pendant tout l'hyver à troubler, comme vous avez fait, la paix de deux ou
 trois ménages.

CLITANDRE

Il faut bien se délasser à Paris des fatigues de la campagne.

LE SERGENT

D'honnêtes Bourgeois ont bien affaire que ce soit chez eux que vous veniez
 vous délasser.

CLITANDRE

Ils sont bien en droit de se plaindre, vraiment! On défend l'été leurs frontieres,
 peuvent-ils trop paier l'hyver toutes les peines que se donnent les gens de
 qualité? (sc. i.)

Clitandre's valet. Crispin, points to the incongruity of a match between 'un fort
 joli homme de qualité, fort jeune et fort connu de quantité de coquettes' and the
 daughter of a bourgeois: 'Un Capitaine doit-il estre aussi bourgeoisement
 amoureux que vous l'êtes?' (sc. ii.).

Another representative of the noblesse d'épée is the Chevalier de Castagnac, an
 officer in La Foire Saint Germain who, in a conversation with his sister, explains
 his outlook on life:

Nous sommes d'une noblesse tellement ancienne, que tous nos biens en sont usés;
 nous n'avons, vous et moi, d'autre patrimoine que le savoir-faire: mais qu'importe?
 Les sots doivent tribut aux gens d'esprit, et il y a dans cette Foire Saint
 Germain quantité de Bureaux où je me fais payer mes rentes...Cadédis, ma chere

soeurette, je suis sans cesse à l'affût de la fortune...(je suis) amoureux... de richesse, oui, de femmes, non. (sc. ii.)

This illustrates another aspect of the noblesse d'épée: their resourcefulness in times of difficulty; not all were content to passively allow themselves to be the prey of scheming bourgeois, as we see especially in the portrait of the two officers in Les Curieux de Compiègne, the Chevalier de Fourbignac and Clitandre. Both have squandered their incomes during the military display, and are determined not to allow their lack of means to interfere with the luxurious way of life which they normally indulge in. Although in reduced circumstances, the chevalier boasts of his ability to keep up appearances and enjoy life without necessarily going to much expense :

je fais figure en apparence, toujours bonne table, beaucoup de vin, les haut-bois du Régiment et forces Bergeres de Paris, quelques Provinciales, maintes villageoises dansent les soirs devant ma tente; je me donne ainsi le bal à peu de frais. Je n'ai pas quatre pistoles, et je me divertis toujours, tout coup vaille. (sc. ii.)

He has met some Parisian visitors at the camp whom he has entertained on a lavish scale and intends to make them pay for the honour he has bestowed on them :

Ce sont de bonnes connoissances subalternes, de Robe, Marchands, Usuriers pour la plupart: je suis un peu sur leurs parties, je m'y veux mettre pour davantage; et je leur paie consciencieusement par avance l'intérêt de leur argent, parce que le principal est mal assuré. (sc. ii.)

Clitandre is in a similar financial predicament, having offered to regale some Parisian visitors without the means of covering the expenses. Although they are willing to associate with these bourgeois guests for their financial advantage, they despise them for their lower social class; the valet, Frontin, refers to them as nouveaux riches :

FRONTIN

~~NOTRE~~ Monsieur Valentin, à son négoce près, est un Bourgeois aussi bourgeois et aussi neuf...

LE CHEVALIER

Les miens sont à-peu-près de même, habiles gens dans leur commerce, mais d'autre part, très imbécilles. (sc. iii.)

In this play the tables are turned, and it is aristocrats who have the upper hand over bourgeois. But the really fundamental issue is the attitude of these officers

towards their Parisian acquaintances who were by no means to be despised; Valentin, a marchand de drap 'qui fournit le Régiment' (sc. ii.) and his colleague, Mouflart, a marchand de galons d'or, were by virtue of their trade, members of the bourgeoisie who enjoyed a privileged position among their associates: wholesale drapers and haberdashers were considered to stand at the pinnacle of their social class, next to the nobility (in some cases nobility was conferred on them), and could operate independently of the guild system to which most other tradesmen were subjected. In spite of the various royal decrees of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which declared wholesale trading to be a highly respectable career which even a nobleman could undertake without fear of 'dérogeance', it was extremely difficult to combat the prejudice of aristocrats against this kind of occupation. Like the two officers in Les Curieux de Compiègne, many nobles refused to regard wholesale merchants with the respect due to their status.

Apart from the manners of courtiers and army officers, another important target for satire was the behaviour of abbés commendataires who were generally, though not exclusively, of noble origin. Before going on to deal with them as stage figures we must first trace the source from which playwrights derived their ideas of this social type. Conferring the post of abbé in commendam on certain individuals, generally the younger sons of aristocratic families, was a means which the King employed to bestow his favours particularly in acknowledgement of services rendered. These titular abbés, lacking any serious commitment to a religious vocation, often led a worldly existence, frequenting fashionable society and living on the income from their abbeys. They are distinct from the 'regular' abbés who, as heads of religious orders, directed the spiritual and administrative affairs of their abbeys. Abbés commendataires, widely satirized in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, earned, not surprisingly, a dubious reputation.

There were, of course, a large number of them battenning on revenues from their abbeys, as the system of the commende was a fairly common abuse, but a few well-known examples of abbés in contemporary society should suffice to illustrate the point: l'abbé Testu who frequented the salons, wrote poetry and was reputed to be a 'bel esprit', l'abbé Fléchier who kept up a correspondence with Mademoiselle Deshoulières, and, worst of all, the notorious abbé de Chaulieu, nicknamed 'l'Anacréon du Temple'. The unedifying conduct of seventeenth-century abbés did not go uncriticised by Church authorities; in his invective against such abbés Bourdaloue described them as

Mondains dans leurs habitudes et leurs sociétés, voulant être de toutes les assemblées, de tous les jeux, de tous les plaisirs, de tous les spectacles; mondains dans leurs manières et leurs discours, affectant de se distinguer par des airs dissipés, par des paroles indécentes, par des excès de joie et des libertés dont ils se flattent qu'on leur applaudit, et dont ils se font un faux mérite; mondains jusque dans leurs vêtements, et par où! par toute la propreté, par tout l'ajustement, par tout le luxe qu'ils peuvent joindre à la sévérité évangélique. (1)

One cannot help remarking that they have much in common with the conventional marquis of contemporary comedy. Another rather serious piece of criticism was made, this time by La Bruyère who held forth on the manners of contemporary abbés :

certain abbés, à qui il ne manque rien de l'ajustement, de la mollesse et de la vanité des sexes et des conditions, qui entrent auprès des femmes en concurrence avec le marquis et le financier, et qui l'emportent sur tous les deux. (2)

All these attributes of abbés were accurately observed by several late seventeenth-century comic playwrights eager to dramatize pieces of scandal which would no doubt be delectable tit-bits for the palate of the public.

(1) 'Sur la Dignité et les Devoirs des Prêtres', Oeuvres Complètes, Versailles, 1812, 16 vols., vol. VIII, pp. 235-6.

(2) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. III, Part I, p. 170.

The following examples serve to illustrate what a reputation these abbés enjoyed before Dancourt and others added their contribution. As stage figures, their chief attributes were considered to be a high degree of social polish, excessive vanity about their appearance and a weakness for the fair sex. In Delosme de Monchenay's La Cause des Femmes (1687), abbés come under fire on account of their foppish manners, as is illustrated in the following satirical lines :

A se mordre de temps en temps
Par maniere de passe-temps
Une lèvre qu'il tâche à rendre plus vermeille,
Affectant de rire de tout
Pour montrer qu'il a les dents belles...
Voilà de legers traits de la delicatesse
Où nos petits collets sont presque tous tombez.
Avouons donc que la mollesse
Est l'appanage des Abbez. (1)

Fatouville, in Le Banqueroutier (1687), indulged in some satire at the expense of a 'certain abbé who was fond of high living ; Colombine comments :

c'est un garçon de qualité qui a dix mille écus de rente en bons Benefices,
et qui est bien aise de manger son revenu avec quelque sorte d'éclat. Il
voit tout ce qu'il y a de jolies femmes à Paris. Il joue gros jeu, son train
est leste : il a une belle maison, des meubles magnifiques...(2)

Th. Corneille's reference to the abbés galants is no less satirical as we see from his La Comtesse d'Orgueil (1687):

certain abbés novices
Ne sont point à courir de méchants bénéfices.
Les belles trouvent là de quoi se régaler,
Bijoux, cadeaux, bombance, elles n'ont qu'à parler,
L'argent ne coûte rien. (Act II, sc. iii.)

The 'abbé bel esprit' was satirized in La Thuillerie's Crispin Bel Esprit where Valère's disguise as an abbé gives rise to the remark that he is indistinguishable from

...ces Originaux dont la Ville est remplie;
...ces gens qui souvent ne sachant A ni B
Passent pour beaux esprits avec le nom d'Abbé. (sc. i.)

Dancourt's first attempt at satirizing abbés was a very timid one indeed: not more than one or two brief remarks in La Maison de Campagne about 'ce gros Abbé

(1) Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Paris, 1695, p. 260.

(2) op. cit., p. 33.

qui est si longtemps à table, et qui boit tant sans s'enivrer' and who 'avoit l'air d'un bon vivant' (sc. v.). It was not until two years later, in L'Eté des Coquettes (1690) that Dancourt ventured as far as to put an abbé on the stage - the first time that one had appeared in the French theatre, apart from the bogus abbé in Crispin Bel Esprit (the abbé is only referred to in previous plays given at the French or Italian theatres). In L'Eté des Coquettes Dancourt uses some discretion in his presentation of the abbé Cheurepied who, in the words of the maid, Lisette, 'n'est pas comme un autre, il n'a point de Bénéfices', but her ensuing remarks, ostensibly intended to excuse the abbé's behaviour, are far from providing a flattering portrait of him : 'il n'a pris le petit colet que pour ne point marcher à l'Arrière-ban'.(sc.ix.) Both Lisette and the coquette, Cidalise, point out the flirtatious tendencies and excessive vanity which characterized many such abbés :

LISETTE

Avant qu'il ait consulté son petit miroir de poche, mordu ses lèvres, arrangé les boucles de sa perruque, et pris l'avis de tous ses laquais sur sa parure, il en a pour un quart-d'heure sur l'escalier.

CIDALISE

La plupart des jeunes Abbés sont foux de leur ajustement.

LISETTE

Jeune, Madame? Celui-ci a cinquante bonnes années. (sc. ix.)

Comic effect is achieved by Lisette's list of the mannerisms which she attributes to the abbé who, as it unexpectedly turns out, is a rather over-grown dandy. He is, however, for all his pains, only barely tolerated in the coquettes' fashionable circle, and is regarded on a similar footing to robins and financiers in that he would be sent packing as soon as the officers return from active service. The image of the cowardly abbé who frequents feminine society occurs in Delosme de Monchenay's Le Phénix (1691) in a scene where Arlequin speaks his mind :

O vous, jeunes Abbez, pâtris d'ambre, de musc,
 Qui n'êtes exposez jamais, qu'aux coups de busc;
 Pendant que nous allons exposer nos cervelles,
 Oh, combien irez vous fourager chez nos belles?
 Pour vous, gros Douaniers, et vous gens de Palais,
 Vous n'avez que l'été pour faire les muguets.

Les Plumets de retour, serviteur aux ruëllés.
 Mais malgré nos grands crocs, et nos airs de dragons,
 Les Abbez sont, morbleu, de toutes les saisons. (1)

Although no abbé appears on the stage, Arlequin's reference to the behaviour of this social type fairly well sums up Dancourt's treatment of the abbé in L'Eté des Coquettes.

The anonymous Aventures des Champs Elisées (1693) dramatizes the unedifying manners of an abbé 'fils de famille' who, like Cheurepied, was too cowardly to join the Army, as we see from his own words :

Mon foible, je l'avoué, étoit pour une vie longue, douce, et tranquille. Celle des gens de guerre me paroissoit la plus belle et la plus brillante à la vérité; mais je la trouvois rude et fatigante, et quelquefois même un peu trop courte. Il me fallôit cependant un prétexte, étant né Gentilhomme. Je n'osois paroître à Paris, tandis que tous mes pareils étoient à l'Armée. Pour y rester avec quelque sorte de bien-séance, il n'y avoit de party à prendre que la Robe ou le petit collet. De me faire Conseiller, je n'avois point d'étude. Je me fis donc Abbé.

The Chevalier adds the significant remark : 'Tu n'étois pas le seul qui à l'ombre d'un collet passoit dans le monde sous le titre specieux d'Abbé'. (2)

The abbé in J.B. Rousseau's Le Caffé (1694) conforms to the well-established conventional image of the fashionable philanderer, but unlike Dancourt, the author does not make any preliminary attempt to excuse his conduct.

Dancourt's only other sketch of an abbé is in La Foire de Besons (1695) where he is represented in much the same light as Rousseau's. 'Il faut avouer', comments one of the joyous band at the fair, 'que ces Messieurs les Abbés sont d'une grande ressource pour les Dames' (sc. viii).

Dancourt held up to ridicule another social type representing the aristocracy, the provincial nobleman, much in the same way as his predecessors had done, stressing the pride of these hobereaux in their ancestry and showing it in contrast with their impoverished state. He briefly touched on this theme in La Maison de Campagne (1688) with his sketch of three anonymous hobereaux who conduct themselves in an insolent fashion on being required by their host, Bernard, to pay for board and lodging. Referring to Bernard's country house, one of them remarks :

(1) Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, p. 301.

(2) ibid., p. 527.

'Le Fief est bien noble (...) Cette maison-ci devroit être à moi; et c'est feu mon grand pere qui l'avoit vendue au pere de celui qui l'a vendue à Monsieur votre pere' (sc. xxix.). In this way the hobereau was recalling the not so far-off days when his forebears used to be in possession of the domain, and was looking askance at members of the noblesse de robe who, like Bernard, were taking over landed property which had formerly belonged to the original aristocracy.

The provincial aristocrat, Bracassak, in Le Prix de l'Arquebuse, described as a 'Gentilhomme de la Garonne', is typical of those members of the noblesse d'épée who sought to turn their relationships with wealthy bourgeois to their own financial advantage. His philosophy of life is summed up in the words :

De l'argent, morbleu, de l'argent, c'est la véritable grandeur, l'appui de la vertu, le nerf de la valeur, le soutien des Etats et des familles, et la source abondante de tous les bonheurs de la vie. (sc. xiv.)

He is anxious to bring about the marriage of his sister with a nouveau riche who has risen in society as a result of his promotion from sergent to prévôt of the town of Meaux. It is clear, however, that the marriage is no more than a financial arrangement, as Bracassak considers it an affront to his dignity that the prévôt should aspire to the hand of an aristocrat :

il n'aura pas impunément conté sornettes à ma soeur, et dans la famille des Bracassaks, où nous faisons ordinairement bouquer la Noblesse, il ne sera pas dit que nous nous laissions insolenter par la Roture. (sc. xiv.)

The match would not be considered a feasible proposition if the Bracassak family were not reduced through poverty to taking what they considered a dishonourable course. Dancourt illustrates the pride which aristocrats had in their family name and their disdain for less privileged members of the community :

BRACASSAK

Hé bien, ma soeur! reconnoissez-vous votre sang? Et dans quelques lieux du monde qu'ils se rencontrent, les Bracassaks font-ils deshonneur à leur famille?

Mlle BRACASSAK

Je fais gloire de vous appartenir, mon frere, et c'est sans doute un avantage où chacun devroit aspirer.

BRACASSAK

Je me communique volontiers, je fais faveur à qui le mérite; et nous avons toujours eu des descendants de pere en fils, tant mâles que femelles, du cœur,

de la valeur, de l'esprit, et de l'honneur à donner libéralement à nos amis. (sc. xxi.)

Bracassak could afford to be generous only in bestowing these admirable qualities on his associates, but he is quite unable to help them in any more substantial way.

One of the most important facets of Dancourt's treatment of the aristocracy is the emphasis he places on the relationship between the noblesse de robe who were contending for recognition as aristocrats and the noblesse d'épée who resented the intrusion of these bourgeois families into their exclusive circle. The hostile attitude of members of the original aristocracy towards ennobled gens de robe is dramatized in La Femme d'Intrigues. Here, the principal character, Mme Thibaut, an intrigante who claims to be a 'veuve de qualité', interviews a young aristocrat, Eraste, formerly an army officer who, finding himself greatly in debt, had pawned his clothes and disguised himself as a conseiller. Although this post was, in itself, worthy of esteem as entitling the holder to the status of the 'grande robe', Mme Thibaut refuses to recognize it as anything but a bourgeois occupation. She thus rebukes the young man for not keeping up appearances : 'Vous vous sentez déjà des mauvaises impressions de l'habit bourgeois. Vous devenez ménager'. (Act III, sc. v.), and expresses quite openly her dislike for the noblesse de robe :

ERASTE

l'Habit bourgeois me portoit malheur, Madame Thibaut; je ne l'ai porté que vingt-quatre heures, il a pensé m'en coûter cher, je me suis remis dans mon centre.

MME THIBAUT

Vous avez fort bien fait, le plumet vaut mille fois mieux que la robe. (Act V., sc. iv.)

Her preference for the 'plumet' was an indication of the prestige attached to high positions in the army, which were normally reserved for the noblesse d'épée.

In another scene of this play Angélique, dressed as a young nobleman without means in search of a comfortable existence, acts in a manner typical of members of the original aristocracy, regarding military service as the only suitable career and holding in contempt a career in the legal profession. Addressing M^{me} Thibaut whose help she pretends to solicit in this affair, she remarks :

...Vous voiez un jeune homme tout frais sorti de l'Académie, qui cherche à entrer dans le monde; mais qui aimeroit mieux n'y mettre jamais le pied, que de n'y pas entrer par une belle porte.

MME THIBAUT

Il y en a plusieurs: il ne s'agit là-dessus que de consulter votre inclination. Voulez-vous être de robe ou d'épée?

ANGÉLIQUE

De robe! Regardez-moi bien, ai-je l'air d'un écolier en Droit? D'épée, morbleu, d'épée, s'il en fut jamais; on a toujours porté les armes dans ma famille(..) Lorsqu'on est né l'épée au côté, je crois que par tout ailleurs un homme de mon âge fait une sotte figure. (Act II, sc. vi.)

An illustration of what was known as the 'morgue de la robe' is seen in Le Retour des Officiers where the parvenu conseiller au parlement, Des Baliveaux, anxious to impress people with his newly-acquired position of importance in society, has taken into his service a lackey, Maturin, to carry his train, as a symbol of his prestige. His accompanying remark betrays his contempt for the members of the 'moyenne robe', not to mention those lawyers whose status was considered to be below that of the avocat :

allons donc, Maturin, ne quittez point ma queue, de peur qu'on ne me prenne que pour un Avocat. Je suis Conseiller, entendez-vous? (sc. x.)

It is clear from this brief glimpse of the conseiller that he is parading his ego along with his robes. True to his character he continues to act ostentatiously in the presence of the maid, Toinette, who, however, recognizes him as a former abbé:

DES BALIVEAUX

Il faut avouer que j'ai bonne mine comme ça, c'est une belle chose qu'une Charge de Robe.

TOINETTE

Que vois-je? Monsieur l'Abbé des Baliveaux en Robe longue? Vous seriez-vous fait Procureur ou Commissaire, Monsieur?

DES BALIVEAUX, regardant derrière lui.

Procureur ou Commissaire! Maturin?

MATURIN

Je ne lâcherai rien, Monsieur, ne vous boutez pas en peine.

DES BALIVEAUX

Je suis Conseiller, ne voyez-vous pas bien?

TOINETTE

Ah! je vous demande pardon je n'y prenois pas garde. (sc. xi.)

The irony of the situation is that the conseiller's purpose of eliciting admiration was defeated first by the maid who did not appreciate the significance of his robes, and secondly by the lackey who remained unimpressed by his master's recent reminder of the importance of a conseiller, and who was blindly carrying out his orders to hold his train. Toinette persuades the conseiller to exchange his post with Clitandre, but he is unable to live up to his new role of officer. As we see from his behaviour in a later scene when he asks a certain Mme Thomas for her niece's hand, he greets the company with a clumsy form of address and awkwardly lavishes obsequious compliments on them. His poor attempts to ape the polished manners of an aristocrat only serve to emphasize his gaucherie :

DES BALIVEAUX, en Officier.

Votre très-humble valet, Mesdames. Vous voyez un nouvel Officier qui avoit bien de l'impatience d'avoir l'honneur de posséder l'avantage de vous faire ses très-humbles révérences.

* * *

ERASTE

Je n'ai jamais vu de Général qui eût cet air-là.

DES BALIVEAUX

Serviteur très-humble, Monsieur, très-humble serviteur. (sc. xvi.)

There is no reference, however, to the professional side of his life, and if it were not for his title and robes there would be hardly anything to distinguish him from the bourgeois parvenu of Dancourt's plays.

In contrast to this pretentious upstart is the staid figure of Monsieur Bernard described in La Maison de Campagne as a 'gentilhomme de Robe' (sc. i.) There is no indication in the play as to exactly what charge he exercised, but we see in Dancourt's portrait of him the comic side of the 'gravité de la robe'.

This is brought out mainly by the contrast between his sober outlook on life - he prizes such qualities as quiet contentment with his status, a certain amount of reserve in his relations with others as befitting his dignity, and caution in his expenditure, - and that of his wife who, in her desire to be recognized on an equal footing with the higher nobility, is prepared to buy the esteem and friendship of aristocrats whom she has invited to her country residence just outside Paris. Her ambitions are a constant source of grievance for Bernard who, apart from not being of such a gregarious nature as his wife, complains bitterly of the expense of entertaining an unending stream of rowdy guests who are used to high living. As he says ruefully : 'depuis que ma pendarde de femme m'a fait acheter cette maudite maison de campagne, j'y ai dépensé en moins d'un Été mon revenu de quatre années.' (sc. iv.) To add insult to injury, Bernard finds that his position as head of the household is threatened by the arrival of the company, among whom are a Gascon marquis and a baron who make themselves completely at home at his expense and without his authority. In spite of Bernard's repeated attempts to make things as unpleasant as possible for the guests, he is overwhelmed by their boisterous good humour and refusal to take offence at his cool reception. Much comic material is drawn from the fact that Bernard, overruled by his wife and her associates, is, up to a certain point, unwilling to be openly rude to his unwelcome guests. What emerges from this comic dramatization of the relationship between the two types of nobility is the exploitation by genuine aristocrats of the social ambitions of a member of the noblesse de robe.

Only very exceptionally does Dancourt give us a glimpse of the professional conduct of gens de robe. In Le Chevalier à la Mode, for example, he satirized

the practice of soliciting judges, which was fairly common ^{under} in the Ancien Régime and was condemned ^{by} ~~with~~ those concerned with social justice. Bourdaloue, for instance, stated that 'On ne s'étonne plus de voir les juges gouvernés par celui-ci, ou gagnés par celle-là' (1), and deplored the effects of such actions :

Combien de familles ruinées parce que le bon droit, attaqué par une partie redoutable, n'a point trouvé de protection! combien de procès mal fondés, néanmoins hautement gagnés, parce que les sollicitations, la cabale et les brigues ont prévalu! (2)

And La Bruyère condemned this abuse of professional power :

Le magistrat coquet ou galant est pire dans les conséquences que le dissolu: celui-ci cache son commerce et ses liaisons, et l'on ne sait souvent par où aller jusqu'à lui; celui-là est ouvert par mille foibles qui sont connus, et l'on y arrive par toutes les femmes à qui il veut plaire. (3)

He went on to add another sally against the 'magistrat galant' :

Combien d'hommes qui sont forts contre les foibles, fermes et inflexibles aux sollicitations du simple peuple, sans nuls égards pour les petits, rigides et sévères dans les minuties, qui refusent les petits présents, qui n'écoutent ni leurs parents ni leurs amis, et que les femmes seules peuvent corrompre! (4)

This is the sort of misbehaviour which Dancourt was satirizing in Le Chevalier à la Mode when Mme Patin resorts to requesting the conseiller, Migaud, to use his position of influence to promote the interests of a certain baronne in a law suit. As we see from her words, the inducement she offers for this favour is more in kind than species :

MIGAUD

Il y a dans sa cause plus de chimere que de raison; et en vérité, il y a peu d'honneur à se mêler...

MME PATIN

Comment, Monsieur, vous ne lui ferez pas gagner son Procès?

MIGAUD

Moi, Madame? cela ne dépend pas de moi seulement, et la Justice...

MME PATIN

La Justice! la Justice! Vraiment si la Justice étoit pour elle, on auroit bien affaire de vous solliciter(.). Je ne prétends pas qu'on dise dans le monde qu'une

(1) Oeuvres Complètes, vol. III, p. 170.

(2) ibid., vol. I, p. 267.

(3) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. III, Part I, p. 186.

(4) ibid., p. 190.

recommandation comme la mienne n'a servi de rien; et je ne suis pas assez laide, ce me semble, pour avoir la réputation de n'avoir pu mettre un Juge dans les intérêts des personnes que je protège...

MIGAUD

En vérité, Madame, je ne vois pas la raison qui vous oblige à vouloir que je m'intéresse dans une cause où il m'y a que de la honte à recevoir.

MME PATIN

En vérité, Monsieur, je ne vois pas la raison qui vous oblige, lorsque je vous en prie, de vouloir refuser de donner un bon tour à une méchante affaire. Eh fi, Monsieur, il me semble que vous ayez encore la pudeur d'un jeune Conseiller. (Act I, sc. iv.)

This portrait of a senior member of the legal profession whose conduct was beyond reproach was an exceptional one in contemporary comedy. The scene brings out the apparent ease with which a law suit could be won irrespective of any principles of justice.

In La Fête de Village Dancourt takes the opportunity of satirizing the incompetence of the noblesse de robe in the provinces where a perfunctory form of justice was often carried out by an illiterate and absentee judge; the parvenue, Mme Carmin, has bought a post in the judiciary for her husband, that of président :

MME CARMIN

Ce n'est qu'une Charge de campagne, à la vérité, et dans une Election d'une très petite Ville du côté d'Estampes: mais il y a de grandes agréments, de grandes prérogatives (...) On est maître absolu dans le pays, premièrement: il n'y a, je crois, dans toute la Jurisdiction, ni Procureurs, ni Avocats, ni Conseillers même, et Monsieur le Président peut se vanter qu'il est lui seul toute la Justice; cela est fort beau. (Act II, sc. iv.)

The post of provincial président, however, while entitling its holder to belong to the 'grande robe', did not carry with it the prestige attached to that of a Président du Parlement, which was the highest post in the judiciary. There is thus a certain amount of pretentiousness in Mme Carmin's boast. In the ensuing conversation the two bourgeoises, Mme Blandineau and l'Elue, and the maid, Lisette, comment sarcastically on the incompetence and dishonesty of such judges :

MME BLANDINEAU

Oui, cela sera fort beau de voir Monsieur Carmin juger tout seul, lui qui ne sait ni latin, ni Pratique, ni lire, ni écrire, peut-être.

MME CARMIN

Oh, je vous demande pardon, Madame Blandineau, il signera son nom fort librement, et avec un paraphe, encore, à cause de sa Charge.

L'ELUE

Mais ce n'est pas assez de savoir signer, il faut juger auparavant.

MME CARMIN

Belle bagatelle! Il y a dans la Ville un Tabellion qui règle tout, moyennant trente ou quarante francs par année; et puis quand on a bon sens, bon esprit, on n'a qu'à juger à la rencontre, c'en est assez pour des gens de Province.

LISETTE

Assurément, et les Juges les plus habiles ne sont pas toujours les plus équitables.

It is clear from this study of the 'aristocratic' content of Dancourt's plays that the upper classes of society occupy an important place in his total dramatic output. In his plays largely devoted to a portrayal of aristocratic manners and in his numerous sketches of aristocratic characters, Dancourt can be said to have accorded more attention to this section of society than any of his contemporaries in the field of comedy, including Michel Baron.

It is difficult to compare Dancourt's treatment of the aristocracy with that of writers of other forms of literature; he is not concerned with the portrayal of catastrophic events in the lives of dignified and noble persons, as writers of tragedy were, or with an indignant denunciation of social vices as is found in the works of moralists. Whereas the purpose of tragedy is to inspire pity and terror, that of moralists to edify their readers, Dancourt's intention was to hold up to society not so much a mirror which would faithfully reflect the contemporary scene, but one which slightly distorted the picture to fit in with his audiences' tastes. This is not to say that in so doing he departs from the social realities of the time; his approach to the aristocracy

is realistic in the sense that the manners he portrays are recognizable as being characteristic of that social class, but incomplete in the sense that no playwright could possibly hope to give a comprehensive account of contemporary society in all its complexities. Then there is the dimension of comic interpretation which is the basis of his compositions. He presents the titled classes - chevaliers, petits-mâîtres, comtes, comtesses, barons, abbés, hobereaux and even a king and princes - in a comic light, pointing out the absurdity of their attitudes towards the rest of society. But amid all this satire he had to take care not to overstep the limits of bienséance, though he was coming dangerously near the brink in Les Fées, and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, he was definitely over the edge in Le Carnaval de Venise. His presentation of the nobility highlights the main characteristics of polite society from a comic playwright's point of view, and contributes, in its own peculiar way, together with the works of his contemporaries, to an understanding of this elite section of society.

VII. SATIRE OF THE BOURGEOISIE

Satire of bourgeois parvenus, recurring at every stage in Dancourt's dramatic career, can be regarded as the leit-motif of his comedies. In presenting these characters on the stage, the author was careful to place particular emphasis on certain traits which were regarded as characteristic of the bourgeoisie of the time: the obsequious admiration of nouveaux riches for members of the class to which they aspired, their contempt for members of the class from which they themselves came, their propensity for ostentation, their gullibility and lack of social graces. In order to dramatize these features with effect, Dancourt generally resorted to a technique reminiscent of that used in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme : he chose as foils for his protagonist (who, however, was usually a bourgeoise) both a member of the family who disdains social pretensions and a maid whose ironic quips, rooted in common sense, serve to bring out the absurdity of the protagonist. Interwoven in this fabric of the bourgeoisie are some familiar motifs : figures such as the financier and the procureur who stand out in relief on account of the emphasis placed on their personal habits, but who do not differ essentially from the image of the parvenu. Another important feature which Dancourt emphasized was the growing importance of money in the society of the time as a visual token of social prestige. The assumed superiority of many bourgeois was based on purely financial grounds; they considered themselves, by reason of their newly-acquired wealth, on an equal footing with people of noble birth and were indignant at any suggestion to the contrary. Not content with the luxurious existence which their income afforded them, some of these wealthy bourgeois, offended at the idea of being an inferior class, were avid for social distinction. These attitudes lent themselves to comic interpretation, and Dancourt took advantage of this ready-made situation to draw material for his plays.

The best-known example among Dancourt's works of satire of the bourgeoisie is undoubtedly Le Chevalier à la Mode in which the author portrays the character of a parvenue, Mme Patin, the widow of a partisan who had dishonestly acquired 'deux millions de bien au service du Roy', an amount of wealth of almost fabulous proportions. Mme Patin's philosophy of life is based on the idea of impressing people with her opulence. Her obsession takes the form of attracting public attention not only by her mode of dress, her impressive carriage and imposing number of liveried servants, but more particularly by the fact that all her possessions are new. This female equivalent of M. Jourdain is portrayed in stark contrast to a certain Marquise of an aristocratic but impoverished family who, however, does not appear on the stage. Mme Patin relates to her maid, Lisette, a humiliating incident which had befallen her in the street when, during a chance encounter with the Marquise, her brand new carriage was forced to make way for the latter's dilapidated vehicle. Lisette's incredulous remarks serve to heighten the effect of the scene :

Voilà une Marquise bien impertinente. Quoi? votre personne qui est tout de clinquant, votre grand carrosse doré, qui roule pour la première fois, deux gros chevaux gris-pommelés à longues queues, un Cocher à barbe retroussée, six grands laquais, plus chamarrés de galons que les Estafiers d'un Carousel, tout cela n'a point imprimé de respect à votre Marquise? (Act I, sc. i.)

The confrontation between the two representatives of opposing classes forms an effective piece of exposition which vividly illuminates the animosity that existed between the aristocracy and the nouveaux riches; in the words of Mme Patin :

c'est du fond d'un vieux carrosse, traîné par deux chevaux étiques, que cette gueuse de Marquise m'a fait insulter par des Laquais tous déguenillés (...) Je l'ai pris sur un ton proportionné à mon équipage; mais elle, avec un 'taisez-vous Bourgeoise', m'a pensé faire tomber de mon haut. (Act I, sc. i.)

The importance of a carriage as a symbol of prestige is seen in Act I scene iii of Boursault's Comédie sans Titre (1683) in which a bourgeoisie, Mme Guillemot, is too ashamed to admit that she came to the editor's office on foot and pretends that she had a carriage. This theme is given more emphasis in Le Feint Polonois (1686) by Hauteroche, when one of the characters states : 'pour avoir un carosse il faut de la qualité ou quelque Charge qui vous oblige à faire cette dépense, sans quoi l'on attire avec justice l'indignation et le mépris de tout le monde'. (Act III, sc. v.)

In Dancourt's play the outraged bourgeoisie considers it an 'injure assommante' to be ranked among members of the bourgeoisie, as she identifies herself, by reason of her wealth, with the aristocracy. Mme Patin's illusion about her position in society is based on her refusal to recognize the difference between the advantages of newly-acquired riches and the privilege of birth to which great weight was attached at the time. Unfortunately for many the two did not always go together, which gave rise to much discontent. The impenitent bourgeoisie is determined to remedy the situation by acquiring a title of nobility :

J'y suis bien résolue, et j'enrage contre ma destinée de ^{ne} m'avoir pas fait tout d'abord une femme de qualité (...) J'aimerois mieux être la Marquise la plus endettée de toute la Cour, que de demeurer veuve du plus riche Financier de France (...) il faut que je devienne Marquise quoi qu'il en coûte. (Act I, sc. iii.)

La Bruyère criticised the contemporary parvenue in Les Caractères :

Cette fatuité de quelques femmes de la ville, qui cause en elles une mauvaise imitation de celles de la Cour, est quelque chose de pire que la grossièreté des femmes du peuple, et que la rusticité des villageoises : elle a sur toutes deux l'affectation de plus. (1)

This quotation could be applied to Dancourt's parvenue whose basic lack of social graces coupled with her infatuation with the title of a marquise, lead her to make a sorry attempt to ape the manners of the aristocracy. Her desire to 'rompre avec ces petites gens dont je me suis encanaillée' (Act I, sc. iii.), as she puts it, referring to her own family, is a source of domestic wranglings. The first step in the direction of social elevation is to break off her engagement to Migaud, a conseiller, on the grounds that the prospective marriage would not provide her with an impressive aristocratic name :

MME PATIN

C'est un beau nom que celui de Madame Migaud! J'aimerois autant demeurer Madame Patin.

LISETTE

Oh, il y a bien de la différence. Le nom de Migaud est un nom de Robe et celui de Patin n'est qu'un nom de Financier.

MME PATIN

Robe ou Finance, tout m'est égal: et depuis huit jours, je me suis résolue d'avoir un nom de Cour, et de ceux qui emplissent le plus la bouche. (Act I, sc. iii.)

(1) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, vol. II, p. 204.

The mania for changing one's name so as to be regarded in society as members of the genuine aristocracy was commented on by La Bruyère :

Plusieurs suppriment leurs noms, qu'ils pourroient conserver sans honte, pour en adopter de plus beaux, où ils n'ont qu'à perdre par la comparaison que l'on fait toujours d'eux qui les portent, avec les grands hommes qui les ont portés. (1)

The person whom Mme Patin intends to marry is a penniless chevalier notorious for his misbehaviour and foppish manners, but her rejection of the worthy conseiller, Migaud, only earns for her the reprimands of her brother-in-law, Serrefort, a thrifty bourgeois not given to lavish display, as his name suggests, who criticizes her absurd pretensions :

vous devez vous défaire de toutes vos manieres et de vos airs de grandeur...(de ce somptueux équipage qui fait demander qui vous êtes, ces chevaux fringans qui éclaboussent les gens de pied, et tout cet attirail enfin, qui vous fait ordinairement mépriser des gens de qualité, envier de vos égaux, et maudire par la canaille. Vous devriez, Madame Patin, retrancher tout ce faste qui vous environne. (Act II, sc. ii.)

This outlook is echoed in a passage on nouveaux riches in Les Caractères :

quel est l'égarement de certains particuliers qui, riches du négoce de leurs pères, dont ils viennent de recueillir la succession, se moulent sur les princes pour leur garde-robe et pour leur équipage, excitent, par une dépense excessive et par un faste ridicule, les traits et la raillerie de toute une ville, qu'ils croient éblouir, et se ruinent ainsi à se faire moquer de soi! (2)

Mme Patin disowns the members of her family, beginning with Serrefort whose outspoken remarks are particularly unwelcome :

Mon Mari étant mort, Dieu merci, M. Serrefort ne m'est plus rien. Cependant il semble à ce crasseux-là qu'il me soit de quelque chose; il se mêle de censurer ma conduite, de contrôler toutes mes actions. Son audace va jusqu'à vouloir me faire prendre de petites manieres comme celles de sa femme, et faire des comparaisons d'elle à moi. (Act I, sc. iii.)

Since her unofficial engagement with the chevalier she attempts to dissolve the bonds of relationship with her niece, Lucile, whom she instructs to address her as 'Madame', not 'ma tante' : 'C'est qu'étant Femme de qualité, et vous ne l'étant pas, je ne pourrois pas honnêtement être votre tante, sans déroger en quelque façon'. (Act II, sc. iv.) The word 'déroger' in the mouth of a bourgeoise is comically incongruous and illustrates the fact that Mme Patin already identifies herself with the aristocracy.

(1) ibid., vol. III, Part I, p. 167.

(2) ibid., vol. II, p. 195.

Not to be outdone by her aunt's claim to be a chevalier's intended bride, Lucile boasts that she, too, has been fortunate enough to attract the attention of a young nobleman in the Tuileries. Lucile regards her chevalier as the epitome of all human qualities and, in her eyes, he is strikingly handsome, extravagantly rich and the quintessence of noble birth : 'On l'appelle Monsieur le Marquis des Guérets. Il est fort riche, et fort de qualité, car il me l'a dit'. (Act II, sc. iv.) In her complete naivety, Lucile is unaware that her suitor is not only a penniless chevalier, but the same one, under a different name, who is courting her aunt. She is so confident in his integrity that she is willing to forego the prospects of an inheritance from her aunt to marry the self-styled marquis : 'en me mariant aussi à un homme de Cour, qui est un fort gros Seigneur, je n'ai que faire du bien de ma Tante'. (Act III, sc. ix.)

When Serrefort realizes the incorrigible nature of his sister-in-law's ambitions, he comments on the shame and disorder which she has brought on the family : 'C'est une peste dans une Famille Bourgeoise qu'une Madame Patin'. (Act V. sc. i.) This remark illustrates another side of the bourgeois mentality; Serrefort represents those who, proud of their bourgeois origins, were anxious to uphold and defend the interests and conventions of their social class.

In La Fête de Village (later re-named Les Bourgeoises de Qualité), as in many of his comedies, Dancourt adopts the technique of presenting two opposing aspects of bourgeois life represented by characters with conflicting ideas. On the one hand, there is the thoroughly bourgeois Blandineau, by profession a Procureur au Châtelet, who advocates a simple and wholesome way of life based on conventional bourgeois standards, and who is characterized by his aversion to frivolous recreations or unnecessary expense, and above all, by his desire to keep up an appearance of respectability; and on the other hand, offset against this comparatively austere philosophy, are the extravagant notions of his wife whose ambitions to imitate the manners of the nobility cause him much embarrassment. Another

character is introduced to help bring out these differences : Naquart, a Procureur à la Cour, a man of carefree and jovial temperament, with a capacity for adapting himself to the vicissitudes of life, who criticizes Blandineau's preoccupation with his wife's lack of principles on the grounds that 'quand on gagne du bien il faut en jouir'. Like many contemporary bourgeois, Naquart wishes to cast aside the image of respectability and sobriety which was associated with his class and join in the general spirit of conspicuously high living which characterized nouveaux riches :

NAQUART

Autrefois, Monsieur Blandineau, on se gouvernoit comme autrefois. Vivons à présent comme dans le tems présent; et puisque c'est le bien qui fait vivre, pourquoi ne pas vivre selon son bien? Ne voudriez-vous point supprimer les mouchoirs, parcequ'autrefois on se mouchoit sur la manche?

BLANDINEAU

Pourquoi non? Je suis ennemi des superfluités, je me contente du nécessaire, et je ne sache rien au monde de si beau, que la simplicité du tems passé.

NAQUART

Oui, mais si comme au tems passé on vous donnoit trois sols parisis, ou deux carolus pour des écritures que vous faites aujourd'hui payer trois ou quatre pistoles, cette simplicité-là vous paieroit-elle, Monsieur Blandineau?

BLANDINEAU

Oh, pour cela non, je vous l'avoue. Ce ne sont pas nos droits que je veux simples, ce sont nos dépenses. (Act I, sc. ii.)

The Blandineau couple find themselves at variance over differences in outlook; the procureur, an insipid character, voices strong objections to his wife's predilection for a gay life which he grudgingly finances. Mme Blandineau, anxious to hobnob with members of polite society, has invited guests to her husband's country residence for an evening's entertainment consisting of gambling, dancing and a concert. In an argument with her exasperated husband who has no wish to participate in the entertainments or even to associate with the company, she explains her intentions :

Pourquoi jouer, Monsieur? pourquoi jouer? je vous trouve admirable. Que voulez-vous donc qu'on fasse de mieux, et à la campagne sur tout? j'ai la complaisance de venir avec vous dans une chaumière bourgeoise avec votre ennuyeuse famille; il se trouve par hasard dans le Village des femmes d'esprit, des personnes du monde, de jeunes gens polis; il se forme une agréable société de plaisir et de

bonne chere; c'est le jeu qui est l'âme de toutes ces parties...
* * *

BLANDINEAU

...Quelle extravagance de rassembler huit ou dix femmes plus ridicules l'une que l'autre qui ne sont assurément pas de vos amies, pour leur donner à souper? leur faire manger votre bien?

MME BLANDINEAU

que vous avez l'âme crasse, Monsieur Blandineau! que vous avez l'âme crasse, et que vous savez peu vos faire valoir! J'aime à paroître, moi, c'est-là ma folie. (Act I, sc. v.)

In this scene Mme Blandineau adopts a contemptuous attitude towards life in the 'provinces', a view held by the narrow circle of aristocratic society in Paris who set standards of good taste.

The chief character in the play is La Greffière, Mme Blandineau's sister, who aspires to marry a count who, however, is in love with her niece, Angélique. Blandineau, naturally, disapproves of her social ambitions, and when she insists on being treated with the respect due to a countess, he loses his patience :

BLANDINEAU

Comment donc; Hé, qui êtes-vous, s'il vous plaît? fille d'un Huissier qui étoit le pere de ma femme, ma belle-soeur à moi, qui ne suis que Procureur au Châtelet, veuve d'un Greffier à la Peau... (1) Je vous trouve admirable, Madame la Greffière.

LA GREFFIERE

Greffiere, Monsieur? Supprimez ce nom-là, je vous prie. Feu mon mari est mort, la Charge est vendue, je n'ai plus de titre, plus de qualité, je suis une pierre d'attente et destinée sans vanité à des distinctions qui ne vous permettront pas avec moi tant de familiarité que vous vous en donnez quelquefois. (Act I, sc. iii.)

Her intended marriage with a count is, however, only the first step in the direction of social advancement :

Je débute par là, c'est assez pour un commencement: mais cela augmentera dans la suite; et de mari en mari, de douaire en douaire, je ferai mon chemin, je vous en réponds, et le plus brusquement qu'il me sera possible. (Act I, sc.iii.)

She has visions of herself possessing a carriage and a number of lackeys, and, quite unconscious of the impression she is making on her brother-in-law, acts an imaginary part which recalls a scene from Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme :

Hola, ho, laquais, petit laquais, grand laquais, moyen laquais, qu'on prenne ma queue. Avancez, Cocher, Montez, Madame. Après vous, Madame: Hé non, Madame, c'est mon carrosse. Donnez-moi la main, Chevalier, mettez-vous là, Comtin, touchez, Cocher, La jolie chose qu'un équipage! (Act I, sc. iii.)

(1) cf. M. Marion, Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Paris, 1923, p. 268, who states that a greffier à la peau was one of the several types of legal functionaries in charge of documents, 'qui transcrivait les jugements sur parchemin.'

Her desire to wear a train as a symbol of social distinction is echoed by Mme Blandineau who adds the significant remark : 'Puisque j'ai eu la complaisance de prendre une queue toute unie, je me la ferai porter...pour ne pas figurer avec la populace. (Act I, sc. vi.)

Comic material is drawn from the rivalry of four bourgeoises, Blandineau's wife, La Greffière, L'Elue and a certain Mme Carmin, described as a 'marchande de laine de la rue des Lombards' (Act II, sc. iii.), each of whom is determined to emulate the other in the quest for social elevation. La Greffière is the first of the group to set in motion this spirit of rivalry with her claim to become a countess. A scene involving three of the pretentious bourgeoises, each jealous of La Greffière's claim to have already attained the envied status of an aristocrat, illustrates both the pettiness of their quarrel and the great importance which was attached to such considerations as noble rank :

LA GREFFIERE

Ma soeur, me voilà comtesse, et graces au ciel nous ne figurerons plus ensemble.

MME BLANDINEAU

Comtesse, vous? Vous, Comtesse, ma soeur?

LA GREFFIERE

Dites Madame, Madame Blandineau, et Madame tout court, entendez-vous?

MME BLANDINEAU

Madame tout court! Ah! je n'en puis plus. Ma soeur Comtesse, et moi Procureuse!

* * *

L'ELUE

Vous seriez Comtesse, vous, ma cousine, la Greffiere?

LA GREFFIERE

Ah! plus de cousinage, Madame l'Elue, plus de cousinage(...) elles m'empêcheront de m'élever, de faire fortune: Ces Bourgillones-là sont si ridicules...

* * *

L'ELUE

Ah! Ciel! Bourgillone, moi qui suis, par la grace de Dieu, fille, soeur, et nièce de Notaire, et femme d'un Elû...

MME BLANDINEAU

Et moi, ma cousine, qui ai eu plus de treize mille francs en mariage, tant en argent comptant, qu'en nippes et bijoux. (Act II, sc. iii.)

The author is careful to bring out the incongruity of La Greffière's claim to be a genuine aristocrat by making her bourgeois relations insist on her kinship with

them. Another noteworthy feature of this scene is Mme Blandineau's indignation at being treated, in spite of her wealth, as a despised member of society.

A turning point in the play is reached with the announcement of Mme Carmin's liberation from the shackles of the bourgeoisie and the tiresome company of her friends :

MME CARMIN

...je viens prendre congé de vous, mes chers enfans (...) Je quitte le négoce, je m'y suis enrichie, cela est au-dessous de moi à l'heure qu'il est; j'achette une Charge à mon mari, je me fais Présidente. (Act II, sc. iv.)

Although it is only a question of a 'Charge de campagne' which would carry far less prestige than a similar post in the city, the immediate effect of this news is to arouse the jealousy of the two remaining bourgeoises, Mme Blandineau and L'Elue. La Greffière, who previously disdained Mme Carmin's company treats the parvenue Présidente in a friendly manner, as befitting members of the upper classes of society. Mme Blandineau has her moment of triumph when she can at last discard the humiliating title of a bourgeoise and assume that of baronne. In a conversation with her sister-in-law, La Greffière, she explains the steps which her husband has taken in order to bring about this change. The two women, now united in rank, can afford to forget past differences and share a common contempt for the unfortunate Elue who remains a bourgeoise:

MME BLANDINEAU

Ma chere soeur, que je vous embrasse, je n'ai plus de chagrin, plus de rancune contre vous. Je vous félicite de devenir Comtesse, félicitez-moi d'être Baronne.

LA GREFFIERE

Vous êtes Baronne, ma chere soeur?

MME BLANDINEAU

Oui, ma chere Comtesse, c'est une affaire faite. Monsieur Blandineau vend sa Charge, et il donne quarante mille francs de la Baronnie de Boîtortu; le marché est conclu, je ne suis plus Madame Blandineau, je suis la Baronne de Boîtortu à l'heure que je vous parle. (Act III, sc. viii.)

La Greffière, in her impatience to marry the count, is easily induced to sign blindly a contract of marriage with Naquart. She is compensated for her irretrievable mistake by the assurance that she has not lost the coveted title of comtesse, as Naquart, the count's guardian, has made an arrangement to retain his ward's title and

lands, much to her relief, but she insists on having a 'style de vie noble' :

LA GREFFIERE

...pourvu que j'aie un équipage, et que vous ne soyez plus Procureur...

NAQUART

Vous serez contente, Madame.

LA GREFFIERE

Je veux trois grands laquais des mieux faits de Paris.

NAQUART

Vous en prendrez quatre, si bon vous semble.

LA GREFFIERE

Nous logerons ensemble, Madame la Baronne.

MME BLANDINEAU

Et nous prendrons un Suisse à frais communs, Madame la Comtesse.

LA GREFFIERE

Oh, pour cela oui, très volontiers. Je le savois bien que je serois de qualité, et que je ferois figure. (Act III, sc. x.)

The bourgeois upstart in Le Moulin de Javelle, Ganivet, does not play a prominent role in the plot. He appears only at the end of the play, although his character had been discussed much earlier by the maid, Finette, and a self-styled countess who plans to marry him for his wealth : 'c'est un Bourgeois: mais il a de quoi vivre en homme de qualité'. (sc. iii.) No precise information is given as to Ganivet's social position, but we gather that he has risen in society having acquired two estates. All that remains to fulfil his ambition is to penetrate into aristocratic circles and to be accepted on an equal footing by people of noble birth. Finette comments ironically on his sudden stroke of good fortune by which he found himself, in less than three weeks, in possession of two estates : 'Vous avez été décanailé en bien peu de tems'. (sc. xxxiii.) Ganivet plans to purchase a title of nobility which will enable him to frequent the court so that he will be in a position to marry a dame de la cour whom he terms, in his ignorance, a courtisane :

je veux devenir Courtisan; j'épouserai quelque Courtisane, belle et de qualité; c'est le moyen de parvenir, n'est-ce pas? hé, tenez, ma mere me l'a toujours dit que je ferois fortune par les femmes...(elle) n'étoit pas une sotte: elle avoit fait fortune par les hommes, elle...Ah! si mon pere l'avoit laissée faire, je serois encore bien plus de qualité que je ne suis; mais c'étoit un jaloux, un

bizarre, un homme incommode.

FINETTE

Le ridicule! Ne vouloir pas que sa femme lui fît des enfants de qualité! (sc. xxxiii.)

In this scene, Dancourt presents in a comic light the absurdity of social pretensions; Ganivet associates his mother's method of fortune hunting with 'le moyen de parvenir', so that the more money which could be made in this way, the higher he could climb the social ladder. In order to create a convincing impression of being of noble extraction, Ganivet disowns his relations because of their humble origins :

Il y a encore un homme à Paris qui dit qu'il est mon oncle, parcequ'il est le frere de mon pere: mais à moins que ce ne soit pour hériter, je ne reconnois point cette famille-là(..)J'étois hier prié d'une nôce de quelque espece de cousin comme ça; mais je n'ai pas voulu aller. (sc. xxxiii.)

The gullible bourgeois is easily deceived by the valet, Lolive, into handing over a large sum of money in exchange for the imaginary post of premier Pollu à la Cour :

...voilà déjà un diamant de trois mille livres(..)Et puis un billet de quatre cens pistoles(..)En voulez-vous encore? Oh, dame, je ne suis pas un gueux, moi, afin que vous le sachiez. (sc. xxxiv.)

It is clear from Dancourt's portrait of Ganivet that he emphasizes the value which socially ambitious bourgeois placed on their wealth as a symbol of their importance in society.

In Les Bourgeoises à la Mode. Angélique, the wife of a Parisian notary, M.

Simon, expresses discontent at being a mere bourgeoise and has an overriding ambition to enjoy the permissiveness and privileges associated with the aristocracy :

N'est-ce pas une chose horrible que je ne sois que la femme d'un Notaire? (...) N'est-il pas vrai que j'étois née pour être tout au moins Marquise? (...) je n'ose médire de personne, je ne puis risquer la moindre petite querelle avec des femmes qui me déplaisent. Je suis privée du plaisir de me moquer de mille ridicules. Enfin, Lisette, quand on a de l'esprit, il est bien fâcheux, faute de rang et de naissance, de ne pouvoir le mettre dans tout son jour.

LISETTE

Hé, pourquoi vous contraindre? qui vous retient? abandonnez-vous toute à votre génie, commencez par donner à jouer, recevez grand monde; il y a mille bourgeoises des plus roturieres qui n'ont point d'autre titre pour faire les femmes de conséquence. (Act I, sc. v.)

The result of Angélique's decision to ape the aristocracy is to make drastic changes in the way of life she and her family have followed for years and to spark off

heated arguments with her disgruntled husband. Lisette explains to the valet, Frontin, that her mistress has adopted the fashion customary in high society of leading a riotous night-life :

LISETTE

Comme nous ne nous couchons que le matin, nous ne nous levons que le soir ordinairement.

FRONTIN

Et vous vous promenez toute la nuit. (Act I, sc. iii.)

The two servants discuss Angélique's character which, however, is typical of socially ambitious bourgeois who, afraid of losing prestige in the eyes of their social betters, attempt to disguise their family background. Frontin remarks that Angélique has relegated her husband to the position of an homme d'affaires :

FRONTIN

Pour faire la femme de qualité, on dit que ta Maîtresse le fait quelquefois passer pour son homme d'affaires.

LISETTE

Le grand malheur! Est-ce ici la seule maison de ta connoissance où les Maris ne sont que les premiers domestiques de leurs femmes?

FRONTIN

Il y a mille Bourgeoises dans ce goût-là. (Act I, sc. iii.)

M. Simon's authority as head of the household is undermined by his wife's ruthless ambitions; she not only wishes to transform their way of life but also to take over his right to choose a marriage partner for their daughter, Mariane. The notary is anxious that Mariane who is being courted by a chevalier should not follow her mother's way of life :

FRONTIN

Pour épouser des Filles de Bourgeois, ce n'est point aux Peres que de jeunes gens de condition s'adressent à présent...cela étoit bon autrefois; mais aujourd'hui les manieres sont bien différentes: on prend seulement l'aveu de la petite fille, on tâche d'avoir l'agrément de la Fille de chambre; et quand on ne peut plus cacher la chose, on en informe la famille.

LISETTE

Monsieur le Notaire, qui est Bourgeois depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête, ne veut pas que sa fille prenne les manieres de sa femme. (Act I, sc. iii.)

The inevitable tête à tête takes place between the Simon couple over their differences in outlook. Angélique wishes to open her house to only the most

genuine members of the aristocracy, the noblesse d'épée, whereas her husband prefers the company of their thoroughly bourgeois relatives whom he describes as 'ma nièce la Greffière qui fait des vers, ma cousine l'Avocate, son beau-frère qui est plaisant, sa sœur la Conseillère, mon oncle le Médecin, sa femme et ses enfans', and their friends of long standing, particularly Arminette, a conseiller's wife on whom he has amorous designs. This list of worthy people who have no pretensions to being 'de qualité' throws into relief the absurdity of Angélique's lofty notions; she begins with an understatement to the effect that 'Le seul plaisir que je me propose, est de jouer et de recevoir compagnie', and goes on to explain in more detail that what she really proposes to do is to convert her home into a salon :

il me faut de la musique trois jours de la semaine seulement; trois autres après dînée, on jouera quelques reprises d'ombre et de lansquenét, qui seront suivies d'un grand souper, de manière que nous n'aurons qu'un jour de reste, qui sera le jour de conversation; nous lirons des ouvrages d'esprit; nous débiterons des nouvelles, nous nous entretiendrons des modes, nous méditerons de nos amies; enfin, nous emploierons tous les momens de cette journée à des choses purement spirituelles...

This comically lengthy programme leads up to an even more preposterous suggestion which exasperates the already outraged bourgeois :

ANGELIQUE

...Et comme cette vie aisée, douce, agréable, pourroit attirer trop grand monde, pour n'être point accablé de visites importunes, il faudra que nous aïons un portier, s'il vous plaît.

SIMON

Miséricorde, un Portier chez moi! chez un Notaire, un Portier, Madame?

* * *

LISETTE

Ne l'obstinez point, Monsieur, elle prendroit un Suisse.

* * *

SIMON

Je me ferai moquer de moi; et d'ailleurs, comment soutenir tant de dépense?

* * *

LISETTE

Allez, Monsieur, qu'il vous suffise que Madame joue. Les joueuses ont des ressources inépuisables, et les femmes à qui leurs maris ne donnent point d'argent ne sont pas toujours celles qui en dépensent le moins. (Act IV, sc. vi.)

Lisette refers to the advantage of being on friendly terms with such influential and corruptible people as Simon's friend, the commissaire, who, in return for a financial reward, would turn a blind eye to the illegal practice of gambling :

'Ce n'est pas peu de chose à Paris, pour des Joueuses de profession que la faveur d'un Commissaire' (Act I, sc. v.). The maid intends to divert some of the commissaire's money for her mistress's use, justifying her action by the thought that his wealth was gained dishonestly in the first place : 'Monsieur le Commissaire nous vous pillerons, vous qui pillez les autres'. (Act III, sc. viii.)

In Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux we are introduced to the home of a Parisian bourgeoisie, Mme Simon, who welcomes with joy the rumours that her husband, a 'Sou-traitant des Aydes de Tours', had recently died; the self-styled widow, no longer hampered by the sobering influence of the apparently deceased husband, has the opportunity to indulge her ambition to marry a penniless chevalier and become the centre of fashionable social life. She intends to use her husband's fortune as a means of social elevation by entertaining members of the aristocracy in her house in conformity with their tastes and outlook. She invites guests of the noblesse d'épée: any member of society outside this exclusive circle is strictly forbidden entry. Addressing the doctor, Bertrand, Lisette explains the situation in her mistress's house in terms which emphasize Mme Simon's infatuation with noblemen :

Il ne faut point que des soupirans, comme vous, s'avisent de paroître au commencement de l'hiver sur notre horizon. Et depuis la chute des feuilles jusqu'au Printemps, ce logis est une espece de Temple, où l'on ne reçoit que les vœux des gens de guerre, et où tout Amant de Ville est proscrit et regardé comme un profane. (sc. i.)

Now that Mme Simon is fully occupied with considerations of gracious living, the maid has instructions to dispense with the doctor's services :

Oh, ça, Monsieur, voulez-vous que je vous parle franchement? Vous êtes de trop dans la maison, nous n'avons que faire ici de Médecin: et ma Maîtresse et les Personnes qu'elle voit, sont trop occupées du plaisir, pour avoir le tems d'être malades. (sc. i.)

Bertrand is scandalized by Mme Simon's unashamed flouting of bourgeois conventions :

Y a-t-il rien de plus condamnable? Une femme d'une dépense prodigieuse, dont la maison ne désemplit point de Colonels et de Capitaines, depuis la nouvelle de la mort de son mari; qui se charge ouvertement du ridicule de loger chez elle un jeune Chevalier dans un appartement à côté du sien. N'a-t-elle point de honte? La veuve d'un Sou-traitant des Aydes de Tours, faire de sa maison une Auberge d'Officiers?

Lisette attempts to justify her mistress's conduct with the words :

Oh, doucement, Monsieur, s'il vous plaî^t, ma maî^tresse peut loger celui-ci en tout bien et en tout honneur. C'est un homme à devenir bientôt son mari.

But the tactless remark which she adds produces the contrary effect : 'et du vivant du défunt, Madame le regardoit déjà sur ce pied-là'. She goes on unwittingly to make the picture worse :

il est bien vrai que comme elle va jouir d'un gros revenu, le Chevalier en mangera une partie, et qu'il se servira de l'autre dans le besoin.

Ostensibly trying to present the chevalier in a favourable light as a person making only the most modest demands on her mistress's finances, she makes an additional remark which depicts him in his true colours : 'mais il n'entamera le fonds qu'au commencement de la campagne tout au plutôt'.

Reference is made to the obsequious attitude of bourgeois towards the aristocracy; they regarded it an an honour to be of service to ~~m~~embers of the class to which they aspired and spared no expense to gain their favour :

LISETTE

De la maniere dont Monsieur le Chevalier fait les choses, il faudroit qu'elle eût l'esprit bien mal fait et bien mal tourné pour le trouver mauvais.

BERTRAND

Comment donc, l'esprit bien mal fait, pour trouver mauvais qu'on la ruine? Tu Extravagues.

LISETTE

Je n'extravague point. C'est un homme qui lui fait faire la plus belle figure, qui lui donne les meilleures connoissances, tous gens de mérite, de plaisir et de distinction, des femmes si jolies et si spirituelles, ils sont toujours huit ou dix à table: et pour divertir la veuve, et la consoler de la perte du défunt, ils fessent son vin de Champagne à la santé du mort. Oh! cela est bien consolant pour une jeune coquette, qui n'a perdu un vieux mari que depuis douze ou quinze jours. (sc. i.)

According to Lisette's account a complete revolution has taken place in the household as a result of Mme Simon's introduction of a new way of life based on aristocratic conventions; her reference to the 'Antipodes' brings this idea out with comic exaggeration :

Oh, dame, nous sommes ici comme aux Antipodes, Monsieur, il ne fait jour chez nous que quand il est nuit par-tout ailleurs. Du tems de Monsieur Simon, pour se conformer à ses manieres bourgeoises, on se couchoit le soir, et on se levait le matin, à présent nous avons réformé tout cela; on se couche le matin, et on se

leve le soir, c'est la règle (...) une espece d'habitude que nous avons prise. Nous ne méprisons rien tant que les choses communes, le Soleil n'a plus pour nous qu'une clarté roturiere, dont nous laissons l'usage au peuple. Plaisirs, visites, affaires, promenades, tout se fait ici pendant la nuit; et nos Dames se proposoient hier de faire avec des lévriers une partie de chasse aux flamb-eaux; et s'il n'avoit pas été grand jour quand elles sont sorties de table...

Far from being impressed by this account, the doctor indicates his opinion with the words : 'ho, les folles, les folles! ce qui m'étonne le plus c'est que leur santé ne soit pas aussi dérangée que leur cervelle.'

The leading character of La Déroute du Pharaon, Bélise, is yet another of Dancourt's parvenues; she is a widowed lingère who is determined to become an aristocrat 'en épousant un Baron, et un Baron de conséquence encore, un homme de distinction', as her maid, Marton, explains. Bélise's lofty notions are offset chiefly by the incredulous comments of her brother, Bartolin, an avocat turned agioteur. Even the maid, who is usually a foil for those whom the author wishes to satirize, has become affected by her mistress's obsession with social elevation, and seriously considers that, on the strength of a bonanza at the gaming-table, both she and her mistress will be raised to a higher social status than that of Bartolin:

MARTON

Oh, doucement, s'il vous plaît, Monsieur Bartolin! les soubrettes comme moi ne sont pas faites pour être traitées irrespectueusement, et nous sommes en train de faire une fortune, qui mettra quelque différence entre vous et moi.

BARTOLIN

La pauvre créature devient aussi folle que sa Maîtresse ! (...) Ecoutez, Mademoiselle Marton, je vous prie de tâcher de rappeler un peu cette lueur de bon sens et de raison que je vous ai connue, et de me dire de bonne foi où vous prétendez que tout ceci vous mène.

MARTON

Ma foi, Monsieur, s'il vous faut parler franchement, je n'en sais rien: tout ce que je puis vous dire, c'est que nous menons une vie assez joyeuse, grosse chere, nombreuse compagnie, grande maison, bon équipage. Madame votre soeur, qui n'étoit que Lingere, s'appelle aujourd'hui Madame la Baronne, dans l'espérance de la devenir.

* * *

BARTOLIN

...Est-il possible que ma soeur, qui avoit autrefois de l'esprit, se repaisse ainsi de visions chimériques, et qu'elle ait quitté son négoce pour se livrer à un ridicule...(sc. i.)

In the presence of her incredulous brother whom she warns not to 'invectiver bourgeoisement contre (ses) manieres', Bélise outlines some of her plans for that evening's entertainment :

si vous êtes raisonnable, soupez avec moi, passez-y la soirée, et vous connaîtrez par vous-même la prudence de mes allures, et l'élévation de mon génie (...)
nous aurons aujourd'hui grosse partie de jeu, Concert, Bal toute la nuit; et vous y verrez un cercle de Dames qui ne sont pas indifférentes. Marton, dites à un garçon de la chambre de dire à mon Maître d'Hôtel qu'on nous fasse bonne chère (...) que le boursier ait soin d'envoyer des imprimés circulaires à huit ou dix Joueurs de distinction (...) Les Dames sont priées: qu'on mette au bas de chaque lettre, par apostille, que le rôl sera de chez la Guerbois, le vin de Harboulin, le fruit de la rue des Lombards; et que j'essaie un nouveau Cuisinier dont les ragôts seront autant de chefs-d'oeuvres. (sc. ii.)

In the ensuing argument Bartolin rebukes his sister for being so unwise as to abandon a flourishing trade which would ensure a continuous income, only to purchase an hôtel for the purposes of inviting aristocratic guests to her gambling parties. Bélise retorts that at least her decision provides her with the opportunity to shine in fashionable society, an achievement which she considers an end in itself: 'je fais figure, je vis, je me réjouis, les duppes paient tout, mon fond ne s'altère point. il n'y a que les sots qui vivent de leurs rentes, les habiles gens vivent de celles d'autrui'. (sc. iii.)

The social pretensions of some bourgeoises reached such proportions that they considered it beneath their dignity to associate with members of the community who were not of 'sterling' nobility. This attitude is brought out in Renaud et Armide, where a wealthy bourgeois, Grognaç, has arranged a match between his daughter, Angélique, and Filassier, an elderly conseiller d'un présidial, a rather subordinate member of the legal profession. Angélique is under the impression that her suitor, Clitandre, is of the required calibre to confer on her by marriage the social distinction to which she aspires, and she is somewhat disenchanted by the news that he is really only Filassier's son. The maid, Lisette, voices Angélique's objections to a marriage with an homme de robe, in a conversation with Grognaç :

GROGNAÇ

comment, coquine, je ne suis pas raisonnable?

LISETTE

Hé, non, vraiment: si vous l'étiez, auriez-vous fait le dessein ridicule de donner votre fille à un subalterne de Robe, un vieux Conseiller de Présidial, un crasseux qui...

GROGNAC

Ah, ah! voici qui est admirable! Et qui suis-je donc, moi, pour prétendre un parti plus considérable?

LISETTE

Vous êtes un peu crasseux aussi, j'en demeure d'accord, puisque vous le voulez; mais comme vous avez du bien...croyez-moi, Monsieur, je ferois un peu dégraisser ma fille, si j'étois à votre place. (sc. ii.)

Lisette goes on to elaborate her thoughts in a soliloquy, pointing out Angélique's ill fortune in having to be content with a robin at the time of the year when young officers were plentiful in Paris :

Mais voyez un peu quelle extravagance! vouloir forcer une jeune fille de bourgeois et de bon esprit à se contenter d'un homme de Robe, et en hiver encore? En été, passe, on prend ce qu'on trouve; mais dans le bon tems on seroit bien sotté de n'en pas profiter. Allons, allons, mort de ma vie, je n'en aurai pas le démenti, et je ne veux pas qu'il soit dit dans le monde qu'aucune fille de la connoissance de Lisette se soit engeancée d'un Robin. (sc. iii.)

Angélique's aunt, Mme Jaquinet, who is in love with a person she believes to be a chevalier, but who is in reality none other than Clitandre, sympathises with her niece on the prospects of marrying such an unromantic figure as a conseiller: whom she terms 'un personnage très peu ragoûtant' (sc. ix.).

Army officers were not only popular among ladies of the aristocracy, but they were very much sought after by coquettes from wealthy bourgeois households. These socially ambitious young ladies often considered members of the noblesse de robe as ineligible marriage partners on account of their bourgeois origins, but they deigned to consort with them on a friendly basis during summer months in the absence of their military suitors. Such is the case of Angélique in Le Diable Boiteux, niece of a procureur who, however, is beginning to have some scruples about entertaining no less than a dozen bourgeois admirers while awaiting the return of her genuine suitor, Graste. Her maid, Marton, blames the injustice of fate for having denied both her mistress and her the prestige of noble birth :

'L'heureuse disposition de fille pour la vie aisée! Quel dommage que cela ne soit que bourgeoise, et moi soubrette! nous avons bien les manieres de qualité.'
(sc. iii.)

In choosing characters representative of bourgeois parvenus Dancourt concentrated mainly on women with an insatiable desire for novelty and an extravagant way of life. The bourgeoise, Mme Thomas in Le Retour des Officiers, is, however, an exceptional figure. Proud of her social status and the security which her means afford her, she sees no material advantage in associating with members of the noblesse d'épée. This outlook leads to some disagreement with her daughter, Henriette, and her niece, Isabelle, both of whom intend to marry officers, Clitandre and Eraste. The husbands whom Mme Thomas, an intransigent matron, wishes to impose on the girls are two parvenus, Rapineau, a financier of peasant origin, and Des Baliveaux who had recently risen from being a crieur d'enterrement to the post of 'conseiller d'Abbeville', thus acquiring the distinction of belonging to the noblesse de robe. Mme Thomas makes her feelings clear to the girls in categorical terms :

MME THOMAS

Vous y ferez vos petites réflexions, je vous en donne tout le loisir; mais vous pouvez compter que je ne veux point voir de gens de guerre, ni dans ma maison, ni dans ma famille.

HENRIETTE

Mais, ma mere...

MME THOMAS

Je n'en veux point, vous dis-je, je connois le fort et le foible de tous les états de la vie. Votre pere étoit Greffier, à vous, il m'a laissé du bien: le vôtre avoit la Ferme du Tabac, il est mort riche. Ils avoient un frere Capitaine de Cavalerie, qui mourut l'année passée aux Invalides. Point de disputes, Mesdemoiselles, un Financier, un homme de Robe, ou un Couvent, et le congé à ces deux Messieurs, sur-tout; que je ne les voie pas davantage. (sc. vi.)

The resourceful maid, Toinette, sees a way out of this predicament, but her proposal to arrange for Clitandre and Eraste to exchange posts with the two bourgeois is met with the disapproval of the girls who consider marriage with anyone outside the circle of the noblesse d'épée distasteful. Toinette reassures them on this score with the theory that the acquisition of posts in finance and in the judiciary will not detract from the officers' inherent qualities :

Hé, mort de ma vie, sont-ce les emplois qui deshonnorent les hommes? Ce sont les hommes qui ridiculisent leurs emplois. Les gens d'esprit et de mérite sont toujours les mêmes dans tout ce qu'ils font; un sot ne cesse point de l'être. Clitandre est un fort joli homme d'épée, ce sera un fort aimable Conseiller. Monsieur des Baliveaux est un Conseiller ridicule, il sera très impertinent Capitaine. (sc. vii.)

Dancourt devoted a fair amount of attention to satirizing members of the legal profession, but nowhere in his plays does he show evidence of such abrasive criticism of abuses in the legal system as are found in Fatouville's Matrone d'Ephèse, subsequently called Grapignan ou Arlequin Procureur, acted at the Italian Theatre in 1682. This play is ^{almost} entirely devoted to the unethical conduct of Coquinière, an elderly procureur, and a newcomer to the profession, Grapignan, to whom he gives instructions on the métier. His advice on what he calls 'le savoir faire et le tour du bâton', expressed in the clearest terms, reflects the contemporary attitude towards men of his profession :

Sçachez donc que pour parvenir en fort peu de temps, il faut être dur et impitoyable, principalement à ceux qui ont de grands biens... Attachez-vous aux procès par écrit, et multipliez si adroitement les incidents et la procédure, qu'une affaire blanchisse dans votre Etude avant que d'être jugée (...) Dans notre métier, le grand talent et le grand gain, c'est de beaucoup écrire (...) Il faut dire des impertinences, des suppositions, des faussetez; et quand on est au bout, il faut avoir recours aux invectives et aux injures. (1)

It does not take Grapignan long to come to the conclusion that 'C'est un Perou que l'Etude d'un Procureur'. When he is reproached by one of his clients for being heartless and unscrupulous, he adopts an air of injured innocence :

(1) Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Amsterdam, 1695, pp. 104-5.

C'est une chose pitoiable de voir comme on traite aujourd'huy les gens d'honneur de nôtre profession. Nous avons beau écrire jour et nuit, avancer nôtre argent, perdre nôtre temps: bon, au bout de tout cela, les Procureurs sont encore des fripons. Voilà en un seul mot toute la récompense de nos peines. (1)

In the following year Fatouville brought out another play on this theme, entitled Arlequin Protée, in which feature two expressively named procureurs, Pillardin and La Ruine. The former complains of the dishonesty which he considers to be rife throughout the whole¹ structure of the legal system from the Basoche to the hightcourt :

la Basoche est la pepiniere des Procureurs...l'indulgence des Juges est une espece d'autorité pour le mal; et...le grand secret pour ne plus trouver des desordres parmy les Procureurs, c'est de n'en point souffrir parmy les Clercs. (2)

Fatouville's treatment of procureurs must have exercised considerable influence on satire of such lawyers in contemporary plays by the emphasis he placed on details of their professional life. It was no doubt to the scenes involving Grapignan that one of Boursault's procureurs in La Comédie sans Titre (1683) was referring when he complained that he had been the object of satire on the stage in a play given in the previous year. The two procureurs in Boursault's play, aptly named Sangsue, a Procureur de la Cour, and Brigandau, a Procureur au Châtelet, quarrel about the importance of their respective posts. In a scene of professional rivalry, each accuses the other of dishonest practices, such as taking the side of the defendant and the accused simultaneously, and of building up a personal fortune at the expense of the public; in the words of Brigandau who criticises the behaviour of procureurs du parlement towards their clients :

...leur main crochue, à voler toujours prête,
Aime mieux écorcher que de tondre la bête. (Act V, sc. vii.)

Dancourt's satire of the legal profession centres largely around the noblesse de robe, but he does indulge in some satirical treatment of members of the 'petite robe', particularly procureurs. These lawyers, among the many who bought their posts, tend to take on the attributes which were associated with them both in the public

(1) ibid., p. 129.

(2) ibid., p. 151.

mind and on the stage. They are on the whole presented with much light-hearted humour, but the procureur in Les Agioteurs is an exceptionally sinister figure; in this play Durillon acts as a henchman to the leading agiotteur, Trapolin, ratifying his usurious practices and, of course, sharing in the proceeds. Trapolin's description of his valuable assistant has an ironic twist : 'Un des honnêtes hommes de la profession, s'il en fut jamais, plein d'honneur et de probité. Il a été Commissaire des Pauvres, et il est Marguillier de sa petite Paroisse'. (Act II, sc. ii.) The idea of a procureur pretending to be a pillar of the church in order to acquire an air of respectability had been used in La Matrone D'Ephèse in a scene where Grapignan gives the sergent, Maraudin, a piece of professional advice :

Mon amy, il n'est rien tel que d'établir sa fortune. Après on se fait des amis: et on tâche à devenir Marguillier (...) c'est un tres-bon vernis sur la reputation d'un Procureur.

The untrustworthy procureur represents those members of the legal profession who were notorious for their lack of impartiality in conducting their affairs. One of the characters in Les Agioteurs, Suzon, has engaged Durillon to deal with the legal side of her uncle's estate, but, realizing his propensity for chicanery, she fears that he may use his professional knowledge against her interests :

SUZON

Avez-vous songé sérieusement à la petite affaire que je vous avois prié d'examiner?

DURILLON

Soyez en repos là-dessus. La donation qui vous a été faite par votre oncle est d'autant meilleure, qu'elle a été insinuée deux mois avant sa mort, et pour les autres sommes qu'il vous a léguées par son testament, votre tante auroit absolument perdu l'esprit, si elle entreprenoit de vous disputer une obole.

SUZON

Cela est bien sûr?

DURILLON

Rien ne l'est davantage.

SUZON

Vous m'en répondez?

DURILLON

Sur mon honneur.

SUZON

Ah, quelle caution! Vous me faites trembler, Monsieur Durillon. (Act I? sc. vi.)

Satire of lawyers occurs more extensively in Les Vacances in which a procureur, Grimaudin, is about to be invested with the title of 'propriétaire du château et de la seigneurie de Gaillardin' (sc. iii.) and squire of that village. One of the characters reveals some details about Grimaudin whom she knew as a 'petit clerc chez mon oncle l'Auditeur, au sortir de calotin, (qui) a trouvé le secret de s'approprier un mauvais château'. (sc. ix.) The village schoolmaster is dubious about the new squire's integrity : 'Un procureur honnête-homme, et qui est devenu riche encore! en vela une belle marque.' (sc. i.) What Grimaudin has to say about himself is even more revealing, for he is anxious to project an image of probity: 'Quand des gens de notre profession ont un peu d'honneur et de conduite, ils font de bonnes maisons en bien peu de tems'. (sc. iii.) References are made to the startling rapidity with which Grimaudin acquired enough wealth to lead a leisurely existence, in a conversation with his god-son, Lépine :

GRIMAUDIN

Il y a plaisir, oui, de venir ainsi passer les Vacances dans ses petits Etats?

LEPINE

Assurément.

GRIMAUDIN

Il y a peu de mes Confreres qui en puisse faire autant.

LEPINE

Il n'y en aura jamais qui fasse son chemin si promptement que vous; et si, ils aiment à aller vite, ces Messieurs-là.

GRIMAUDIN

J'en attends ici trois ou quatre, que j'ai priés de me venir voir avec leurs familles pendant les vacances(..) Je veux les régaler de maniere à les faire crever de dépit.

LEPINE

Ils seront tous bien fâchés de vous voir faire si bonne figure. (sc. iii.)

In this scene Dancourt adds another dimension to his portrait of the procureur : that of the nouveau riche who delights in flaunting his wealth . Now that he has risen in the world to the status of a seigneur, Grimaudin considers it fitting to break off his engagement to marry a certain bourgeoisie, Mme de la Roche, under the pretext that 'Cela étoit bon quand je n'étois que simple Procureur; mais à présent...' (sc. iii.)

Faced with the predicament of trying to bring legal pressure to bear on a troop of marauding soldiers who have overrun his lands, the procureur is forced to come to the realization that the power exercised by gens de robe is ineffectual against the depredations of the noblessé d'épée. Lépine warns him that it would be futile to take legal action against members of the aristocracy : 'Autant de papier timbré perdu, mon parrain, on ne gagne rien à plaider avec ces gens-là'. (sc. iv.) But Grimaudin is adamant to punish the soldiers :

GRIMAUDIN

...je m'en vais leur faire donner assignation par mon Sergent, à ce qu'ils aient à se retirer, et à en venir pardevant le Bailli dans la huitaine, avec protestation de les prendre à partie en leur propre et privé nom, en cas de désordre.

LEPINE

Leur signifiant que vous êtes Procureur, n'est-ce pas?

MME DE LA ROCHE

Hé, Monsieur, vous n'y songez pas: ces gens-là jetteront votre Sergent dans le puits, et ils mettront le feu à la maison; c'est moi qui vous le dis. (sc. v.)

His impressive official jargon is rendered meaningless and preposterous in comparison with the reality of the situation as pointed out by Lépine and Mme de la Roche.

Dancourt satirizes the accepted tradition among lawyers of procuring influential and lucrative positions for their sons - or, in Grimaudin's case, for his god-son:

GRIMAUDIN

Laisse-moi faire, j'achèverai ta fortune, va; quoique je n'eusse encore cette Terre-ci qu'à bail judiciaire, quand tu revins de Flandres l'année passée, j'ai trouvé le moyen de t'en faire le Procureur Fiscal: m'en voilà maintenant Seigneur, par la grace de Dieu et du Châtelet; tu es mon filleul, tu as de bons principes, je te pousserai, tu iras loin sur ma parole.

LEPINE

Il ne tiendra pas à moi que je ne fasse quelque chose dans la Robe, j'ai des inclinations admirables.

GRIMAUDIN

Sur ce pied-là, je veux, avant qu'il soit dix ans que tu aies une petite Terre. (sc. iii.)

Lépine, formerly the valet of the officer in command of the troop, Clitandre, explains to him that he accepted the post of Procureur Fiscal under pressure from his friends who, realizing his propensity for stealing, advised him to seek a post

in which he could fulfil his ambitions legitimately:

Je me suis de tout tems senti les inclinations preneuses...et parceque ces petites inclinations-là ont quelquefois de mauvaises suites, tant pour le repos de ma conscience, que pour exercer ma passion dominante sans aucun risque, mes amis m'ont conseillé de me faire Procureur. (sc. xiv.)

Dancourt's approach to such low motives of self-interest is not that of the moralist or even the cynic, but of the comic playwright who sought to present with a dash of humour abuses prevalent in the legal world.

Just as lawyers enjoyed a dubious reputation among their contemporaries, those who were involved in the country's chaotic system of tax-collecting were the object of public indignation - but even to a greater degree as, with the wealth they accumulated in the course of their duties, they could afford to lead a way of life which was more conspicuously scandalous. Always important figures in society, financiers were indispensable to the economy of the war-torn country at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, as, in the absence of any serious banking system, they were in a position to supply the King with the wherewithal to subsidize his war effort.

The financiers who appear in Dancourt's plays are not always clearly defined; sometimes the author does not oblige by explaining whether they were Treasury officials with high posts in the Civil Service employed by the State to deal with its financial affairs, or whether they were traitants who received from the King, in return for a substantial sum of money, the right to collect indirect taxes. No doubt fearing the repercussions of offending the pride of such magnates Dancourt did not put traitants on the stage; he either used the blanket expression 'financier' to designate his characters or else chose to present those to whom traitants sub-contracted part of their duties, namely sous-traitants. What Dancourt was basically concerned with was the public image of financiers in general.

With their easily gained fortunes, their prominent position in society and their correspondingly high standard of living, these Treasury officials

and traitants could not have failed to arouse the envy and indignation of their contemporaries. They acquired a reputation for lavish and vulgar display of their wealth and, of course, unscrupulousness in their monetary dealings. Many had risen from the humblest of origins and lacked the qualities and social graces of the honnête homme. Tallemant des Réaux, mentions, for example, the rise to wealth of La Bazinière, 'trésorier de l'Epargne' :

il estoit filz d'un paysan d'Anjou, et à son avenement à Paris, il fut laquais chez le president Gayan: c'estait mesme un fort sot garçon; mais il fallait qu'il fust né aux finances. Après, il fut clerc chez un procureur, en suite commis, et insensiblement il parvint à estre trésorier de l'Espargne. (1)

And the author adds : 'c'estoit le plus rustre et le plus avare de tous les hommes'.

La Bruyère makes reference to the ruthless way in which many rose from the position of a lackey and attempted to gloss over not only their humble origin, but also their dishonesty :

Sosie de la livrée a passé par une petite recette à une sous-ferme; et par les concussions, la violence, et l'abus qu'il a fait de ses pouvoirs, il s'est enfin, sur les ruines de plusieurs familles, élevé à quelque grade. Devenu noble par une charge, il ne lui manquoit que d'être homme de bien: une place de marguillier a fait ce prodige. (2)

Such were the attributes of financiers which have left their mark in many comedies of the latter part of Louis XIV's reign when their importance in society was at an unprecedented height. We can gather, too, from another of La Bruyère's comments how they were regarded by members of the aristocracy who had a sneaking regard for them once they had built up a fortune : 'Si le financier manque son coup, les courtisans disent de lui: 'C'est un bourgeois, un homme de rien, un malotru': s'il réussit, ils lui demandent sa fille.' (3) Dancourt does not, of course, adopt the deprecatory tone of La Bruyère's condemnation of the insensitivity of financiers to human needs mentioned in his passage on Champagne who, quite unthinkingly, 'ôteroit le pain à toute une province si l'on n'y remédioit.' (4) It was not this kind of harsh reality with which Dancourt was concerned when he put on the stage a number of financiers; his intention was to present in a humorous light certain recognizable traits which were associated with such unpopular figures, and which included their

(1) Historiettes, ed. G. Mongrédien, Paris, 1932-34, 8 vols., vol. IV, p. 297.

(2) Oeuvres, ed. G. Servois, t. II, pp. 161-2.

(3) ibid., p. 159.

(4) ibid. p. 163.

social ambitions, ostentation, philandering and sharp practice.

Dancourt's earliest sketch of a financier is found in L'Été des Coquettes in a scene between the coquette, Angélique, and the wealthy M. Patin who courts her with a profligate disregard for the expense :

ANGELIQUE

Toujours régal sur régal; tous les jours des cadeaux, et des présens même. Je ne parle point de ce que vous perdez au jeu; mais en vérité, Monsieur Patin, vous vous jetez dans une dépense effroyable, et il faut être ce que vous êtes pour la soutenir.

M PATIN

Vous moquez-vous, Madame? Ce ne sont-là que des bagatelles.

LISETTE

Hé Madame, ces Messieurs les Financiers entendent bien leurs affaires; et s'ils font en Été si grosse dépense avec les Dames, ils ont pendant l'Hiver en revanche tout le tems de se ménager.

M. PATIN

Oh, pour moi, l'Hiver et l'Été, je vais toujours le même train. (sc. xvi.)

There is a resemblance between this scene and a scene of Turcaret where Lesage's protagonist is rebuked by a hypocritical baronne for lavishing expensive presents on her; his replies echo M. Patin's protestation that such expenditure is only 'des bagatelles' :

LA BARONNE

Avez-vous perdu la raison de m'envoyer un billet au porteur? Vous faites tous les jours quelque folie comme cela.

M. TURCARET

Vous vous moquez?

LA BARONNE

De combien est-il ce billet? Je n'ai pas pris garde à la somme, tant j'étois en colère contre vous!

M. TURCARET

Bon! il n'est que de dix mille écus.

LA BARONNE

Comment! de dix mille écus? Ah! si j'avois su cela, je vous l'aurois renvoyé sur-le-champ (...) En m'accablant tous les jours de présents, il semble que vous vous imaginiez avoir besoin de ces liens-là pour m'attacher à vous. (Act I, sc. vi.)

In a sense M. Patin can be regarded as a modest predecessor of Turcaret; Dancourt did not stop to develop his character in any detail in this one-act comedy in which the chief emphasis, as we have seen, is on the summer escapades of Parisian coquettes.

A number of other financiers appear in Dancourt's plays, but they have only very minor roles in the plot, and the author does not portray aspects of their professional life. Griffard in La Foire de Besons is no more than a shadowy figure about whom very little information is given. Described as 'un homme considerable' (sc. xvi), he uses his wealth to pursue a life of gay libertinage, as we see from remarks made by the intrigante, Frosine :

vous souvient-il de cette jeune Avocate, au mari de qui vous donniez à plaider toutes les causes de la Ferme, et qui venoit déjeuner avec vous, pendant que le pauvre diable s'égosilloit au Palais? (...) Et ce Commissaire à qui vous aviez prêté de l'argent pour achever de paier sa Charge? son épouse ne vous haïssoit pas encore (...) Je ne médise de personne: mais pendant que Monsieur le Commissaire courroit la ville pour faire observer les Ordonnances de la Police, Madame sa femme tenoit chez elle une petite police, où Monsieur le Commissaire lui-même étoit souvent condamné à l'amende. (sc. xxii.)

He is a forerunner of Farfadel in La Foire Saint Germain, 'un petit libertin sexagénaire' who, in the words of the Chevalier alarmed at his conquests 'épouser(oit) tout Paris si la Police ne s'en mêl(oit)' (sc. xxiv.) This financier enjoys the notoriety which he has gained through philandering, as if it were an integral part of his profession :

...je n'aime point les femmes, elles sont toutes folles de moi. Je suis un peu coquet de mon naturel: je les laisse se flatter; je dis que je veux épouser l'une, je promets de faire la fortune de l'autre; je donne des régals, des cadeaux, des promenades, somme totale, je les amuse, et je ne conclus rien. Oh! cela me donne un grand relief dans le monde. (sc. xvi.)

As Turcaret was to do, Farfadel uses his influence to gain the favours of his lady-friends ;

Quand quelque petite personne me donne dans la vue, je donne d'abord de l'emploi à ses freres ou à ses cousins. Quand j'ai soupé trois ou quatre fois avec elle, krac, je les révoque.

The protagonist of Turcaret, for his part, regards this technique as his 'maniere d'écarter les incommodes' and adds: 'Ah! combien de cousins, d'oncles et de maris j'ai faits directeurs en ma vie! J'en ai envoyé jusqu'en Canada.' (Act II, sc. v.)

The 'financier galant' was also satirized at the Théâtre Italien in Arlequin Jason (1694) where Jason describes this type as 'des gens qui amorcent les femmes avec l'argent et qui offrent à point nommé tout ce que les maris refusent', and Médée considers them as 'des dupes banales que les femmes amusent avec des cartes, et qui ne se font de merite et de reputation auprès d'elles, qu'à proportion de l'argent qu'ils perdent au jeu. (†)

(1) Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Amsterdam, 1695, p. 179.

At a later date Dancourt gave a more prominent role to Rapineau in Le Retour des Officiers who describes himself as an 'Adjudicataire des Regrats de Peronne, Sous-fermier des Aides de l'Election de Saint-Quentin', but what he omits to mention is the fact that he was formerly a lackey in a wealthy household. In this play the maid, Toinette, complains about the inconvenience caused by his courtship of her mistress: 'cet animal-là nous assassine tous les soirs de grands repas, on en a des indigestions toute la nuit; et quand on commence à s'endormir, il vous envoie des réveils-matins aussi désagréables...' (sc. iii.) In spite of the presents, banquets and serenades, Rapineau, like many of his associates, will be unceremoniously dismissed from feminine society as soon as more eligible suitors return from military service to their winter quarters; as Toinette puts it bluntly :

quand il n'y a que de la Robe et de la Finance dans le commerce, les Sousfermiers brillent, on les trouve passables: mais si-tôt qu'on revoit des Officiers, ces autres Messieurs-là deviennent si laids, si laids (...) Je crois qu'on doit aujourd'hui commencer à lui faire la mine, on boudera demain plus sérieusement; dans trois ou quatre jours on lui cherchera querelle, et on lui fermera la porte au nez sur la fin de la semaine. (sc. iii.)

Like Turcaret he is merciless to members of his family and generous only to those whose good graces he wishes to gain. La Bruyère pointed out the hard-hearted nature of such people : 'un bon financier ne pleure ni ses amis, ni sa femme, ni ses enfants' (1). And Rapineau's reluctance to be associated with his brother, a peasant, on the grounds of losing prestige was another attribute of financiers mentioned by La Bruyère : 'Chrysanthé, homme opulent et impertinent, ne veut pas être vu avec Eugène qui est un homme de mérite, mais pauvre: il croiroit en être déshonoré' (2).

Further satire of financiers is found in Le Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux which portrays a miserly sous-traitant, Simon, whose way of life is completely at odds with that of contemporary financiers. His refusal to indulge in lavish expenditure is contrasted with the personal habits of two of his colleagues, one of whom, according to the lame devil 'fait bâtir un Palais superbe, pour y vivre à la manière des Satrapes, dans le luxe et dans la mollesse', while the other 'qui n'est qu'un nouveau financier, promet déjà autant que les plus consommés'. Referring to the latter, the devil comments:

(1) Oeuvres, vol. II, p. 169.

(2) ibid., p. 174.

quelle chère fait-il? quelle dépense? quelle magnificence dans sa maison? quel nombre de valets? quels équipages pour lui, pour Madame? Il a acheté la maison d'un Seigneur, et elle est trop petite pour le contenir; il y faut ajouter deux aîles, et abattre aux environs vingt maisons bourgeoises qu'il a achetées pour faire un jardin. (Prologue, sc. i.)

and he goes on to criticize financiers in general as well as their wives :

Ce sont des hommes que cela: voilà des gens qui savent vivre. Leurs femmes ne les font point enrager, elles les adorent; et si par hasard elles en aiment d'autres quelquefois, ce n'est que par repréailles, du moins, par amusement, pour n'être pas en reste avec leurs maris, et pour éviter les manières bourgeoises.

Simon himself, however, remains very much in the background of events, and no details are given as to his professional conduct.

Les Agioteurs, on the other hand, offers the most detailed picture in the contemporary theatre of people engaged in financial affairs from the point of view of their professional occupation. In Lesage's recent Turcaret the financial aspect of the traitant's life is subordinated to a dramatization of his private life, particularly his social ambitions. Dancourt, however, gives us samples of the way in which his money-dealers worked. Their chief concern was to exchange coin against paper-money and vice versa which they resold after manipulating the rate of exchange to their own advantage. The stage had been set for the activities of these sharks since 1701 when paper-money was first issued by the Treasury as an expedient for helping finance French involvement in the War of the Spanish Succession; but what started out as a temporary measure was gradually adopted on a more permanent footing as the need for money became more critical. As more notes were issued at a falling interest rate (by 1709 they had lost two-thirds of their value) and as the holders of these bonds could not be reimbursed on demand, confidence was at a low ebb long before Dancourt's play. Speculation between coin and paper-money gave rise to both huge fortunes and crashing failures. It was not until 1710 when the country's financial situation had reached an exceptionally difficult stage on account of mounting debts that these notes were converted into various 'rentes sur l'Hotel de Ville' or 'sur la Gabelle'. The critical financial situation which gave rise to speculation was also aggravated by agiotage.

Dancourt's agioteurs work in collusion with one another, forming an influential group who, through the control they exercise over fluctuating values, are in an excellent position to make exorbitant profits at the expense of their clients. The leading character, Trapolin, is an influential figure among agioteurs, and is seen

in the play conducting a series of interviews, aided by an unscrupulous procureur, Durillon, with the clients who come to him for assistance. The technique which Trapolin uses in his transactions is to take advantage of his clients' financial predicament to force them to accept whatever terms he wishes to impose, as we see from his own words : 'il faut connoître son monde, et savoir à propos serrer le bouton aux ~~em~~prunteurs que leurs affaires pressent'. (Act I, sc. viii.)

In a conversation with his partner, a usurer, Zacharie, Trapolin criticizes one of his colleagues, Craquinet, for not being sufficiently exacting in his dealings with a client from whom he could easily have extracted an even more extortionate rate of interest. His attitude recalls that of Turcaret who criticizes a financier for being 'trop bon' :

TRAPOLIN

Il a prêté treize mille francs de papier, à rendre dans six mois, tout en espece, et il n'a fait faire le billet que de quinze.

ZACHARIE

Ah, ah! Il prend quelquefois des caprices de scrupule, dont les grands hommes ne sont pas les maîtres.

TRAPOLIN

Nous sommes ruinés, si cela continue; quinze mille francs pour treize, au bout de six mois! Il n'y a pas de l'eau à boire.

ZACHARIE

Il faut lui dire de ne pas tant lâcher la main.

TRAPOLIN

Et avec qui fait-il cette affaire-là? car c'est ce qui me chagrine...Avec un nouveau Traitant, qui est obligé de payer aujourd'hui partie de ses avances, pour n'être pas exclus d'un traité...Et, fi, fi, cela crie vengeance.

ZACHARIE

Assurément. C'est un imbécille que Monsieur Craquinet, et qui ne sait pas profiter de l'occasion; il faut être plus ferme. (Act I, sc. viii.)

The two partners embark on a discussion of their affairs from which we can form an idea of the kind of influence they exert in financial circles. Trapolin refers figuratively to the 'thermomètre' by which he can gauge the fluctuating value of paper-money at any given time :

ZACHARIE

...Comment va le courant aujourd'hui?

TRAPOLIN

Je ne sais, je n'ai point vu le Thermomètre, je ne suis pas encore sorti; mais il ira comme nous voudrions. Quand on est trois ou quatre forts bureaux de bonne intelligence...

ZACHARIE

Quels fonds avons-nous? cela nous réglera.

TRAPOLIN

Quantité de papier, et fort peu d'argent; et pour ne pas manquer quelque bonne affaire, il faut incessamment faire de l'espece.

* * *

ZACHARIE

Puisque le papier nous gagne, et que l'espece est rare, il est bon de baisser aujourd'hui le papier de huit pour cent: quand nous nous serons défaits du nôtre on le remettra sur le même pied, ou on le rehaussera s'il est possible. (Act I, sc. viii.)

Throughout the play Dancourt stresses the lack of principles which characterize the agioteurs; their desire for financial gain knows no bounds. One of Trapolin's friends, an agioteur, Cangrene, who pretends to mingle some restraining scruples with his monetary dealings, becomes the butt of double-edged compliments from Trapolin and Durillon :

CANGRENE

Il est bon de mettre un frein à ses passions, et de ne pas passer de certaines bornes.

TRAPOLIN

Vous avez raison. Quand j'aurai attrappé celles où vous êtes, je ne me soucierai pas d'aller plus loin, je vous en réponds.

CANGRENE

Aussi ne me mêlai-je plus de rien qui puisse charger ma conscience.

TRAPOLIN

Je crois qu'elle a tout au moins la charge qu'il lui faut.

DURILLON

Je l'ai pourtant toujours connue pour une des plus robustes du tems présent, et je n'en sache point d'aussi forte parmi tous ces Messieurs, c'est beaucoup dire.

CANGRENE

Cela se pourroit bien: mais il y a de grands héros chez vous autres, sans vous compter, Monsieur Durillon. (Act II, sc. viii.)

An example of Trapolin's ruthless treatment of his clients is seen in his

dealings with Dargentac, an intendant in a wealthy household who seeks the agioteur's help in an attempt to turn his masters' capital to his own financial advantage. Dargentac has succeeded in persuading a creditor to accept repayment of a debt of 40,000 livres half in paper-money and half in the more valuable currency, espèces. When Trapolin realizes that the intendant wishes to buy 20,000 livres of paper-money for a minimal amount of especes, and pocket the difference, he seeks to thwart his plan by proposing a simple exchange of 20,000 livres in coin for the same amount of paper-money. This transaction, unacceptable to Dargentac, would bring the agioteur an exorbitant profit. So that his proposal may appear fair and even liberal, Trapolin attempts to hoodwink the intendant by a plausible artifice : seconded by his assistant, Durillon, he approaches the question with overflowing cordiality :

TRAPOLIN

...je suis ravi d'avoir occasion de vous faire ce petit plaisir-là.

DURILLON

Monsieur Trapolin est le plus obligeant homme qu'il y ait au monde.

TRAPOLIN

Vous n'avez qu'à me faire compter les vingt mille livres, et je vais vous livrer pour la même somme du meilleur papier qu'il y ait à Paris.

DARGENTAC

Hem, plaît-il? quoi? comment dites-vous cela, Monsieur Trapolin?

TRAPOLIN

Que je suis prêt à faire l'échange que vous me proposez.

DURILLON

Et sans vous connoître, cela n'est-il pas bien honnête? (Act II, sc. ix.)

In the ensuing argument, in which insults are exchanged, Trapolin makes every effort to pit his wits against his fellow profiteer. After a long course of haggling, the agioteur, realizing that Dargentac is not to be easily duped or overcome by his bluster, agrees to reduce his terms and accept no less than 16,000 livres in species in exchange for 20,000 livres' worth of paper-money. The negotiations come to an abrupt conclusion when Trapolin identifies Dargentac as the intendant of the Troussignac family. Finding himself in a position to inform

the family of Dargentac's attempt to divert their money to his own use, he forces the issue by threatening to withdraw from the deal. Anxious to preserve an appearance of honesty and even of benevolence towards his client, ^{Trapolin} affects an air of indifference to the deal, hesitates to come to a decision, and, after some persuasion, accepts the terms offered with an ironic reference to his amateurish knowledge of financial affairs :

DURILLON

...Pouvez-vous faire cela sans y perdre, Monsieur Trapolin?

DARGENTAC

Dépêchez, déterminons-nous: le Trapolin, tope-t-il? Prenons-nous la parole?

TRAPOLIN

On fait de moi ce qu'on veut; mais pour commencer à faire connoissance...

DARGENTAC

Elle aura des suites heureuses. A deux heures jé me rends ici, muni d'especes.

TRAPOLIN

Je vous y attends, cantonné de papier.

DARGENTAC

Et tous trois ensemble, le verre à la main, nous ratifierons l'échange.

TRAPOLIN

Volontiers, nous dînerons ensemble. (Act II, sc. ix.)

Another character in the play, Zacharie, bases his claim to the hand of Suzon on financial grounds, and his proposal of marriage on these terms is to her utterly abhorrent. Quite unconscious of the unfavourable impression he is making on the girl, Zacharie boasts of the fortune he has amassed during his career as a money-dealer which, in his estimation, is in itself justification for his proposal of marriage :

ZACHARIE

Je ne vous parlerai point de mon mérite (...) ni de mon coffre fort, où il pleut pourtant tous les jours presque autant d'argent que je le souhaite (...) J'ai fait cette semaine, à moi tout seul, pour plus de quarante mille francs de conversions, et si nous ne sommes encore qu'au Jeudi (...) et il y a le tiers de profit pour le moins.

SUZON

Le tiers de profit? Mais parmi toutes ces conversions-là, Monsieur Zacharie, ne feriez-vous pas bien de songer un peu à la vôtre?

ZACHARIE

Cela viendra, ma chere enfant, cela viendra; et tout aussitôt que nous serons mariés, je renonce absolument à tout négoce, et je veux que nous n'ayons, vous et moi, d'autre occupation que de nous aimer.

SUZON

De nous aimer? Vous auriez trop d'occupation, Monsieur Zacharie, et de mon côté, moi, je n'en aurois guères. (Act I, sc. vii.)

In this scene Dancourt satirizes nouveaux riches who have an unwarranted pride and confidence in their wealth which they fondly imagine entitles them to be sought after and pandered to by those in a less advantageous position financially.

This play is one of Dancourt's most complex compositions by reason of the variety of themes which it contains. Not only is there satire of agioteurs, and lawyers, but also of other social classes - the nobility and the peasantry - which is dealt with in separate chapters.

Another play in which Dancourt portrayed a diversity of social types is La Femme d'Intrigues which contains, among other things, brief sketches of a playwright and a précieuse. These are his only portraits of people engaged in literary pursuits. In this play the playwright, M. de la Protase complains of the unfavourable reception accorded to his works by the parterre :

je fais les meilleures pieces du monde, elles charment tous ceux à qui je les lis; mais, à-peine passent-elles dans la bouche des Comédiens, qu'on les siffle à faux bourdon. (Act V, sc. ii.)

He has written a Placet au Roi, with the intention of making his grievance known at Court while at the same time complaining on behalf of all other Parisian dramatists who experience difficulties of this nature :

Nous verrons, nous verrons, Messieurs du Parterre, si vous sifflerez à l'avenir les Auteurs et les Comédiens, comme on siffle les linotes et les perroquets. PLACET AU ROI. Comme je ne puis faire pour moi, que je ne fasse en même tems pour tous les autres poètes mes confreres, j'ai trouvé qu'il étoit à propos d'adresser mon Placet au nom de toute la communauté des Auteurs, ^{de} Paris s'entend.

M. de la Protase reads aloud :

AU ROI,
Sire,

Les Auteurs modernes en Dramatique, tant en Vers qu'en Prose, de votre bonne Ville et Fauxbourgs de Paris, remontrent très humblement à votre Majesté qu'après avoir sacrifié leurs soins et leurs veilles aux plaisirs du public,

leur zele seroit tous les jours mal reconnu par certains Quidams indiscrets qui, de dessein prémédité, se transportent journellement ès lieux où lesdits Auteurs font représenter leurs ouvrages, avec des apeaux à perdrix, des sifflets de chaudronniers, et autres armes offensives, des quelles ils chargent sans miséricorde, tout ce qui ose paroître d'Acteurs sur le Théâtre, avec tant de fureur, que le Comédien le plus intrépide est souvent contraint de lâcher pied, et de se retirer le coeur meurtri et tout percé de coups de sifflets(..)SIRE, souffrirez-vous que le Théâtre qui est le symbole de la joie, devienne celui de la douleur! Je ne doute, point, SIRE, que les ennemis de la Science ne représentent à Votre Majesté que nous exigeons d'Elle une chose impossible; qu'il est naturel au Parterre de siffler, comme à nous de parler. Je n'ignore pas non plus qu'eux, SIRE, que Plin le Naturaliste dans son Traité des Animaux, au Chapitre du mouvement vocal, dit que l'homme parle, que le cerf brame, que le lion rugit, que le taureau beugle, que le cheval hennit, que l'âne brait, et que le Parterre siffle; je sais, dis-je, tout cela comme eux, SIRE, mais votre Majesté fait tous les jours des choses si incroyables, que nous osons espérer...etc.

In this scene Dancourt points to the tribulations of contemporary professional writers struggling unsuccessfully, like M. de la Protase, to make a living with their pen. The outspoken maid, Gabrillon, comments on the playwright's poverty-stricken appearance which, however, was not unusual for those men of letters who lacked a regular and substantial income :

M. DE LA PROTASE

Savez-vous que vous parlez au premier homme du monde pour le Dramatique, à un bel esprit, à un Auteur de premier ordre?

GABRILLON

Vous êtes un bel esprit, Monsieur? Oh, je ne m'étonne plus de vous voir si déguenillé, un habit en lambeaux est le juste-au-corps à brevet du Parnasse.

M. DE LA PROTASE

Ce que vous dites-là ne sont pas des vers à la louange de la fortune; néanmoins il n'est que trop vrai que c'est assez d'être bel esprit pour être mal avec elle.

GABRILLON

Oh, sur ce pied-là, il faut que vous soyez plus bel esprit qu'un autre; car il paroît qu'elle vous traite plus mal que pas un. J'ai bien vu des Auteurs; mais tout franc, je n'en ai point encore vu de si mal relié que vous.

M. DE LA PROTASE

Patience.

GABRILLON

Et si, à le bien prendre, il vous en devroit coûter moins qu'à qui que ce soit; car, votre taille ne peut passer tout au plus que pour un Inedouze.

M. DE LA PROTASE

Laissez faire, si je puis parvenir à mettre une piece sur le Théâtre sans être sifflée, on me verra aussi-bien étoffé qu'un autre. (Act V, sc. ii.)

In presenting his disgruntled playwright in a comically absurd light, Dancourt was taking care not to ruffle the parterre by too strong a reprimand of their conduct.

(1)

With reference to this scene H. C. Lancaster⁽¹⁾ points out that it was reproduced almost wholesale in Act III, scene v of Les Aventures des Champs Elisés, acted at the Théâtre Italien in 1693, the year after Dancourt's play was first produced. Here a dramatist with exactly the same problem as M. de la Protase, described as 'mal relié' and resembling an 'in-douze' reads aloud the placet (which is almost a word for word copy of Dancourt's) which is addressed not to the King, but to Apollo.

Dancourt had made reference to the penury to which professional writers were often reduced in Le Chevalier à la Mode where an impoverished poet had composed for the chevalier some verses of a romantic nature in return for a used garment ; this is brought out by the valet, Crispin, addressing his master : 'Ce sont les Vers que vous fîtes faire l'autre jour, pour la Baronne, par ce misérable Poète, à qui vous donnâtes ce vieux juste-au-corps, qui vous avoit tant servi à la chasse. (Act II, sc. x.)

Another scene of La Femme d'Intrigues is devoted to satire of a précieuse. This was a rare theme in contemporary comedy, as the hey-day of preciosity had long since passed. The classic example of such satire is, of course, Molière's Les Précieuses Ridicules (1659), and apart from a few sallies in Les Femmes Savantes, there is hardly any tradition of précieuses in comedy. Dancourt's précieuse, Dorise, seeks the aid of Mme Thibaut, a bourgeoisie in the guise of a 'veuve de qualité' with influence at Court, so that she might obtain a 'brevet de bel esprit'. She is presented in a ridiculous light when she asks Mme Thibaut to speak on her behalf in influential circles with a view to her being elected into the Académie Française, an exclusively male preserve, even down to the present day :

MME THIBAUT

Je vous avoue, Madame, qu'avant que d'avoir eu l'honneur de vous voir, je n'avois point encore ouï dire qu'il y eût de beaux esprits à brevets.

DORISE

C'est que pour m'exprimer à vous, Madame, d'une manière élégante, je me suis servi du figuré; mais à parler au propre, cela veut dire que je postule une place à l'Académie.

MME THIBAUT

Vous, Madame, une place à l'Académie! Oh, je crois que vous dites encore cela au figuré.

(1) A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century, Part IV, vol. II, p. 687.

DORISE

Pourquoi pas, Madame, une place à l'Académie? parceque je suis femme, peut-être? Oh, si vous le prenez-là, c'est notre vrai ballot que les ouvrages de langue.

MME THIBAUT

Des femmes à l'Académie! Oh, il faudroit donc du moins se garder de leur donner des jettons; car, au lieu de travailler au Dictionnaire, elles joueroient à l'Ombre ou à la Bassette.

DORISE

S'il est besoin de faire preuve de beau génie, graces au Ciel, il court dans le monde des Sonnets et des Madrigaux de ma façon, qui ont fait dire à plus d'un connoisseur, qu'en matiere de Poésie je ne pouvois manquer d'être bel esprit à la premiere promotion. (Act I, sc. vii.)

The wife of a member of the legal profession, Dorise intends to make significant changes in the language used in the law-courts :

Pour la Prose, c'est en quoi j'excelle. Je travaille à mettre en beau langage le Code, le Protocole des Notaires, et le Praticien François(..)Par mon moyen, on parlera dorénavant au Palais comme on parle à la Cour(..)Les Exploits, les Ajournemens personnels, les Décrets et les Sentences de mort, seront écrits de ce petit style gai, coupé, enjoué et fleuri, dont on écrit les Historiettes et les Romans(..)Il n'y aura point de bel esprit qui ne veuille avoir vingt Procès, et l'on plaidera moins à l'avenir par nécessité, que par galanterie.

She is so caught up with literary affairs that she speaks of marriage in comically figurative terms :

DORISE

Croiriez-vous bien, Madame, que je ne me suis fait séparer de corps et de bien d'avec mon penultième mari, que parcequ'il m'étourdissoit tous les jours de quelque barbarisme du Palais.

MME THIBAUT

Votre penultième mari, Madame! vous avez donc été marié bien des fois?

DORISE

J'en suis à ma cinquieme édition.

MME THIBAUT

Oh, que vous n'en demeurerez pas là: belle et jeune comme vous êtes, pour peu que votre mari soit vieux, vous serez bientôt réimprimée. (Act I, sc. vii.)

Another exceptional example of a précieuse is found in La Baguette de Vulcain by Regnard and Dufresny given at the Italian Theatre in the year after Dancourt's play. Bélise, also a 'bel esprit' claims that 'On ne fait rien à l'Academie, sans me consulter', and, like her namesake in Les Femmes Savantes, thinks that marriage is incompatible with literary pursuits : 'je passe les jours avec des Livres; et je ne m'endors point que je n'aye une douzaine d'Auteurs anciens sous mon chevet'. (1)

(1) Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi, Amsterdam, 1695, p. 505.

With these plays devoted to satire of the bourgeoisie, as well as ^{with} those concerned with the aristocracy, Dancourt showed that he was no mere follower of established patterns who somehow fitted in with the general trend of contemporary comedy, but a playwright of initiative who played a prominent role in the period after Molière which is generally regarded as that of the comedy of manners. His Chevalier à la Mode provided the theatre with a fresh impetus for satire of parvenus, and he himself went on to develop this theme in many other plays.

The material for these social comedies was drawn chiefly from his observation of contemporary manners, but the aspects which he chose to dramatize do not, of course, give a complete and accurate picture of the bourgeoisie. What he does achieve is to give dramatic expression to various attributes which were regarded as characteristic of the bourgeois class as a whole, and present them in contrast with the outlook of their social betters; the difference between the two often led to lively and amusing confrontations. Dancourt is also successful in producing comic effects from the ironical situation of certain bourgeois who, even before their rise to social distinction is accomplished, adopt the airs and ideas of the class to which they aspire. In the instances when the metamorphosis from bourgeois to aristocrat exists purely in the imagination of the would-be social climber, Dancourt emphasizes their blood-ties with other bourgeois which make this transition look absurd. In other cases where the rise in social prestige has been effected in suspicious circumstances, the author stresses the chicanery or dishonesty (especially when it is a question of a lawyer or a financier) which has led to a rapid advancement in society.

It would be a gloomy picture indeed if Dancourt restricted his efforts to unrelieved satire of bourgeois manners; his portrait of contemporary society has, however, a more pleasing side, seen in the light-hearted vein in which he satirizes his characters and the existence of the numerous level-headed bourgeois whose outlook represents another and more flattering aspect of the bourgeoisie.

VIII. PEASANT PLAYS

An aspect of Dancourt's work which deserves special attention is his treatment of rustic themes, as the portrayal of peasant characters and episodes from rural life formed an appreciable part of his total output. On the whole, seventeenth-century playwrights as, indeed, writers of other forms of literature, did not devote much attention to rustic themes; such low-born members of society as peasants, whenever they did appear in the literature of the time, were generally consigned to a correspondingly inferior genre, that of comedy and farce. A rare example of a peasant appearing in non-dramatic literature of the time is found in a letter from Mme de Sévigné to her daughter written from her estates in Brittany; ^{hoped} ~~having~~ to collect her debts in full, she relates an amusing incident involving a peasant laden with 'des sacs de tous côtés...sous ses bras, dans ses poches, dans ses chausses' (1) who produces only thirty francs worth of doubles. Peasants are, however, mentioned with much sympathy in La Fontaine's fable, La mort et le bûcheron, and in La Bruyère's famous passage devoted to their plight. It was only in the last three decades of the seventeenth century that peasant characters became increasingly popular figures for the stage. Even then, they were represented according to a conventional pattern, as simple-minded bumpkins speaking a barbarous dialect, who were introduced into comedies not so much for the sake of characterization, but so as to provide an amusing digression from the main plot.

Dancourt's peasants, mostly drawn from the Paris region, correspond to a certain extent to the general trend of the time in that they are fairly conventional patois-speaking types, not unsympathetically portrayed in most cases, but always laughable characters. He does not, however, always treat his peasants as a mere homogeneous group: there are for example the socially ambitious and rapacious peasants, discontented with their humble lot and dazzled by the prospects of gaining wealth, and the parvenus who, like their bourgeois counterparts, despise the social

(1) Lettres, ed. Gérard-Gailly, Paris, 1953-57, 3 vols., vol. II, p. 746. (July 1680).

class from which they have risen. These are portrayed in much the same way as the bourgeois parvenus, though transposed in a lower key; over-confident in their unexpected good fortune, they become offensively domineering towards their associates and fall an easy prey to intriguers. On the other hand, some of Dancourt's peasants are sharp-witted and artful deceivers endowed with the faculty of outwitting sophisticated people. Their roles correspond roughly to those of the outspoken and resourceful servants of bourgeois plays, always ready to give advice to their masters, especially when unsolicited. In contrast with this type of peasant there are the utterly naive and amiable yokels whose gaucherie and ignorance of social graces compare comically with the manners of the neighbouring city-folk. And there are the illiterate sons of the soil, obliged to gain a living by the sweat of their brow, who are characterized by their folk-wisdom, earthy comments, and superstitious beliefs.

These peasants have, however, only the remotest connection with the hard realities of peasant life in the seventeenth century when conditions for many of this section of society were far from being a subject for comedy. It was for those concerned with moral and ethical questions to appeal to people's sense of social justice, and Dancourt was certainly not writing with this in view. None of his peasants could possibly resemble those '*animaux farouches...noirs, livides et tout brûlés du soleil*', suffering oppression and deprivation, as La Bruyère depicted them(1). Nor could a comic playwright take stock of such social conditions and give a realistic picture of the rustic way of life as seen by Locke on his travels through France. Instead, Dancourt made comedy out of certain traits of character which were recognizably and peculiarly rustic, and peasant jargon, with its phonetic deformations, is used for comic effect.

(1) Oeuvres, vol. III, Part I, p. 61.

As we have seen in only one quite exceptional case does Dancourt produce a purely 'peasant' play, that is, one exclusively devoted to a portrayal of rustic characters. He tends rather to present his peasants in their native habitat usually just outside the city, and in situations which involve them in dealings with Parisian bourgeois who visit these outlying districts. The contrast of the worldly-wise city-dwellers and the unsophisticated provincials, however shrewd the latter may be, produces an amusing effect.

A typical example of the astute and money-grubbing peasant is the gardener, Thibaut, of Les Vendanges de Suresnes, who, beneath his rather gross expressions, displays a keen insight into human behaviour unmatched by his bourgeois master, Thomasseau. Thibaut prides himself on his superior knowledge of womenfolk, and considers that he can offer some sagacious advice to his twice-widowed master on the choice of a third wife :

Accoutez, faites-la moi voir avant que de la prendre, je vous en dirai ce qui en sera, tout à la franquette. Voiez-vous, nous autres Paisans des environs de Paris, je nous connoissons mieux en femmes que parsonne, j'en voions tant de toutes les façons. C'est morgué une marchandise bian trompeuse. (sc. i.)

As in many other of Dancourt's plays, the peasant is given a dominant role and plays a significant part in the plot. This was a far cry from the previous generation of stage peasants as illustrated in Montfleury's Crispin Gentilhomme (c. 1675) where they come cap in hand to their master and are overawed by visitors from the city. In fact, in comparison with the wily gardener, Thomasseau appears as an idealist who indulges in flights of fancy and refuses to come to terms with the reality of situations. In particular, he has formed an over-optimistic opinion of his daughter, Marianne, whom he plans to marry to a man of his choice, and it is only after some persuasion that he is finally disillusioned by Thibaut, who expounds his philosophy in metaphors drawn from horticulture:

votre fille est en âge d'être mariée; et quand une poire est mûre, si on ne la cueille, elle tombe d'elle-même(...) elle est une fille bian élevée, mais elle est une fille. (sc. i.)

It comes rather as a shock to Thomasseau to discover that his daughter has not

been living up to the idealized opinion he had formed of her; it takes Thibaut to enlighten him by revealing that 'alle a queuque jeune drole dans la fantaisie'. (sc. i.) He offers to help his master out of this predicament by eliciting information from Mariane and informing him of her intentions. He further demonstrates his acumen in dealing with women :

THOMASSEAU

Tu as raison, je ne puis trop me hâter de la marier, pour rompre le cours de cette intrigue. Je m'en vais lui parler un peu, et savoir d'elle...

THIBAUT

Bon, est-ce que vous croïez les filles assez sottes pour conter à leurs peres leurs petites fredaines? Elles ne sont pargués pas si mal apprises: laissez-moi tout doucement ly tirer les vars du nez, je la ferai bian donner dans le panniau, et je vous dirai tout, ne vous boutez pas en peine. (sc. i.)

Reflecting on their conversation, Thibaut, soliloquising, is conscious that he is superior in ingenuity to his master :

il m'est avis que j'ai plus d'esprit que Monsieu Thomasseau: Oh, pour ça oui, j'ai meilleur jugement. Je ne sis pourtant qu'un païsan, mais il y a vingt ans que je le sers, et que je me moque de ly, et il ne m'en feroit morgués pas accroire seulement un quart d'heure. (sc. i.)

In an encounter with Mariane's suitor, Clitandre, an officer, Thibaut sizes up the prosperous-looking young man with the intention of extorting money by the threat of revealing his secret courtship : 'Il a la meine d'avoir bonne bourse, et notre connoissance pourroit avoir de bonnes suites' (sc. ii.) The astute peasant attempts to blackmail the young couple firstly by hinting in a jocular fashion at their clandestine meetings, then by mentioning the matter more openly, and finally by threatening to inform Thomasseau. The stages of his plan to obtain hush-money, although he has already divulged the information to his master, form an amusing scene full of dramatic irony :

THIBAUT

Je savons de vos fredaines, comme vous voïez(.).je sis diablement babillard, je vous en avertis.

* * *

MARIANE

Vàilà une montre d'or que je vous donne.

THIBAUT

Oh non, tatigué, je ne veux rian de vous. Quand il y a queuque fmais à faire

en amour, il faut que ce soit le Monsieur qui paie, à moins que la Madame ne soit vieille. Dans les Villages d'autour de Paris, je savons les règles.

CLITANDRE

Je vous dis que Thibaut est un homme d'esprit. Tiens, voilà une bourse, il y a dedans vingt pistoles, tu n'as qu'à l'ouvrir, et y prendre tout ce que tu voudras.

THIBAUT

Oh, Monsieur.

CLITANDRE

Comment?

THIBAUT

Il n'y a point de nécessité de l'ouvrir, je la veux toute.

CLITANDRE

Tu n'as qu'à la garder, je te la donne.

MARIANE

Il est homme d'esprit, vous avez raison.

THIBAUT

Nous vela donc d'accord à présent, je serons trois têtes dans le même bonnet.
(sc. iii.)

The peasant, Mathurin, in Colin-Maillard, plays a significant part in the plot. He resembles other rustic characters who are corruptible, but he has one distinguishing feature, his desire to project an image of honesty. He is a gardener in the country house of a Parisian bourgeois, Robinot, who has confided in him his plans to marry his ward, Angélique, in spite of rivalry from her suitor, a young captain, Eraste. When Mathurin overhears a conversation between the captain, his valet, Lépine and Robinot's aunt, Mme Brillard, who are conspiring to kidnap the girl, he intends to make capital out of this information. There is one difficulty, however, in the way of fulfilling his intention: he does not want his extortion of money to appear as blackmail, which would destroy the illusion he wishes to give of faithfulness to his master. In a confrontation with Eraste and Lépine, he at first resists their attempts to win him over by friendly advances, and then steers the conversation in the direction of bribery. A comic effect is created by the contrast between his insistence throughout the scene on his incorruptible nature and his overriding avidity for financial gain :

ERASTE

Ecoute, mon ami.

MATHURIN

Non, morgué, je ne sis pas votre ami, et ça est bian vilain à un honnête Capitaine comme vous, d'avoir comme ça des enjoleux à gage qui venont prêcher dans les maisons, afin de parvartir les parsonnes foibles(...) morgué vous ne me parvartirez point, je sis imparvartissable.

* * *

LEPINE

...tu te feras donner cent coups de bâton .

* * *

MATHURIN

...Ce n'est morgué pas comme ça qu'on m'amadoué. Hé fi, queulle magniere! Allons, de l'honnêteté, de la douceur, on a tout de moi par la douceur, j'aime qu'on me prie.(...) mais il y a magniere et magniere de prier (...) On m'a prié plus de cent fois pour des affaires comme ça: mais n'an s'y prenoit d'une autre façon...Oh, il y a des parsonnes bian plus stildées les unes que les autres. Tenez, on tiroit une bourse d'abord, ça me bailloit de l'attention, ça me faisoit ouvrir les yeux, vous entendez bian ça n'est-ce pas?(..) On m'expliquoit la chose, j'acoutois; on ouvroit la bourse, je boutois la main dedans sans qu'on me fît seigne: car je comprends facilement les choses, moi, et il m'est avis que vous ne comprenez pas si bian, vous, Monsieu le Capitaine. (sc. ix.)

An anti-climax is reached when it is discovered that Eraste never carries ready cash on his person, thus rendering of no effect Mathurin's contrivance to obtain money. The wily peasant refuses to accept a promissory note from Eraste, fearing that the captain, like many of his associates, would not have the wherewithal to meet it: 'Un billet? non, Je n'avons pas de foi pour des billets de Capitaine... Non, voyez-vous, je sis incorruptible.' (sc. ix.) Eraste speedily puts an end to this state of deadlock by turning the tables on Mathurin; he pretends to be in love with Mathurin's fiancée, Claudine, and proposes marriage to her in his presence. The peasant girl is temporarily led astray by his promises of fine clothers, jewels, and a carriage, with the result that Mathurin is powerless to bring her to her senses:

MATHURIN

Hé, que t'es sotte Claudeine, ne t'assie morguene pas à ça, ce sont des feintes.

ERASTE

Non, Monsieur le Jardinier, non, ce ne sont point des feintes: Claudine sera ma femme, je vous en réponds(..) Je me fais un plaisir sensible de réparer l'injustice du sort qui l'a fait nâître paysanne.

CLAUDINE

C'est bien de la bonté à vous, Monsieur. Tu entends, Mathurin?

ERASTE

Que j'ai d'impatience de la voir habillée d'une belle étoffe d'or.(...) avec une belle croix de diamans, et de belles pierreries à ses oreilles (...) Qu'elle sera brillante, dans ce beau carrosse que je lui ferai faire!

* * *

MATHURIN

Par la harnigué, vela une mauvaise langue, il n'y a morgué pas un mot de vrai à tout ce qu'il dit là. Et comment te bailleroit-il tout ça? Aga, tiens, Claudeine, son valet ni ly n'avont pas seulement de bourse. (sc. xii.)

Mathurin's real character is brought out in a scene between Eraste, Lépine and the gardener when Mathurin, afraid of losing his fiancée, is only too willing to betray his master.

LEPINE

... Le beau dessein à un homme comme vous, d'épouser une paysanne? une petite étourdie apparemment: sans conduite, sans jugement, sans retenue, sans scrupule (...)et cependant vous rompez pour elle des engagemens très solides, vous oubliez Mademoiselle Angélique.

* * *

ERASTE

Un tendre souvenir me rappelle à ses charmes.

MATHURIN

Retornez-y, Monsieur le Capitaine.

ERASTE

J'y trouve tant d'obstacles.

MATHURIN

Morgué, je les lèverons, ne vous boutez pas en peine.

ERASTE

Non, je fais cas de ta fidélité, je ne veux point que tu trahisse ton maître.

MATHURIN

Oh, palsangué je le trahirai.

LEPINE

Voilà un fort honnête garçon, Monsieur.

ERASTE

Il mourroit de douleur.

MATHURIN

Morguene, il ne m'importe, partant que j'aie Claudeine.

ERASTE

Ce seroit une trop grande perfidie à toi de me livrer une personne qu'il regarde comme sa femme.

MATHURIN

Ça n'y fait rien, je vous la livrerai. J'aime mieux que vous épousais sa femme que la mienne. (sc. xiv.)

Ironically, it is only when Mathurin has found that his claims to scrupulous honesty become an obstacle to his personal interests, that he agrees to help Eraste in his quest for Angélique's hand.

As for Claudine, she continues to be enraptured with the idea of marrying into the nobility, and adopts an air of superiority when explaining Eraste's sudden change of heart to her mistress, Angélique, who calls her 'impudente' :

CLAUDINE

Impudente! Oh doucement, s'il vous plaît, je serai bientôt plus grande Dame que vous. Mais voyez un peu avec son impudente!

ANGELIQUE

Ce qu'elle me dit là n'est pas concevable: elle a perdu l'esprit, ou bien Eraste est devenu fou. Non, non, il n'y a pas d'apparence qu'il la préfère à moi.

CLAUDINE

Il n'y a pas d'apparence? Ah! voyez donc comme il n'y en a pas. Hom, quand j'aurai de belles pierreries aux oreilles, avec ces beaux habits dorés, dans ce beau carrosse qu'il me fera faire...(sc. xvii.)

Claudine has a rude awakening when she sees Eraste, dressed as a peasant, anxious to justify himself in the eyes of Angélique who, however, refuses to accept his excuses. When she repents of her gullibility, Mathurin is willing to pardon her for temporarily deserting him, but not before teasing her for her extravagant notions and criticising the manners of city-folk :

MATHURIN

...Ce sont de drôles de parsonnes que ces gens de Paris...Quand ils sont Messieurs, ils couront les Paysannes; s'habillent-ils en Paysans, c'est aux Demoiselles qu'ils en veulent. Ils ne font jamais rien de ce qu'ils doivent faire. Ha, ha, ha.

CLAUDINE

Ah! Mathurin, je crois que celui-ci s'est moqué de moi, mon pauvre Mathurin.

MATHURIN

Ouidà, ouidà, ça se pourroit bien; ils sont un tantinet gausseux ces drôles-là.

CLAUDINE

Les vilaines gens! Tu vaud (sic) mieux que tout ça, toi, Mathurin, tu n'es point trigaute(..) Hé bien, touche donc-là. Va, je t'aime mieux que personne.

MATHURIN

Oh nanin, nanin, je ne te veux point faire perdre ta fortune(..) je te veux voir dans ce biau carrosse, avec cet habit d'or et ces pend'oreilles.

CLAUDINE

Bon, c'est encore un bon nigaud avec ses contes. Va! Mathurin, je n'y serai plus attrapée.

* * *

MATHURIN

Hé bien, velle qui est fait, je te le pardonne. (sc. xxi.)

Mathurin proceeds to instruct his fiancée on the dangers of gullibility, and warns her that, in the interests of their future ménage, she will have to amend her conduct. The similes he uses in his brief lecture are drawn from agriculture:

MATHURIN

...Stanpendant vois-tu, autant c'en seroit si j'avions déjà été mari et femme; t'étois folle de ly, et il n'en faut morgué pas plus que ça pour gayer un ménage.

CLAUDINE

Tu as raison.

MATHURINE

C'est que, vois-tu, Claudeine, il est bon que tu saches ça. Il en est du ménage, vois-tu, comme d'une charrue, où sont attelés le mari et la femme; tant qu'ils tirent tous deux de concert, la charrue va bien: mais si la femme se met quelque fantaisie dans la charvelle, le mari se chagrine; l'un tire à dià, l'autre à uriau: la charrue deviant mal attelée, et le ménage s'en va à tous les diables.

CLAUDINE

Cela est fort bien dit, Mathurin. Que tu as d'esprit!

MATHURIN

Oh ce n'est pas par l'esprit que je sais ça, c'est par l'expérience, et ma défunte, à moi, tiroit à uriau autant que parsonne de sa sorte: mais, écoute, donc, ne vas pas faire de même. (sc. xxi.)

A parallel passage in Dufresny's L'Opéra de Campagne (1692) shows a striking similarity with Mathurin's amusing simile, in a scene where Pierrot gives a 'petite harangue' to Jeannot about his wife :

le mariage est une charrue; le mari c'est le roussin qui la tire, et la femme c'est le collier. Or sus donc, si la femme est le collier de misère, imaginez-vous que vous êtes le roussin. Or, si vous êtes un bon roussin, vigoureux et bien empoitrailé, vous serez franc du collier, c'est-à-dire, maître de votre femme, et la charrette du mariage ira bon train; mais posé le cas que vous ne soyez qu'un criquet, fleube et dibile, le collier vous gourmandera, la première ornière vous fera chopper, et voilà la charrette à tous les diables. (Act II, sc. viii.)

On occasion, Dancourt emphasized what was an almost universal attribute among peasants - their illiteracy. In Le Tuteur, for example, the fermier, Lucas's inability to read puts him in an awkward situation :

LUCAS, seul, tenant un papier à la main.

Tatigué que c'est grand dommage que je ne connoisse A ni B. Gros et grand comme je sis, c'est une honte que je ne sache pas encore lire. Ah! que j'aurois de plaisir à défricher ce qu'il y a dans ce papier que je viens de trouver! Il faut que ce soit quelque chose de biau; car il étoit bien emmailloté; cachets par ici, cachets par y-là... Si c'étoit quelque bon contrat, quelque bonne lettre

de change, que sait-on? La fortune vient par fois en dormant; elle m'en veut peut-être? Pourquoi non? je ne serois pas le premier manant qu'elle auroit fait grand Seigneur, ça se voit à chaque bout de champ, ça arrive tous les jours, et si personne ne crie miracle. Si on me voyoit dans un beau carrosse, qu'est-ce qui croiroit que j'ai été paysan? je ne m'en souviendrois peut-être pas moi-même. (sc. i)

This socially ambitious peasant is in charge of a certain M. Bernard's country house, and acts as spy for his bourgeois master, assisting him to track down a would-be suitor and his helpers who are planning to kidnap Bernard's ward and intended bride, Angélique. Lucas is also characterized by his sharpness of wit and his lack of tact in expressing himself. He tells his master some home-truths about Angélique's feelings for him, and at the same time puts him on his guard against plans which are afoot to abduct the girl :

BERNARD

Ici, Lucas. Tu as un gros bon sens que j'ai toujours trouvé admirable.

LUCAS

Mon bon sens et moi, je sommes à votre service.

BERNARD

Que penses-tu de l'évanouissement d'Angélique?

LUCAS

Morgué, je pense qu'elle ne vous aime point. Voyez-vous; elle seroit bien-aise d'être mariée, mais elle est fâchée que ce soit avec vous.

BERNARD

Elle n'en épousera pourtant point d'autre.

LUCAS

Acoutez, Monsieur, ne jurons de rien, et défions-nous de tout, il se mitonne quelque manigance, à quoi il faut prendre garde. (sc. vii.)

The Lucas of Le Galant Jardinier is the gardener of a Parisian bourgeois, Dubuisson, who has accepted a bribe from a young man, Léandre, suitor of Dubuisson's daughter, to employ him ostensibly as an apprentice gardener in his master's country residence and to pass off Léandre's valet, La Montagne, as his own nephew. Lucas's wife, Mathurine, slow of understanding, finds all this too taxing on her powers of retention; her inability to embrace this complicated situation poses a threat to the secrecy of the affair:

MATHURINE

Ah! Vous voilà, Monsieur de la Montagne, il y a une heure que votre maître...

LA MONTAGNE

Hé! paix, paix, Madame Mathurine, êtes-vous folle de ne me pas appeler votre neveu?

MATHURINE

Ah! vous avez raison, et je n'y songeois pas. Votre maître donc, il y a une heure...

LA MONTAGNE

Encore? Ah! tout est perdu. Avez-vous le diable au corps, ma tante Mathurine? Est-ce que j'ai un maître, moi?

MATHURINE

Oui, voirement, vous en avez un. Ce jeune Monsieur qui a baillé de l'argent à notre homme pour être garçon Jardinier, n'est-ce pas votre maître? Que voulez-vous dire? Est-ce que je suis une bête?

LA MONTAGNE

Oh! pour cela oui, très fort. Votre garçon Jardinier est un Jardinier, et moi, je suis votre neveu, Sargent de milice. On vous a dit cent fois...

MATHURINE

Ça est vrai, j'ai tort, je n'y serai plus attrappée(..)mais songez donc que votre maître...le garçon Jardinier vous cherche pour vous parler, mon neveu de la milice. (sc. iii) (seule) Ils avont biau faire et biau dire, je ne saurois m'accoutumer à ce qui n'est point. (sc. iv.)

In an amusing scene with his wife, whose strong point is not discretion, Lucas explains in his rambling and repetitive style what he thinks might be the secret of gaining a fortune: the discovery of a piece of paper belonging to Léandre's valet which he cannot read, but which he suspects might well contain some vital information which would, in some mysterious way, lead to wealth and, consequently, social elevation :

LUCAS

O ça, accoute, te sens-tu capable de garder un secret bian secretement?

MATHURINE

Oh, pour ça oui. Tian, il m'est arrivé je ne sais combien de choses, que je me serois plutôt fait hâcher que de te les dire à toi-même.

* * *

LUCAS

Aga, tian, Mathureine, je ne sais pas encore trop bian ce que c'est. Morgué, pourquoi faut-il que je ne sachions pas lire ni l'un ni l'autre?...Tians, vela un papier qui est tombé de la poche de ce drôle que j'appelons notre neveu.

MATHURINE

Hé bian?

LUCAS

Hé bian? C'est le factoton de ce jeune Capitaine qui s'est fait garçon Jardinier.

MATHURINE

Je le sais bien.

LUCAS

Or ces gens-là, tu sais, remuons l'argent à la pelle; ils font jouer, tu sais, jour et nuit les Ménestriers dans le Village; ils tirent, tu sais, des fusées, et des artifices sur l'iau; ils m'ont baillé, tu sais, quinze piéces d'or, pour que le Capitaine devint notre garçon, et son homme de chambre notre neveu, tu sais.

MATHURINE

Hé bian? je sais, je sais. Si je sais tout ça, pourquoi me le dire?

LUCAS

Ah! Marguenne, bellement, Mathureine, tredame! t'es bian prompte. Ce que je te dis là, vois-tu, c'est à celle fin de te faire mieux entendre que ce Capitaine-là est un homme riche, vois-tu, queuque fils de Maltôtier; que c'est-là, vois-tu, queuque bon papier de conséquence, queuque contrat de construction, vois-tu, queuque lettre de change. (sc. v.)

The gardener displays a singular mixture of cunning and credulity as he paints a mental picture of the life they would lead as a result of this stroke of good fortune; he unfolds to his equally simple-minded wife the stages of his imaginary rise to social distinction which he has carefully mapped out. At this point Dancourt introduces some satire of tax-farmers who had risen from lowly positions in society :

LUCAS

J'ai marguenne opignon que ça est. Tatigué, que d'envieux! Que de gens fâchés dans le Village, quand ils verront Mathureine et Lucas dans un biau carrosse! Car, vois-tu, je ne sommes pas pour en demeurer là. Si j'ai une fois de l'argent, crac, je me boute dans les affaires, je me fais Partisan, tu seras Partisane; j'achèterons queuque Charge de Noblesse; et pis, et pis on oubliera ce que j'avons été; et je ne nous en souviendrons morgué peut-être pas nous-mêmes.

MATHURINE

Je deviendrons Nobles, Lucas! J'aurions carrosse?

LUCAS

Pourquoi non? Je ne sommes pas les premiers Paysans qui aurions fait fortune. (sc. v.)

At a much later date, Dufresny made use of the idea of a peasant wishing to realize his dreams of wealth through a financial career. In La Coquette de Village (1715) Lucas, who imagines he has won the 'gros lot', despises the way of life he has led all his life on the land, and envisages an easy method of becoming rich :

...mon argent, bouté dans la grande aventure,
 Ça renflera d'abord, et pi, comme une enflure,
 Ça va gagner. (Act III, sc. v.)

In Dancourt's play, Mathurine at first expresses some scruples about her husband's holding on to the mysterious paper which is the property of their newly acquired apprentice gardener, Léandre, but she is easily won over by Lucas's sophistical reasoning; the wily peasant finds justification of his action in the theory that members of the rustic community, often sorely oppressed by various social injustices and the ravages of marauding soldiers on their lands, were entitled to some form of compensation for their hard lot :

MATHURINE

Mais, acoute, Lucas, n'est-ce pas voler, que de ne pas rendre ce papier à ce Monsieur à qui il appartient?

LUCAS

Bon, voler une feuille de papier! Et puis, après tout, il n'y a pas de mal à ça. Un Paysan prendre à un Capitaine, et au fils d'un Maltôtier encore: ce n'est pas voler, que ça, c'est prendre sa revanche.

MATHURINE

Tu as raison. Montre-moi ce papier, Lucas; donne, Lucas, donne.

LUCAS

Bellement, donc, ne vas pas le déchirer. (sc. v.)

Dancourt portrays the awe with which illiterate people regard the printed word:

to Lucas, the piece of paper he has found is surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery:

MATHURINE

Hé, Lucas, c'est de l'écriture dont on écrit des livres, je pense?

LUCAS

Hé oui, tant mieux, c'est de la meilleure, stelle-là, de la plus véritable, de celle qu'on croit davantage... Hé, margué, que fais-tu? t'es mal-adroite. Ce n'est pas comme ça que ça se tiant, c'est comme ça. J'ons déjà queuque connoissance, vois-tu. Tiens, Mathureine, que je te montre? tout ce qui est blanc, vois-tu c'est le papier, et tout ce qui est noir, c'est les lettres. (sc. v.)

Having eavesdropped on a conversation between Léandre and his valet, Lucas discovers the key to the paper he has found: it is notice of a reward of ~~thirty~~ pistoles offered by Léandre's father for information leading to the recovery of the young captain feared killed on his return from the front. Lucas sees in this situation an excellent opportunity for blackmail: Léandre has disguised himself, with Lucas's

help, as a gardener to gain access to Dubuisson's daughter, Lucile, and at the same time wishes to remain incognito to his father who has arranged a match for him. Lucas's avidity for money is explained in his own words: 'je suis fillot d'un Procureur de Paris' (sc. vii.) . He obtains from Léandre and his valet not only thirty pistoles, but also four louis to prevent him from tossing up between the father's reward and their hush-money. But not content with his bribe, Lucas sells out to Léandre's father, Orgon, and gains an additional thirty pistoles. He prides himself on his cunning: 'J'ai fait un beau coup. Avouez tous que je suis un habile homme.' (sc. xxiv.)

In Les Agitateurs, Dancourt puts on the stage yet another Lucas, whose greatest ambition is to acquire a fortune. Lucas is a villager from the outskirts of Paris who, for the first time in his life, is venturing into city life. The reason for his visit to Paris is to bring news of an inheritance to his cousin, Claudine, who has found employment as a maid in a bourgeois household. The villager, used to the narrow confines of a tightly-knit community, is completely out of his depth in a sea of strange faces:

Palsangé, cousine, c'est une terrible ville que ce Paris, que peine on a d'y trouver une fille. On ne t'y connaît non plus que s'il n'y avait pas six mois que tu y demeures. Je te cherche morguoi tout depuis hier que je suis arrivé; et si par cas fortuit je ne t'avais pas rencontrée, je crois, Dieu me pardonne, que je te chercherais encore, et je me chercherais peut-être itou moi-même, car j'ai pensé me perdre. (sc. i.)

Although the two cousins are to share equally an estate left by their recently deceased aunt, Lucas has thought up a scheme to gain possession of the whole amount:

LUCAS

je sommes ses héritiers, si tu veux je partagerons, ou si tu veux je ne partagerons pas.

CLAUDINE

Qu'est-ce à dire, je ne partagerons pas?

LUCAS

Oui, je ne dépendons que de nous, je n'avons qu'à nous marier, ça évitera le partage, et j'aurai lignée à qui tout revendra, tu n'as qu'à voir. (sc. i.)

As a result of her greater experience of city life, Claudine has acquired a gloss of sophistication which contrasts comically with her cousins's complete naivety:

CLAUDINE

...mais écoute donc, Lucas, je suis ici dans une bonne maison, et avec une jeune ~~Maîtresse~~, qui m'a promis de faire ma fortune.

LUCAS

Hé bian, tant mieux, qu'alle fasse itou la mienne, me ~~vala~~ tout porté, il ne lui en coûtera pas davantage.

CLAUDINE

Hé! le moyen? tu ne sais ni lire ni écrire.

LUCAS

Pargué, ni toi non plus, je sommes aussi ~~savans~~ l'un que l'autre; et si on fait la tienne, il m'est avis que la mienne ne sera pas plus mal-aisée.

CLAUDINE

Oui, c'est bien tout un, mais ce n'est pas de même. On dit que ce n'est pas par l'esprit que les filles font fortune dans ce Paris: mais les hommes...

LUCAS

Tatigué, je la ferai par où tu la feras, je sommes parens, du même village, je suivrons tous deux le même chemin.

CLAUDINE

Tu es un ignorant, ça ne se fait pas comme ça: il faut savoir écrire, compter, faire des chiffres, il n'y a que ce moyen-là pour parvenir.

LUCAS

Hé bian, je parviendrai, il n'y a qu'à apprendre. (Act I, sc. i.)

Dancourt takes advantage of the situation to insert a piece of satire against peasant parvenus; referring to one of the agioteurs, Claudine remarks: 'Monsieur Trapolin n'étoit qu'un Paysan comme toi il y a cinq ou six ans, quand son Parrain le fit venir à Paris: mais il sait écrire, lui, aussi est-il devenu riche'. (Act I, sc. i.) When the maid explains that the business of agioteurs consists of making profits from paper money, Lucas takes this to be the effect of witchcraft, a conclusion which was suggested to him by his superstitious nature. It is interesting to note in this context that belief in witchcraft still survived in the seventeenth century:

CLAUDINE

(Monsieur Trapolin) change le papier en de l'~~argent~~ et l'argent en papier (...) tout le papier qui est dans la maison, c'est autant d'argent, crois-tu ça?

LUCAS

Morgué, c'est queuque sorcier que ce drôle-là: notre Barger l'est itou: mais il n'en fait pas tant, et il est bian raisonnable que les sorciers de Paris en sachant plus que les sorciers de Village.(...) si je pouvions attrapper

queuques petits feuillets de ce papier-là, Claudeine!

CLAUDINE

En attrapper, gardons-nous-en bien, le diable nous tordroit le cou, peut-être.

LUCAS

Bon, palsanguenne, est-ce qu'il le tord aux autres? Ayons tant seulement du papier, et puis laisse faire, je nous accommoderons avec ly, ne te boute pas en peine. (Act I, sc. i.)

Lucas, taking literally the idea that paper ~~can~~ be changed into gold, is however unsuccessful in his attempt to gain a fortune. Having found a piece of paper containing writing and believing it to be invested with magical properties, the illiterate peasant hands it to one of the agioteurs, Zacharie, requesting him to exchange it for a sum of money. But, unknown to Lucas, the paper is no more than a billet doux :

ZACHARIE lit

...ah, ah, ah, cela est trop plaisant, par ma foi, cela vaut de l'or.

LUCAS

De l'or, Claudeine...Oh, Monsieur...Comme il rit! Est-ce-là la sarominie qu'il faut ~~pour~~ faire pour changer le papier en de l'argent? dis.

ZACHARIE

Sa simplicité me charme. (Act III, sc. xxiii.)

The peasant, Guillaume, in Les Curieux de Compiègne, takes advantage of the attraction of the military display held just outside the town in order to make a lucrative business out of providing accommodation for crowds of curieux who had flocked there in such great numbers that, in the words of Saint-Simon, 'L'on ne trouvoit point à se loger pour son argent'. Guillaume has no scruples about exacting exorbitant prices from his lodgers in return for overcrowded and uncomfortable conditions. In a conversation with his cousin, Mme Pinuin, owner of a boarding-house in the town, the astute peasant compares himself with his guests and prides himself on his superior wisdom :

MME PINUIN

Hélas, Monsieur Guillaume, vous n'êtes pas trop nigaut pour un Picard, et vous entendez assez bien vos petits intérêts, aussi bien que moi.

GUILLAUME

Dame, acoutez, quand je sommes une fois déniaisés, nous autres Picards, je ne nous changerions pas contre certains badauds qui n'avont rien vu; tatigué, la plaisante engeance.

MME PINUIN

Vous n'avez pas mal fait votre compte avec eux, et le voisinage du Camp ne vous a point apporté ^{de} dommage.

GUILLAUME

Oh, pour stilà non; je me sis avisé de tenir cabaret dans notte ferme, c'est un bon métier, couseine, n'an gagne ce qu'on veut; j'avons morgué eu du monde jusques dans nos étables, et si ils y couchiont tretous sur de la litiere à vingt sous par tête tant qu'il en vouliant: Oh morgué, j'ai bien vendu mes denrées.

MME PINUIN

Hé, n'est-il pas juste que ces Curieux de Paris paient un peu cher le plaisir de voir un Camp?

GUILLAUME

Parguenne, ils seraiant encore trop heuruex quand il leur en coûteroit encore dix fois davantage; ils avont vu une armée une fois, comme alle campe, comme alle file, comme alle marche, comme alle décampe, comme alle...que sais-je, moi? Tatigué, quand ils seront retournés cheux eux, comme ils débagouleront tout ça dans leur voisinage! (sc. vi.)

Guillaume goes on to criticize the morals of certain Parisian bourgeois who have come to Compiègne unaccompanied by their husbands ostensibly to watch the spectacular event :

Guillaume

...mais ces Bourgeoises, que venont-elles faire ici?

MME PINUIN

La curiosité est plus pardonnable aux femmes qu'aux hommes, et...

GUILLAUME

Hé fy, morgué, c'est se mocquer, la curiosité est permise à de certaines femmes: mais à des Marchandes, à des Cabaretieres, à des Procureuses: Est-ce que c'est leur besogne de quitter leur ménage et de s'en venir à l'armée! (...) Il y a morgué de ces masques-là qui avont fait garder la maison aux Procureurs pendant qu'alles s'en venont ici courir la pretantaine avec des maîtres Clercs (...) Je voudrois, parguenne, pour la rareté du fait, qu'on en fit tant seulement passer queuque demi douzaine par les baguettes, ça leur apprendroit à demeurer cheux elles. (sc. vi.)

Guillaume regards his guests as objects of ridicule as well as of financial profit:

MME PINUIN

Mais ces gens-là dont vous vous moquez, vous apportent de l'argent, cousin.

GUILLAUME

Bian entendu, voirement, je profite de leurs sottises, mais je m'en gobarge. Ainsi va le monde, ça est-il défendu? (sc. vi.)

In his other rustic plays Dancourt places greater emphasis on the social ambitions of peasants rather than on their pursuit of financial gain though, as we have seen these two characteristics are often inextricably linked. In les Trois Cousines, for example, a three-act comédie-ballet, devoted to an exclusively peasant section of society, Dancourt satirizes a meunière who, since she was left a widow, has ample opportunity to lead a gay life and who showed flirtatious tendencies even during her late husband's lifetime. Apart from the completely different background in which the meunière moves, there is little in Dancourt's treatment of her to distinguish her from the numerous bourgeois of his other plays; she is portrayed as a socially ambitious widow whose brother-in-law, De Lorme, outraged by her lack of any sense of propriety, reprimands her for her conduct. De Lorme, too, has his counterpart in bourgeois plays, although he retains his peasant identity. The other characters include De Lorme's daughter, Colette, a precocious girl who displays a keener insight into the affairs of the heart than her elders, her two cousins, Louison and Marotte, daughters of La Meunière, whose only ambition in life is to secure a husband, an amenable yokel, Blaise, who is in love with Colette but courted by La Meunière, and a village bailli who provides Dancourt with material for satire of such petty officials.

In a conversation with the bailli, De Lorme makes known his attitude towards his sister-in-law, La Meunière, whose way of life has given him cause for concern :

Il s'agit que défunt mon frere, le Meunier d'ici, est trépassé, comme vous savez; et que Madame sa femme est diablement vivante, à ce qu'il me paroît(..)je ne vas pas de fois au moulin que je ne trouve la nape mise et du monde au tour, de grandes cruchées de vin par ici, des jambons par là, un gigot d'un côté, un cochon de lait de l'autre, des Menétriers dans un batiau, la musette et le hautbois sous l'orme, il m'est avis que ce sont des nœces perpétuelles, et si parmi tout ça je ne vois ni Curé ni Tabellion. Morgué, cela me baille martel en tête; car voyez-vous, j'ai de l'honneur, et je sis pour l'ame du défunt presque aussi jaloux de ma belle-soeur, que je l'aye jamais été de ma femme Margot, pendant qu'elle étoit au monde; et je ne l'étois pas mal, comme vous savez (Act I, sc. iii.)

He is afraid that his sister-in-law's impatience to remarry may set a bad example to her two daughters and Colette. His explanation to the bailli of his attitude towards women in general and his solicitude for the future of the three cousins is couched in comically figurative language :

La Meuniere bronchera, prenons-y garde, et si elle bronche une fois, ses filles et la mienne broncheront itou, peut-être. Car les filles et les femmes, c'est comme les moutons, voyez-vous; drès que l'une a sauté le fossé, crac, vela les autres après; et la Meuniere est une sauteuse, je vous en avartis. (Act I, sc.vii.)

La Meunière's carefree existence is always a bone of contention whenever she engages in conversation with her brother-in-law who cannot suppress his disapproval in spite of his intention to feign acquiescence :

DE LORME

Parguenne, la belle soeur n'a pas tort, Monsieu le Bailli, vela une bonne petite vie, toujours chanter, danser, boire et manger. Gagne-t-on biau coup à ce métier-là?

LA MEUNIERE

On y gagne du bon tems, biau-frere; n'est-ce pas le meilleur proufit de la vie? (Act II, sc. i.)

De Lorme, a man of upright character, criticizes La Meunière's way of bringing up her daughters. Referring to her recent decision to consult some gypsy fortune-tellers on the best action to take, De Lorme remarks in a soliloquy :

Oh vela palsangé des maximes qui ne valent rian pour de jeunes filles, et ces Bohémiens-là sont des dénicheux de marles, sur ma parole. Vela ce que c'est, Madame la Meuniere, vous aimez la joie, le divartissement; vos filles s'élèvent parmi tout ça, alles n'entendent par-ci par-là que des morales d'amour, et vous ne voulez pas qu'alles songiaint au mariage? Ça est morgué imparinent, ça est ridicule. (Act III, sc. i.)

Another noteworthy feature of the play is the piece of satire directed against the bailli; addressing him, La Meunière makes an ironic compliment : 'Oh, ça, Monsieur le Bailli, vous êtes bon-homme, honnête homme, vous avez bon esprit, bonne conscience, tout Bailli que vous êtes.' (Act I, sc. i.) This remark reflects the reputation of baillis in contemporary society for being unprincipled officials (1).

In Le Charivari the peasant, Thibaut, a gardener in the house of a bourgeoisie of some means, Mme Loricart, expresses his dissatisfaction with his humble station in society, and intends to remedy the situation by a mariage de convenance with his mistress which he envisages will be the first step to social elevation. The barrier of social class is not the only incongruous element in this marriage; what is even more preposterous is the disparity in age between Thibaut who is no more than a youngster and his intended bride of fairly advanced age;

(1) As this is only a brief, though significant, reference, the question will be discussed later in the chapter when dealing with a weightier satirical passage on baillis.

je me suis fait le Jardinier d'une vieille Madame, qui a pris une si bonne amitié pour moi, que c'est la plus grande piquie du monde(..) elle est folle de moi(..) elle veut m'épouser c'est sa folie; je ly avois pourtant offert qu'elle ne m'épousât pas: mais j'ai biau dire, elle n'en veut morgué pas d'mordre(..) quand ça sera fait une fois, ça sera fait; je nous déclarerons, et j'apprendrai à lire et à écrire pour excercer queuque bonne charge de robe(..) en après je deviendrai veuf, et puis velà le garçon, je serai heureux comme un petit roi; car je ne l'aime pas, moi, Madame Loricart; et si ce n'étoit que je m'ennuie d'être Jardinier...(sc. vi.)

Thibaut becomes disillusioned about his carefully laid plans when he realizes to his shame that news of his imminent marriage has leaked out in spite of his efforts to keep it a secret, with the result that he becomes the laughing-stock of the village chiefly, of course, on account of the wide discrepancy between their ages. He explains his embarrassment to Mme Loricart's maid, Mathurine :

THIBAUT

N'an se gobarge de moi dans tout le Village, et les petits enfans couront après moi: oh dame(..) c'est notre Madame qui est cause de ça(..) Tenez, à la franquette, Madame Mathurine, je nous deshonorons tous deux, Madame Loricart et moi, chacun à notre maniere; elle, moi, parcequ'elle est vieille; moi, alle, parceque je ne sis qu'un paysan: et si dans le fonds, il y va plus d'm mien que du sien; car tatigé, je vaux mieux qu'elle, oui, et elle le sait bien, c'est alle qui me recherche.

MATHURINE

Et tu crois que cela te deshonore de devenir le mari d'une personne dont tu n'es que le Jardinier. (sc. xiv.)

Not even the prospects of riches which had tempted him before could now induce Thibaut to expose himself to the derision of his associates :

il n'en sera rian, vela qui est résolu(..) je sais bian ce qui en arriveroit, je sis brutal, je me connois; je n'aime pas les gausseries, je casserois la tête à queuqu'un qui en trépasseroit, la Justice s'en voudroit mêler, et puis crac, vela le marié branché; le biau commencement de nêce! Oh dame, voyez-vous, j'aime mieux être un Jardinier en bonne santé, qu'un Monsieu pendu, il n'y a point de milieu... (sc. xiv.)

It is evident from his outlook that Thibaut is not the usual simple-minded bumpkin of Dancourt's comedies, but a peasant solicitous about his image and conscious of the impression he is making on others. Having considered the consequences of a marriage into a higher social class, he judiciously decides that the disadvantages in terms of the embarrassment it would entail outweigh the advantages of financial gain. When he breaks the news of ^{his} decision to Mme Loricart, his fiancée beats him with a stick for breaking his promise, but he holds firm in his resolution :

THIBAUT

vous m'avez fait accroire que de me marier avec vous, ça me feroit de l'honneur et c'est tout le contraire, ça me fait de la vergogne.

MME LORICART

Ah! l'insolent, de quel terme il se sert. De la vergogne, moi? de la vergogne? (..)N'avons-nous pas un Contrat de Mariage?

THIBAUT

Ça n'y fait rien, je sis mineur, je reviendrai là-contre. (sc. xx.)

The gardener is eventually persuaded to consent to their marriage, not for any convincing reason, but simply to provide a denouement for the play.

A peasant who has achieved his ambition to rise in society is the sous-fermier, Rapineau, of Le Retour des Officiers, who made his way to a lucrative post as tax-collector from that of a country rat de cave and later a lackey in a wealthy Parisian household. It is noteworthy that Rapineau, through prolonged contact with city life, is indistinguishable from a Parisian bourgeois, but he is portrayed in stark contrast to his brother, Mathurin, a patois-speaking peasant who has not been exposed to the influence of a more sophisticated way of life, and who is, in every sense of the word, a rustic. Mathurin, whom Rapineau is helping to climb the social ladder in a similar way, criticizes the attitude his brother has adopted since he has risen in society. The parvenu is ashamed of his peasant origins, as he would lose prestige among his associates, and resents the fact that his brother insists on reminding him of his past :

RAPINEAU

...point de familiarité: vous savez bien sous quelles conditions je vous ai tiré du Village, pour vous pousser dans la Finance?

MATHURIN

Palsanguenne, oui, me voilà bien poussé, je sis Rat de cave et Rat de cave de campagne encore; et au train que vous prenez, vous, vous pourriez bien le redevenir: car vous l'avez été aussi, ne vous en déplaie, et c'est le premier degré de la fortune, à ce que vous dites.

RAPINEAU

Qu'est-ce à dire? moi, redevenir Rat de cave, moi, Adjudicataire des Regrats de Peronne, Sousfermier des Aides de l'Election de Saint-Quentin? Quelle impertinence!

MATHURIN

Impertinence! Oh dame acoutez, Monsieur le Sousfarmier de Saint-Quentin, quoique vous sayez tout ça, vous êtes mon frere, oui; et sans note oncle le Portier de ce gros Maltoutier, qui vous fit venir tout petit, pour être laquais...

RAPINEAU

Laquais, moi? moi, laquais? J'étois en pension chez lui, vous ne savez ce que vous dites.

MATURIN

Cela est vrai, vous étiez nourri dans la maison; mais comme vous ne payiez rien, et qu'il vous habilloit encore par-dessus le marché, vous portiez la queue à Madame sa femme par reconnaissance. Acoutez, c'est morgué ce qui vous a fait ce que vous êtes.(...) vous enragez que je vous dise tout ça; car vous êtes glorieux, et je ne sais pas de qui vous tenez; je ne sommes pas comme ça dans notre famille.

RAPINEAU

Ecoutez donc, il n'y a qu'un mot qui serve, je vous ai dit que je ne prétendois pas qu'on sût qui vous êtes, j'ai de bonnes raisons pour cela. Si vous faites tant qu'on vienne à le soupçonner seulement, je vous renverrai planter vos choux dans votre village. (sc. i.)

In particular, Maturin criticizes his brother's policy of courting Henriette, a girl from a wealthy background who, however, only tolerates him in the absence of her military suitor, on account of the lavish expenditure he makes on her behalf.

Rapineau, like Turcaret later, had spared no expense in providing Henriette with numerous presents, and even gave banquets and serenades :

MATURIN

Morgué, vela bian de la musique pardue; et si vous velez que je vous parle frachement, il m'est avis que vous êtes un benais de faire tout ça(.). Le coeur me saigne de vous voir dépenser notre bian à être amoureux d'une personne qui ne vous aime point(.). et si pourtant vous ne laissez pas de ly bailler toujours des cadeaux, des festins, de la musique. (sc. i.)

Maturin is grieved at this wholesale waste of money which, he considers, would be spent more profitably in alleviating the plight of their underprivileged relations in the country, but his attempts to stir his brother's conscience only earn for him additional insults and a threat to dismiss him from his job :

MATURIN

Cet argent-là seroit bian mieux employé à faire subsister notre soeur Nicole, qui garde les vaches auprès de Corbie, et le cousin Guillaume, qui n'est que le Bediau d'une petite paroisse.

RAPINEAU

Oh, finirez-vous? Si vous me parlez jamais de ces gens-là, vous n'avez qu'à faire votre paquet et les aller joindre, entendez-vous? je vous révoque. Ces gueux-là quand cela commence à faire fortune, cela est d'une insolence...(sc. i.)

In this play peasants are viewed from two angles: on the one hand, the parvenu who has succeeded in fitting into a niche in bourgeois society but who fears that he may easily be dislodged, and, on the other hand, the thoroughly provincial character, at the point of emerging from his humble surroundings, and aspiring to greater social prestige.

Dancourt makes use of the theme of the disparity between city and country dwellers in Les Vendanges, a comedy based on the plot of a mésalliance between an officer, Eraste, and a peasant girl, Claudine. Claudine, niece of a rich vigneron, Lucas, was looking forward to the marriage her uncle had arranged for her with the local collecteur, the 'coq du village', who, incidentally, had reduced Lucas's taxes in return for this favour, until her recent visit to Paris where she attracted the attention of a young aristocrat, Eraste. She explains to her aunt, Margot, the result of this experience which has engendered in her a sudden dissatisfaction with her station in life and an ambition for social elevation. Margot does not lend a sympathetic ear to her niece's discontent, and expresses some misgivings about life in the city :

CLAUDINE

...je n'avois jamais été à Paris; vous m'y avez menée, je ne veux plus du Collecteur(..) je ne prétends pas toute ma vie n'être qu'une paysanne, moi(..) Je veux devenir Madame, afin que vous le sachiez.

MARGOT

Devenir Madame, miséricorde! Ah! le vilain Paris, on dit bien vrai que l'air de ce pays-là ne vaut rien pour les jolies filles de Village. (sc. i.)

Margot's prejudice, no doubt based on fear of the unknown, reflects the attitude of provincials who tended to look with some degree of suspicion on the quality of city life and regard sophisticated society as the home of moral turpitude.

Claudine's aristocratic suitor and his valet, l'Olive, have disguised themselves as peasants in order to gain access to Lucas's house, but they find it difficult to convince him of their humble birth on account of their noble mien. Although the vigneron is always in a state of inebriation, he has enough discernment to recognize the discrepancy between their claims to be members of the rustic community and their appearance :

LUCAS

Mais qui êtes-vous, s'il vous plaît? vous avez bonne mine, franchement, et je n'ons point de garçons dans le Village qui en approchions.

ERASTE

Quand nos habillemens ne suffiroient pas à nous faire connoître, il seroit difficile de cacher notre condition. Pour vous parler franchement, nous sommes nés comme vous l'un et l'autre en bonne et franche paisannerie.

LUCAS

Oh bian pargué, je vous en aime mieux. Touchez donc là sans façons, freres; je vous ai pris d'abord pour des apprentifs Conseillers, qui venont pendant les vacances faire les libartins dans les Villages. (sc. iv.)

What is noteworthy in Lucas's remark is the spirit of comradeship which existed among members of the same social class, and also the satire of conseillers.

The sub-plot of Le Mari Retrouvé is concerned with a love-affair between an officer, Clitandre, and a peasant girl, Colette, niece of a millowner, Julien. Clitandre's valet, Lépine, points out the incongruity of a match between the young couple from widely different social classes which would give rise to scandal. Lépine also mentions the discrepancy between the type of life led at both ends of the social scale : the officer, notorious for his libertinage and enjoying a great deal of popularity among provincial coquettes, is accustomed to a life of liberty and pleasure, whereas the girl he intends to marry leads an uninteresting and confined existence in a mill. The attraction in a marriage with Colette is the fact that, unlike her suitor, she is soon to come into possession of some wealth. Lépine is incredulous at his master's unexpected decision to marry a person of such humble status :

Comment diable? voilà une passion bien sérieuse, au moins; et pour la petite nièce d'une Meuniere encore! Cette aventure-là fera du bruit, Monsieur, et ce sera un des beaux chapîtres du Roman de votre vie(..)Quoi? vous qui avez passé de si doux momens dans les plus agréables compagnies de la Province? vous qui êtes la coqueluche de tout le Gâtinois, et les délices de toutes les coquettes de Montargis? vous allez vous borner ici, et vous amuser à filer le parfait amour dans un moulin? vous vous moquez, je pense. (sc. i.)

Colette's aunt, Julianne, who manages the affairs of the mill in her husband's absence, is enthusiastic about Clitandre's marriage with Colette, which will confer a sort of distinction on the family and make her the envy of the neighbourhood:

Dame, acoutez, je prétends que ça fasse fracas dans le país, et que tout le monde sache que vous serez mon neveu(..)je m'en vais faire prier de la nôce toutes les Meunieres des environs, pour qu'elles aient la rage au coeur de voir Colette devenir grosse Madame. (sc. ii.)

Julienne wishes that news of her husband's death will soon be confirmed, as he is the one obstacle in the way of the match and a stumbling-block to her social ambitions :

JULIENNE

Cette parenté-là ne fera point de deshonneur à la profession, Monsieur de Lépine.

LEPINE

Non, vraiment, et voilà votre moulin illustré, Madame Julienne.

JULIENNE

Vous ne saurais croire le plaisir que ça me fait, et si pourtant je ne sis pas glorieuse.

LEPINE

Un peu d'ambition n'est pas blâmable.

JULIENNE

Ça ne me tourmente point, et je voudrais que mon pauvre mari fût mort, au verroit bian que ce n'est pas la vanité qui me gouvarne. (sc. iii.)

As we have seen in a previous chapter, the author exploits a contemporary law suit to provide the main plot of Le Mari Retrouvé, but he also uses this theme to dramatize the grossly unjust conduct of a bailli. There were different kinds of baillis in contemporary society.⁽¹⁾ On the one hand there were those who, as representatives of the King in the provinces, were connected, albeit tenuously, with the administration of justice. Often lacking an adequate education and training, these officials rarely had by the seventeenth century any effective judicial powers, and were often represented in legal procedure by a more knowledgeable lawyer. Their office was thus really little more than a nominal one. And on the other hand there were the baillis who were employed by church authorities or seigneurs to look after the legal side of their administrative affairs. Devoid of any recognizable professional status, baillis in the course of the seventeenth century lost much of their former prestige and even began to be regarded as laughable

(1) For a history of baillis and sénéchaux cf. P. Viàllet, Histoire des Institutions Politiques et Administratives de la France, Darmstadt, 1966 (reprint of the Paris 1912 edition), 4 vols., vol. III, pp. 254-93.

figures and fit subjects for comedy, particularly eighteenth-century comedy.

As one historian put it with reference to the bailli :

Ce glorieux impuissant, dont les frères cadets, les baillis seigneuriaux, sont plus grotesques encore, deviendra un masque ridicule, un personnage de comédie. Il va prendre place dans le grand répertoire où puisent les amuseurs publics. Son histoire qui commence à peu près avec l'histoire de l'administration royale, va s'achever et se perdre dans celle du théâtre. (1)

In Dancourt's play not only does the bailli cut a ridiculous figure, but he is portrayed as the villain of the piece. When the miller, Julien, spreads rumours that his wife, Julienne, has deliberately caused his death, the village bailli, whose decisions are motivated by his personal dislike of Julienne, welcomes this false allegation as a means of incriminating the meunière without evidence. The witnesses he chooses in his legal proceedings are the mill-hand, Charlot, and a certain Mme Agathe, but he discards any evidence they give which may be favourable to Julienne's cause, and takes into consideration only untrue information, however far-fetched it may be. Charlot, who is a willing accomplice in the proceedings on account of a personal grievance he has against the accused, describes the bailli with open-mouthed admiration, mentioning in the same breath his knowledge of legal procedure and his malevolence :

c'est bian le meilleur homme, le plus honnête, le plus habile homme, pour faire du mal à queuqu'un dâ. Il sait morgué sur le bout du doigt toutes les rubriques de la Justice. (sc. xiv.)

It thus appears that the bailli, with all his apparent intellectual qualities, is no more than a 'clever devil'. These aspects of the bailli's unethical conduct are brought out in the following scene :

MME AGATHE

Il n'y a qu'un quart d'heure que j'ai quitté Monsieur Julien, vous dis-je.

LE BAILLI

Oui, un faux Monsieur Julien qu'elle aura attiré pour faire prendre le change.

MME AGATHE

Oh, point du tout, c'est le véritable, elle l'a reçu comme un vrai mari, je l'ai aidée à le battre, moi, Monsieur le Bailli, puisqu'il faut vous le dire.

LE BAILLI

Bagatelle, je ne donne pas là-dedans; et nous avons, le Procureur-Fiscal et

(1) P. Viollet, op. cit., vol. III, p. 293.

moi, commencé une procédure que nous soutiendrons vigoureusement.

CHARLOT

Je vous le disois bian, Madame Agathe, c'est un bian honnête homme, un bian habile homme que notre Monsieur le Bailli.

MME AGATHE

Mais le compere Julien n'est point défunt, ce sont des contes.

CHARLOT

Je crois pargué bian que si, moi, et s'il ne l'étoit pas, il faudroit qu'il le devenît, puisque Monsieur le Bailli le dit. Est-ce que la Justice est une menteuse, Madame Agathe? (sc. xv.)

The bailli begins his interrogation of the witnesses who openly declare their prejudice against Julianne and ignorance of the real facts of the case. Having heard the fictitious evidence, the bailli concludes with reference to Julianne and her family that 'Voilà une cruelle affaire pour ces gens-là...Je les ferai arrêter sur votre déposition, et je vais tout de ce pas faire chercher le Greffier pour la venir recevoir.' At the denouement, when Julien presents himself in person in order to exonerate his wife, the bailli treats him as an impostor, as his reappearance does not conform to the 'evidence' he has fabricated of his death, and in his own words: 'il y a un bon procès-verbal qui certifie le fait.' (sc. xxiii.) He is eventually persuaded, however, to come to terms with the reality of the situation and relents of his unjust behaviour with the ironic remark: 'je suis trop humain pour un Bailli'. (sc. xxiv.)

Baillis appear in eighteenth-century comedies as unpopular characters, and are depicted as tyrannical and insensitive. Such, for example, is the bailli in Favart's Annette et Lubin (1762), to quote only one specimen from his musical comedies. It was not until well into the eighteenth century that the image of baillis as stage figures began to change. With reference to Davesne's opéra-comique, Perrin et Lucette (1774), it was remarked by Grimm's successor, J.H. Meister:

L'idée la plus neuve de ce drame est un bailli honnête homme. Il est un peu capucin: à la bonne heure: au village, comme ailleurs, un capucin est toujours plus agréable qu'un tyran. (1)

(1) Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, ed. M. Tourneux, Paris, 1877-82, 16 vols., vol. X, p. 450.

And as a further illustration of this change is the protagonist of Gabiot de Salin's comedy, Le Bailli bienfaisant (1786) who comes to the aid of an impoverished family in distress.

Between 1704 and 1717 Dancourt ceased to write comedies which centred largely around peasant themes. Le Prix de l'Arquebuse (1717) has, as we have seen, a provincial flavour, and the character representing the rustic nobility has been dealt with in an earlier chapter. After this date, the only other reference to peasant characters is contained in a fairly insignificant passage in La Métépsychose des Amours (1717). Here, one of the mythological figures, Faunus, accuses Jupiter who is disguised as a partisan, of using his wealth and influence for the social advancement of one of his country cousins :

Il avoit un cousin, manan, faquin, pied-plat,
Par son crédit et par son opulence
Il en fit en six mois un Seigneur d'importance.
Il étoit sans honneur, et chacun l'honora;
Il étoit fat, on l'admira:
Tous les défauts trouvèrent grace,
Et le monde aisément comprit
Qu'il n'étoit ni de noble race,
Ni de mérite, ni d'esprit,
Mais parent de quelque homme en place. (Act II, sc. iv.)

These plays have been treated in a different way from Dancourt's 'social' comedies because they do not testify to the conditions in which the rustic community lived, or reflect to anything like the same degree the manners of contemporary society. Although they have some connection with country life, they contain in fact very little 'realism'. It would be a fruitless task to undertake a study of these plays with a view to assessing the peasant way of life in the seventeenth century. The question is complicated by the fact that conditions under which many peasants lived varied not only from region to region but also from one harvest to the next, from lean years to fat years. In these plays not only does Dancourt generally

set a boundary around the Paris region, but he also limits himself in time to the years between 1692 and 1704. Yet even if he continued to produce peasant plays throughout the war years which went particularly hard with the poorer sections of society, and even during the 'grand hiver' of 1709 when there was widespread famine, he would scarcely have made allusion to the plight of peasants, as this would be incompatible with material for comedy and unpalatable to an audience seeking amusement in this genre.

It is no coincidence that some of Dancourt's peasants seem to be in a comfortable position materially, and include a prosperous miller's family (the miller was traditionally and universally notorious as a dishonest tradesman), a head gardener on a country estate digging, out of cupidity rather than penury, for the root of all evil, not to mention those who have succeeded in climbing the social ladder; in other cases the circumstances of peasants are left deliberately vague.

These plays have been studied chiefly from the point of view of characterization and the comic qualities they contain. The latter are much in evidence in the passages quoted which have, however, been kept to the strict minimum.

With his peasant plays Dancourt added a significant amount of local colour to the literary scene, a commodity which was generally lacking as it had been banished from good usage. But Dancourt was not, of course, concerned with the finer points of classical regulations and concentrated instead on discerning and supplying his audience's needs. His peasants, far ^{from} being images of reality, were highly entertaining stage-figures almost clownish characters, who were sure to raise a laugh by their comic jargon and provincial manners. They were often assigned a significant part in the plot, and were no longer the merely episodic characters of previous comedies. In Dancourt's hands they became creatures of varying mood and temperament, sharing the human foibles of other social classes, yet largely characterized by their own ~~peculiar~~ stamp of quaintly amusing rusticity.

1X. THE SUCCESS OF DANCOURT'S PLAYS.

Before attempting to estimate the degree of success which Dancourt's plays enjoyed during his lifetime, it is necessary to see this aspect of his dramatic career against the administrative background of the Comédie Française which, if it did not entirely determine the fate of an author's play, at least played an important part in deciding the length of its first run and the frequency of its later revivals. The regulations which governed a play's first run were rigorously applied to all new plays, but varied at different seasons of the year: that is according to whether the play was given during summer months, always a slack period for the theatre, or in winter, when the popularity of the theatre was at its height :

En hiver, (de la Toussaint à Pâques) on joue les pièces nouvelles jusqu'à ce que la recette s'abaisse deux fois de suite à 550 livres, alors on les quitte sans retour pour l'auteur... En été... la Pièce est quittée sans retour pour l'auteur lorsqu'on fait deux recettes de suite de 350 livres et au-dessous. (1)

The duration of a play's first run was of crucial importance to an author as, for each of the performances his play enjoyed during this period, he received a certain proportion of the theatre's net receipts. The author who managed to receive a part d'auteur for between twenty and thirty consecutive performances could congratulate himself on his ability to attract enough spectators to keep the box-office receipts from falling below the minimum amount stipulated in the regulations of the Comédie Française ; 'les grands succès ne comportent que de vingt à trente représentations'. (1) Anything above this number would, of course, be altogether exceptional.

However not every author who put forward a play for consideration by the selection committee stood an equal chance of having it accepted. On the one hand there was every possibility that, in the selection of plays for production at the theatre, priority could be given to actor-playwrights like Dancourt who could rely on the comradeship and coterie spirit that existed among their

(1) J. Bonnassies, Les Auteurs Dramatiques et la Comédie Française à Paris aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Paris, 1874, pp. 25-6.

colleagues; but, on the other hand, one cannot overlook another possibility - the existence of personal jealousies in the troupe which could give rise to unfair discrimination against a colleague who submitted a play for consideration by the selection committee. On the whole, however, actors of the Comédie Française were less favourably disposed towards professional playwrights who were not part of their company, and are not unknown to have exercised unfair discrimination against outsiders by deliberately interpreting their plays in such a way as to render them less interesting to the audiences whose lack of financial support would ensure a very brief first run for the play. As soon as the level of the box-office receipts reached the stipulated minimum, the actors would be no longer obliged to pay the author any royalties and were free to exploit the play to the full.

Actor-playwrights of the Comédie Française were in a position to exert a certain amount of influence within the troupe to ensure the acceptance of a play; but after this initial stage the success of the play depended on the unpredictable reception of the theatre audience. In the Mercure Galant of 1714, the editor, Lefèvre, accused Dancourt of being responsible for the rejection of Dufresny's Les Deux Veuves ou le Faux Damis which was 'généralement applaudie de tous les auditeurs, et absolument et sur le champ refusée des Comédiens'. This hostile commentator alleged that it was because Dancourt 'qui est l'âme de cette Compagnie', wishing to remove competition with his two comedies of that year, Les Fêtes du Cours and Le Vert Galant, imposed his will on the rest of the troupe to reject Dufresny's play :

Les Fêtes du Cours et le Vert Galant... occupent la scène, en dépit du public, autant qu'il plaist à leur auteur, et de bonnes pièces, qu'un tel parallèle deshonoreroit, ne sont point reçues, parce qu'il ne plaist pas à ce même Auteur de les recevoir; mais il ne faut pas s'étonner de son pouvoir, quoy qu'il en ait beaucoup parmi les Comédiens qui ne pensent pas comme luy; il est cependant l'âme de cette compagnie, qu'il soumet, comme nous, à ses décisions. (1)

It is obvious that these accusations were ill-founded since the acceptance of a

(1) Le Mercure Galant, November, 1714, pp. 348-9.

play did not depend on Dancourt's decision alone, but on a majority vote ; moreover it is unlikely that Dancourt could bring such pressure to bear on his colleagues, as some of his own plays, particularly Le Vert Galant submitted in the previous year, were rejected by the selection committee.

It must also be borne in mind that conditions in the contemporary theatre were hardly conducive to a successful performance of a play, and it is noteworthy that his comedies met with a favourable reception from the audience in spite of such obstacles as rowdiness and direct interference from members of the audience. An example of the hazards placed in the path of an author's chances of success is an incident which occurred on 22 November 1700 during one of the initial performances of Dancourt's Trois Cousines which was the only play presented on that day :

24 novembre 1700 - Avant-hier, il arriva du bruit à la Comedie, à l'occasion du chien danois que Monsieur le Marquis de Livry fils y avoit amené. Ce chien se mit à faire son manège sur le théâtre. Messieurs du parterre firent, pour l'encourager, tous les bruits de chasse dont chacun se put aviser. Un de ceux qui affecta le plus de s'y distinguer fut le sieur du Creil, mousquetaire de la deuxième Compagnie, fort sujet à troubler la tranquillité des spectacles...également prompt à critiquer ou à applaudir, pourvu que ce soit avec éclat, et qui regrette fort le tems des sifflets. (1)

It was often against very unfavourable odds that an author presented his play to the public. Such were the difficult conditions in the contemporary theatre that actors were often hampered during performances by the presence of rowdy young bloods who sat on either side of the stage and who took delight in causing a disturbance. Other hazards for a playwright were the dangers of offending the pride of aristocratic theatre-goers or of failing to satisfy the capricious tastes of a vitally important section of the house - the parterre, who would unceremoniously whistle his play off the stage. Nor were the disorders common in the theatre effectively dealt with by the occasional intervention of the police.

(1) cf. J. Bonnassies, La Comédie Française, Histoire Administrative, Paris, 1874, p. 331, from La Bibliothèque Nationale, pièces et rapports de police manuscrits.

The Reception of Dancourt's plays at the Comédie Française from 1685 to 1726.

If we examine the reception given to Dancourt's plays by the theatre audiences in the light of these considerations, we find that, out of the fifty-six plays for which he received a part d'auteur or a share of it, sixteen qualified as 'grands succès' by being presented at least twenty times to the author's financial advantage, and that four of these had the added distinction of enjoying over thirty performances for which he received payment. And what is also a creditable achievement is the fact that none of his plays could be considered a total flop in the sense that they failed to survive the first performance or that they were whistled off the stage.

It is a curious fact that it was precisely those plays which were performed at the height of the theatrical season and which had, at least on paper, the best chance of success, which were discontinued after relatively few performances, and that, contrary to expectations, those which Dancourt presented in the slack season scored a higher number of performances during their first run. But this can be partly explained by the fact that comedies were generally more popular in the summer months. On the other hand, there were some 'seasonal' difficulties in presenting a new play in the slack season, especially towards the ^{end} of the summer period when the best actors were beginning to leave the Paris theatre for performances at Court. This aspect is brought out in a commentary^a in the Mercure Galant on the success of Le Chevalier à la Mode in October, 1687:

On joue rarement des Pièces nouvelles dans cette Saison, parce que l'on ne la croit pas avantageuse, et celles qu'on y joue, quand cela arrive, sont regardées comme des Pièces que l'on risque, et dont on n'attend pas les grands succès, qui sont presque infaillibles en plein hyver, pour peu que les Ouvrages soient bons. On peut dire que ce n'est pas la seule chose qui se devoit opposer au Succès de la Comédie dont je parle. Il n'y avoit à Paris que la moitié de la Troupe, et le Public croit quelquefois que le mérite des Acteurs qu'il a accoutumé de voir, détruit celui des autres. (1)

It must also be borne in mind that, in Dancourt's case at least, the immediate success of his plays and the profits he derived from them were not necessarily

(1) October 1687, p. 377.

an indication of their subsequent popularity with theatre audiences. Indeed, it appears from the posthumous fate of his plays that those of a more ephemeral nature proved a more lucrative source of income on account of their popularity during their first run, while the plays which lasted in the repertory of the Comédie Française did not achieve quite such a success in their day. An example of this situation can be seen in the fate of Dancourt's best-known comedy, Le Chevalier à la Mode, performed twenty-two times during its first run, and that of La Foire de Besons, which enjoyed thirty-nine performances also during its first run, but which disappeared from the repertory completely after 1736.

Of all Dancourt's plays, the one-act comedy, Les Vendanges de Suresnes (1695), enjoyed the greatest number of performances during its first run, being acted forty-four times. The author did not, however, receive his share of the proceeds on all these occasions as, on account of the expenses involved in producing the play, the actors decided to withhold royalties until after the fifth performance when they granted the author a bonus payment. Another outstanding success was La Foire de Besons (1695) ; Dancourt received payment for thirty-nine performances. A contemporary commentator attributes its popularity with theatre audiences to the introduction of Dancourt's two daughters Manon and Mimi, aged about nine and ten, and also the professional contributions to the scenic and musical backgrounds :

Tout a concouru à son grand succès, l'agrément de la Pièce, le plaisir d'y voir deux jeunes Demoiselles, Filles de l'Auteur, qui, sachant mieux qu'un autre ce qui leur convient, a si heureusement réussi dans la distribution de ces personnages que ces deux jeunes Demoiselles sont devenues dans cette Pièce le charme de tout Paris. Les airs qui ont été faits par M. de Giliers, et les Ballets de M. de la Montagne, ont extrêmement plu. Il y a longtemps qu'ils ont l'un et l'autre réputation pour ces sortes d'ouvrages. Il n'y a pas jusqu'à la decoration qui n'ait fait beaucoup de plaisir à voir. Elle représentoit La Foire de Besons. Elle est de M. Joachim, Peintre italien, qui a un talent tout particulier pour ces sortes d'ouvrages, où il réussit parfaitement bien. (1)

Jean-Nicolas du Tralage, a spectator at the first performances of the comedy, noted that :

ce qui a le plus attiré du monde sont les deux filles du sieur Dancourt...

(1) Mercur Galant, 1695, Setember, pp. 308 - 12.

La cadette...déclame fort bien; elle est nommée Chonchette dans la pièce, elle ressemble fort à sa mere qui est appelée Mariane dans cette Comédie. L'aînée, qui a dix ou onze ans, a un visage dont la douceur est charmante, et avec cela les plus beaux cheveux du monde. C'est elle qui fait l'Espagnolette. (1)

It is also true that part of the attraction of Dancourt's daughters was due to the novelty of the situation; in the early years of the Comédie Française the introduction of children on to the stage was only beginning to become popular. According to a contemporary report, Dancourt had added some amusing scenes soon after the first performance of August 13, and had increased the entertainment value of the play by additional songs :

La Comédie de la Foire de Besons que tout Paris va voir avec empressement est augmentée de plusieurs scènes fort plaisantes et de chansons notées en musique. (2)

Such was the popularity of the play that the theatre was often filled to capacity:

la presse y est si grande dans les représentations que le plus souvent il n'y a pas de place pour les Spectateurs. (3)

In a letter of 26 October, Louis François Ladvocat, conseiller du roi, drew a comparison between the success of Dancourt's play and that of Iphigénie, which seems to have been the most successful of Racine's tragedies :

N'est-il pas vrai, Monsr., que la Foire de Besons a attiré autant de spectateurs qu' Iphigénie? Peu de gens achepteront la premiere et beaucoup de sçavans liront Racine. (4)

La Loterie (1697) came high on the list of Dancourt's successes with thirty-three performances during its first run. It is interesting to note that this play which ranks among Dancourt's major successes with contemporary spectators did not survive the first year of its existence. This is one of several examples of the author's very ephemeral plays which, although they attracted the attention of the public in the initial stages, failed to stand the test of time. The actors noted on 2 September in the feuilles d'assemblée that Dancourt withdrew his play even before it was due to be taken off :

- (1) Notes et Documents sur l'Histoire des Théâtres à Paris, Paris, 1880.
- (2) Gazette d'Amsterdam, 1695, September 29.
- (3) op. cit., September 22.
- (4) cf. P. Mélese, Répertoire Analytique, Paris, 1934, p. 200.

Monsieur Dancourt a prié la Compagnie de quitter la lotterie quoy quelle ne soit pas encore dans les Regles. On a Resolu qu'on prieroit monsieur Renard de donner incessamment une lecture du Distrain.

No reason is given for this unexpected decision. Moreover Regnard's play was not performed immediately afterwards; Dancourt noted in the feuilles d'assemblée on 22 September that the first performance of Le Distrain was 'retardée a cause de l'indisposition de Mr Poisson'. (1)

The only other play to exceed thirty performances during its first run was Les Fêtes du Cours (1714). In spite of the suggestions by a hostile commentator in the Mercure Galant (2) that the play was not enthusiastically received by the audiences and that the numerically most important section of the theatre, the parterre, did not give it their full approval, it is obvious from the number of performances for which Dancourt received royalties that it was one of his most successful plays.

Le Moulin de Javelle (1696) was, in the words of the Frères Parfaict, 'un succès marqué' (3) bringing financial returns for its author on twenty-seven occasions. Next in order of success were a group of plays for all of which Dancourt received royalties twenty-five times :

Opéra de Village (1692)
Bourgeoises à la Mode (1692)
Curieux de Compiègne (1698)

These were followed closely by three plays each of which enjoyed twenty-four performances during their first run :

Charivari (1697)
Diable Boiteux (1707)
Impromptu de Suresnes (1713)

Those which brought royalties on twenty-two occasions were :

Chevalier à la Mode (1687)
Vacances (1696)
Mari Retrouvé (1698)

Les Eaux de Bourbon (1696) was performed twenty-one times during its first run,

- (1) The first performance of Le Distrain was 2 December of that year, 1697.
- (2) September 1714, p. 177, and November 1714, pp. 343-4.
- (3) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIV, p. 28.

and La Maison de Campagne (1688) twenty times. The plays which met with a substantial, though not outstanding success, being performed between fifteen and twenty times during their first run were :

<u>Dame à la Mode</u>	(1689)
<u>Colin-Maillard</u>	(1701)
<u>Trois Cousines</u>	(1700)
<u>Tuteur</u>	(1695)
<u>Opérateur Barry</u>	(1702)
<u>Agioteurs</u>	(1710)
<u>Fête de Village</u>	(1700)

We thus see that what is now Dancourt's best-known play, Le Chevalier à la Mode (1687), was far from being his most popular play with spectators of the time, at least as far as the number of performances during the first run is concerned. A comparison between the initial performances of this five-act comedy and those of the one-act Les Vendanges de Suresnes (1695) shows that the latter enjoyed exactly twice as many performances as Le Chevalier à la Mode. None the less, the Mercure Galant points out the immediate impact which this comedy made on the audience :

Les Comédiens François jouent une pièce nouvelle intitulée Le Chevalier à la Mode, et cette Pièce ayant extrêmement plû à tous ceux qui la virent la première fois, les Assemblées ont esté si nombreuses à toutes les Representations suivantes, qu'il a souvent esté difficile d'y trouver place, de sorte qu'il auroit esté impossible de voir plus de beau monde ensemble en plein Carnaval (1)

The report goes on to say that this success was achieved, as we have seen, in spite of such obstacles as the fact that the play was presented in a slack season at a time when only part of the troupe was in Paris.

Dancourt was disappointed at the cool reception accorded to his five-act comedy in verse, Sancho Pança Gouverneur, which, in spite of the effort involved in undertaking this ambitious form of writing, was performed no more than five times during its first run. The Frères Parfaict suggest some reasons for the play's lack of success :

Le Public ne reçut pas cette Comédie aussi favorablement que M. Dancourt l'espéroit, ainsi il la retira, et la fit imprimer avec des changemens...

(1) October, 1687, pp. 380-2.

Dans (sa) Préface, M. Dancourt paroît un peu piqué du froid accueil que le Public fit à sa Comédie; la peine qu'il avoit prise à la composer lui en faisoit espérer une réussite marquée, et effectivement il y avoit mis de sa part tout ce qui pouvoit y contribuer; mais le sujet qu'il avoit choisi n'est point Théâtral, rien n'y peut intéresser le spectateur; dès la première Scene, il est instruit que tous les personnages qui paraîtront n'agiront, pour ainsi dire, que par machine, comme des espèces d'automates... (Les) rôles ont beau être travaillés de la part du Poète, ils ne peuvent exciter aucun mouvement d'intérêt, tout y est trop préparé. (1)

Although the play was accepted by the actors in April 1712, it was decided to postpone the performances until a later date. This is seen in the feuilles d'assemblée of 25 April 1712 :

La troupe a resolu de Jouer au plustot S. Pansa et attendu quelle a esté receu p(ou)r estre jouée Lhyver on a promis a l'auteur de la reprendre au moy d'oct(o)bre prochain sans égard aux representations de l'eté.

In fact, the play was produced on 15 November 1712.

Another outright failure was the ill-fated Céphale et Procris, a three-act play written in verse. It appears from the feuilles d'assemblée that Dancourt had some difficulty in persuading the actors to produce the play as, even after it was accepted for performance on 27 May 1710, it was to experience many vicissitudes before actually getting as far as the stage. On 16 October 1710, Dancourt was required to give another 'Lecture de Cephale et procris'en vers', in spite of the fact that it had already been approved by the selection committee. Then on 3 February 1711, we read that 'Mr Dancourt a retiré sa piece De Cephale et procris'. It was not to be performed, however, until 27 October of that year when it turned out to have only a poor reception, with six performances during its first run. The play was a failure in spite of Dancourt's attempts to render it more stageworthy; a note in the 1711 edition with respect to certain deletions indicated by inverted commas (these amount to over 450 lines) illustrates this point :

L'auteur ayant été obligé de retrancher quelques vers, pour rendre la représentation de cette Pièce plus vive...

Three other verse plays of this latter period of Dancourt's career also failed to reach the standard of success associated with most of his prose

(1) F. and C. Parfaict, Histoire du Théâtre François, vol.XV, pp. 126-8.

compositions. These were all five-act plays, where extensive borrowing from other authors is much in evidence. Madame Artus is, as we have seen, a fairly undisguised imitation of Le Tartuffe, and a play which suffers from lack of cohesion, as the Frères Parfaict point out :

Tant de lambeaux et si mal cousus ensemble, conduisent à un dénouement pitoyable. Aussi malgré le jeu des Acteurs, cette Pièce fut reçue du Public, comme elle le méritoit; cependant l'Auteur prévenu pour son Ouvrage, engagea ses camarades à en donner encore quelques représentations, qui n'eurent pas un meilleur succès que la première. (1)

The number of performances during the first run of this play was no higher than four. Dancourt did rather better with La Trahison Punie, (1707) which was performed seven times during its first run. In it, the author failed to sustain a comic note throughout, with the result that the general tone of the play did not conform to his habitual vein and resembled more the tragi-comedies of the seventeenth century. The murder of Don André at the end of the play was an incongruous element in comedies. Although the events take place inside twenty-four hours, unity of place is violated on three occasions. The Frères Parfaict comment on its lack of sustained success in spite of its qualities:

Le fond triste qui règne dans toute cette Pièce, quoique bien conduite, et assez passablement versifiée, en occasionna la chute...Cependant on peut dire que le personnage de Don André, qui est le dominant de cette Comédie, et qui en présente la morale, est peint de main de Maître. C'est une espèce de Don Juan du 'Festin de Pierre', homme qui en conte à toutes les femmes, mais seulement pour satisfaire sa vanité, et son penchant pour porter partout le trouble et la dissension...Le Caractere de Don Juan d'Avarade, contraste admirablement avec celui de Don André, il est franc, brave et généreux. A l'égard des autres rôles, ils ne sont pas de la même force, surtout ceux des femmes. En un mot, si cette Pièce avoit paru pour la première fois il y a dix ou douze ans, elle auroit eu un tout autre succès, et peut-être même, qu'elle auroit passé pour bonne, puisque la mode s'est introduite de se passionner pour le larmoyant comique. (2)

A rather similar fate attended Dancourt's last play, La Belle-Mère, (1725) also a five-act verse comedy, which was given three performances during its first run. The Mercure de France, offered some criticism of the play which, it was considered, was not in keeping with the audiences' tastes :

Quoique celui-ci n'ait pas eu une grande réussite, on peut dire que c'est un de

(1) op. cit. vol. XIV, p. 484.

(2) op. cit. vol. XIV, pp. 454-5.

ceux qui lui font le plus d'honneur, par la maniere légère et vive dont il est dialogué, et versifié. Le Public a trouvé qu'il n'y avoit pas assez d'action dans cette Pièce, et que le dénouement n'en étoit pas heureux...Le Lecteur n'avouera-t-il pas que ce sont-là de vrais traits de Comédie, et que celle-ci auroit eu un meilleur succès, si ces traits-là avoient été répandus sur un sujet plus heureux. (1)

As we have seen in a previous chapter, the controversial Le Carnaval de Venise had no chance of being a success on account of the offensive elements which it contained. The first performance took place on 29 December 1690, but, for reasons of bienséances, the play was withdrawn after the third time on the stage.

In an avertissement of the first edition of Renaud et Armide (1697) Dancourt refers, with some exaggeration, to the degree of success which the play enjoyed during its first run in August 1686; its total of eight performances at the Comédie Française during this period can be described as a modest success :

Voicy une Comedie qui a eu un très-grand succès au mois d'Aoust de l'année 1687 (2) qui n'est pas une saison favorable pour les Spectacles. Cette Piece a esté représentée plusieurs fois à la Cour avec beaucoup d'applaudissement.

The author goes on to mention its failure to achieve a similar degree of success when it was revived in 1697, and attributes its loss in popularity to the changing taste of the audience :

Jusque-là mesme qu'on l'a souvent demandée preferablement à d'autres, et cependant elle vient d'estre trouvée très-mauvaise au mois de Janvier 1697. Je ne prétends point deffendre le jugement des personnes qui l'ont approuvée il y a dix ans, je n'attribue sa dernière destinée qu'au changement de goust du Public, qui s'est lassé de voir de ces sortes de Parodies sur le Théâtre Italien, et qui les trouve trop outrées et trop triviales pour le nôtre.

The play was, of course, written to satirize the opera, Armide, by Jean Baptiste Lully and Philippe Quinault which appeared in 1686, and it had lost much of its relevance long before its revival a decade later.

The unpublished one-act comedy, La Guinguette de la Finance, put forward for consideration by the troupe in 1711, failed to qualify for immediate performance on the stage. On June 8 of that year the actors noted in their feuilles d'assemblée that :

La Compagnie a entendu la piece de Monsieur Dancourt Intitulée La Guinguette et elle a esté...

(1) 1725, May, p. 987.

(2) This should be '1686', when the play was premiered.

As there were five votes for 'acceptée' and the same number for 'refusée' no final decision was reached on this date, but, as events were to prove, the play did not appear on the stage until 19 May 1716. It was performed only four times before being discontinued.

Other plays which enjoyed less than five performances in their first run were La Parisienne (1691), La Baguette (1693) and l'Eclipse (1724).

Dancourt did not receive any part d'auteur for the production of Le Bon Soldat, first performed on 10 October 1691, although it enjoyed eleven performances during the remainder of that year, the reason being that the play was a mere adaptation of a comedy by Raymond Poisson, Les Foux Divertissans (1680). It is to Dancourt's credit that his version, however, achieved a far greater success than Poisson's play which was given only 11 times in 1680 compared with 203 performances of Le Bon Soldat between 1691 and 1750. Although the one-act comedy, La Baguette, was performed four times during its first run in April 1693, Dancourt received payment of 12 livres, 12 sols on only the third performance. It is likely that this, too, was an adaptation of a previous play, no doubt La Baguette de Vulcain, by Regnard and Dufresny, and that Dancourt had added too little of his own creation to justify more than a nominal sum in royalties.

It would be of little avail to include here the remainder of Dancourt's plays which did not evoke sufficient interest from the audiences to ensure for their author a successful run in the initial stages. Of these two stand out as worthy of comment : La Dame à la Mode (1689) and Merlin Déserteur (1690), which earned for the author royalties on fifteen and thirteen occasions respectively. A mystery arises when one compares the fate of these two plays which were dropped from the repertory of the Comédie Française and never published, with a host of other plays which, though less successful on the stage, none the less found their way to the printing-press.

The Revival of Dancourt's plays during his lifetime.

Although the first run of a new play, in most cases a brief one, was an

indication of its popularity with theatre-goers, it was not the only thermometer with which to gauge the degree of success which a play enjoyed with contemporary spectators; the number of times which the actors revived plays points to their more sustained popularity with theatre audiences. The following table shows the reception given to Dancourt's plays which were considered by the troupe to be worthy of revival throughout his dramatic career and up to his death in 1725. The list does not include L'Été des Coquettes which, exceptionally among Dancourt's plays, retained its appeal for audiences from the date of its first performance in 1690 throughout the remainder of the author's life, over a period of thirty-five successive years. The table is divided into two sections. In the left-hand column is indicated the date of first performance of a new play and the period of successive years in which it was performed. The right-hand column shows the date of revival of the play and the period of successive years in which it was performed thereafter up to the author's death. In this way, we can see how many times a play was revived during Dancourt's lifetime, and for what periods of time it lasted after revival.

<u>Date of first performance and period of successive years of performance</u>	<u>Date and period of revival</u>
<u>Renaud et Armide.</u>	1686 1697
<u>Désolation des Joueuses</u>	1687 1690
<u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	1687-1700 1706-1708 1716-1718 1720-1723
<u>Maison de Campagne</u>	1688-1698 1717
<u>Parisienne</u>	1691-92 1694-1707 1708-1713 1714-1716 1717-1719 1724-1727
<u>Gazette</u>	1692-1694 1713-1716
<u>Opéra de Village</u>	1692-1694 1702
<u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	1692-1717 1725-1728
<u>Foire de Besons</u>	1695-1698 1717
<u>Bon Soldat</u>	1691-1694 1700-1707 1711-1713 1714-1724 1725-1742

<u>Moulin de Javelle</u>	1696-1701	1707-1715 1716-1718 1721
<u>Vacances</u>	1696-1744	1721-1723
<u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	1698-1699	1713 1725-1727
<u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>	1695-1712	1715-1726
<u>Enfants de Paris</u>	1699	1704-1706 1712-1715
<u>Fête de Village</u>	1700-1701	1705-1707 1724-1739
<u>Trois Cousines</u>	1700-1702	1709 1724-1727
<u>Colin-Maillard</u>	1701-1702	1708-1710 1713 1721-1723
<u>Galant Jardinier</u>	1704-1721	-
<u>Diabla Boiteux</u>	1701-1709	1713
<u>Fêtes du Cours</u>	1714-1715	1718

Reception of Dancourt's Plays at Court.

It was customary for part of the troupe of the Comédie Française to give performances at Court during the winter season for the entertainment of the royal family. The regular visits to ^{Versailles} ~~Court~~ lasted down to the death of Louis XIV in September 1715. From this date to the coronation of the new king in 1722, there was a significant gap in the number of visites made by the French actors to Versailles. But there was no decline in the number of performances given at Court during this period, as the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, who had a keen interest in the theatre, summoned the actors regularly to the Palais Royal where he chose to reside in preference to Versailles. It was not until 1722 when Louis XV took up residence in Versailles that the actors could resume their performances there.

As a playwright, Dancourt enjoyed a sustained popularity at Court throughout his dramatic career. If we take the period from 1685 to 1726, we see that Dancourt succeeded in having the greater part of his work chosen for performance at Court at fairly regular intervals. It must be remembered, however, that

Court performances, with a few possible exceptions, were confined to the winter season, that is the period between November and Easter. As far as available information permits us to ascertain, thirty-nine of Dancourt's total dramatic output of sixty-two plays were given at Court 139 times from 1685 to 1726, making an average of three performances a season. It is impossible to give any exact indication of the reception of his plays at Court, as it is an unfortunate fact that the actors failed to keep a regular account of all their performances there. However, we can glean from whatever scraps of information which are to hand, some general observations on the frequency with which Dancourt's plays were given in these circles.

The first of these, Le Notaire Obligeant, elicited a favourable comment from Dangeau on its first performance at Versailles. The comedy had, however, been performed previously at Marly in August 1685 :

Le soir on vit pour la première fois l'opéra de la Lande. Les vers sont d'un comédien nommé d'Ancourt, qui a fait aussi les trois actes de comédie qu'on a trouvés bien plus jolis qu'on ne l'avoit cru. (1)

The reason why the audience reacted with a mixture of surprise and admiration was no doubt because Dancourt was a newcomer to the art of entertaining at Court.

The types of play which found most favour at Court were those which dramatized such subjects as military affairs : Merlin Déserteur, L'Impromptu de Garrison, Le Bon Soldat, and Les Curieux de Compiègne; aspects of aristocratic life : Les Fées, La Désolation des Joueuses, and L'Été des Coquettes which was by far the most popular of Dancourt's plays there; satire of bourgeois parvenus : Le Chevalier à la Mode, La Maison de Campagne, Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, Le Moulin de Javelle, and La Fête de Village; satire of the Opéra: Angélique et Médor, Renaud et Armide, and l'Opéra de Village; and episodes from Parisian life : La Parisienne, Les Enfants de Paris, and Les Agioteurs. There are a few examples of his peasant plays given at Court : Les Vendanges,

(1) Journal, vol. 1, p. 287, January 28, 1686. Dancourt's contribution to the opera, composed in verse, was entitled Le Ballet de la Jeunesse and is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Colin-Maillard, Les Trois Cousines, Le Charivari, and Le Mari Retrouvé.

The following information, drawn chiefly from the registers of the Comédie Française, but also from a variety of other sources, sheds some light on the reception of Dancourt's plays at Court :

1685

Aug. 4 Marly : Notaire Obligeant
 " 7 " : Ang. et Médor
 Nov. 8 Versailles : "

1686

Jan. 28 " : Notaire Obligeant
 Feb. 22 " : Ang. et Médor (1)
 Sep. 21 St. Cloud : Ren. et Armide
 Dec. 4 Versailles : "

1687

Jan. 4 " : Armide
 " 25 " : Ang. et Médor
 Mar. 14 " : Ren. et Armide
 Sep. 20 " : Notaire Obligeant
 " 27 " : Désolation des J.
 Nov. 2 " : Chev. à la Mode
 " 14 " : "
 " 24 " : "

1688

Apr. 3 " : Ren. et Armide
 Nov. 29 " : Maison de Camp.

1689

Jan 10 " : Dame à la Mode
 Jan 11 " : Maison de Camp.
 Mar 5 " : Notaire Obligeant
 " 17 " : Ang. et Médor
 Nov 24 " : Notaire Obligeant
 Dec 20 " : Ang. et Médor
 " 27 " : "

1691

Oct 3 Fontainebleau: Mer. Déserteur
 Nov 15 Versailles : Folle Enchère
 " 24 " : Parisienne
 Dec 22 " : Bon Soldat

1692

Feb 12 Versailles : Maison de Camp.
 Nov 26 " : Impromptu de Garnison
 " 29 " : Bourgeoises à la Mode
 Dec 11 " : Gazette de Hollande

1693

Jan 9 " : Été des Coquettes
 " 26 " : Opéra de Village

1695

Jan 22 " : Vendanges
 " 25 " : Chevalier à la Mode
 Feb 24 " : Bourgeoises à la M.
 Oct 8 Fontainebleau: Foire de Besons (2)
 Nov 22 Versailles : Vendanges de Sur.

1696

Jan 27 " : Été des Coquettes
 Feb 16 " : Bourgeoises à la M.
 " 28 " : Foire St Germain
 Nov 25 " : Moulin de Javelle
 Dec 10 " : Vacances

1697

Feb 14 " : Bourgeoises à la M.
 Mar 5 " : Vacances
 Nov 21 " : Loterie
 " 30 " : Charivari

1698

Nov 28 " : Mari Retrouvé
 Dec 13 " : Curieux de Comp.

1699

Jan 19 " : Été des Coquettes
 Mar 9 " : Chevalier à la Mode
 Sep 24 Fontainebleau: Fées (3)
 Oct 1 " : " (3)
 " 8 " : " (3)

(1) Dangeau, op.cit., vol. I, p. 297 notes that on May 18 1686 at Versailles 'il y eut le soir l'opéra de la Lande avec une petite comédie nouvelle de d'Ancourt'. Presumably this was either Merlin la Chaconne or Le Brutal de Sang Froid, first performed on May 3.

(2) ibid. vol. V, p. 290.

(3) ibid. vol. VII, pp. 157, 161 and 164.

1699				1708			
Oct ?	Fontainebleau:	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	(1)	Jan 2	Versailles :	<u>Été des Coquettes</u>	
1700				" 7	" :	<u>Vend. de Suresnes</u>	
Feb 7	Versailles :	<u>Fam. à la Mode.</u>		Mar 22	" :	<u>Parisienne</u>	
Mar 26	" :	<u>Bourg. à la M.</u>	(2)	Dec 22	" :	<u>Colin-Maillard</u>	
Oct 27	Fontainebleau:	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	(3)	1709			
Dec 16	Versailles :	<u>Fête de Village</u>		Feb 4	" :	<u>Vacances</u>	
1701				Mar 4	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	
Nov 25	" :	<u>Colin-Maillard</u>		Dec 4	" :	"	
Dec 19	" :	<u>Bon Soldat</u>		1710			
1702				Nov 25	" :	<u>Agioteurs</u>	
Feb 7	" :	<u>Vend. de Suresnes</u>		Nov 30	" :	"	(6)
" 24	" :	<u>Vacances</u>		Dec 3	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	
Oct 23	Fontainebleau:	<u>Parisienne</u>	(4)	1711			
Dec 9	Versailles :	<u>Opérateur Barry</u>		Mar 7	" :	<u>Vendanges</u>	
1703				1713			
Jan 13	" :	<u>Bon Soldat</u>		Oct 16	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	
Dec 15	" :	"		Dec 20	" :	<u>Bourg. à la Mode</u>	
1704				1714			
Jan 21	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>		Jan 12	" :	<u>Enfants de Paris</u>	
" 23	" :	<u>Parisienne</u>		" 24	" :	<u>Parisienne</u>	
Dec 9	" :	<u>Enfants de Paris</u>		Feb 3	" :	<u>Galant Jardinier</u>	
		<u>Galant Jardinier</u>		1717			
1705				Jan 20	Palais Royal:	<u>Chevalier à la M.</u>	(7)
Feb 17	" :	<u>Vendanges</u>		May 13	" :	<u>Maison de Camp.</u>	
Sep 24	Fontainebleau:	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	(5)	Jun 3	" :	<u>Vend. de Suresnes</u>	
Dec 22	Versailles :	"		" 10	" :	<u>Parisienne</u>	
1706				" 17	" :	<u>Vend. de Suresnes</u>	
Jan 13	" :	<u>Vend. de Sur.</u>		Jul 2	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	
" 30	" :	<u>Bon Soldat</u>		Sep 9	" :	<u>Foire de Besons</u>	
Mar 1	" :	<u>Fête de Village</u>		" 16	" :	<u>Bon Soldat</u>	
" 6	" :	<u>Vacances</u>		" 23	" :	<u>Foire de Besons</u>	
" 15	" :	<u>Bourgeoises à la M.</u>		Oct 7	" :	"	
Nov 24	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>		" 21	" :	<u>Prix de l'Arquebuse</u>	
1707				Dec 2	" :	<u>Bon Soldat</u>	
Mar 16	Versailles :	<u>Moulin de Javelle</u>		1718			
Nov 23	" :	<u>Diabre Boiteux</u>		Jan 5	" :	<u>Fêtes du Cours</u>	
Dec 3	" :	<u>Second Chapitre</u>		Feb 26	Louvre :	<u>Vend. de Sur.</u>	(8)
" 31	" :	<u>Trahison Puhie</u>		Mar 16	Palais Royal:	<u>Parisienne</u>	
				Jun 8	" :	<u>Vend. de Sur.</u>	
				" 20	" :	<u>Été des Coq.</u>	

(1) Mercure Galant, October 1699, p. 269.

(2) The feuilles d'assemblée show that Les Trois Cousines 'a esté acceptée pour estre jouée pendant le voyage de Fontainebleau', but there is no evidence of the play having been performed around this time. (September 27 1700).

(3) Mercure Galant, November 1700, p. 209.

(4) ibid., 1702, October, p. 342.

(5) ibid., September 1705, p. 297.

(6) P. Mèlèse, Répertoire Analytique, Paris, 1934, p. 191.

(7) S. Pitou, in Studies on Voltaire..., vol. XLIV, pp. 235-259. This source indicated all subsequent performances at the Palais Royal up to 1723.

(8) Comédie Française, Registre.

1719			1721		
Jan 25	Palais Royal	: <u>Vend. de Sur.</u>	Sep 24	Palais Royal	: <u>Été des Coq.</u>
Mar 6	"	: <u>Été des Coq</u>	Nov 25	"	: <u>Moulin de Jav.</u>
Oct 11	"	: <u>Vend de Sur.</u>	Dec 3	"	: <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
Dec 27	"	: "	1722		
1720			Jan 14	"	: <u>Vacances</u>
May 22	"	: <u>Été des Coq.</u>	" 21	"	: <u>Chev à la Mode</u>
Aug 21	"	: "	Apr 15	"	: <u>Été des Coq.</u>
Dec 18	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode</u>	Jul 15	"	: <u>Vend. de Sur.</u>
1721			1724		
Apr 23	"	: <u>Moulin de Jav.</u>	Dec 4	Versailles	: <u>Fête de Village</u> (1)
Jul 23	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode</u>	" 8	"	: <u>Trois Cousines</u>
Sep 10	"	: <u>Vacances</u>	1725		
" 17	"	: <u>Vend. de Sur.</u>	Mar 10	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode</u>

A comparison between the reception of Dancourt's plays at Court and in Paris up to 1726.

The following table sets out the number of performances which Dancourt's plays enjoyed during his lifetime both at Court and in Paris. The numerical discrepancy between performances of a play at Court and in Paris is not a straightforward indication of its comparative success or lack of success; it is necessary to bear in mind that Court performances were restricted to certain months of the year, as compared with those of the Paris theatre which continued throughout the theatrical year. In addition to this factor which necessarily modifies the comparison between the reception in both quarters, there is the consideration that performances at Court often carried a higher degree of prestige: these must be considered in terms of merit rather than frequency. If it was an achievement for an author to have his work selected for presentation at Court, it was an even greater achievement to continue to find favour in these circles. L'Été des Coquettes, which ranks high among Dancourt's most popular plays at the Comédie Française during this period, was by far his most popular play at Court and was performed there twenty-one times. Les Vendanges de Suresnes, Dancourt's most frequently performed play at the Comédie Française during this period, as, indeed, to date, enjoyed a total of 252 performances from 1695 to 1726 and was given thirteen times at Court.

(1) S. Pitou, 'The Players' Return to Versailles', in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, Geneva, 1970, vol. LXXIII, p. 7.

A striking example of the discrepancy between the taste of the Court and that of Paris audiences is the fate of La Foire de Besons which was given only one performance at Court in 1696 and three in 1717, but which enjoyed sixty-seven performances at the Comédie Française during this period. A contemporary commentator, J.N. du Tralage, mentions the play's abysmal failure at Fontainebleau :

En 1696, la petite comédie de la Foire de Bezons qui a valu 20,000 francs aux comédiens françois a esté rebutée à Fontainebleau devant la Court, et l'on a dit hautement qu'on s'étonnoit comment elle n'avoit point esté sifflée dès le commencement. (1)

The key to the reason for this poor reception is contained in the significant remark :

Les gens de Court, et surtout les Dames, affectent de mépriser ce que les Bourgeois ont estimé. (1)

Les Fées, a three-act comédie-ballet, written specially for presentation at Court, was performed, as far as available information indicates, at Fontainebleau three times up to October 8 1699, but the number of performances may have been higher than this, as the Histoire Journalière of 19 October 1699 mentions its continued popularity there :

On imprime...la nouvelle comédie des Fées, mêlée de danses et de musique, dont la Cour continue à prendre le divertissement à Fontainebleau. (2)

There are, however, no records to establish the exact dates to which this account refers. In Paris, the play scarcely outlived its first run, being presented there on seven occasions that year. With regard to the remainder of Dancourt's plays, it is interesting to note that, broadly speaking, those which were never performed at Court during this period-(mostly confined to the latter part of his dramatic career) were not particularly popular either with audiences of the Comédie Française. An exception to this is Les Fêtes du Cours, one of Dancourt's major successes with Paris audiences in his time.

(1) Notes et Documents sur l'Histoire des théâtres à Paris, Paris, 1880.

(2) cf. P. Mélése, Répertoire Analytique des documents contemporains d'information et de critique concernant le théâtre à Paris sous Louis XIV, Paris, 1934, p.208.

Performances from 1685 to 1726.

	<u>Comédie Française</u>	<u>Court</u>
<u>Notaire Obligeant</u>	42	5
<u>Angélique et Médor</u>	29	7
<u>Renaud et Armide</u>	11	5
<u>Désolation des Joueuses</u>	20	1
<u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	120	10
<u>Maison de Campagne</u>	60	4
<u>Dame à la Mode</u>	15	1
<u>Folle Enchère</u>	16	1
<u>Été des Coquettes</u>	219	21
<u>Merlin Déserteur</u>	20	1
<u>Carnaval de Venise</u>	3	-
<u>Parisienne</u>	93	7
<u>Bon Soldat</u>	131	7
<u>Femme d'Intrigues</u>	23	-
<u>Gazette</u>	43	1
<u>Opéra de Village</u>	57	1
<u>Impromptu de Garnison</u>	12	1
<u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	114	7
<u>Baguette</u>	4	-
<u>Vendanges</u>	19	3
<u>Tuteur</u>	25	-
<u>Foire de Bezons</u>	67	4
<u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>	252	13
<u>Foire St Germain</u>	14	1
<u>Moulin de Javelle</u>	119	4
<u>Eaux de Bourbon</u>	22	-
<u>Vacances</u>	117	7
<u>Loterie</u>	37	1
<u>Charivari</u>	42	1
<u>Retour des Officiers</u>	12	-
<u>Curieux de Compiègne</u>	25	1
<u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	41	1
<u>Fées</u>	7	3
<u>Enfants de Paris</u>	39	3
<u>Opérateur Barry</u>	19	1
<u>Fête de Village</u>	56	3
<u>Trois Cousines</u>	87	1
<u>Colin-Maillard</u>	60	3
<u>Galant Jardinier</u>	107	2
<u>Diable Boiteux</u>	36	1
<u>Second Chapitre</u>	12	1
<u>Trahison Punie</u>	7	1
<u>Madame Artus</u>	5	-
<u>Comédie des Comédiens</u>	14	-
<u>Agitateurs</u>	20	2
<u>Céphale et Procris</u>	6	-
<u>Sancho Panca</u>	5	-
<u>Impromptu de Suresnes</u>	26	-
<u>Vert Galant</u>	10	-
<u>Fêtes du Cours</u>	35	1
<u>Guinguette de la Finance</u>	4	-
<u>Prix de l'Arquebuse</u>	10	1
<u>Métempsychose des Amours</u>	10	-
<u>Eclipse</u>	3	-
<u>Belle-Mère</u>	4	-

Contemporary Opinions on Dancourt as a playwright

There is very little information available to enable us to form anything more than an inadequate idea of how Dancourt was regarded by his contemporaries. One commentator of ~~the~~ time accuses him of being a plagiarist, but, with the scanty documentation at our disposal, it is difficult to discern with accuracy how much truth is contained in this accusation or to what extent it applied to individual cases. One major factor in the scarcity of information on contemporary opinion of Dancourt as a playwright was the failure of seventeenth-century men of letters to produce systematic works of literary criticism. As a result, we can only fall back on some unreliable and rather scrappy comments made by writers, usually journalists, of the time.

When, in 1698, the poet, Gacon, launched his satire against 'les faiseurs de mauvais Opera, de mauvaises Comedies, et de mauvais Livres' he considered himself justified in publishing what he states was a well-known fact : Dancourt's notoriety as a plagiarist and his unscrupulous treatment of playwrights who were not members of the Comédie Française. Referring to Dancourt's recent success with La Foire de Besons, Gacon comments :

Il est tel froid spectacle inventé par Dancourt
 Que tout Paris condamne et que tout Paris court.
 Ce succez étonnant, qui flatte sa manie,
 Fait que ce fade Acteur croit être un grand génie;
 Quoy qu'il doive souvent tout ce qu'il a de beau,
 A tel qui lui confie un Ouvrage nouveau.
 De ses honteux larcins l'histoire est si publique
 Que je l'ose avancer comme un fait sans réplique.
 Mais ma Muse il est tems de prendre du repos,
 Tu pourrois ennuyer par trop longs propos;
 Toujours des froids Auteurs implacable ennemie
 traits — Prépare d'autres/contre l'Academie
 Et laisse là Dancourt rempli de vanité,
 S'applaudir d'un honneur qu'il n'a pas mérité. (1)

Given the poets preoccupation as a satirist with presenting his victim in the least flattering light, it would not, of course, be wise to place too much

(1) Le Poète sans Fard, Satire VII, Libreville, 1698, pp. 33-6.

faith in his allegations or to subscribe unreservedly to his opinions. Although Gacon uses exaggerated and even abusive terms in his assessment of Dancourt as a playwright, he does at least point out an undeniable fact, that Dancourt owed a certain amount of his success - but not so much as Gacon has suggested - to other authors' ideas. This is particularly true of Le Chevalier à la Mode and Les Bourgeoises à la Mode which, as we have seen, he composed in collaboration with Saint-Yon. Even if we disregard Le Moulin de Javelle, which certainly seems to have been produced in suspicious circumstances, there is no particular reason to doubt Dancourt's integrity with regard to the other comedies which he produced up to 1698.

In his satire, Gacon also refers to the farcical elements in Dancourt's comedy 'que tout Paris condamne et que tout Paris court', thus suggesting that Dancourt was catering for the lowest tastes of the public. This was another aspect of contemporary opinion of Dancourt, and we find that an epigram of 1694 entitled Sur les Mauvaises pieces de Dancourt relegates the author to the position of a farceur :

La sérieuse comédie,
Oubliant son grave maintien,
Donne à présent dans la folie
Du théâtre italien. (1)

This is, no doubt, a reference to the high standard of achievement in the genre of comedy attained by Molière at his best, and is an unfair comparison to make with a playwright of Dancourt's calibre. On the other hand, Dancourt would have deeply resented any attempt to group his plays in the same bracket as the farcical productions often given at the Théâtre Italien and later at the Foires ; conscious of the professional superiority of the Comédie Française in matters concerning acting and the quality of plays produced there, Dancourt, like other playwrights of his time, was continually anxious to stress his concern with questions of good taste, and advocated a strict distinction between his ideal of 'la critique des mœurs' (2) and performances of a farcical nature given at the Foire.

(1) cf. P.Mélèse, Répertoire Analytique... Paris, 1934, p. 47.

(2) Prologue of Céphale et Procris, Paris, 1711.

Before joining the Comédie Française, Marc Antoine Legrand produced Les Comédiens de Campagne, at Lyon in 1699, in which he refers to the way provincial actors recite their parts without due regard to the quality of the plays in which they perform; this leads the author to make sarcastic allusion to the wide discrepancy between the achievements of Molière and Dancourt, who in his opinion, bear no comparison : 'On ne distingue plus Corneille d'avec Pradon ni Molière d'avec d'Ancourt' (Sc. viii).

In l'Ecole du Monde, Le Noble too makes an unfavourable comparison between Dancourt and Molière, and, with special reference to La Foire de Besons, he deplores the unedifying nature of Dancourt's comedies :

J'avoue, quant à la Comédie, que depuis la mort de l'inimitable Elomire on a pris quelques licences qu'il seroit bon de réprimer. Ce sage correcteur de nos folies ne s'émancipoit point à ces impertinentes équivoques qui ne font rire que des âmes basses; il entroit délicatement dans le naturel, sans chercher à desopiler la rate par ces fades mots à double entente, qu'on peut tolérer au village de Bezons mais non pas à la foire exposée en plein Théâtre (1)

An obscure playwright, Valentin, published in Brussels in 1706, a play entitled Les Francs-Bourgeois which he composed for performance in Munich and dedicated to the Elector of Bavaria.⁽²⁾ In his preface Valentin, embittered by the failure of his play to be performed in Munich on account of Dancourt's popularity there, (3) includes a criticism of authors who have gained an unmerited reputation :

Quelque fade que soit un Auteur, s'il imprime souvent, on s'accoutume à sa manière d'écrire, on le tolère... Me preserve le Seigneur Apollon d'une pareille manie! et de chercher à établir bien ou mal ma réputation par une quantité de mauvais Ouvrages!

That this an undisguised allusion to Dancourt is illustrated in the quatrain following this attack :

Si Pandolphe déplaît, s'il semble être trop fade,
A Phoebus pour jamais un grand 'adieu' je dis:
J'ayme mieux finir là, que de voir mes Ecrits
Porter dans l'Univers le nom de DANCOURADE.

(1) Oeuvres, Paris, 1718, 19 vols., vol. IV.

(2) cf. S. Pitou, 'Molière, Dancourt et Valentin', Modern Language Quarterly, 1962, vol. XXIII, pp. 115-9. A copy of this play is in the Arsenal.

(3) cf. K. Trautman, Jahrbuch für Münchener Geschichte, Munich, 1888, p. 185 who states that next to tragedy and music the performances of Molière's and Dancourt's plays were the highlight of the stage in Munich at that time.

This is the earliest known example of the use of the term 'dancourade' which was subsequently applied in a contemptuous way to Dancourt's works, particularly his one-act comedies. It is not known, however, who actually coined this expression.

Reference has already been made to the accusations of tyranny among the actors of the Comédie Française and of discrimination against outside authors launched at Dancourt by a hostile commentator, Le Fèvre, editor of the Mercure Galant. The implications of these accusations are that Dancourt owed his success not to any merit as a playwright but to his power within the troupe to eliminate any competition from outsiders which might detract from the favourable reception of his own plays with the audience. As we have seen, these allegations were largely the product of Le Fèvre's biased opinions based on personal animosity. The Frères Parfaict assure us that Le Fèvre was 'L'ennemi déclaré de l'Auteur' and that his adverse comments were motivated by 'l'envie de dire du mal de M. Dancourt'. Moreover, as a successful and prosperous playwright, Dancourt could hardly escape being the target of hostile criticism from envious individuals. It is noteworthy that Le Fèvre was relieved of his post of editor by an 'arrêt du conseil du 28 novembre à cause qu'il se glissait dans le Mercure des choses scandaleuses et même injurieuses à la réputation de plusieurs personnes.' (1) Even if no concret proof were available to disprove his account of Dancourt's professional conduct, Le Fèvre's fondness for publishing libellous information is in itself sufficient to weaken considerably the credibility of his allegations in this instance.

Quite apart from these pieces of criticism from individual commentators, there was, of course, the prevailing contemporary prejudice against all forms of dramatic productions particularly comedies; the latter were regarded as farcical productions suitable for the uneducated and less genteel sections of society, and as being incompatible with such considerations as morality and good taste.

(1) E. Hatin, Bibliographie Historique et Critique de la Presse Périodique Française, Paris, 1866, p. 25.

The Posthumous Fate of Dancourt's Plays at the Comédie Française.

Dancourt ranks fifth among the playwrights of the Comédie Française whose works were performed there more than a thousand times. The following table illustrates the position he enjoyed in relation to the three dominant figures in French dramatic literature of the seventeenth century, and to his contemporary, Regnard :

Molière (1622-1673).....	26,750
Racine (1639-1699).....	8,257
Corneille (1606-1684).....	6,465
Regnard (1655-1709).....	5,648
Dancourt (1661-1725).....	5,578 (1)

These figures have been calculated from the date of first performance of each play to 31 July 1960. The number of Dancourt's performances is, in fact, higher than this when we add the eighteen performances of Merlin la Chaconne and Le Brutal de Sang Froid as well as the 43 performances of his plays in the period 1739-1740 (2), to make a total of 5,639.

A striking feature of the posthumous fate of Dancourt's plays is the popularity among theatre audiences of his more modest productions, the one-act comédies-vaudevilles written in prose and containing elements of singing and dancing. In considering these unambitious playlets, it is important to make a distinction between those of a more ephemeral nature whose popularity depended on public interest in some contemporary event which the author dramatized, and those which were endowed with more substantial qualities of characterization or social satire. Plays like La Baguette or L'Eclipse could not be expected to survive for long, whereas others, of more lasting interest, were able to fare much better. It is interesting to note that what is now Dancourt's best-known play, Le Chevalier à la Mode, takes only fourth place in the list of his plays performed at the Comédie Française; the 388 performances it has enjoyed up to the present day can be contrasted with the fate of a relatively little known play, Les Vendanges de Suresnes, which achieved the record number of 555 performances. On the other hand, La Maison de Campagne which was

(1) cf. S. Chevalley, La Comédie Française, Paris, 1961, p. 32. Dancourt's figure includes 6 performances of La Mort d'Alcide, the tragedy he revived in 1704.

in the theatre's repertory longer than any other of Dancourt's plays, could not be described as a great success from the point of view of frequency of presentation: last performed in 1958, it had failed to hold the interest of spectators in the two previous centuries, being performed only eight times in the nineteenth century and 27 times in the eighteenth. Its total number of performances to date is 105.

The following table, indicating in brackets the number of acts of each play, shows in order of success the total number of performances which Dancourt's plays have enjoyed to the present day at the Comédie Française :

<u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u> (I).....555	<u>Angélique et Médor</u> (I).....29
<u>Galant Jardinier</u> (I).....433	<u>Impromptu de Suresnes</u> (I).....26
<u>Été des Coquettes</u> (I).....398	<u>Agioteurs</u> (III).....20
<u>Chevalier à la Mode</u> (V).....388	<u>Désolation des Joueuses</u> (I)...20
<u>Mari Retrouvé</u> (I).....379	<u>Merlin Déserteur</u> (I).....20
<u>Vacances</u> (I).....368	<u>Comédie des Comédiens</u> (III)...19
<u>Fête de Village</u> (III).....362	<u>Opérateur Barry</u> (I).....19
<u>Trois Cousines</u> (III).....357	<u>Vendanges</u> (I).....19
<u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u> (V).....252	<u>Folle Enchère</u> (I).....16
<u>Tuteur</u> (I).....229	<u>Dame à la Mode</u> (V).....15
<u>Colin-Maillard</u> (I).....228	<u>Trahison Punie</u> (V).....15
<u>Moulin de Javelle</u> (I).....215	<u>Fées</u> (III).....14
<u>Bon Soldat</u> (I).....203	<u>Foire Saint Germain</u> (I).....14
<u>Parisienne</u> (I).....143	<u>Second Chapitre du Diable B.</u> ...12
<u>Curieux de Compiègne</u> (I).....109	<u>Renaud et Armide</u> (I).....11
<u>Maison de Campagne</u> (I).....105	<u>Brutal de Sang Froid</u> (?).....11
<u>Charivari</u> (I).....101	<u>Métempsychose des Am.</u> (III)....10
<u>Foire de Besons</u> (I).....79	<u>Prix de l'Arquebuse</u> (I).....10
<u>Opéra de Village</u> (I).....57	<u>Vert Galant</u> (I).....10
<u>Enfants de Paris</u> (V).....43	<u>Merlin la Chaconne</u> (?).....7
<u>Gazette de Hollande</u> (I).....43	<u>Céphale et Procris</u> (III).....6
<u>Notaire Obligeant</u> (III).....42	<u>Madame Artus</u> (V).....5
<u>Loterie</u> (I).....37	<u>Sancho Pança Gouverneur</u> (V)....5
<u>Diable Boiteux</u> (I).....36	<u>Baguette</u> (I).....4
<u>Fêtes du Cours</u> (I).....35	<u>Belle-Mère</u> (V).....4
<u>Eaux de Bourbon</u> (I).....31	<u>Carnaval de Venise</u> (V).....3
<u>Retour des Officiers</u> (I).....31	<u>Eclipse</u> (I).....3 (1)

Only a small proportion of Dancourt's plays maintained their interest for audiences at the Comédie Française down to 1780 or so, when they experienced a fairly rapid decline in popularity. The large majority, however, were either

(1) These figures were obtained from the following sources : A. Joannides, La Comédie Française de 1680 à 1920, Paris, 1921, the Registers of the Comédie Française, and S. Chevalley, 'La Saison théâtrale 1739-1740 à la Comédie Française,' Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, 1967, vol. 19, pp. 57-73.

too ephemeral in nature to outlive their author, or else devoid of sufficient depth to hold the interest of spectators for more than a few years after Dancourt's death. In considering the decline in popularity of the more lasting type of Dancourt's productions, it is important to bear in mind the gradual development, in the course of the eighteenth century, of a new spirit in French literature which, at the time of the Revolution, was to have a profound effect on the fate of these plays. Although eleven of them succeeded in surviving the Revolutionary period - which was quite an achievement - only two, Le Chevalier à la Mode and La Maison de Campagne, were to continue with any real success in the repertory of the Comédie Française by the turn of the following century.

It is interesting to note that some of Dancourt's plays, far from having lingered on in the theatre's repertory until they exhausted the interest of the theatre-going public, were revived after a moderately successful debut in Dancourt's lifetime to enjoy at least a favourable recognition from audiences at a later date. Such is the case of La Fête de Village which, after its first run was revived in 1705 but completely neglected for almost twenty years. From 1724 onwards it was performed regularly with only a short break (from 1743 to 1750) down to 1793. Le Retour des Officiers, which had been given only twelve times during its first run in 1697, was dropped from the repertory until 1733 when it enjoyed a brief return to the stage. It was not until almost half a century later, between 1780 and 1782 that it was accorded a favourable reception. Another example of one of Dancourt's plays which increased in popularity after his death is Le Charivari, which had been dropped in 1701. After two brief revivals in 1727 and 1757 the play was performed at the Comédie Française regularly from 1762 to 1783. The year 1733 was one in which the actors attempted to revive a number of Dancourt's plays, with varying degrees of success. Apart from the already mentioned Le Retour des Officiers, they decided to produce two plays which had met with only modest success during their first run, La Comédie des Comédiens and La Trahison Punie, but their high hopes did not meet with a corresponding degree

of success. In the same year, Le Tuteur, which had not been performed since 1697, made a fairly successful reappearance on the stage; but it was only from 1757 to 1790 that it was to be received by audiences with a far greater success than in its hey-day.

The Fate of Dancourt's Plays at Versailles from 1726 to 1757.

1726 Sep 10 : <u>Vacances</u>	1739 Mar 3 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" " 12 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>	" " 10 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>
" Dec 10 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	" Dec 17 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
1727 Mar 18 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" " 31 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" " 24 : <u>Parisienne</u>	1740 Jan 7 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>
" Dec 2 : <u>Fête de Village</u>	" " 12 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>
" " 18 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" " 14 : <u>Parisienne</u>
1728 Feb 24 : <u>Fête de Village</u>	" Mar 17 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>
" Nov 23 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	" Dec 29 : "
" " 25 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	1741 Feb 7 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>
1729 Jan 13 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" " 21 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 27 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" Mar 7 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>
" Nov 10 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	" Nov 9 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
1730 Jan 26 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" " 16 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" Mar 9 : <u>Vacances</u>	" Dec 12 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 16 : <u>Fête de Village</u>	" " 19 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>
" Nov 8 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>	1742 Jan 9 : <u>Parisienne</u>
1731 Jan 30 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	" Feb 20 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>
" Feb 27 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" Nov 6 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
" Oct 25 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	" " 8 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" Dec 11 : <u>Vacances</u>	" " 13 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>
1732 Jan 29 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" Dec 18 : <u>Fête de Village</u>
1733 Dec 1 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	1743 Mar 12 : <u>Parisienne</u>
1734 Jan 5 : <u>Tuteur</u>	" " 14 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>
" Apr 6 : <u>Parisienne</u>	" " 19 : <u>Vacances</u>
" Dec 9 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	" Dec 3 : "
" " 14 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	" " 31 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
1735 Jan 18 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	1744 Feb 11 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 27 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" Mar 10 : <u>Vacances</u>
" Dec 1 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	1745 Jan 5 : <u>Curieux de Compiègne</u>
1736 Jan 17 : <u>Bon Soldat</u>	" " 21 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 26 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>	" " 26 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" Feb 23 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" Dec 2 : "
" Mar 1 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	1746 Feb 3 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
" Dec 11 : "	" Mar 1 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
1737 Jan 29 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	" Dec 20 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
" Feb 12 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>	1747 Feb 16 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" Mar 7 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	" Mar 9 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 26 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	" Dec 12 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" Dec 30 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	1748 Jan 2 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
1738 Jan 28 : "	" " 9 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
" Feb 4 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>	" Feb 8 : <u>Trois Cousines</u>
" " 18 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	" Mar 14 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 27 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	" " 26 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
	" Dec 12 : "

1749 Jan 7 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	1753 Feb 22 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
" Mar 11 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" Dec 11 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>
" " 20 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	1754 Jan 22 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" Dec 2 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	" Feb 5 : <u>Fête de Village</u>
" " 11 : <u>Vacances</u>	" " 7 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
" " 18 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>	" " 14 : <u>Vacances</u>
1750 Mar 10 : "	" Dec 19 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" Dec 3 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	1755 Jan 2 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" " 29 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	" " 21 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
1751 Mar 2 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u>	" Feb 25 : <u>Fête de Village</u>
" " 23 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	" Mar 4 : <u>Colin-Maillard</u>
1752 Jan 27 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	" Nov 4 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>
" Mar 8 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	" Dec 2 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" Nov 28 : <u>Fête de Village</u>	1756 Jan 20 : <u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>
1753 Jan 2 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	" " 27 : <u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>
" Feb 6 : <u>Été des Coquettes</u>	" Feb 24 : <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" " 13 : <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	1757 Nov 15 : <u>Galant Jardinier</u> (1)

A Comparison of the success of Dancourt's Plays at Versailles and at the Comédie Française between 1726 and 1757.

The total number of Court performances of Dancourt's plays in this thirty-one-year period is 123,(2) making an average of four performances a season. L'Été des Coquettes is, once again, prominent, and shares first place in order of success with Le Galant Jardinier, both of which enjoyed eighteen performances during this period. It is noteworthy that, whereas L'Été des Coquettes maintained its high degree of popularity during Dancourt's lifetime both at Court and in Paris, Le Galant Jardinier, though always popular at the Comédie Française, was only beginning to find favour at Versailles after 1726. Next in order of success is Le Mari Retrouvé which also ranks high in the list of posthumous performances at the Comédie Française. Another peasant play to enjoy a significant increase in popularity in Court circles is Colin-Maillard, performed fourteen times during this period. The popularity of Les Trois Cousines is also noteworthy, as it was performed eight times at Versailles from 1726 to 1757, and 135 times at the Comédie Française. Similarly, Les Vendanges de Suresnes was performed eight times at Versailles, and as many as 177 times in the Paris theatre. The following chart shows at a glance the success of Dancourt's plays in both quarters :

(1) cf. S. Pitou, 'The Players' return to Versailles', in Studies on Voltaire and the 18th Century, vol. LXXIII, pp. 7 - 145.

(2) cf. S. Pitou, op. cit., pp. 7 - 145, who gives Dancourt's figure as 126, but includes the three performances given at Versailles from 1724-26.

	<u>Comédie Française</u>	<u>Versailles</u>
<u>Eté des Coquettes</u>	90	18
<u>Galant Jardinier</u>	174	18
<u>Mari Retrouvé</u>	135	16
<u>Colin-Maillard</u>	88	14
<u>Trois Cousines</u>	135	8
<u>Vacances</u>	144	8
<u>Vendanges de Suresnes</u>	177	8
<u>Fête de Village</u>	91	7
<u>Bon Soldat</u>	66	7
<u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u>	75	6
<u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>	76	6
<u>Parisienne</u>	45	5
<u>Tuteur</u>	29	1
<u>Curieux de Compiègne</u>	9	1

It is interesting to note exactly where Dancourt stands on the list of playwrights who had their works performed at Versailles from 1723 to 1757 :

Molière.....200	Legrand.....81
Regnard.....133	Dufresny.....75
Racine.....128	Voltaire.....61
Dancourt.....126	Hauteroche.....55
P. Corneille.....101	Fagan.....54

Eighteenth Century Opinions of Dancourt.

The popularity of Dancourt's plays continued almost unabated until about the mid-eighteenth century when he began to lose his appeal for theatre-goers. Up to this time various commentators on literary subjects showed sufficient interest in Dancourt to put forward some pieces of criticism of the style and content of his works, but mostly of a vague and repetitive nature. What characterizes these commentators is the lack of constructive criticism organized on an adequately systematic and objective basis.

Their opinions of Dancourt fall into two main categories : on the one hand, objections were frequently raised to the tone and language of his plays - an outlook which reflected the eighteenth-century preoccupation with even the slightest departure from the bienséances, particularly as far as the delicate question of 'pudeur' was concerned; and, on the other hand, some critics mingled

their appraisal of Dancourt as a second-rate writer of ephemeral comedies with some praise of his lively sketches of contemporary society expressed in racy and sparkling dialogue.

One of the greatest obstacles in the way of Dancourt's success on the eighteenth-century stage was the increasingly hostile reaction of contemporary critics to the 'bas comique' of the previous century. Although there was a certain amount of this kind of criticism in the seventeenth century, critics became more and more intolerant not only of words with indecent connotations introduced into comedies in order to provoke hilarity, but also themes which were not in conformity with moral principles, such as elopements, parties carrées, and cocuage. As Dancourt's plays are, for the most part, constructed on such 'immoral' themes and contain an element of facetious ribaldry, it is only to be expected that he would fall foul of the critics. The Marquis d'Argenson commented on the changing climate of opinion which characterized his century : 'Nous devenons de plus en plus pudibonds sur les images et sur les expressions'. (1)

What applied to the presentation on the stage of material likely to scandalize the eighteenth-century public sense of decency was also true of a broader concept of morality. Not only had relationships between the sexes to be beyond reproach, but it was also considered unfitting to dramatize situations involving breaches of parental authority, usurious practices, intrigues to obtain money and, indeed, knavery of any description. Several seventeenth-century playwrights including Dancourt were criticized for just such lack of moral concern, and Molière was generally considered the arch-offender in this respect as having set the tone for subsequent comedies: 'C'est sur ce modèle', wrote Luigi Riccoboni in 1736, 'que la plupart des auteurs font écouter aux filles sur la scène les fleurettes de leurs amants, approuver les fourberies des soubrettes et des valets, et s'exposer

(1) Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, vol. XLII, p. 258.

même aux suites d'un enlèvement, plutôt que d'obéir aux volontés de leurs parents' (1). Later in the century Cailhava de l'Estendoux formulated a three-fold theory of 'décence' which should be observed on the stage :

L'une défend qu'on y effarouche la pudeur, l'autre ne veut pas qu'on y blesse le respect dû aux parents, la troisième ordonne d'y ménager les égards que les hommes se doivent mutuellement. (2)

The presence of 'sensibilité' in eighteenth-century literature was also important in this respect. As there was a demand for emotive scenes in plays which would cater for the lachrymose tendencies particularly of women spectators, it was required that authors should resort to pathos, not scurrilous satire. It was in accordance with the concept of the 'comique larmoyant' that the innocent and oppressed should triumph, that the wicked should be punished and, in a word, that justice should reign supreme. All this was entirely at odds with the content of Dancourt's plays in which the protagonist is often the epitome of knavery, the majority of characters unprincipled, and the occasional person embodying moral standards of any kind is represented as the least sympathetic of all : generally as a weak-willed bourgeois dominated by a 'maîtresse-femme'. But the temporary appeal of the comédie larmoyante did not seem to seriously affect the popularity of Dancourt's plays with the theatre-going public who were not all whole-hearted followers of the new fashion in comedy; with reference to L'Impromptu de Suresnes d'Argenson states that 'Les gens de goust regrettent aujourd'huy ce wray comique où les acteurs brillent davantage, et les spectateurs rient autant qu'ils s'attristent au comique larmoyant' (3). His attitude was shared by Frédéric Melchior Grimm who, in a ^{news-}letter of 15 July 1753, showed his appreciation of the comic qualities of Dancourt's plays, with special reference to Les Trois Cousines and Le Moulin de Javelle :

- (1) Observations sur la comédie et sur le génie de Molière, Paris, 1736, pp. 264-5.
- (2) De l'Art de la Comédie, Paris, 1772, 4 vols., vol. I, pp. 314-5.
- (3) Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, p. 179.

...petites pieces qui ont cette gaïeté si singulière, qu'on ne trouve plus dans les pièces de théâtre d'aujourd'hui, et qui s'est perdue avec Dancourt, de même que ces saillies et cette vivacité qui caractérisent son dialogue, et qui le rendent si original et si supérieur aux autres. (1)

The popularity of Dancourt's comedies was also threatened, to a certain extent, by the rumblings of hostile reaction from mid-eighteenth-century theorists of the drame who advocated a type of play which would exalt the bourgeoisie, hitherto the object of contempt on the stage. The practitioners of this new type of play which, however, retained some of the characteristics of the comédie larmoyante, sought to dramatize the domestic problems of bourgeois and plebeian characters in such a way that they would no longer be the butt of jests from playwrights and the laughing-stock of theatre audiences, but the centre of admiration. But, once again, in spite of the opposition presented by this new genre which reflected the changing position of the bourgeoisie in eighteenth-century society, Dancourt's plays continued to be in demand at least almost down to the eve of the Revolution.

Then there were the baneful effects on dramatic works of the 'esprit critique' of the eighteenth century. Dancourt himself had objected in his prologues to Le Diable Boiteux (1707) and Céphale et Procris (1711) to the attitude of those who did not come to the theatre simply for enjoyment; he regarded this as detrimental to a playwright's chances of success. D'Argenson, too, for his part, was not a devotee of pedantic criticism :

On aime trop la critique aujourd'hui; tout déplaist, parce qu'on ne songe plus qu'à l'art et non aux effets de l'art; la pédanterie a pris la place du goût, l'envie a produit le dénigrement, et ses menaces ont éteint le génie...(2)

He praises 'ce naturel, source de bonne plaisanterie pour les gens qui sentent'.(3), and criticizes the sophisticated style and philosophical content of many mid-eighteenth-century one-act comedies : 'ce naturel est perdu ou peu s'en faut chez nos modernes; on se livre trop à l'imagination, et on alambique trop son esprit dans les farces'.

(1) Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, ed. M. Tourneux, Paris, 1877-1882, 16 vols., vol. II, p. 262.

(2) Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, ed. H. Lagrave, p. 670.

(3) ibid., p. 218.

The only two eighteenth-century writers who studied Dancourt's collection of plays - though from entirely different angles - were the Marquis d'Argenson in his Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, mostly written between 1748 and 1756, and the Frères Parfaict in their Histoire du Théâtre François (1735-1749). The former, who was not a historian of the theatre in the sense that the Frères Parfaict were, adopts a different approach to criticism of dramatic works. To begin with, he was writing purely for his own pleasure, without intending his commentary on the Parisian theatres for publication. He was a 'connaisseur' of the theatre in the full sense of the word: a regular theatre-goer, he increased his first-hand knowledge by contact with authors such as Voltaire, Marivaux and La Motte, attending private auditions or reading manuscripts of plays. Unlike the Frères Parfaict, he is unconcerned with a strict chronological order in his presentation, and pays scant attention to details of correctness. The keynote of his criticism is an aesthetic appreciation of the theatre: he is more concerned with the effects which a play produces in him as a spectator than with a rigid application of the classical rules: 'Je ne sais d'autre manière de juger les pièces de théâtre, que d'après l'impression qu'elles m'ont faite, et je me garde bien d'examiner si elles sont conformes aux règles'. (1) The main criterion which he applies to dramatic works is that they should be in conformity with vraisemblance and bienséance. Only occasionally does he introduce some comments on an author's style, as, for example, his opinion that 'le dialogue extrêmement coupé étoit le style de Dancourt' (2).

D'Argenson's rather strong views on the absence of morality in Dancourt's plays, while reflecting the contemporary prejudice against comedy as a genre, has its explanation in his personal philosophy; as a 'Moderne' with Christian principles, he was opposed to any manifestation of 'paganism' which recalled the ethos of the early Greek theatre. Thus, in his comments on Céphale et Procris which deals

(1) Essais dans le goût de ceux de Montaigne, Paris, 1785, p. 204.

(2) Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, p. 170.

with a mythological theme of marital infidelity, he dismissed the play point-blank :

Ce sujet, comme il est traité, doit convertir tout ce qui a du penchant pour la croyance païenne des Grecs: les dieux, auteurs des plus noires injustices et des plus grandes fourberies...cet auteur traite ces sujets relevés comme il en usoit avec sa famille: prostitution partout, fidélité conjugale humiliée devant les présents, plaisirs deshonnêtes partout, maquerillage, libertinage, sentiments vils et honteux. Cette pièce est sans nul mérite. (1)

Elsewhere in his Notices d'Argenson makes frequent reference to the low moral standards in the private lives of actors. Similarly, he objects to the tone of La Métamorphose des Amours in which Jupiter is depicted as a philanderer, another well-worn mythological theme :

Il règne dans cette pièce un goût de prostitution et d'amour grossier qui n'a pu plaire qu'à des auteurs comédiens accoutumés à tirer partie de leurs épouses, et à ce trafic indigne de la beauté fardée et de la tendresse feinte. Il déplaist de voir les dieux plongés dans cette familiarité basse et dégoutante comme icy. C'est donc une pièce de très mauvais goût. (2)

The Marquis's respect for the institution of marriage was such that he deplored any irreverent treatment of the subject in plays. This is why he complains that 'Tous les mariages des pièces de Dancourt ont toujours plus les apparences de simples concubinages que d'autre chose'(3), (which he also terms 'mariages en détrempe'), and that Dancourt 'traite le mariage dans ses comédies comme une vraie séduction et comme s'il ne s'agissoit que d'entretenir une fille' (4). Referring to the plot of Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, which is based on a humorous presentation of a partie carrée and which therefore violated the bienséances, d'Argenson comments : 'Les amours infidèles de quatre personnes mariées sont une licence qu'il faut tolérer en faveur du relâchement de ce siècle'. (5) And he deplores the unedifying behaviour of the characters in Les Eaux de Bourbon 'dont les mœurs choquent plus le théâtre aujourd'hui que dans le tems où cela parût'. (6)

(1) Notices sur les Oeuvres de théâtre, p. 170.

(2) ibid., ibi 180.

(3) ibid., p. 171.

(4) ibid., p. 178.

(5) ibid., p. 170.

(6) ibid., p. 173.

Although d'Argenson's assessment of Dancourt as an 'auteur mediocre' whose plays 'reviennent toujours sur le même pivot' (1), is an entirely subjective one, his ideas have much in common with those expressed by other contemporary commentators.

The Frères Parfaict do more justice to Dancourt as a playwright. They give a brief account of each of his plays in chronological order, explaining the plot, putting forward their personal reasons for a play's success or lack of success, providing here and there snippets of information about possible collaborators or sources and about events which inspired Dancourt with some ideas, and relating an anecdote or two in connection with his life and works. But as for criticism of Dancourt in the sense of a balanced judgement based on a comprehensive grasp of both the qualities and weaknesses of his work, they do not offer any more than a few comments on the author's talent for endowing his characters with a lively and natural form of expression which they consider 'la partie dominante de cet Auteur' :

On peut dire qu'à travers tout ce jeu de farce, on y trouve de temps en temps des traits qui caractérisent un homme qui entend parfaitement le ton du Dialogue comique. (2)

There were throughout the eighteenth century several pot-shots taken at Dancourt's work which were hardly likely to enhance his image; indeed, some critics did him a positive disservice. But there were also occasionally some expressions of praise, as that given by the editor of the Mercure de France who wrote a rudimentary obituary in December 1725 :

Il laisse au Théâtre une tres grande quantité de Pièces, que le Public voit encore tous les jours avec plaisir. Son stile est léger, vif, agreable, et si tous ses Ouvrages ne sont pas aussi châtiés qu'on le désireroit, on peut dire que le dialogue en est toujours admirable. (3)

These were the qualities by which Dancourt was to be best remembered.

Ten years later Beauchamps described Dancourt as an 'auteur médiocre, trop libre dans ses expressions' and showed little appreciation for his ability as a playwright ;when he remarked that 'ses pieces ne sont pour la plupart que des

(1) ibid., p. 171.

(2) Histoire du Théâtre François, vol. XIII, p. 246.

(3) cf. ibid., vol. XV, pp. 55-56.

vaudevilles, et ne doivent leur réussite qu'à quelque aventure du tems.' (1)

This rather ungracious allusion to Dancourt as a playwright of insignificant literary merit illustrates Beauchamps's low view of his achievements as a dramatist. His attribution of Dancourt's success to a single and unconvincing reason can only be considered as arbitrary. It would, moreover, require more thought than can be expressed in half a sentence to define with accuracy the qualities which are the ingredients of success.

Voltaire, a defender of the classical tradition, was no less unjust in his criticism of Dancourt's works which he expressed in a venomous style. In his correspondence of August 1725, he attributes a decline in standards of dramatic productions and of good taste among the audience to the joint influence of Dancourt and his colleague, Marc-Antoine Legrand, actor and author of several one-act comedies similar in theme and content to those produced by Dancourt :

Dancour et Legrand ont accoutumés le parterre au bas comique et aux grossièretés, et insensiblement le public s'est formé le préjugé que des petites pièces en un acte doivent être des farces pleines d'ordures et non pas des comédies nobles où les mœurs soient respectées. Le peuple n'est pas content qu'on ne fait rire que l'esprit. Il faut le faire rire tout haut et il est difficile de le réduire à aimer mieux des plaisanteries fines, que des équivoques fades, et à préférer Versailles à la rue Saint Denis. (2)

It seems unfair to brand Dancourt and Legrand as the sole instigators of a decline in dramatic standards; writers of worthless comedies have abounded at all times, and Dancourt, at any rate, is not the most representative of these. Little constructive criticism can result from a purely negative approach to the question. As with other commentators of the time, Voltaire was expecting too much of Dancourt, and condemning him for falling short of the perfect. Consequently there was a tendency to overlook the qualities which are in evidence in Dancourt's works, even if they are not of a nature to qualify him as a playwright of the highest order. As for Voltaire's contemptuous reference to Dancourt's greater appeal for the uneducated merchants of the Rue Saint Denis, we can see from the favourable reception

(1) Recherches sur les Théâtres de France, Paris, 1735, 3 vols., vol. II.

(2) Correspondence, ed. T. Besterman, Geneva, 1953-66, 107 vols., vol. I, p. 321. (Letter to the Marquise de Bernières, 20 August, 1725).

which Dancourt's plays enjoyed at Court as well as with the more mixed audiences of the Comédie Française, that this is no more than a churlish refusal to acknowledge Dancourt's achievements.

In his Siècle de Louis XIV (1752) Voltaire relegated Dancourt to the position of a farce writer, making an unfair comparison between him and Molière. Referring to Dancourt's youthful abandonment of academic pursuits in favour of the theatrical world - a decision which he made at the time of his marriage in 1680 and which, incidentally, Molière had also made in his youth - Voltaire remarks scathingly that 'Dancourt aime mieux se livrer au théâtre qu'au barreau'. He goes on to deny Dancourt's creative ability by regarding his comedies as appropriate forms of facile amusement for the lower orders of society on account of what he considers their insignificant value as literary compositions :

Ce que Regnard était à l'égard de Molière dans la haute comédie, le comédien Dancourt l'était dans la farce. Beaucoup de ses pièces attirent encore un assez grand concours; elles sont gaies, le dialogue en est naïf. La quantité de pièces qu'on a faites dans ce genre facile est immense; elles sont plus du goût du peuple que des esprits délicats; mais l'amusement est un des besoins de l'homme, et cette espèce de comédie, aisée à représenter, plaît dans Paris et dans les provinces au grand nombre, qui n'est pas susceptible de plaisirs plus relevés. (1)

Although Voltaire does seem to concede qualities to Dancourt by stating that he was successful as a public entertainer, underlying this apparent praise is a studied insult which negates the compliment he paid. The words 'gaies' and 'naïf' in his mouth have anything but a favourable connotation, especially as he goes on to associate them with a cheap popularity. It appears that Voltaire was more concerned with setting Dancourt on a pedestal only to knock the structure from under him. The reference to Dancourt's popular appeal for the unenlightened and undistinguishing masses does not stand up to a critical examination of his success as a playwright. We have seen Dancourt's popularity both with the frequenters of the Court - considered the arbiters of taste - and with the audiences of the Comédie Française which consisted, among other social types, of members of the nobility as well as a large section of ~~the~~ educated and professional bourgeois.

(1) Oeuvres Complètes, ed. L. Moland, Paris, 1877-85, 52 vols., vol. XIV, p. 60.

J.J. Rousseau was more forthright in his opinion of Dancourt and expressed it in a way that illustrates his testiness with regard to the theatre. He had particularly strong feelings on the unsavoury tone of many late seventeenth-century comedies where, in his opinion, virtue was held up to ridicule. In his Lettre à Mr. d'Alembert sur les Spectacles (1758) he treats Dancourt with the utmost contempt, as being almost an 'untouchable' in the literary world :

J'aurois trop d'avantage si je voulois passer de l'examen de Molière à celui de ses successeurs, qui, n'ayant ni son génie, ni sa probité, n'en ont que mieux suivi ses vues intéressées en s'attachant à flatter une jeunesse débauchée et des femmes sans mœurs. Je ne ferai pas à Dancourt l'honneur de parler de lui: ses pièces n'effarouchent pas par des termes obscènes, mais il faut n'avoir de chaste que les oreilles, pour le pouvoir supporter. Regnard, plus modeste, n'est pas moins dangereux: laissant l'autre amuser les femmes perdues, il se charge, lui, d'encourager les filoux. (1)

In 1760 De la Porte described Dancourt as 'L'Ecrivain le plus volumineux et le plus monotone' of his time, and his work as 'fruits passagers qui perdent leur prix avec la saison qui les avait vu naître.' He criticizes the playwright's 'défaut d'étude' which accounts for the shallowness of his comedies : 'Dancourt n'a qu'un petit cercle autour duquel il revient sans cesse...Borné aux petites peintures, il entreprit rarement de grands tableaux.' (2) One redeeming feature emerges from this perfunctory review, which had become Dancourt's best-known attribute : 'On peut donner sa prose pour un modèle d'agrément et de légèreté.'

A more favourable opinion of Dancourt was put forward by Sabatier de Castres in 1772 :

Son théâtre comique annonce dans presque toutes les pièces un génie égal quelquefois à celui de Molière, et capable d'en approcher plus constamment, si la trop grande facilité de Dancourt ne l'eût souvent jeté dans la négligence et l'incorrection. Quand il veut tirer parti de ses talents, son style est naturel, vif, agréable, plein de force comique, et son dialogue plein d'adresse et de légèreté.

D'une cinquantaine de pièces qu'il a composées on n'en joue plus guère à Paris que sept ou huit, parmi lesquelles Les Bourgeoises à la Mode, Les Vendanges de Suresnes, Le Moulin de Javelle, Les Curieux de Compiègne reparaissent le plus souvent. (3)

(1) ed. M. Fuchs, Lille, 1948, pp. 60-61.

(2) Observateur Littéraire, Amsterdam, 1760, vol. I, Letter X.

(3) Les Trois Siècles de la Littérature Française, Paris, 1781, 5th ed., 4 vols., vol. II, pp. 104-5. The first edition was published in Paris in 1772 in three volumes.

His assessment of Dancourt's success on the Parisian stage, however, stands in need of correction. If we take the decade from 1760 to 1770, we find that altogether fifteen of Dancourt's plays were performed with varying degrees of success. Contrary to what is stated in the quotation, neither Le Moulin de Javelle nor Les Curieux de Compiègne could be considered as Dancourt's most popular plays during this period, as they enjoyed only thirteen and ten performances respectively. These figures contrast strongly with the number of performances of Le Galant Jardinier, presented fifty-four times during this period, Le Tuteur forty-one times, Le Mari Retrouvé forty times or Le Chevalier à la Mode thirty-six times. Other successful plays not mentioned by Sabatier de Castres are l'Été des Coquettes and Les Trois Cousines with thirty-four performances each, and Le Charivari with nineteen. The two other plays which were mentioned, Les Bourgeoises à la Mode and Les Vendanges de Suresnes, were both presented thirty-one times during this period.

Dancourt's works were the subject of a very severe criticism from the classically-minded journalist and critic, La Harpe, whose lectures, delivered from 1786 onwards at the Lycée, Ecoles normales and other institutions, were later published under the title of Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne (1799-1805). With a reputation for being a very severe critic who based his standards of good taste on an almost servile admiration for the Ancients and their seventeenth-century successors, Racine, Molière and La Fontaine, La Harpe's name became identified with resistance to change. His rather stiff attitude towards Dancourt is explained by his preference for the noble genres of tragedy and the epic poem and his insistence on the superiority of Molière to any other French writer of comedy. He described Dancourt as a third-rate writer, and arbitrarily allotted him a niche in a hierarchy of contemporary playwrights :

Dancourt marche bien loin après Dufresny, et pourtant doit avoir son rang parmi les comiques du troisième ordre; ce qui est encore quelque chose. Son théâtre est composé de douze volumes dont les trois quarts sont comme s'ils n'étaient pas; car s'il est facile d'accumuler les bagatelles, il n'est pas aisé de leur donner un prix. Cet auteur courait après l'historiette ou l'objet du moment, pour en faire un vaudeville qu'on oubliait aussi vite que le fait qui l'avait fait naître. De ce genre sont La Foire de Besons, La Foire Saint Germain, La Déroute du Pharaon, La Désolation des Joueuses, L'Opérateur Barry, Le Vert-Galant, Le Retour des Officiers, Les Eaux de Bourbon, Les Fêtes du Cours, Les Agioteurs, etc. Ses pièces même les plus agréables, celles où il a peint des bourgeois et des paysans, ont toutes un air de ressemblance. Mais il n'en est pas moins vrai que Le Galant Jardinier, Le Mari Retrouvé, Les Trois Cousines et Les Bourgeoises de qualité seront toujours au nombre de nos petites pièces qu'on revoit avec plaisir. Il y a dans son dialogue de l'esprit qui n'exclut pas le naturel: il rend ses paysans agréables sans leur ôter la physionomie qui leur convient, et il saisit assez bien quelques uns des ridicules de la Bourgeoisie.

De Dancourt à Hauteroche, il faut encore descendre beaucoup: qu'on juge quel chemin nous avons fait depuis Molière, sans sortir d'un même siècle!.(1)

This account contains the usual patronizing note which is common in criticism of Dancourt particularly when it is a question of the more flattering aspects of his compositions, and there is the inevitable comparison with Molière. It is far from being a complete criticism of Dancourt's prolific output, as La Harpe emphasizes only a few of the most obvious characteristics of Dancourt's works and chooses to ignore the rest.

Although some eighteenth-century critics praised Dancourt's achievements in the dramatic field and most offered negative criticism according to the variety of ideas which they personally held, none can be said to have done him justice. This would entail an approach to literary criticism which was to develop only in the following century. With all its shortcomings, La Harpe's Lycée was the first full-scale history of literature, an ambitious work embracing centuries; but even here Dancourt, as, indeed, other successors of Molière, is dismissed rather summarily. On the whole, critics did not pay much attention to the literary production of the whole period of ^{the} late seventeenth- and early

(1) Lycée ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne, Paris, 1834, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 654.

eighteenth century, which they often considered as insignificant.

It is clear from the popularity of Dancourt's plays on the stage down to the 1780's that any influence which these critics exercised on public opinion was minimal. We can see a discrepancy between the general trend of criticism and the actual success of Dancourt's plays with theatre audiences of most of the eighteenth century. But the real reason for the decline in Dancourt's popularity lay elsewhere. In a sense, most of Dancourt's plays were doomed to sink into oblivion with the emergence of a new spirit in French literature which gradually dominated the scene. Dancourt's concentration on aristocratic characters and his satire of the bourgeoisie was in keeping with the tastes of members of polite society whose influence in literature and particularly in the theatre continued to prevail down to the closing decades of the Ancien Régime. In spite of the growing importance of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, aristocratic society for whom theatre-going was an important recreation, continued to hold its sway down to the eve of the Revolution when its influence in literary fields which had lasted for two centuries, was finally swept away. The eventual disappearance of the aristocratic influence in the theatre meant the removal of the stanchions on which Dancourt's plays rested : his works, conformistes in character, could not be expected to adapt themselves to the changing outlook of the eighteenth-century public, and as they became unfamiliar to subsequent generations Dancourt as a playwright gradually merged into the shadows.

CONCLUSION

Each of the chapters in this thesis, based on authentic documentary evidence, offers an original approach to a variety of aspects : Dancourt's domestic and professional life, the literary value of his prologues, his originality and evolution as a playwright, his keen interest in faits divers and in the activities of rival entertainers, his satire of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, his entertaining paysanneries, his long-term success as a dramatist and the opinions of his critics. In the light of this synthesis of information we are now in a position to form a fairly comprehensive idea of the type of person Dancourt was, and to estimate his contribution not only to the contemporary theatre, but, in a wider sense, to the literature of the age.

If we take the most salient features of Dancourt's character we find that he was a man of impulsive temperament which, on occasion, erupted into violence, that he did not scruple to maintain a high standard of living largely on credit from various sources which embroiled him in legal proceedings, or to help himself to other authors' ideas as a basis for his plays, although it is only fair to add that he was by no means so great a plagiarist as was commonly supposed.

Dancourt stands out as a remarkable figure in his time from various points of view. Although the lot of playwrights, especially actor-authors, began gradually to improve in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, he led a more affluent existence than is normally associated with a man of his profession: he could, for instance, afford to have two houses - his Paris dwelling, a rented property which he sublet in apartments, and his estate in Auteuil - and, in his later years, in

anticipation of his retirement, he purchased a fair-sized château and its surrounding lands in Le Loiret. What is more, he enjoyed a rare distinction for a comédien du roi by acquiring the title and privileges of a seigneur which raised him above the status of his colleagues and added a certain amount of lustre to his name.

Whatever personal failings he may be considered to have, there is no doubt that Dancourt was a most valuable asset to the Comédie Française in many ways, and it is ironic that his chequered career should end on a note of resentment at his colleagues' lack of appreciation for his talents and his contribution to the theatrical life. It was not, however, until over fifty years after his death that the troupe, in recognition of his contribution to the theatre, commissioned the sculptor, J.J. Foucou, to make a bust of Dancourt. ⁽¹⁾ Completed in 1782, it is at present preserved in one of the foyers of the Comédie Française, but it is not, of course, an authentic image of Dancourt; bearing no resemblance to the portrait painted by Robert Gence in 1704, it must be regarded as entirely the product of the sculptor's imagination.

Although Dancourt was always partial to the tangible rewards of his profession, his interest in the theatre was not simply a mercenary one, as we have seen from a study of his prologues. Without, of course, putting too literal a construction on the ambitions which he expressed in various dedicatory epistles not only to distinguish himself during his lifetime as an actor of some merit and a successful writer of comedies but also to establish a name for himself as a literary figure, it seems that he did cherish some sort of aspirations in the direction of literary immortality. At the very beginning of his career as a playwright, even before joining the Comédie Française, he toyed with the notion of following in the footsteps of Racine, but after an amateurish attempt at composing his sole tragedy, La Mort d'Hercule (1683), he soon abandoned his interest in the 'noble' genre. In 1704, at the height of his

(1) cf. G. Monval, Les Collections de la Comédie Française, Paris, 1897, no. 54 : On 30 January 1781 J.J. Foucou wrote a letter to the Comédie Française asking permission to make a bust of one of the famous men connected with the theatre, and received the reply : 'La Comédie a arrêté que M. Foucou ferait le buste de Dancourt. A l'assemblée ce 26 fevrier, 1781.'

dramatic career, he began to show signs of becoming more seriously concerned with the question of his reputation in the literary world ; this was the year in which he expressed his fear of being engulfed in the 'horreurs de l'oubli', and when, perhaps as a counter-measure to the prospects of this fate, he had his portrait painted by Gence. Then, at a later date, he considered himself fully justified in claiming precedence over all other French writers of comedy except, of course, Molière. Furthermore, Dancourt was not indifferent to the question of publication, and it is only a tiny fraction of his prolific output of plays which, for one reason or another, never found their way to the printing press.

As events were to prove, the laurels which Dancourt aspired to gain were of a sadly deciduous nature, and his plays did not escape a gradual decline in popularity. If this fate can be regarded as regrettable, it has its explanation in the ephemeral nature of his comedies and in the changing outlook of the eighteenth-century French society. Both of these factors contributed to a gradual decline in Dancourt's appeal for the general public, but his failure to achieve lasting recognition as a gifted and prolific writer of comedies was certainly an undeserved reward for his contribution to the literary world. It is, after all, through familiarity with the ^{work of} contemporary writers that we can best appreciate the spirit of the age, and Dancourt's plays, as is shown in this thesis, provide us with a rich vicarious experience of life and manners at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

A striking feature of Dancourt's dramatic output is the fact that he captured the spirit of the age and expressed in a concrete form the diversity of attitudes and ways of life characteristic of members of different social classes. In reflecting the foibles of his contemporaries with an appropriate amount of comic exaggeration, his work does not, however, degenerate into an over-simplified and rigid account of the various classes which made up the fabric of society, a danger which besets every writer of social satire. Dancourt achieved much more than a mere wooden portrayal

of social types acting in a manner characteristic of the class to which they belonged; he had a talent for achieving harmony between a portrayal of the attitudes which characterized a particular social class and that of the human qualities which pervaded society at all levels. There is no evidence in his plays to suggest that a member of any particular class was more predisposed than any other to be a prey to the various weaknesses which he dramatizes in widely different ways. We have seen, for example, how often he has emphasized the fatuity of meaningless titles, ceremonial trappings and mere outward appearances, yet without regarding the pursuit of these objectives as the monopoly of any one social class. Similarly, he held up to ridicule, as universal attributes, other foibles to which all are prone to succumb, such as an obsession with social prestige, a desire to live in an illusory world, and single-minded avidity for financial gain.

This is not to say that Dancourt set out with the intention of pointing a deprecating finger at the fundamental weaknesses of mankind as manifested by his contemporaries. In fact he could not be considered a moralist in the broader sense of the word - even though it is often possible to draw a practical lesson from some of his plays, - nor a visionary who illuminated with devastating clarity the evils of contemporary society; his intention in holding up to ridicule the foibles of men and women of his time was quite simply to create comic effect from a light-hearted portrayal of contemporary manners.

Dancourt's chief concern was to cultivate l'art de plaire, a difficult ideal which depended on a keen awareness of the tastes of his audience : what would be likely to captivate their attention, appeal to their views and, above all, to amuse them. He concentrated largely on satire of Parisian society, but his satire was of a nature hardly likely to arouse in the spectator feelings of indignation against the abuses inherent in the Ancien Régime. Like other contemporary playwrights he did not show much sympathy with his bourgeois characters, an attitude which was shared by aristocratic spectators in the audience at a time when French literature

was dominated by an aristocratic outlook. In order to gain their approval Dancourt wrote in conformity with their ideas; his plays reflect their contemptuous attitude towards the lower orders in a society rigidly divided into a hierarchy of classes. The necessity to produce plays which were essentially conformistes accounts for the fact that Dancourt used more discretion in his satire of the aristocracy, as it was essential for a playwright of the time to avoid offending the pride of influential theatre-goers. The general effect of his plays is one of sheer irrepressible good humour and light-hearted satire devoid of malice. Even his mildly anti-feminist attitude, seen in his tendency to choose women as his most ludicrous characters, is expressed with inoffensive gaiety. His ability to see the comic side of disputes over precedence in areas of social life and to make people laugh at themselves for indulging their petty prejudices, is a commendable quality in a writer dealing with issues liable to provoke bitterness and strife.

Although Dancourt had no conscious intention of being a moralist, the effect of his works can be regarded as illuminating and instructive as well as amusing : illuminating because by reading them we gain an insight into fundamental attitudes and outlooks of contemporary men and women, instructive because we are made painfully aware of the ever-present weaknesses of human nature, and amusing because they abound in comic qualities which cater for an indispensable human need - laughter.

1688

Jan 7 Versailles: Stilicon & Baron de la Crasse
Feb 5 " : Cid & Carosses d'Orléans
" 6 " : Coquette
" 21 " : Bajazet & Comtesse d'Escarbagnas
" 24 " : Mort de Pompée & George Dandin
Mar 8 " : OEdipe & Cocu Imaginaire
" 17 " : Stilicon & George Dandin
" 23 " : Géta & Médecin Volant
May 1 Com. Fr. : Nicomède & Ecole des Jaloux
" 11 " : Ariane & Petit Homme
" 14 " : Mariane & Merlin Dragon
" 16 " : Coquette
" 17 " : Attila & Ombre de Molière
" 18 " : Coquette
" 19 " : Les Horaces & Ombre de Molière
" 22 " : Polyeucte & Ombre de M.
" 24 " : Stilicon & Notaire Obl.
" 26 " : Arminius & Précieuses
" 28 " : Cid & Faux Gascon
" 30 " : " & "
" 31 " : Comédie sans Titre
Jun 3 " : Mort de Pompée & Faux Gascon
" 13 " : Coquette
" 18 " : Chevalier à la Mode
" 19 " : Oedipe & Comtesse d'Escarbagnas
" 20 " : Venceslas & Les Dragons
" 22 " : Géta & Souper mal app.
" 26 " : Ecole des Maris & Pourceaugnac
Jul 3 " : Pirame et Thisbé & Le Grand Turc
" 4 " : Régulus & Notaire Obl.
" 5 Versailles: Amants Magnifiques
" 7 Com. Fr. : Othon & Semblable à soi-même
" 11 " : Zélonide & "
" 21 " : Ecole des Femmes
" 26 " : Oedipe & Coupe Enchantée
" 27 " : Comédie sans Titre
" 28 " : Cid & Coupe Enchantée
" 30 " : Géta & "
" 31 " : Ecole des Maris & Pourceaugnac

1688

Aug 1 Com. Fr. : Géta & Coupe Enchantée
" 2 " : Notaire Obl. & Plaideurs
" 10 " : Chevalier à la Mode
" 23 " : Devineresse
" 25 " : "
" 28 " : Mort de Pompée & Coupe Enchantée
" 29 " : Cid & Maison de Campagne
Sep 7 " : Coquette
" 9 " : Rodogune & La Turquie
" 10 " : Misanthrope & Crispin Médecin
" 11 " : Phèdre & Le Deuil
" 12 " : Festin de Pierre
" 13 " : Cinna & Plaideurs
" 14 " : Pourceaugnac & Crispin Médecin
" 21 " : Géta & Maison de Camp.
" 27 " : Othon & "
Oct 5 " : Zélonide & "
" 6 " : Comédie sans Titre
" 9 " : Cid & Maison de Camp.
" 12 " : Femmes Savantes & Merlin Dragon
" 14 " : Malade Imaginaire
" 15 " : Amants Magnifiques & Amphitryon
" 17 " : Amants Magnifiques & Amphitryon
" 18 " : Coquette
" 19 " : Amants Magnifiques & Médecin malgré lui
" 20 " : Malade Imaginaire
" 21 " : Amants Magnifiques & Notaire Obl.
" 23 " : Amants Magnifiques & Coupe Enchantée
" 25 " : Amants Magnifiques & Pourceaugnac
" 27 " : Amants Magnifiques & Désespoir Extravagant
" 29 " : Amants Magnifiques & Crispin Médecin
" 31 " : Amants Magnifiques & Pourceaugnac
Nov 10 " : Coquette
" 15 " : Annibal & Merlin Dragon
" 17 " : Othon & Petit Homme
" 18 " : Amants Magnifiques & George Dandin
" 21 " : Cid & Coupe Enchantée
" 29 Versailles : Britannicus & Maison de Camp.
Dec 2 Com. Fr. : Malade Imaginaire
" 5 Versailles : Nicomède & Cocher Supposé

1688

Dec 6 Versailles: Phèdre & Plaideurs
 " 13 Com. Fr.: Chevalier à la Mode
 " 14 " : Esprit Follet
 " 17 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 17 Versailles: Cid
 " 20 Com. Fr.: Comédie sans Titre
 " 21 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 26 Versailles: Ecole des Femmes & Précieuses Rid.

1689

Jan 2 Versailles: Cinna & Comtesse d'Escarbagnas
 " 3 Com. Fr.: Dame à la Mode
 " 3 Versailles: Fâcheux
 " 5 Com. Fr.: Dame à la Mode
 " 6 " : Phocion & Merlin Dragon
 " 7 " : Dame à la Mode
 (Suite de la Coquette)
 " 8 " : Phocion & Petit Homme
 " 9 " : Dame à la Mode
 " 10 Versailles: Suite de la Coquette
 " 13 Com. Fr.: Suite de la Coquette
 " 16 Versailles: Pénélope & Baron de la Crasse
 " 17 Com. Fr.: Suite de la Coquette
 " 19 " : "
 " 20 " : Oedipe & Notaire Obl.
 " 21 " : Suite de la Coquette
 " 22 " : Alcibiade & Précieuses
 " 23 " : Suite de la Coquette
 " 25 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 26 " : Suite de la Coquette
 " 27 Versailles: Coquette
 " 29 Com. Fr.: Suite de la Coquette
 " 30 " : Régulus & Après-souper des Auberges
 " 31 " : Suite de la Coquette
 Feb 1 " : Ariane & Enlèvements
 " 3 " : Suite de la Coquette
 " 4 " : Céa & Fâcheux
 " 6 " : Suite de la Coquette
 " 8 " : Coquette
 " 13 " : Chev. à la Mode
 " 15 Versailles: Cléopâtre & Médecins
 " 17 Com. Fr.: Devineresse
 " 19 " : Comédie sans Titre & Plaideurs
 " 21 " : Amants Magnifiques & Pourceaugnac
 " 27 " : Amants Magnifiques & Amphitryon
 Mar 1 " : Amants Magnifiques & Notaire Obl.
 " 2 " : Laodamie & Précieuses
 " 5 Versailles: Régulus & Notaire Obl.

1689

Mar 9 Com. Fr.: Coquette
 " 10 " : Cid & Médecin Forcé
 " 12 " : Chevalier à la Mode
 " 13 " : Laodamie & Merlin Dragon
 " 15 " : Misanthrope & G. Dandin
 " 15 Versailles: Enlèvements
 " 17 Com. Fr.: Malade Imaginaire
 " 18 Versailles: Othon & Après-souper des Auberges
 " 19 Com. Fr.: Laodamie & Merlin Dragon
 " 21 Versailles: Céa & Fragments de Molière
 " 26 " : Andromaque & Dragons
 Sep 22 " : Coquette
 Nov 11 " : Jodelet Maître et Valet
 " 24 " : Céa & Notaire Obl.
 " 30 " : Amazonie & Plaideurs
 Dec 12 " : Débauché
 " 19 " : Parisien

1690

Jan 2 " : Phèdre & Répétition
 " 17 " : Comédie sans Titre

1691

April (5/8 times)
 May (16/30 times)
 June (12/ 28 times)
 July (15/31 times)
 August (18/30 times)
 September (17/29 times)
 Oct 3 Font'bleau: Merlin Déserteur
 October (14/31 times)
 Nov 15 Versailles: Cinna & Folle Enchère
 " 21 " : Parisienne
 " 24 " : Horaces & Parisienne
 " 30 " : Coquette
 November (16/27 times)
 Dec 3 Versailles: Oedipe & Chasse ridicule
 " 13 " : Britannicus & Mer. Gascon
 " 20 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 22 " : Bajazet & Bon Soldat

1692

Jan 7 " : Etourdi
 " 25 " : Rodogune & Veau Perdu
 January (11/31 times)
 Feb 6 Versailles: Dépit Amoureux
 February (23/28 times)
 March (15/22 times)
 April (14/17 times)
 May (9/29 times)
 June (12/29 times)
 July 24/31 times)
 August (26/30 times)
 September (16/29 times)
 October (4/31 times)

1692

Nov 26 Versailles: Cléopâtre & Impromptu
de Garnison
December (9/28 times)

1693

Jan 2 Versailles: Coquette
" 9 Versailles: Mort de Pompée &
Eté des Coquettes
" 26 " : Mithridate & Opéra
de Village

January (13/31 times)
Feb 9 Versailles: Aetius & Grondeur
February (17/27 times)
March (4/7 times)
April (15/30 times)
May (12/29 times)
June (24/30 times)
July (12/31 times)
August (23/30 times)
September (20/29 times)
October (13/31 times)
Nov 13 Versailles: Rodogune & Veau Perdu
" 26 " : Avare
November (18/29 times)
Dec 9 Versailles: Phèdre & Grondeur
" 15 " : Iphigénie & Précieuses
December (15/28 times)

1694

Jan 2 Versailles: Cid & Cocher Supposé
" 7 " : Mort de Pompée &
Comtesse d'Escarbagnas
" 24 " : Amphitruon
January (19/31 times)
Feb 5 Versailles: Tartuffe
February (17/27 times)
Mar 5 Versailles: Médée & Grondeur
" 10 " : Coquette
March (12/26 times)
April (8/12 times)
May (15/28 times)
June (11/29 times)
July (24/31 times)
August (18/30 times)
Sep 24 Com. Fr. : Misanthrope & Souper
mal apprêté
September (15/25 times)
October (15/31 times)
Nov 9 Versailles: Femmes Savantes
" 19 " : Misanthrope
" 24 " : Cinna & Sérénade
November (19/29 times)
Dec 10 Versailles: Jodelet Prince
December (20/28 times)

1695

Jan 3 Versailles: Germanicus & G. Dandin
" 18 " : Important
" 25 " : Chevalier à la Mode
" 29 " : Cocher supposé & Phèdre
January (21/32 times)
Feb 4 Versailles: Jodelet Maître
" 7 " : Cid & Grondeur
" 21 " : Andromaque & Veau Perdu
" 24 " : Bourgeoises à la Mode
February (15/27 times)
Mar 2 Versailles: Mithridate & Fragments
" 8 " : Visionnaires
" 19 " : Judith & Sicilien
March (1/19 times)
April (7/20 times)
May (20/29 times)
Jun 15 Trianon : Iphigénie & Plaideurs
June (23/29 times)
Jul 11 Trianon : Dom Bertrand
July (23/31 times)
Aug 1 Trianon : Parisien
August (14/30 times)
September (18/29 times)
October (29/31 times)
Nov 22 Versailles: Alcibiade & Vendanges de
Suresnes
" 28 " : Bradamante & Sérénade
November (20/29 times)
Dec 2 Versailles: Visionnaires
December (18/28 times)

1696

Jan 2 Versailles: Mithridate & Cocu Imag.
" 27 " : Mort de Pompée & Eté
des Coquettes
January (23/31 times)
Feb 6 Versailles: Ecole des Femmes
" 13 " : Cid & Florentin
" 28 " : Polixène & Foire St.
Germain
February (12/28 times)
March (5/16 times)
April (4/7 times)
May (15/31 times)
June (17/28 times)
July (9/31 times)
August (12/30 times)
September (16/29 times)
October (26/31 times)
Nov 12 Versailles: Pénélope & Florentin
November (21/29 times)
Dec 3 Versailles: Ecole des Femmes
December (9/28 times)

1697

Jan 3 Versailles: Venceslas & Comtesse
 d'Escarbagnas
 " 6 " : Dépit Amoureux
 " 14 " : Jodelet Prince
 January (14/31 times)
 Feb 1 Versailles: Femmes Savantes
 February (16/27 times)
 Mar 2 Versailles: Jodelet Maître
 " 5 " : Pénélope & Vacances
 " 14 " : Dom Bertrand
 March (13/23 times)
 Nov 24 Versailles: Misanthrope
 " 20 " : Bajazet & Charivari

1698

Jan 19 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 28 " : Jodelet Prince
 Feb 10 " : Manlius & Souper mal app.
 " 14 " : Jodelet Prince
 Mar 1 " : Mort de Pompée & Médecins
 " 3 " : Oreste et Pilade &
 Mariage forcé
 Apr 8 Com. Fr. : Iphigénie & Plaideurs
 " 9 " : Avare
 " 10 " : Esprit follet
 " 13 " : Oreste et Pilade &
 Sérenade
 " 19 " : Cid & Florentin
 " 21 " : Rodogune & Mariage forcé
 " 22 " : Tartuffe
 " 23 " : Alcibiade & Grondeur
 " 24 " : Jodelet Prince
 " 25 " : Andromaque & Sicilien
 " 27 " : Cid & Sicilien
 " 29 " : Nicomède & Sicilien
 May 2 " : Misanthrope
 " 9 " : Bourgeois Gentilhomme
 " 11 " :
 " 13 " : Dom Bertrand
 " 14 " : Cid & Charivari
 " 15 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 16 " : Zélonide & Charivari
 " 20 " : Cinna & Charivari
 " 21 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 22 " : Nicomède & Charivari
 " 23 " : Esope
 " 24 " : Oedipe & Vend. de Sur.
 " 26 " : Iphigénie & Vendanges de S.
 " 27 " : Tartuffe
 " 28 " : Andronic & "
 " 30 " : Grondeur & Crispin
 Médecin
 " 31 " : Mithridate & Vend. de Sur.
 Jun 1 " : Ecole des Maris &
 Pourceaugnac
 " 2 " : Héraclius & Vend. de Sur.

1698

Jun 3 Com. Fr. : Avare
 " 4 " : Alcibiade & Mer. Dragon
 " 5 " : Scapin & Pourceaugnac
 " 7 " : Iphigénie & Florentin
 " 8 " : Tartuffe
 " 9 " : Polyeucte & Sicilien
 " 11 " : Horaces & Sérenade
 " 12 " : Etourdi
 " 13 " : Oreste & Pilade &
 Ombre de Molière
 " 16 " : Ecole des Femmes
 " 18 " : Jodelet Prince
 " 22 " : Malade Imaginaire
 " 23 " : Manlius & Vend. de Sur.
 " 26 " : Chev. a la Mode
 " 27 " : Tiridate & Fragments
 " 29 " : " & Parisienne
 " 30 " : Misanthrope
 Jul 1 " : Brutus & Cocher Supposé
 " 3 " : Pompée & Précieuses
 " 7 " : Cid & Escarbagnas
 " 9 " : Oedipe & Ombre de Mol.
 " 11 " : Cinna & Auberges
 " 13 " : Andromaque & Souper
 mal app.
 " 15 " : Polixène & Parisienne
 " 17 " : Venceslas & Vend.
 " 19 " : Cinna & Charivari
 " 22 " : Dépit Amoureux
 " 24 " : Tartuffe
 " 26 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 27 " : Tiridate & Moulin de Jan.
 " 28 " : Dom Bertrand
 Aug 1 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 4 " : Scévole & Médecins
 " 5 " : Esprit Follet
 " 6 " : Iphigénie & Mariage for-
 cé
 " 8 " : Zélonide & Florentin
 " 9 " : Chev. a la Mode
 " 12 " : Pompée & Foire de Besons
 " 13 " : Jodelet Prince
 " 14 " : Alcibiade & F. de Besons
 " 16 " : Esope
 " 19 " : Cid & F. de Besons
 " 22 " : Avare
 " 24 " : Etourdi
 " 26 " : Dépit Amoureux
 " 28 " : Misanthrope
 " 29 " : Oreste et Pilade &
 Cocu Imaginaire
 " 30 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 31 " : Horaces & F. de Besons
 Sep 1 " : Grondeur & Pourceaugnac
 " 2 " : Cinna & F. de Besons
 " 6 " : Rodogune & Vend. de Sur.

1698

Sep 7	Com.Fr.	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Tiridate & Vacances</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Pénélope & "</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Sertorius & "</u>
" 16	"	: <u>D. Bertrand</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Bajazet & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Brutus & Vacances</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Andronic & Vacances</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Jodelet Prince</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Mithridate & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Cinna & Florentin</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Polixène & Mer. Dragon</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Cid & Cocher supposé</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Esprit Follet</u>
Oct 1	"	: <u>Grondeur & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Avare</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Ecole des Maris &</u> <u>Curieux de Compiègne</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Cur. de Comp.</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes & "</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Amphitryon & G. Dandin</u>
" 8n	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Curieux</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Amphitryon & "</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Etourdi & Curieux</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Curieux</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode & "</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Fâcheux & Scapin</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Curieux</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Misanthrope & "</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Plaideurs & G. Dandin</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Curieux</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Chev. à la Mode & Curieux</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Scapin & Curieux</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Avare & Médecin malgré lui</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Etourdi & Curieux</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Tartuffe & "</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes & Curieux</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Curieux</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Curieux</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Amphitryon & "</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Ecole des Maris & Mari</u> <u>Retrouvé</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Mari Ret.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Dépit Amoureux & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
Nov 2	"	: <u>Dépit Amoureux & Mari Ret.</u>
" 3	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & "</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Avare & Mari Retrouvé</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Menteur & "</u>

1698

Nov 7	Com.Fr.	: <u>Fâcheux & Plaideurs</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Crispin Musicien &</u> <u>Mari Retrouvé</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Menteur & Mari Ret.</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & "</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Crispin Mus. & Curieux</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Mari Ret.</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Festin de P. & "</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Andronic & "</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Britannicus & "</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Esprit Follet &</u> <u>Crispin Médecin</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Grondeur & Curieux</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Mari Ret.</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Joueur & Curieux</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Pirame & Mari Ret.</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Venceslas & Curieux</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Esope & Mari Ret.</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Andromaque & Curieux</u>
" 25	Versailles:	<u>Tartuffe</u>
" 26	Com.Fr.	: <u>Nicomède & Mari Ret.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Homme à bonne fortune</u> <u>& Curieux</u>
" 28	Versailles:	<u>Bajazet & Mari Ret.</u>
" 29	Com.Fr.	: <u>Mithridate & "</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Iphigénie & Florentin</u>
Dec 1	"	: <u>Bourgeoises à la M.</u> <u>& Mari Retrouvé</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Charivari</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Cid & Mari Ret.</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Mari Ret.</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Tiridate & "</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 10	"	: <u>"</u>
" 11	Versailles:	<u>Jodelet Maître</u>
" 12	Com.Fr.	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 13	Versailles:	<u>Phèdre & Curieux</u>
" 14	Com.Fr.	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 16	Versailles:	<u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 17	Com.Fr.	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Phèdre & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Avare & Scapin</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Nicomède & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Jodelet Prince &</u> <u>Été des Coquettes</u>
" 27	Versailles:	<u>Jodelet Prince</u>
" 28	Com.Fr.	: <u>Bajazet & Mer. Dragon</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Muet & Florentin</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Oedipe & Cocher Supp.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Jodelet Maître &</u> <u>G. Dandin</u>

1699

Jan 1 Com.Fr. : Cid & Crispin Méd.
 " 2 Versailles: Oedipe & G. Dandin
 " 3 Com.Fr. : Horaces & Mar. forcé
 " 4 " : Jodelet Maître & Grondeur
 " 6 " : Menteur & Souper mal app.
 " 8 " : Jodelet Maître & Médecin malgré lui
 " 9 " : Othon & Escarbagnas
 " 12 Versailles: Plaideurs & Venceslas
 " 14 Com.Fr. : " "
 " 15 Versailles: Misanthrope
 " 16 Com.Fr. : Oreste et Pilade & Sérénade
 " 18 " : Grondeur & Pourceaugnac
 " 19 " : Misanthrope & Plaideurs
 " 20 " : Alcibiade & Précieuses
 " 22 " : Iphigénie & Dragons (Merlin Dragon)
 " 24 " : Mithradate & Sicilien
 " 26 Versailles: Dépit Amoureux
 " 29 Com.Fr. : Jodelet Maître
 Feb 3 Versailles: Méléagre & Souper mal app.
 " 5 Com.Fr. : Méléagre & Cocher supp.
 " 6 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 8 " : Fille Capitaine & Sérénade
 " 9 " : Méléagre & Florentin
 " 10 Versailles: Avare
 " 11 Com.Fr. : Méléagre & Mar. forcé
 " 12 " : Fille Cap. & Mari Ret.
 " 13 " : Jod. Maître & Cocu Imag.
 " 14 " : Fille Cap. & Souper mal apprêté
 " 16 " : Esopé & Sicilien
 " 17 " : Méléagre & Fragments
 " 18 " : Tartuffe & Charivari
 " 19 " : Andronic & Médecin malgré lui
 " 20 " : Méléagre & Mer Dragon
 " 21 " : Devineresse
 " 22 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 23 " : Fille Cap. & Escarbagnas
 " 24 " : Devineresse
 " 25 " : Oreste et Pilade & Cocher suppose
 " 26 " : Femme Juge et Parti & Ballet Extravagant
 " 27 " : Chev. à la Mode & Vend. de Suresnes
 Mar 2 " : Femme Juge & Pourceaugnac
 " 3 " : G. Dandin & Grondeur
 " 5 " : Dépit Am. & Précieuses
 " 7 " : Femmes Sav. & Plaideurs

1699

Mar 9 Versailles: Chev. à la Mode
 " 10 Com.Fr. : Femmes Sav. & Plaideurs
 " 12 " : Femme Juge & Fragments
 " 13 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 15 " : Malade Imaginaire
 " 17 " : Menteur & Sérénade
 " 20 " : Jodelet Prince & Mari Ret.
 " 21 " : Joueur & Souper mal app.
 " 23 " : Jod. Maître & Deuil
 " 24 " : Gabinie & Scapin
 " 26 " : " & Grondeur
 " 27 " : Ecole des Femmes & Vend. de Sur.
 " 28 " : Gabinie & Parisienne
 " 29 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 29 Versailles: Gabinie & Escarbagnas
 " 31 Com.Fr. : Esprit Follet & "
 Apr 2 " : Avare & Crispin Méd.
 " 3 " : Tartuffe & Scapin
 May (18/30) times)
 June (16/28 times)
 July (19/31 times)
 August (10/29 times)
 September (13/29 times)
 October (20/31 times)
 Nov 19 Versailles: Jodelet Maître
 " 21 " : Ariarate & Cocu Imag.
 November (13/29 times)
 December (18/28 times)
 1700
 Jan 11 Versailles: Femmes Savantes
 " 15 " : Cid & Marquise Imaginaire
 " 30 " : Oedipe & Scapin
 January (9/31 times)
 February (10/27 times)
 March (17/26 times)
 Mar 2 Versailles: D. Bertrand
 April (11/12 times)
 May (19/29 times)
 June (23/29 times)
 July (19/31 times)
 August (14/30 times)
 September (20/29 times)
 October (31/31 times)
 Nov 30 Versailles: Bajazet & Coupe Ench.
 November (28/29 times)
 Dec 20 Versailles: Etourdi
 " 29 " : Venceslas & Gros Lot de Marseille

1701

Jan 10 Versailles: Capricieux
 " 26 " : Jodelet Maître
 January (17/31 times)

1701

Feb 3 Versailles: Cid & Escarbagnas" 17 " : D. Bertrand

February (18/27 times)

Mar 2 Versailles: Gabinie & Souper
mal app.

March (9/12 times)

April (23/26 times)

May (8/15 times)

June (9/17 times)

July (19/30 times)

August (23/30 times)

September (21/29 times)

October (31/31 times)

November (16/29 times)

Dec 5 Versailles: Bajazet & Médecins" 9 " : Tartuffe

December (13/28 times)

1702

Jan 2 Versailles: Jodelet Maître" 16 " : Ecole des Femmes" 20 " : Esprit Follet

January (16/31 times)

Feb 7 Versailles: Oedipe & Vend. de Sur." 24 " : Ariane & Vacances" 26 " : Montézume & Grondeur

February (17/27 times)

March (11/25 times)

May 27 Com.fr. : Iphigénie & Cocher supp" 28 " : Tartuffe & Crispin Méd." 29 " : Polyeucte & Auberges" 30 " : Ecole des maris &Double veuvageJun 1 " : Médecins & Doub. Veuvage" 2 " : Pénélope & Auberges" 3 " : Arrie et Pétus &Souper mal app." 9 " : Arrie et Pétus &Colin-Maillard" 10 " : Esprit Follet &Sicilien" 12 " : Jodelet Maître &Esprit de Contradiction" 14 " : Fâcheux & Grondeur" 17 " : Crispin Musicien &Merlin Dragon" 19 " : Avare & Bon Soldat" 22 " : Etourdi & Col. Maillard" 23 " : Fâcheux & Doub. veuvageJuly 2 " : Arrie et P. & Vacances" 3 " : Ecole des maris &Bon Soldat" 5 " : D. Bertrand & Vacances" 6 " : Arrie et P. & Vend.de Sur." 7 " : Grondeur & Pourceaugnac" 8 " : Arrie et P. & Vend. de S." 11 " : Cinna & Opéra de Village" 13 " : Bajazet & "

1702

Jul 14 Com.fr. : Misanthrope & Crispin
Méd." 15 " : Phèdre & Opéra de vill." 16 " : Menteur & "" 18 " : Femmes sav. & Bon Soldat" 20 " : Festin de P. & Mar. forcé" 30 " : Ecole des maris &Trois Cousines" 31 " : Géta & VacancesAug 1 " : Jod. Maître &Trois Cousines" 4 " : Andronic & Sicilien" 5 " : Jod. Prince & Opéra de
Village" 6 " : Agamemnon & Sicilien" 9 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme" 10 " : Amphitryon & G. Dandin" 11 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme" 13 " : "" 16 " : "" 18 " : "" 19 " : Mithridate & Souper mal
app." 20 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme" 21 " : Cid & Colin-Maillard" 23 " : Esprit Follet &Escarbagnas" 25 " : Grondeur & Trois Cousines" 27 " : Coquette & Scapin" 29 " : Avare & Ballet Extrav.Sep 1 " : Pompée & Opéra de vill." 4 " : G. Dandin & Pourceaugnac" 5 " : Venceslas & Florentin" 6 " : Etourdi & Vend. de Sur." 10 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme" 12 " : Crispin mus. & Vacances" 13 " : Misanthrope & Deuil" 14 " : Festin de P. & Cocu imag." 16 " : Ecole des maris &Médecin malgré lui" 17 " : Tartuffe & Plaideurs" 18 " : Avare & Souper mal app." 19 " : Femme Juge & Deuil" 22 " : Misanthrope & Mar. forcé" 23 " : Mithridate & Matroned'Ephèse" 24 " : Tartuffe & Matroned'Ephèse" 25 " : Amphitryon & Mat. d'Eph." 26 " : Femme Juge & Mar. forcé" 28 " : Festin de P. & Deuil" 29 " : Fille Cap. & Matrone" 30 " : Ecole des maris &Médecin malgré lui.Oct 1 " : Amphitryon & Matrone" 2 " : Avare & Souper mal app." 6 " : Festin de P. & Cocu imag." 7 " : Bérénice & Mar. forcé" 8 " : Femme Juge & Plaideurs

1702

Oct 9 Com.Fr. : Avare & Souper
mal app.

" 10 " : Ecole des Maris & G. Dandin

" 11 " : Bérénice & Opérateur Barry

" 12 " : Misanthrope & Op. Barry

" 13 " : Fille Capitaine & Cocu Imag.

" 14 " : Phèdre & Op. Barry

" 15 " : Avare & "

" 16 " : Cinna & "

" 17 " : Amphitruon & Médecin forcé

" 18 " : Fille Capitaine & Op. Barry

" 19 " : Tartuffe & Op. Barry

" 20 " : G. Dandin & Plaideurs

" 21 " : Andromaque & Op. Barry

" 22 " : Festin de P. & "

" 23 " : Andromaque & "

" 24 " : Tartuffe & Cocu Imag.

" 25 " : Avare & Op. Barry

" 26 " : Cinna & "

" 27 " : Esprit Follet & Matrone d'Ephèse

" 28 " : Andronic & Op. Barry

" 29 " : Etourdi & Matrone

" 30 " : Britannicus & Op. Barry

" 31 " : Tartuffe & Matrone

NOV 2 " : Venceslas & Op. Barry

" 7 " : D. Bertrand & Bal d'Auteuil

" 8 " : Cid & Cocher supposé

" 11 " : Coquette & Grondeur

" 15 " : Jodelet Maître & G. Dandin

" 18 " : Avare & Plaideurs

" 21 Versailles: Jodelet Maître

" 22 Com.Fr. : Malade Imaginaire

" 24 Versailles: Nicomède & Matrone

" 25 Com.Fr. : Malade Imaginaire

" 26 " : "

" 28 " : "

Dec 1 " : Amasis & Cocher supp.

" 2 " : Amphitruon & Mar. forcé

" 3 " : Malade Imaginaire

" 7 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme

" 9 " : Tartuffe & Florentin

" 10 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme

" 11 " : Etourdi & Deuil

" 12 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme

" 14 " : Grondeur & Crispin Méd.

1702

Dec 16 Com.Fr. : Jod. Prince & Scapin

" 17 " : Malade Imaginaire

" 18 " : Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.

" 19 " : Phèdre & Super mal app.

" 21 " : Andromaque & Médecin malgré lui

" 22 " : Festin de P. & Précieuses

" 26 " : Amphitruon & G. Dandin

" 28 " : D. Japhet & Bal d'Auteuil

1703

Jan 2 " : Ec. des Femmes & Deuil

" 4 Versailles: Esprit Follet

" 6 Com.Fr. : Bourg. Gentilhomme

" 8 " : Joueur & Vend. de Sur.

" 12 " : Crispin Mus. & Scapin

" 13 Versailles: Cid & Bon Soldat

" 15 Com.Fr. : Fille Cap. & Médecins

" 21 " : Cornélie & Vend. de Sur.

" 22 Versailles: Crispin Musicien

" 27 Com.Fr. : Tartuffe & Cocu Imag.

" 29 Versailles: Homme à bonne fortune

" 31 " : Bajazet & Baron de la Crasse

Feb 3 " : Pourceaugnac & Scapin

" 5 Com.Fr. : Cid & Baron de la Crasse

" 7 " : Nicomède & Grondeur

" 9 " : Homme à b. f. & Baron de la Crasse

" 10 " : Tartuffe & Méd. malgré lui

" 11 " : Malade Imaginaire

" 12 " : G. Dandin & Plaideurs

" 12 Versailles: Malade Imaginaire

" 13 Com.Fr. : Festin de P. & Baron de la Crasse

" 15 " : Jod. Maître & Grondeur

" 17 " : Joueur & Vend. de Sur.

" 19 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme

" 22 " : Femmes Savantes & Baron de la Crasse

" 23 " : Mithridate & Vend. de Sur.

" 26 Versailles: " & Florentin

Mar 4 Com.Fr. : Mort de Néron & Cocher suppose

" 7 " : Esprit Follet & Vend. de Suresnes

" 8 " : Mort de Néron & Vacances

" 9 " : Festin de P. & G. Dandin

" 10 " : Misanthrope & Eté des Coquettes

" 12 " : Mort de Néron & Souper mal app.

" 13 " : Ec. des Femmes & Plaideurs

" 14 " : Mort de Néron & Scapin

" 15 " : Devineresse

1703

Mar 17	Com.Fr. :	<u>Tartuffe & Cocu</u> <u>Imaginaire</u>
" 18	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Régulus & Vacances</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 22	" :	"
Apr 24	" :	<u>Nicomède & Souper</u> <u>mal app.</u>
" 25	" :	<u>Jod. Maître &</u> <u>Florentin</u>
" 27	" :	<u>Femme Juge & G.Dandin</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Bajazet & Vacances</u>
" 29	" :	<u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 30	" :	<u>Horaces, B. de la Crasse</u>
May 2	" :	<u>Cinna & Auberges</u>
" 3	" :	<u>Menteur & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 5	" :	<u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 6	" :	<u>Régulus & Sicilien</u>
" 7	" :	<u>Misanthrope & Bon Soldat</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Cid & Eté des Coquettes</u>
" 11	" :	<u>Esprit Follet & Cocu</u> <u>Imag.</u>
" 13	" :	<u>Bourgeoises à la Mode &</u> <u>Pâcheux</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Bourg. à la M. & Sicilien</u>
" 22	" :	<u>Crispin Mus. & Baron de</u> <u>la Crasse</u>
" 25	" :	<u>Andronic & Escarbagnas</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Venceslas & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 30	" :	<u>Bérénice & Auberges</u>
Jun 1	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 3	" :	"
" 5	" :	"
" 6	" :	<u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
" 8	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 9	" :	<u>Jod. Maître & G.Dandin</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 11	" :	<u>Etourdi & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 12	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 13	" :	<u>Fille Cap. & Bon Soldat</u>
" 14	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 16	" :	"
" 18	" :	"
" 20	" :	"
" 22	" :	"
" 24	" :	"
" 26	" :	"
" 27	" :	<u>Femme Juge & Escarbagnas</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 30	" :	"
Jul 2	" :	"
" 3	" :	<u>Tartuffe & Souper mal app.</u>
" 7	" :	<u>Misanthrope & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 12	" :	"
" 14	" :	"
" 16	" :	"

1703

Jul 17	Com.Fr. :	<u>Jod. Maître & Eté des</u> <u>Coquettes</u>
" 18	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Menteur & Auberges</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Esprit Follet & Médecins</u>
" 22	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Cid & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 27	" :	<u>Crispin Mus. & Souper</u> <u>mal app.</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 30	" :	"
" 31	" :	<u>Tartuffe & B. de la Cra-</u> <u>sse</u>
Aug 1	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 2	" :	<u>Esprit Follet &</u> <u>Parisienne</u>
" 4	" :	<u>Fille Cap. & G.Dandin</u>
" 5	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 8	" :	<u>Homme à b. f. & Sicilien</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Femmes Sav. & Crisp. Méd.</u>
" 12	" :	<u>Jod. Prince & Vend de S.</u>
" 14	" :	<u>Femme Juge & Médecins</u>
" 17	" :	<u>Menteur & Auberges</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Tiridate & Baron de la</u> <u>Crasse</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 23	" :	"
" 25	" :	"
" 26	" :	"
" 27	" :	"
" 29	" :	"
" 31	" :	"
Sep 2	" :	"
" 4	" :	"
" 6	" :	"
" 7	" :	<u>Femmes Sav. & Mar. forcé</u>
" 9	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 11	" :	"
" 13	" :	"
" 15	" :	"
" 16	" :	"
" 17	" :	"
" 18	" :	<u>Tartuffe & Deuil</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Mariane & Mar. forcé</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Avare & Escarbagnas</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Mariane & Médecin malgré</u> <u>lui</u>
" 22	" :	<u>Fille Cap. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Mariane & G. Dandin</u>
" 24	" :	<u>Festin de P. & Souper</u> <u>mal app.</u>
" 26	" :	<u>Ec. des Femmes & Mariage</u> <u>forcé</u>
" 27	" :	<u>Avare & Deuil</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Femme Juge & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 30	" :	<u>Misanthrope & Flaideurs</u>

1703

Oct	1	Com.Fr.	: <u>Festin de P. & Souper mal app.</u>
"	2	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes & G. Dandin</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Agamemnon & Florentin</u>
"	6	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Deuil</u>
"	7	"	: <u>Agamemnon & Scapin</u>
"	8	"	: <u>Ecole des Maris & G. Dandin</u>
"	9	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Plaideurs</u>
"	10	"	: <u>Fille Capitaine & Médecin malgré lui</u>
"	11	"	: <u>Agamemnon & Frontin Gouverneur du château de Vertigililinguen</u>
"	12	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.</u>
"	13	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Vertigililinguen</u>
"	14	"	: <u>Andromaque & Vertigililinguen</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Florentin</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Avare & Vertigililinguen</u>
"	17	"	: <u>Ecole des Maris & G. Dandin</u>
"	18	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Escarbagnas</u>
"	19	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Mar. forcé</u>
"	20	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Deuil</u>
"	21	"	: <u>Ec. des Maris & Plaideurs</u>
"	22	"	: <u>Misanthrope & G. Dandin</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Fille Capitaine & Souper mal app.</u>
"	24	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Scapin</u>
"	25	"	: <u>Esprit Follet & Médecin malgré lui</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Femmes Servantes & Concert Ridicule</u>
"	30	"	: <u>Etourdi & Médecins</u>
Nov	2	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
"	3	"	: <u>Cid & Crispin Médecin</u>
"	4	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Ariane & Vend. de Sur.</u>
"	6	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
"	8	"	: "
"	10	"	: "
"	12	"	: "
"	15	"	: <u>Tiridate & Vacances</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
"	18	"	: "
"	20	"	: "
"	22	"	: "
"	22	Versailles:	<u>Inconnu</u>
"	23	Com.Fr.	: <u>Cid & Plaideurs</u>
"	24	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
"	26	"	: "
"	28	"	: "
"	30	"	: "

1703

Dec	1	Com.Fr.	: <u>Astrate & Vacances</u>
"	2	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
"	3	"	: <u>Astrate & Vend. de Sur.</u>
"	4	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Astrate & Vend. de Sur.</u>
"	6	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
"	10	Versailles:	"
"	12	Com.Fr.	: <u>Tartuffe & Deuil</u>
"	13	"	: <u>Corésus & Souper mal app.</u>
"	14	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Eté des Coquettes</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Astrate & Vend. de Sur.</u>
"	18	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Médecins</u>
"	20	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Pourceau-gnac</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Alceste & Scapin</u>
"	27	Versailles:	" & <u>Escarbagnas</u>
"	29	"	: <u>Esprit Follet</u>
"	31	Com.Fr.	: <u>Inconnu</u>

1704

Jan	2	Versailles:	<u>Nicomède & Auberges</u>
"	3	Com.Fr.	: <u>Inconnu</u>
"	4	"	: <u>Psyché</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
"	7	"	: "
"	9	"	: "
"	11	"	: "
"	13	"	: <u>Andrienne & Pourceaugnac</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	17	"	: "
"	18	Versailles:	<u>Jodelet Prince</u>
"	19	Com.Fr.	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	20	"	: <u>Psyché</u>
"	21	Versailles:	<u>Homme à bonne fortune & Eté des Coquettes</u>
"	22	Com.Fr.	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre & Mariage forcé</u>
"	24	"	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	26	Versailles:	<u>Iphigénie & Mar. forcé</u>
"	27	Com.Fr.	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	28	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Cocu Imag.</u>
"	29	"	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	31	Versailles:	"
Feb	1	Com.Fr.	: "
"	4	"	: "
"	6	"	: "
"	7	"	: <u>Iphigénie & Vend. de Sur</u>
"	8	"	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	9	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Cocu Imag.</u>
"	10	"	: <u>Folies Amoureuses</u>
"	12	"	: "
"	14	"	: "
"	19	Versailles:	<u>Inconnu</u>
"	20	Com.Fr.	: "

1704

Feb 21 Versailles: G. Dandin
 " 23 Com.Fr. : Andrienne & Grondeur
 " 25 " : Esp. Follet & Scapin
 " 26 " : Inconnu
 " 27 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 28 Versailles: Polyeucte & Sicilien
 " 29 Com.Fr. : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 Mar 1 Versailles: Misanthrope
 " 2 Com.Fr. : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 4 " : Cid & Vend. de Sur.
 " 7 " : Malade Imaginaire
 Apr 2 " : Femmes Savantes & G. Dandin
 " 5 " : Hypermnestre & Sicilien
 " 8 " : Misanthrope & Plaideurs
 " 12 " : Esprit Follet & Bon Soldat
 " 16 Versailles: Hypermnestre & Souper mal apprêté
 " 17 Com.Fr. : Hypermnestre & Ec. des Maris
 " 21 " : Hypermnestre & Vacances
 " 25 " : Jodelet Prince & Crispin Médecin
 " 26 " : Cid & Vend. de Sur.
 " 27 " : Jod. Prince & Pourceaugnac
 " 29 " : Jod. Maître & Sicilien
 May 2 " : Andronic & Je vous prends sans vert
 " 3 " : Coquette & Grimaudin (Vacances)
 " 4 " : Ariane & Je vous prends sans vert
 " 5 " : Festin de P. & Vend. de Suresnes
 " 9 " : Inconnu
 " 12 " : "
 " 17 " : "
 " 18 " : Alexandre & Vend. de Sur.
 " 25 " : Nicomède & G. Dandin
 " 26 " : Esprit Follet & Baron de la Crasse
 " 28 " : D. Japhet & Grimaudin
 " 30 " : Jod. Prince & Ec. des Maris
 Jun 1 " : Inconnu
 " 6 " : Cid & Port de Mer
 " 7 " : Misanthrope & Bon Soldat
 " 9 " : Femmes Savantes & Souper mal app.
 " 13 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 15 " : "
 " 17 " : "
 " 20 " : Andrienne & Port de Mer

1704

Jun 22 Com.Fr. : Andrienne & Port de Mer
 " 25 " : Inconnu & "
 Jul 1 " : Bourgeoises à la Mode & Sicilien
 " 3 " : Festin de P. & Deuil
 " 10 " : Femmes Savantes & Eté des Coquettes
 " 11 " : Amants Magnifiques
 " 13 " : "
 " 15 " : "
 " 16 " : Esprit Follet & Escarbagnas
 " 17 " : Amants Magnifiques
 " 19 " : "
 " 20 " : Festin de Pierre & Concert Ridicule
 " 21 " : Amants Magnifiques
 " 22 " : Misanthrope & Plaideurs
 " 23 " : Amants Magnifiques
 " 25 " : "
 " 27 " : "
 " 29 " : Etourdi & Vacances
 Aug 3 " : Nicomède & Scapin
 " 4 " : Aware & Mar. forcé
 " 5 " : Cid & Cocu Imag.
 " 12 " : Andrienne & Souper mal app.
 " 18 " : Bérénice & Sicilien
 " 19 " : Psyché
 " 21 " : "
 " 23 " : "
 " 25 " : "
 " 26 " : Scévole & Vacances
 " 27 " : Psyché
 " 29 " : "
 " 31 " : "
 Sep 2 " : Bourgeoises à la Mode & Sicilien
 " 4 " : Femmes Savantes & Concert Ridicule
 " 10 " : Esprit Follet & Médecin malgré lui
 " 11 " : Misanthrope & Deuil
 " 12 " : Aware & Mar. forcé
 " 13 " : Tartuffe & Plaideurs
 " 14 " : Festin de P. & Crispin Bel Esprit
 " 15 " : Femmes Sav. & Cocu Imag.
 " 17 " : Dame Invisible & Souper mal app.
 " 19 " : Tartuffe & G. Dandin
 " 20 " : D. Japhet & Crispin Bel Esprit
 " 22 " : Festin de P. & Deuil
 " 24 " : Misanthrope & Médecin de Village

1704

Sep 25	Com.Fr.	: <u>Esprit Follet & Crispin Bel Esprit</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Médecin de Village</u>
" 27	"	: <u>D. Japhet & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes & Médecin de Village</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Avare & Scapin</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre & Médecin de Vill.</u>
Oct 1	"	: <u>Mère Coquette & Crispin Bel Esprit</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Enfants de Paris</u>
" 5	"	: "
" 7	"	: "
" 9	"	: "
" 10	"	: <u>Fâcheux & G. Dandin</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Enfants de Paris</u>
" 12	"	: "
" 13	"	: <u>Mère Coquette & Mariage forcé</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & G. Dandin</u>
" 15	"	: <u>D. Japhet & Médecin malgré lui</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Enfants de Paris & Crispin Précepteur</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Crispin Précepteur</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Plaideurs</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Enfants de Paris & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Andromaque & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Médecin de Village</u>
Nov 2	"	: <u>Cid & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Cinna & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Ballet Extravagant</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Horace & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Géta & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Bajazet & "</u>
" 11	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Vend. de Suresnes</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Phèdre & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Andrienne & Vend. de S.</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Gal. Jard.</u>

1704

Nov 15	Com.Fr.	: <u>Amants Magnifiques</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Cid & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Amants Magnifiques</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Britannicus & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 21	"	: <u>D. Japhet & G. Dandin</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 28	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Scapin</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Joueur & Vend. de Sur.</u>
Déc 2	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Vacances</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Etourdi & Ec. des Maris</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Mère Coquette & Plaideurs</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Cosroes & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 9	Versailles:	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 10	Com.Fr.	: <u>Andronic & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 12	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Grimaudin</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Psyché</u>
" 15	"	: "
" 17	"	: "
" 19	"	: "
" 21	"	: "
" 22	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Florentin</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Psyché</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Cid & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Grimaudin</u>

1705

Jan 1	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Avare & Plaideurs</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Adelphes & Baron de la Crasse</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Devil</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Bérénice & Plaideurs</u>
" 14	Versailles:	: <u>Cid & Grondeur</u>
" 18	Com.Fr.	: <u>Festin de P. & Concert Rid.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Menteur & Vacances</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 23	Versailles:	: "
" 25	Com.Fr.	: <u>Joueur & Scapin</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Médecin m. lui</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Esprit Follet & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Mère Coquette & G. Dandin</u>
Feb 6	"	: <u>Bourgeois Gentilhomme</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Plaideurs & Fâcheux</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Mustapha & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 11	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Double Veuvage</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Grondeur</u>
" 14	Versailles:	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 15	Com.Fr.	: <u>Mustapha & Vacances</u>
" 17	Versailles:	: <u>Cléopâtre & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 21	Com.Fr.	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 24	"	: <u>D. Japhet & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Esprit de Contradiction</u>

1705

Feb 26	Com.Fr.	: <u>Festin de P. & Mariage forcé</u>
Mar 2	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Vend. de Suresnes</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Joueur & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes & Deuil</u>
" 16	Versailles:	<u>Andrienne</u>
" 19	Com.Fr.	: <u>D. Japhet & Mar. forcé</u>
" 21	Versailles:	<u>Crispin Musicien</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Rodogune & Folies Am.</u>
April (nil)		
May (nil)		
Jun 1	Com.Fr.	: <u>Joueur & Scapin</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Deuil</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Cid & B. de la Crasse</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Crispin Mus. & Eté des Coquettes</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Vacances</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Ec. des Maris & Double Veuve</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Scapin</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Gal. Jard.</u>
Jul 1	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Bon Soldat</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Géa & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Hypermnestre & Sicilien</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
Aug 6	"	: <u>Circé</u>
" 8	"	: "
" 10	"	: "
" 13	"	: "
" 16	"	: "
" 17	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Circé</u>
" 22	"	: "
" 27	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Circé</u>
Sep 12	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Mariage Forcé</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Escarbagnas</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Souper mal apprête</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Fâcheux & G. Dandin</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Florentin</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Plaideurs & Médecin m. lui</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Menteur & Eté des Coquettes</u>

1705

Oct 3	Com.Fr.	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Escarbagnas</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Semblable à soi-même</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Esp. Follet & Florentin</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Enfants de Paris</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Semblable à soi-même</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Fâcheux & Plaideurs</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Semblable</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Esprit follet & Souper mal app.</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Provençale</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Semblable</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Comédie sans Titre & Escarbagnas</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Deuil</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Com. sans Titre & Semblable</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Médecin malgré lui</u>
Nov 4	"	: <u>Cid & Parisienne</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Com. sans Titre & Plaideurs</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Florentin</u>
" 25	Versailles:	<u>Cid & B. de la Crasse</u>
" 27	Com.Fr.	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
" 28	Versailles:	<u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Polidore & Escarbagnas</u>
Dec 2	Com.Fr.	: <u>D. Japhet & Fâcheux</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
" 6	"	: "
" 7	Versailles:	<u>Misanthrope</u>
" 9	Com.Fr.	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
" 11	"	: "
" 13	"	: "
" 15	"	: "
" 17	"	: "
" 19	Versailles:	"
" 20	Com.Fr.	: "
" 22	"	: <u>Esprit Follet & Vend. de Suresnes</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
" 26	"	: "
" 28	"	: "
" 30	"	: "
1706		
Jan 1	"	: "
" 3	"	: "
" 5	"	: "
" 7	"	: "

1706

Jan 11	Com.Fr. :	<u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 13	" :	<u>& Mar. forcé</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Fâcheux & Plaideurs</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Com. sans Titre & Grondeur</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Avare</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Misanthrope</u>
" 25	Versailles :	<u>Fâcheux & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 29	Com.Fr. :	<u>Esprit Follet</u>
" 30	" :	<u>" & Bon Soldat</u>
" 31	" :	<u>Festin de P. & Mar. forcé</u>
Feb 1	" :	<u>Idoménée & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 3	Versailles :	<u>Femme Juge & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 4	Com.Fr. :	<u>Comédie sans Titre & Amour Médecin</u>
" 7	" :	<u>Amphitryon & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 9	" :	<u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Cid & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 11	" :	<u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 13	" :	<u>"</u>
" 15	" :	<u>"</u>
" 17	" :	<u>"</u>
" 21	" :	<u>"</u>
" 22	Versailles :	<u>"</u>
" 24	Com.Fr. :	<u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 26	" :	<u>"</u>
" 28	" :	<u>"</u>
Mar 4	Versailles :	<u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 5	Com.Fr. :	<u>Cyrus & Vacances</u>
" 6	Versailles :	<u>" & "</u>
" 8	Com.Fr. :	<u>Festin de P. & Médecin malgré lui</u>
" 13	" :	<u>Cyrus & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Fille Cap. & Plaideurs</u>
" 17	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 18	" :	<u>Femme Juge & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Polyeucte & Médecin m. lui</u>
Apr 15	" :	<u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Ménechmes</u>
" 23	" :	<u>"</u>
" 27	" :	<u>Misanthrope</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 29	" :	<u>Cid & Port de Mer</u>
May 7	" :	<u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 8	" :	<u>Andromaque & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 14	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Comédie sans Titre</u>
" 16	" :	<u>Psyché</u>
" 18	" :	<u>"</u>
" 20	" :	<u>"</u>
" 22	" :	<u>"</u>
Jun 7	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 8	" :	<u>Cid & Patelin</u>
" 9	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>

1706

Jun 11	Com.Fr. :	<u>Femme Juge</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Ménechmes</u>
" 17	" :	<u>Misanthrope</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Festin de P.</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Cid & Patelin</u>
Jul 19	" :	<u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Stilicon & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 26	" :	<u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 30	" :	<u>Misanthrope</u>
" 31	" :	<u>Cid & B. de la Crasse</u>
Aug 2	" :	<u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 3	" :	<u>Femme Juge</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 16	" :	<u>Agrippa & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Jodelet Prince</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 29	" :	<u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 30	" :	<u>Femmes Savantes</u>
Sép 2	" :	<u>Ménechmes</u>
" 3	" :	<u>Chevalier à la Mode</u>
" 5	" :	<u>"</u>
" 6	" :	<u>Cid & Escarbagnas</u>
" 12	" :	<u>Andromaque & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 19	" :	<u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Mercure Galant</u>
" 26	" :	<u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Jodelet Prince</u>
Oct 3	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 5	" :	<u>"</u>
" 7	" :	<u>"</u>
" 9	" :	<u>"</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Cid & Scapin</u>
" 11	" :	<u>Ménechmes & Ballet Extrav.</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 16	" :	<u>Festin de P. & Plaideurs</u>
" 17	" :	<u>Devineresse</u>
" 18	" :	<u>Malade Imag. & Scapin</u>
" 21	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 23	" :	<u>Andromaque & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 24	" :	<u>Joueur & Pourceaugnac</u>
Nov 12	" :	<u>Misanthrope & Escarbagnas</u>
" 13	" :	<u>Cid & Baron de la Crasse</u>
" 14	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 15	" :	<u>Tartuffe & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 16	" :	<u>Inconnu</u>
" 20	" :	<u>Festin de Pierre.</u>
" 22	" :	<u>Esp. Follet & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 26	" :	<u>D. Japhet & Am. Médecin</u>
" 28	" :	<u>Ménechmes & Scapin</u>
Dec 4	" :	<u>Femme Juge & Bon Soldat</u>
" 6	" :	<u>Avare & Plaideurs</u>
" 10	" :	<u>Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag</u>
" 13	" :	<u>Dame Invisible & Escarbagnas</u>
" 17	" :	<u>Festin de P. & Parisienne</u>
" 18	" :	<u>Cid & Sérénade</u>
" 22	" :	<u>Ménechmes & Vend. de Sur.</u>

1706

Dec 28 Com.Fr. : Malade Imaginaire
 " 29 Versailles: Misanthrope
 " 30 Com.Fr. : Jod. Prince & Ballet Extrav.
 " 31 " : Avare

1707

Jan 5 Versailles: Malade Imag.
 " 6 Com. Fr. : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 8 " : Misanthrope & Florentin
 " 9 " : Femmes Sav. & Grondeur
 " 16 " : D. Japhet & Gal. Jard.
 " 17 " : Mort d'Ulysse & Escarbagnas
 " 18 " : Festin de P. & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 23 " : Devineresse
 " 24 " : Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.
 " 26 " : Misanthrope & Plaideurs
 " 28 " : Mercure Galant & Fâcheux
 " 29 Versailles: Ménechmes
 Feb 14 Com.Fr. : Avare & Crispin Méd.
 " 16 " : Misanthrope & Mar. forcé
 " 20 " : Joueur & Gal. Jardinier
 " 26 " : Psyché
 " 27 " : " "
 Mar 1 " : " "
 " 3 " : " "
 " 5 " : " "
 " 7 " : " "
 " 9 " : Ménechmes & Patelin
 " 10 " : Malade Imag.
 " 15 " : Don César Ursin & Crispin Rival de son Maître
 " 18 " : D. César Ursin & Crispin Rival de son Maître
 " 20 " : Ursin & Crispin Rival
 " 22 Versailles: " & "
 " 23 Com.Fr. : " & "
 " 24 " : Avare & Cocu Imag.
 " 26 " : Phèdre & Plaideurs
 " 29 " : Ursin & Crispin Rival
 " 31 " : " & "
 Apr 2 " : Femme Juge & Fâcheux
 " 4 " : Festin de P. & Crispin Rival de son Maître
 " 7 " : Devineresse
 May 3 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 7 " : Jodelet Prince
 " 10 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 17 " : Misanthrope
 " 19 " : Ecole des Femmes
 " 25 " : Comédie sans Titre
 " 31 " : Festin de Pierre

1707

Jun 4 Com.Fr. : Ménechmes
 " 10 " : Misanthrope
 " 20 " : Comédie sans Titre
 " 22 " : Femmes Sav.
 " 24 " : Cid. & Gal. Jardinier
 Jul 1 " : Jod. Prince
 " 5 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 9 " : Ménechmes
 " 15 " : Inconnu
 " 20 " : Cid & Crispin Médecin
 " 21 " : Femmes Sav.
 " 22 " : Cid & B. de la Crasse
 " 23 " : Crispin Musicien
 " 24 " : Inconnu
 " 25 " : Crispin Mus.
 " 29 " : Mercure Galant & ETE des Coquettes
 Aug 1 " : Misanthrope & Plaideurs
 " 3 " : Ec. des Femmes & Escarbagnas
 " 9 " : Ménechmes & Gal. Jard
 " 11 " : Crispin Mus. & Devil
 " 13 " : Inconnu
 " 22 " : Cid & Faux Instinct
 " 23 " : Tartuffe & Cocu Imag.
 " 25 " : Jod. Prince & Gal. Jard.
 " 31 " : Comédien Poète
 Sep 2 " : " "
 " 4 " : " "
 " 6 " : " "
 " 9 " : " "
 " 10 " : " "
 " 11 " : " "
 " 13 " : Misanthrope
 " 14 " : Avare
 " 15 " : Ec. des Femmes
 " 16 " : Avare
 " 18 " : Tartuffe
 " 19 " : Ec. des Femmes
 " 20 " : Misanthrope
 " 21 " : Don César d'Avalos
 " 22 " : Tartuffe
 " 23 " : D. César d'Avalos
 " 25 " : " "
 " 27 " : " "
 " 29 " : " "
 " 30 " : Avare
 Oct 1 " : D. César d'Avalos & Diabla Boiteux
 " 2 " : César d'Avalos & Diabla Boiteux
 " 4 " : " & "
 " 5 " : Misanthrope
 " 6 " : César d'Av. & Diabla B.
 " 8 " : " & "
 " 9 " : Tartuffe & "
 " 10 " : César d'Av. & "

1707

Oct 12 Com.Fr. : Ecole des Jaloux & Diable Boiteux
 " 13 " : Ecole des Femmes & Diable Boiteux
 " 14 " : Fausse Turquie & Diable Boiteux
 " 15 " : Fausse Turquie & Diable Boiteux
 " 16 " : Don César d'Avalos & Diable Boiteux
 " 17 " : Avare
 " 18 " : Misanthrope & Diable Boiteux
 " 19 " : Ec. des Jaloux & Diable Boiteux
 " 20 " : Don César d'Av. & Second Chapitre du Diable Boiteux
 " 21 " : Tartuffe & Diable B.
 " 22 " : Avare & Second Chap.
 " 23 " : César d'Av. & "
 " 24 " : Chev. à la Mode & Diable Boiteux
 " 25 " : Festin de P. & Second Chapitre
 " 26 " : Menteur & Diable B.
 " 27 " : D. César d'Av. & Second Chapitre
 " 28 " : D. Japhet & Diable B.
 " 29 " : D. César d'Av. & Second Chapitre
 " 30 " : Andromaque & Diable Boiteux
 " 31 " : Joueur & Second Chap.
 Nov 2 " : Horaces & Diable B.
 " 3 " : Comédien Poète & Second Chapitre
 " 4 " : Cid & Diable Boiteux
 " 5 " : Comédien Poète & Second Chapitre
 " 6 " : Amphitryon & Diable B.
 " 7 " : Comédien Poète & Second Chapitre
 " 8 " : Médecin malgré lui & Diable Boiteux
 " 9 " : Ariane & Diable Boit.
 " 11 " : Joueur & "
 " 12 Versailles: Comédien Poète
 " 13 Com.Fr. : Ecole des Maris, Diable Boiteux & Second Chapitre
 " 18 " : Comédien Poète & Femme Fille et Veuve
 " 19 " : Jod. Maître
 " 21 " : Cid & G. Dandin
 " 22 " : Tartuffe & Escarbagnas

1707

Nov 23 Versailles: Premier Chapitre du Diable Boiteux & Ariane
 Dec 1 " : D. Cesar d'Avalos
 " 3 " : Britannicus & Second Chap.
 " 5 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 7 Com.Fr. : Dame Invisible & Cocu Imag.
 " 17 " : Inconnu
 " 19 " : "
 " 21 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 29 " : Jod. Maître & Escarbagnas
 " 31 " : Festin de P. & Crispin Méd.

1708

Jan 2 " : Esp. Follet & Cocu Imag.
 " 4 " : D. Cesar d'Av. & Diable B.
 " 6 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 7 " : Ec. des Femmes
 " 14 " : Mithridate & Second Chap.
 " 18 " : Cid & Florentin
 " 20 " : Cinna & Galant Jardinier
 " 30 Versailles: Cid & Danaé
 Feb 1 Com.Fr. : Misanthrope & Folies Am.
 " 4 " : Fille Capitaine
 " 10 " : Cid & Médecin malgré lui
 " 11 " : Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.
 " 13 " : Cid & G. Dandin
 " 15 " : Fille Capitaine
 " 17 " : Cid & Cocu Imag.
 " 21 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 23 " : Festin de P. & Sérénade
 " 26 " : Cid & Vendanges de Suresnes
 " 27 " : César d'Av. & Folies Am.
 Mar 2 " : Comédien Poète & Gal. Jard.
 " 4 " : " & Vend. de Sur
 " 5 " : Ec. des Femmes & Cocu Imag.
 " 8 Versailles: Femme Juge
 " 10 Com.Fr. : "
 " 11 " : Inconnu
 " 12 Versailles: Crispin Musicien
 " 14 Com.Fr. : Psyché
 " 22 " : Avare
 Apr 17 " : Psyché
 " 19 " : "
 " 20 " : César d'Av. & Gal. Jard.
 " 23 " : Crispin Mus. & Diable Boit.
 " 27 " : Festin de P. & Florentin
 " 28 " : Cid & Baron de la Crasse
 " 29 " : Inconnu
 May 1 " : Comédien Poète
 " 8 " : Madame Artus
 " 10 " : "
 " 12 " : "
 " 14 " : "
 " 16 " : "
 " 22 " : Cid & Médecin malgré lui
 " 30 " : Festin de Pierre

1708

Jun 4	Com.Fr.	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Jod. Maître</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Femme Juge</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Bérénice & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
Jul 3	"	: <u>Festin de P.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Britannicus & Cocu Imaginaire</u>
" 10	"	: <u>D. César d'Avalos</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Crispin Mus.</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Cid & Amour Diable</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Tartuffe</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Mercure Galant</u>
Aug 2	"	: <u>Fille Capitaine</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Comte d'Essex & Escarbagnas</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Comte d'Essex & Diable Boiteux</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Comédien Poète</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Comte d'Essex & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Crispin Musicien</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
Sep 2	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Cid & Amour Diable</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Femmes Sav.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Esope à la Cour</u>
" 13	"	: "
" 15	"	: "
" 17	"	: "
" 19	"	: "
" 21	"	: " & Vend. de S.
" 23	"	: " & Scapin
" 25	"	: " & Concert Rid.
" 27	"	: " & Double Veuvage
" 29	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
Oct 1	"	: <u>Homme à bonne fortune & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Cid & Diable Boiteux</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Dépit Am. & Colin-Maillard</u>
" 15	"	: " & "
" 19	"	: <u>Menteur & Am. Medecin</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Cid & Esprit de Contradiction</u>

1708

Oct 25	Com.Fr.	: <u>Esope à la Cour & Patelin</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Pirame et Thisbé & Colin-Maillard</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Gal. Jard.</u>
Nov 3	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Démocrite & Esprit de Contradiction</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Démocrite & Col.-Maill.</u>
" 9	"	: " & <u>Vacances</u>
" 11	"	: " & "
" 12	"	: <u>Rodogune & Col-Maillard</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Démocrite & Moul. de Javelle</u>
" 15	"	: " & <u>Médecin malgré lui</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Cid & Port de Mer</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Démocrite & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 19	"	: " & <u>G. Dandin</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Port de Mer</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Démocrite & Vacances</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Comte d'Essex & Colin-Maillard</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Démocrite & Moulin de Javelle</u>
" 25	"	: " & <u>Double Veuvage</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Mari sans Femme</u>
" 29	"	: " & <u>Cocher Supposé</u>
Dec 1	"	: " & <u>Diable Boiteux</u>
" 3	"	: " & <u>Vend. de Suresnes</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Démocrite & P. de Mer</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Mari sans Femme & Patelin</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Malade Imaginaire</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Avare & Col.-Maillard</u>
" 12	Versailles:	<u>Démocrite</u>
" 14	Com.Fr.	: <u>Electre</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Démocrite & Médecin malgré lui</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Electre</u>
" 18	"	: "
" 19	"	: <u>Mari ssans Femme & Vacances</u>
" 20	Versailles:	<u>Mari sans Femme</u>
" 21	Com.Fr.	: <u>Electre & Mar. forcé</u>
" 22	Versailles:	<u>Pirame et Thisbé & Colin-Maillard</u>
" 23	Com.Fr.	: <u>Electre & Am. Diable</u>
" 26	"	: " & <u>Eté des Coq.</u>

1708

Dec 27 Com.Fr. : Inconnu
 " 28 " : Electre & Esprit
 de Contradiction
 " 29 " : Malade Imaginaire
 " 30 " : Electre & P. de Mer
 " 31 Versailles: Comédien Poète

1709

Jan 1 Com.Fr. : Electre & Vend. de
 Suresnes
 " 3 " : " & Baron de la
 Crasse
 " 4 Versailles: " & Cocu Imag.
 " 5 Com.Fr. : " & Concert Rid.
 " 7 " : " & Ballet Extrav.
 " 8 " : Ec. des Femmes & Deuil
 " 9 " : Electre & Cocher Supp.
 " 12 " : " & Florentin
 " 19 Versailles: Cid & Ballet Extravagant
 " 21 " : " & "
 " 27 Com.Fr. : Malade Imaginaire
 " 27 Versailles: Femmes Savantes
 " 29 Com.Fr. : Femme Juge & Attendez-moi
 sous l'orme
 Feb 3 " : Cid & Vacances
 " 4 Versailles: Cinna & Vacances
 " 6 Com.Fr. : Démocrite & Gal. Jardinier
 " 8 " : Inconnu
 " 12 " : Bourg. Gentilhomme
 " 15 " : Hérode
 " 18 " : "
 " 20 " : "
 " 22 " : " & Esprit de Contr.
 " 28 Versailles: " & Florentin
 Mar 2 Com.Fr. : Cid & Cocu Imag.
 " 3 " : Hérode & Sérénade
 " 5 " : " & Mar. forcé
 " 7 Versailles: Crispin Musicien
 " 8 Com.Fr. : Hérode & Concert Rid.
 " 9 " : Malade Imaginaire
 " 10 " : Hérode & Moulin de Jav.
 " 12 " : " & Cocher Supposé
 Apr 11 " : Cid & Vacances
 " 13 " : Festin de Pierre
 " 17 " : Crispin Mus. & Ballet
 Extravagant
 " 19 " : Ménechmes & Gal. Jard.
 " 24 " : Amants Brouillés & Vacances
 " 29 " : Comte d'Essex & Colin-
 Maillard
 May 4 " : Légataire Universel &
 Diabre Boiteux
 " 6 " : Esopé à la Cour & Moulin
 de Javelle
 " 8 " : " & Baron de la
 Crasse

1709

May 10 Com.Fr. : Misanthrope & Cocher
 Supp.
 " 12 " : Démocrite & Folies Am.
 " 17 " : Trois Cousins
 " 20 " : Ec. des Maris & Trois
 Cousines
 " 22 " : Démocrite & Folies Am.
 " 23 " : Jod. Maître & Trois
 Cousines
 " 24 " : Pirame et Thisbé &
 Sicilien
 " 25 " : Amphitryon & Trois
 Cousines
 " 26 " : Horaces & Sicilien
 " 27 " : Plaideurs & Trois
 Cousines
 " 28 " : Femmes Sav. & Sicilien
 " 29 " : Pourceaugnac & Trois
 Cousines
 " 31 " : Fâcheux & Trois Cousins
 Jun 1 " : Venceslas & Sicilien
 " 2 " : Homme à b.f. & Trois
 Cousines
 " 6 " : Malade Imaginaire
 " 8 " : Festin de P. & Baron
 de la Crasse
 " 10 " : Esopé à la Cour &
 Esp. de Contradiction
 " 12 " : Ménechmes & Col.-Maill.
 " 16 " : Amphitryon & Sicilien
 " 17 " : Femmes Sav. & Florentin
 " 21 " : Misanthrope &
 Escarbagnas
 " 23 " : Démocrite & Double
 Veuve
 Jul 2 " : Cid & Cocu Imag.
 " 3 " : Misanthrope
 " 4 " : Femmes Savantes
 " 11 " : Ménechmes
 " 19 " : Dépit Am. & Col.-Maill.
 " 21 " : Pourceaugnac & Trois
 Cousines
 " 25 " : Dépit Am. & Eté des
 Coquettes
 " 27 " : Festin de Pierre &
 Escarbagnas
 " 29 " : Femmes Sav. & Gal.
 Jardinier
 " 30 " : Astrate & Sicilien
 " 31 " : Démocrite & Parisienne
 Aug 2 " : Comédien Poète & Esp.
 de Contradiction
 " 4 " : Comédien Poète & G.
 Dandin
 " 5 " : Cid & Amour Diable
 " 7 " : Com. Sans Titre &
 Cocher Supposé

1709

Aug 13	Com.Fr.	: <u>Ecole des Femmes & Amour Médecin</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Dépit Am. & Parisienne</u>
" 16	"	: <u>D. César d'Avalos</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Pompée & Colin-Maill.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Mercure Galant</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Démocrite & Esprit de Contradiction</u>
" 23	"	: <u>D. César d'Av. & Parisienne</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Arminius & Attendez-moi sous l'orme</u>
" 30	"	: " & <u>Ballet Extrav.</u>
Sep 1	"	: " & <u>Médecin m. lui</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Etourdi & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes & Esp. de Contradiction</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode & Vacances</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Patelin</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Hypermnestre & Plaideurs</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Cocher supp.</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Hypermnestre & Am. Diable</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Fille Capitaine & Deuil</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Arminius & Foire Saint Laurent</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Cid & "</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Florentin</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Electre & F. St. Laurent</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Sérénade</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Electre & F. St. Laurent</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Esope à la Cour & Scapin</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Electre & F. St. Laurent</u>
Oct 1	"	: <u>Démocrite & G. Dandin</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Electre & F. St. Laurent</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Col.-Maillard</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Am. Diable</u>
Nov 21	"	: <u>Démocrite & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Avare & Escarbagnas</u>
" 27	Versailles	: <u>Démocrite</u>
" 29	Com.Fr.	: <u>Ec. des Femmes</u>
Dec 1	"	: <u>Dépit Am. & Double Veuve</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Foire St. Laurent</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Cid & Vendanges de Sur.</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Méd. malgré lui</u>

1710

Jan 2	"	: <u>Ec. des Maris & G. Dandin</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Plaideurs</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Mar. forcé</u>
" 11	Versailles	: <u>Misanthrope</u>

1710

Jan 13	Com.Fr.	: <u>Rodogune & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 15	Versailles	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 18	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Foire St. Laurent</u>
" 21	"	: " & "
" 22	Versailles	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
" 24	Com.Fr.	: <u>Homme à h.f. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Hérode & Baron de la Crasse</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Ménechmes & G. Dandin</u>
Feb 4	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Mar. forcé</u>
" 12	Versailles	: <u>Andromaque & Escarbagnas</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Avare</u>
" 17	Com.Fr.	: " & <u>Plaideurs</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Jaloux</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Ménechmes & G. Dandin</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Cid & Am. Médecin</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
Mar 6	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Florentin</u>
" 10	Versailles	: <u>Jaloux</u>
" 20	Com.Fr.	: <u>Fille Cap. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Electre & Vend. de Sur</u>
" 22	Versailles	: <u>Etourdi</u>
" 23	Com.Fr.	: <u>Electre & Pourceaugnas</u>
" 26	Versailles	: <u>Arminius & F. St. Laurent</u>
" 28	Com.Fr.	: <u>Visionnaires & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 29	Versailles	: <u>Visionnaires</u>
" 30	Com.Fr.	: <u>Sérénade & Visionnaire</u>
Apr 1	"	: <u>Visionnaires & Moulin de Javelle</u>
May 8	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Amour Médecin</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Jaloux désabusé & Concert Rid.</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Jaloux désabusé & Patelin</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Cid & Escarbagnas</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Double Veuve</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Démocrite & Fâcheux</u>
Jun 1	"	: <u>Cid & Sérénade</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Démocrite</u>

1710

Jun 23	Com.Fr.	: <u>Crispin Musicien</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
Jul 1	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Dépit Amoureux</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
Aug 7	"	: <u>Comédie des Comédiens</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Cid & Deuil</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Ménechmes</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Démocrite</u>
Sep 1	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Crispin Mus.</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Fille Capitaine</u>
Oct 11	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 13	"	: "
" 15	"	: "
Nov 25	"	: <u>Fille Cap.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Phèdre & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
Dec 5	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Parisienne</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Avare & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Tartuffe</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Ecole des Femmes</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Escarbagnas</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Festin de P.</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Démocrite & Eté des Coq.</u>
" 22	Versailles:	"
" 27	Com.Fr.	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Misanthrope & G. Dandin</u>

1711

Jan 2	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Cid & Escarbagnas</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
" 27	Versailles:	: <u>Cid & B. de la Crasse</u>
" 29	Com.Fr.	: <u>Festin de P. & Parisienne</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Dame invisible & Crispin</u> <u>Médecin</u>
Feb 4	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Souper mal</u> <u>apprêté</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Folies Am.</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Malade Imag. & G. Dandin</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Souper mal</u> <u>apprêté</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Femme Juge</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Fille Cap. & Florentin</u>
" 26	Versailles:	: <u>Misanthrope</u>

1711

Mar 2	Com.Fr.	: <u>Jod. Maître & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Phèdre & Escarbagnas</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Homme à bonne fortune</u>
" 10	Versailles:	: <u>Femmes Savantes</u>
" 12	Com.Fr.	: <u>Fille Cap.</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Démocrite & Pourceaugnac</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Tartuffe</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Amour</u> <u>Médecin</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
April (nil)		
May 13	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Ménechmes & G. Dandin</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Flaideurs</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
Jun 10	"	: <u>Femme Juge</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Mercure Galant</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Fables d'Esopé</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Démocrite</u>
Jul 1	"	: <u>Cid & Amants Ridicules</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Dépit Am.</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Andrienne</u>
" 20	"	: " & <u>Deuil</u>
" 22	"	: " & <u>Esprit de</u> <u>Contradiction</u>
" 24	"	: " & <u>Pourceaugnac</u>
" 26	"	: " & <u>Gal. Jard.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Femmes Sav.</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Femme Juge</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Gal. Jard.</u>
Aug 2	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 5	"	: <u>Agrippa & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Médecins</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Cid & Port de Mer</u>
Sep 15	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Florentin</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Démocrite & Esp. de</u> <u>Contradiction</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Comte d'Essex & Moulin</u> <u>de Javelle</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Démocrite & Folies Am.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 29	"	: "
" 30	"	: <u>Mort d'Agamemnon &</u> <u>Médecin malgré lui</u>
Oct 1	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Sérénade</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 5	"	: "
" 11	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Grondeur</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Escarbagnas</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Cocher supp.</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>

1711

Oct 22	Com.Fr.	: <u>Cid & Epreuve</u> <u>Réciproque</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Fille Cap. &</u> <u>Naufrage</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Céphale et Procris</u>
" 29	"	: "
" 30	"	: <u>Misanthrope &</u> <u>Epreuve Récip.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Céphale et Procris</u>
Nov 3	"	: "
" 4	"	: <u>Venceslas & Cocher</u> <u>supposé</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Andrienne & Naufrage</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Céphale et Procris</u>
" 9	"	: "
" 12	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Dépit Am. & Patelin</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Rhadamiste et Zél.</u> <u>& Galant Jardinier</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Démocrite & Parisienne</u>
Dec 2	"	: <u>Cid & Double Veuvage</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Mar.</u> <u>forcé</u>
" 4	"	: <u>Comédie sans Titre &</u> <u>Souper mal app.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Fables d'Esopo & Bon</u> <u>Soldat</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Festin de P. &</u> <u>Fâcheux</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes &</u> <u>Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Jod. Maître & Plaideurs</u>

1712

Jan 5	"	: " & <u>Patelin</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Amour</u> <u>Médecin</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Cid & Scapin</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Moulin de</u> <u>Javelle</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Cid & G. Dandin</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Astrate & Sérénade</u>
" 16	"	: " & <u>Double</u> <u>Veuvage</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Astrate & Double</u> <u>Veuvage</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Fables d'Esopo &</u> <u>Double Veuvage</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Bourgeoises à la Mode</u> <u>& Gal. Jardinier</u>

1712

Jan 22	Com.Fr.	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Mar. forcé</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Iphigénie & Fâcheux</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Ingrat</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Cid & Scapin</u>
Feb 1	"	: <u>Ingrat</u>
" 3	"	: "
" 5	"	: "
" 6	"	: <u>Menteur & Cocu Imag.</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Ingrat</u>
" 8	"	: <u>D. Japhet & Double</u> <u>Veuvage</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Ingrat</u>
" 11	"	: "
March (nil)		
Apr 6	Com.Fr.	: <u>Fables d'Es. & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Absalon</u>
" 11	"	: "
" 13	"	: "
" 14	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Sérénade</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Absalon & Attendez-moi</u> <u>sous l'orme</u>
" 17	"	: " & <u>Moul. de Jav.</u>
" 19	"	: " & <u>F. St. Laurent</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Crispin Mus. & Parisienne</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Absalon & Eté des Coq.</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Absalon & G. Dandin</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Absalon & Ballet Extrav.</u>
" 27	"	: " & <u>Amour Méd.</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Femme Juge & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Absalon & Florentin</u>
May 1	"	: <u>Andromaque & Moul. de Jav.</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Plaideurs</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Cid & Bon Soldat</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Double</u> <u>Veuvage</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Cid & Eté des Coquettes</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Mercure Gal. & Escarbagnas</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Attendez-moi</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Patelin</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
Jun 2	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Escarbagnas</u>
" 10	"	: <u>Mithradate & Sérénade</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Tartuffe & G. Dandin</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Femmes Sav.</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Festin de P.</u>
Jul 1	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Rodogune & Sérénade</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Jod. Maître</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Fables d'Esopo</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Cid & Mar. forcé</u>

1712

Jul 24	Com.Fr.	: Homme à b.f. & <u>Grondeur</u>
" 26	"	: Femmes Sav.
" 30	"	: Esope à la Cour
Aug 3	"	: " & <u>F. St. Laurent</u>
" 5	"	: Es. à la Cour & <u>Sérénade</u>
" 7	"	: Es. à la Cour & <u>Métamorphose Am.</u>
" 10	"	: Cid & <u>Métamorphose</u>
" 11	"	: Jod. Maître
" 22	"	: Festin de P.
" 24	"	: Cid & <u>Deuil</u>
" 25	"	: Es. à la Cour & <u>Plaideurs</u>
" 28	"	: Es. à la Cour & <u>Plaideurs</u>
" 31	"	: Misanthrope
Sep 2	"	: Femmes Sav.
" 7	"	: Es. à la Cour & <u>Fille Valet</u>
" 10	"	: Festin de P. & <u>Escarbagnas</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Fille</u> <u>Valet</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Rodogune & Galant</u> <u>Jardinier</u>
" 17	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris &</u> <u>Fille Valet</u>
" 19	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris &</u> <u>Crispin Méd.</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris &</u> <u>Métamorphose Am.</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris &</u> <u>Attendez-moi</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Régulus & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris &</u> <u>Métamorphose</u>
Oct 7	"	: <u>Electre & "</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Démocrite & Eté des Coq.</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Crispin</u> <u>Méd.</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Femmes Sav. & Amour</u> <u>Méd.</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Electre & Métamorphose</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Esope à la Cour &</u> <u>Baron de la Crasse</u>
Nov 11	"	: <u>Ingrat & Vacances</u>
" 13	"	: " & "
" 15	"	: <u>Sancho Pança Gouverneur</u>
" 19	"	: "
" 21	"	: "
" 23	"	: "

1712

Dec	3	Com.Fr.	:	<u>Démocrite & Vacances</u>
"	6	"	:	<u>Cid & Concert Rid.</u>
"	9	"	:	<u>Es. à la Cour &</u> <u>Double Veuve</u>
"	14	"	:	<u>Démocrite & Vacances</u>
"	16	"	:	<u>Ec. des Femmes &</u> <u>Galant Jardinier</u>
"	18	"	:	<u>Malade Imag.</u>
"	19	"	:	<u>Comte d'Essex &</u> <u>Vacances</u>
"	22	"	:	<u>Enf. de Paris & Bon</u> <u>Soldat</u>
"	27	"	:	<u>Malade Imag.</u>
"	28	"	:	<u>Esope à la Cour &</u> <u>Vacances</u>
"	30	"	:	<u>Femme Juge & B. de la</u> <u>Crasse</u>

1713

Jan	3	"	: <u>Alcibiade & Col.-Maill.</u>
"	4	"	: <u>Misanthrope & F. St.</u> <u>Laurent</u>
"	6	"	: <u>Honneur & Col.-Maill.</u>
"	8	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	12	"	: <u>Amphitryen & Col.-Maill.</u>
"	14	"	: <u>Agrippa & "</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Horaces & Vacances</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	21	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes & Colin-</u> <u>Maillard</u>
"	22	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Phèdre & Fâcheux</u>
"	24	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Col.-</u> <u>Maill.</u>
"	30	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Moulin</u> <u>de Jav.</u>
Feb	4	"	: <u>Es. à la Cour & "</u>
"	6	"	: <u>D. Japhet & Diable</u> <u>Boiteux</u>
"	7	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Fâcheux</u>
"	8	"	: <u>Cid & Diable Boit.</u>
"	9	"	: <u>Démocrite & Médecin</u> <u>malgré lui</u>
"	10	"	: <u>Nicomède & Diable Boit.</u>
"	13	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Vacances</u>
"	14	"	: <u>Electre & Diable Boit.</u>
"	16	"	: <u>" & Col.-Maill.</u>
"	17	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	21	"	: <u>Jaloux Desabusé & Mari</u> <u>Retrouvé</u>
"	23	"	: <u>" & "</u>
"	25	"	: <u>" & "</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
"	28	"	: <u>"</u>

1713

Mar	1	Com.Fr.	: <u>Iphigénie & Mari</u> <u>Retrouvé</u>
"	3	"	: <u>Femme Juge &</u> <u>Diab. Boiteux</u>
"	11	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Joueur & Col.-Maill.</u>
"	17	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
"	19	"	: "
"	21	"	: "
"	23	"	: "
"	27	"	: "
"	29	"	: "
"	31	"	: "
Apr	24	"	: <u>Polyeucte &</u> <u>Vacances</u>
"	29	"	: <u>Misanthrope &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
May	1	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Je vous</u> <u>prends sans vert</u>
"	2	"	: <u>Démocrite & Sérénade</u>
"	5	"	: " & <u>Je vous</u> <u>prends s. v.</u>
"	7	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Folies am.</u>
"	9	"	: <u>Festin de Pierre &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
"	11	"	: <u>Fille supposée &</u> <u>Crispin Méd.</u>
"	13	"	: <u>Fille supp. & Vacances</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Baron d'Albikrac & "</u>
"	17	"	: <u>Fille supp. & B. de la</u> <u>Crasse</u>
"	29	"	: <u>Andronic & Impromptu de</u> <u>Suresnes</u>
"	31	"	: <u>Iphigénie & "</u>
Jun	1	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
"	8	"	: "
"	11	"	: "
"	21	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Galant</u> <u>Jardinier</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Crispin</u> <u>Méd.</u>
"	25	"	: <u>Démocrite & Esprit de</u> <u>Contradiction</u>
"	28	"	: <u>Manlius & Impromptu de</u> <u>Suresnes</u>
Jul	3	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Plaideurs</u>
"	6	"	: <u>Misanthrope</u>
"	11	"	: <u>Démocrite & Impromptu de</u> <u>Suresnes</u>
"	12	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Ballet</u> <u>Extrav.</u>
Aug	1	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Gal. Jard.</u>
"	2	"	: <u>Démocrite & G. Dandin</u>
"	19	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Eté des Coq.</u>
"	22	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme & Trois</u> <u>Frères Rivaux</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Deuil</u>
"	31	"	: <u>Démocrite & Semblable à</u> <u>soi-même</u>

1713

Sep	22	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite & Naufrage</u>
"	23	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Usurier</u> <u>Gentilhomme</u>
"	25	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Usurier</u> <u>Gentilhomme</u>
Oct	28	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & "</u>
Nov	7	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Crispin</u> <u>Méd.</u>
"	9	"	: <u>Démocrite & Esp. de</u> <u>Contradiction</u>
"	11	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	13	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Scapin</u>
"	14	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Plaideurs</u>
"	25	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
"	27	"	: <u>Tartuffe & "</u>
Dec	1	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Cocu</u> <u>Imag.</u>
"	3	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
"	4	"	: <u>Ariane & Plaideurs</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Crispin</u> <u>Méd.</u>
"	6	Versailles:	"
"	11	"	: <u>Démocrite</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Fâcheux</u>
"	18	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite & Mar. forcé</u>
"	19	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & G. Dandin</u>
"	20	"	: <u>Misanthrope &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
"	22	"	: <u>Ec. des Femmes</u>
"	26	"	: <u>Mère Coquette & Fâcheux</u>
"	28	"	: <u>Nicomède & Cocu Imag.</u>
"	30	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Eté des</u> <u>Coquettes</u>

1714

Jan	1	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Plaideurs</u>
"	2	Versailles:	"
"	5	Com.Fr.	: <u>Femme Juge</u>
"	7	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Scapin</u>
"	8	Versailles:	<u>Jod. Maître</u>
"	10	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite</u>
"	12	Versailles:	<u>Enf. de Paris</u>
"	14	Com.Fr.	: <u>Andronic & Gal. Jard.</u>
"	15	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Crispin</u> <u>Méd.</u>
"	16	"	: <u>Enf. de Paris & Gal.</u> <u>Jard.</u>
"	17	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
"	19	"	: <u>Démocrite & G. Dandin</u>
"	24	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Florentin</u>
"	26	Versailles:	<u>Esope à la Cour</u>
"	29	Com.Fr.	: <u>Misanthrope &</u> <u>Escarbagnas</u>
Feb	3	Versailles:	<u>Rodogune & Gal. Jard.</u>
"	4	Com.Fr.	: <u>Ménechmes & Double</u> <u>Veuve</u>
"	5	"	: <u>Comédie sans Titre &</u> <u>Attendez-moi s. l'orme</u>
"	12	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Folies Am.</u>

1714

Feb 15 Versailles: Malade Imaginaire
 " 18 Com.Fr. : "
 " 19 Versailles: Comédie sans Titre
 " 23 Com.Fr. : Enf. de Paris & Souper mal app.
 " 27 " : Misanthrope & Médecin m. lui
 Mar 1 " : B. d'Albikrac & Vacances
 " 3 " : Inconnu
 " 5 " : " & Médecin m. lui
 Apr 11 " : Comédien Poète & Plaideurs
 " 13 " : Comédien Poète & Galant Jardinier
 " 15 " : Com. Poète & Moulin de Jav.
 " 16 " : Jod. Prince & Crispin Méd.
 " 18 " : Com. Poète & Dandin
 " 22 " : Devineresse
 " 28 " : Démocrite & Patelin
 " 30 " : Festin de P. & Cocu Imag.
 May 22 " : Amphitryon & Pourceaugnac
 " 26 " : Ménechmes & Crispin Méd.
 Jun 6 " : " & Famille Extrav.
 " 12 " : Misanthrope & Florentin
 " 16 " : Es. à la Cour & Concert Ridicule
 " 18 " : Es. à la Cour & Crispin Méd.
 " 20 " : Es. à la Cour & Cocu Imag.
 " 26 " : Démocrite & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 29 " : Festin de P. & Crispin Méd.
 July (nil)
 Aug 13 Com.Fr. : Jod. Prince & Amour Méd.
 " 16 " : Ménechmes & Pourceaugnac
 " 17 " : Démocrite & Gal. Jard.
 " 21 " : Misanthrope & Eté des Coquettes
 " 22 " : Phèdre & Gal. Jard.
 " 24 " : Ménechmes & F. St. Laurent
 " 28 " : Festin de P. & Naufrage
 " 30 " : Es. à la Cour & Esprit de Contrad.

1714

Sep 3 Com.Fr. : Démocrite & Crispin Méd.
 " 10 " : Jod. Prince & Patelin
 " 11 " : Es. à la Cour & Fêtes du Cours
 " 12 " : Ménechmes & Cocher supp.
 " 16 " : Amphitryon & Folies Am.
 " 24 " : Misanthrope & Dandin
 " 25 " : Es. à la Cour & Fêtes du Cours
 Oct 11 " : Festin de P. & Fêtes du Cours
 " 20 " : Grondeur & Captifs
 " 29 " : Ménechmes & Fêtes du C.
 Nov 5 " : Soeur Ridicule & Captifs
 " 7 " : " & "
 " 12 " : Démocrite & Fêtes du C.
 " 22 " : Es. à la Cour & Baron de la Crasse
 " 26 " : Jod. Prince & Crispin Méd.
 " 28 " : Es. à la Cour & Vert Galant
 Dec 4 " : Misanthrope & Cocu Imag.
 1715
 Jan 15 " : Misanthrope & Escarbagnas
 " 19 " : Pompée & Gal. Jard.
 " 24 " : Démocrite & Cocu Imag.
 Feb 4 " : Es. à la Cour & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 7 " : Caton d'Utique & Galant Jardinier
 " 10 " : Ménechmes & Grondeur
 " 12 " : Jod. Prince & Mar. forcé
 " 14 " : Festin de P. & Cocu Imag.
 " 18 " : Es. à la Cour & Eté des Coquettes
 " 27 " : Ménechmes & Concert Rid.
 Mar 5 " : Joueur & Gal. Jard.
 " 13 " : Misanthrope & "
 " 15 " : Es. à la Cour & Méd. malgré lui
 " 20 " : Ménechmes & Dandin
 " 22 " : Curieux Impertinent & F. St. Laurent
 " 28 " : Absalon & Gal. Jard.
 Apr 1 " : Démocrite & Méd. m. lui
 May 5 " : Es. à la Cour & Scapin
 " 9 " : Démocrite & Deuil
 " 11 " : Amphitryon & G. Dandin
 " 13 " : Ménechmes & Mar. forcé
 " 16 " : Cinna & Gal. Jard.
 " 17 " : Festin de P. & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 19 " : Menteur & Gal. Jard.
 " 22 " : Ménechmes & Plaideurs
 " 23 " : Misanthrope & Crisp. Méd.
 " 28 " : Jod. Prince & Méd. m. lui

1715

Jun 8	Com.Fr.	: <u>Es. à la Cour & Lot Supposé</u>
" 23	"	: <u>Coquette & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 25	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Esp. de Contradiction</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Lot supposé</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Démocrite & Pourceaugnac</u>
Jul 1	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Attendez-moi</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Deuil</u>
" 18	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Esp. de Contradiction</u>
Aug 23	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Deuil</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Dame Invisible & Galant Jardinier</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Cocu Imag.</u>
September (nil)		
Oct 10	Com.Fr.	: <u>Démocrite & Méd. malgré lui</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Escarbagnas</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 16	"	: <u>Es. à la Cour & Sérénade</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Homme à b.f. & Gal. Jardinier</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Es. à la Cour & Méd. malgré lui</u>
Nov 6	"	: <u>Coquette & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Famille Extrav.</u>
" 10	"	: " & <u>Patelin</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Mithridate & Vend. de Sur.</u>
Dec 1	"	: <u>Andromaque & " "</u>
" 3	"	: <u>Vend. de Sur & Es. à la Cour</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Amphitryon & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 11	"	: <u>Festin de P. & " "</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Usurier Gentilhomme</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Coquette & Patelin</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Démocrite & Grondeur</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Misanthrope & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 31	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>

1716

Jan 1	"	: <u>Avare & Méd. m. lui</u>
" 2	"	: <u>Bourg. Gentilhomme</u>
" 4	"	: " "
" 6	"	: " "
" 8	"	: " "
" 10	"	: " "
" 12	"	: " "

1716

Jan 28	Com.Fr.	: <u>Misanthrope & Méd. malgré lui</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Mar. forcé</u>
Feb 6	"	: <u>Démocrite & Dandin</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 10	"	: " "
" 11	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 12	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 14	"	: " "
" 16	"	: " "
" 19	"	: <u>Ariane & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 20	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 21	"	: <u>Jod. Maître & " "</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Inconnu</u>
" 24	"	: " "
" 26	"	: " "
" 27	"	: <u>Festin de P. & Am. Médecin</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Escarbagnas</u>
Mar 5	"	: <u>Athalie</u>
" 6	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Méd. m. lui</u>
" 7	"	: <u>Athalie</u>
" 8	"	: <u>Ménechmes & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 9	"	: <u>Athalie</u>
" 11	"	: " "
" 12	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 13	"	: <u>Athalie & Crispin Méd.</u>
" 14	"	: <u>Malade Imag.</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Athalie & Vend. de Sur.</u>
" 17	"	: " & <u>Cocher supp.</u>
" 19	"	: " & <u>Concert Rid.</u>
" 21	"	: " & <u>Patelin</u>
" 23	"	: " & <u>Sicilien</u>
" 26	"	: " & " "
" 27	"	: <u>Coquette & V. de Sur.</u>
" 29	"	: <u>Athalie & Sérénade</u>
" 31	"	: " & <u>Attendez-moi</u>
Apr 1	Louvre	: " "
" 22	Com.Fr.	: <u>Misanthrope & Escarbagnas</u>
" 27	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Gal. Jard.</u>
" 28	"	: <u>Jod. Prince & Dandin</u>
" 30	"	: <u>Es. à la Cour & Deuil</u>
May 11	"	: <u>Tartuffe & Mar. forcé</u>
" 15	"	: <u>Devineresse</u>
" 17	"	: " "
" 19	"	: <u>Guinguette de la Finance & Astrate</u>
" 22	"	: <u>Cid & Guinguette</u>
" 24	"	: <u>Mithridate & " "</u>
" 26	"	: <u>Astrate & " "</u>
" 27	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Attendez-moi</u>
" 29	"	: <u>D. Bertrand & Dandin</u>

1716

Jun 13 Com.Fr. : Démocrite & Patelin
 July (nil)
 August (nil)
 September (nil)
 October (nil)
 Nov 19 Com.Fr. : Crispin Musc. & G. Dandin
 " 23 " : Chevalier à la Mode & Sérénade
 " 24 " : Jod. Prince & Esp. de Contradiction
 " 25 " : Chev. à la Mode & Cocher Supposé
 " 27 " : Chev. à la Mode & Concert Ridicule
 " 28 " : Chev. à la Mode & Grondeur
 " 29 " : Malade Imag.
 " 30 " : Chev. à la Mode & Pourceaugnac
 Dec 2 " : Chev. à la Mode & Plaideurs
 " 4 " : Chev. à la Mode & Patelin
 " 6 " : Chev. à la Mode & Ec. des Maris
 " 7 " : Chev. à la Mode & Coupe Enchantée
 " 9 " : Chev. à la Mode & Sicilien
 " 11 " : Chev. à la Mode & Méd. malgré lui
 " 13 " : Chev. à la Mode & Scapin
 " 17 " : Misanthrope & Gal. Jardinier
 " 28 " : Es. à la Cour & Dandin
 " 29 " : Jod. Prince & Mar. forcé

1717

Jan 1 " : Es. à la Cour & Crispin Méd.
 " 7 " : Misanthrope & Usurier Gent.
 " 9 " : Démocrite & V. de Sur.
 " 12 " : Tartuffe & Cocu Imag.
 " 18 " : Es. à la Cour & Grondeur
 " 20 " : Chev. à la Mode & Méd. malgré lui
 " 23 " : Ménechmes & Florentin
 " 25 " : " & Gal. Jard.
 " 26 " : Misanthrope & F. St. Laurent
 " 30 " : Chev. à la Mode & Cocher supp.

1717

Feb 1 Com.Fr. : Démocrite & Am. Médecin
 " 10 " : Nicomède & Folies Am.
 " 12 " : Athalie
 " 13 " : Ménechmes & Cocu Imag.
 " 14 " : Athalie
 " 15 " : Femmes Sav. & Maison de Campagne
 " 16 " : Athalie & Es. de Contrad.
 " 18 " : " & Mais. de Camp.
 " 19 " : Misanthrope & Attendez-moi
 " 20 " : Athalie & Mais. de Camp.
 " 21 " : Festin de P. & "
 " 23 " : Es. à la Cour & "
 " 24 " : Athalie & Patelin
 " 25 " : Femme d'Intrigues & Crispin Méd.
 " 26 " : Athalie & Sicilien
 " 27 " : Femme d'Intrigues & Médecin m. lui
 " 28 " : Athalie & Pourceaugnac
 Mar 1 " : Femme d'Intrigues & Dandin
 " 2 " : Athalie & Ec. des Maris
 " 5 " : " & Moulin de Jav.
 " 7 " : " & Patelin
 " 8 " : Femme d'Intrigues & Mais. de Campagne
 " 12 " : Oedipe & Mais. de Cam.
 Apr 13 " : Misanthrope & Cocu Imag.
 " 16 " : Tartuffe & Deuil
 " 22 " : " & Esp. de Contrad.
 " 24 " : Jod. Prince & Mar. forcé
 May 3 " : Misanthrope & Vend. de S.
 " 4 " : Ménechmes & Usurier Gent.
 " 8 " : Jod. Prince & Crispin Méd.
 " 9 " : Iphigénie & Maison de Camp.
 " 11 " : Cid & Scapin
 " 12 " : Es. à la Cour & Sicilien
 " 13 " : Jod. Prince & Mais. de Camp.
 Jun 6 " : Ménechmes & Grondeur
 " 8 " : Homme à b.f. & Mais. de C.
 " 9 " : Es. à la Cour & Esp. de Contradiction
 " 21 " : Misanthrope & Escarbagnas
 Jul 2 " : Géta & Souper mal apprêté
 " 7 " : Jod. Prince & G. Dandin
 " 16 " : Cid & B. de la Crasse
 " 19 " : Es. à la Cour & Am. Diable
 " 21 " : Misanthrope & Souper mal apprêté
 " 26 " : Es. à la Cour & Folies Am.
 August (nil)
 September (nil)
 Oct 4 Com.Fr. : Jod. Prince & Bon Soldat
 " 6 " : Misanthrope & Prix de l'Arquebuse
 " 8 " : Homme à b.f. & Crispin Méd.
 " 10 " : Es. à la Cour & Prix de l'Arquebuse

1717

Oct 13 Com.Fr. : Festin de P. & Souper mal app.
 " 30 " : Obstacle Imprévu & Coupe Enchantée
 Nov 4 " : Antiochus & Mariage forcé
 " 5 " : Médisant & Crispin Méd.
 " 10 " : Festin de P. & Cocu Imag.
 " 11 " : Oedipe & Pourceaugnac
 " 12 " : Es. à la Cour & Eté des Coquettes
 " 13 " : Oedipe & Ballet Extravagant
 " 14 " : Malade Imag.
 " 15 " : Britannicus & Foire St. Laurent
 " 18 " : Misanthrope & Méd. malgré lui
 " 20 " : Tartuffe & Souper mal app.
 " 22 " : Femmes Savantes & Mariage forcé
 " 23 " : Esprit Follet & Esprit de Contrad.
 " 25 " : Avare & Crispin Méd.
 " 27 " : Ménechmes & Escarbagnas
 " 29 " : Ménechmes & Cocu Imag.
 Dec 3 " : Tartuffe & Souper mal app.
 " 4 " : Homme à b. f. & Foire St. Laurent
 " 5 " : Obstacle Imprévu & Coupe Enchantée
 " 7 " : Obstacle Imprévu & Coupe Enchantée
 " 9 " : Andronic & Amour Diable
 " 10 " : Coquette & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 11 " : Coquette & Ballet Extravagant

1717

Dec 13 Com.Fr. : Andronic & Médecin malgré lui
 " 14 " : Ménechmes & Escarbagnas
 " 15 " : Coquette & Baron de la Crasse
 " 16 " : Andronic & Crispin Médecin
 " 17 " : Dieux Comédiens (Métempsychose des Amours)
 " 18 " : Tartuffe & Attendez-moi sous l'orme
 " 19 " : Dieux Comédiens
 " 21 " : "
 " 23 " : "
 " 26 " : "
 " 27 " : Avare & Pourceaugnac
 " 28 " : Dieux Comédiens
 " 29 " : Joueur & Esprit de Contradiction
 " 30 " : Dieux Comédiens
 " 31 " : Phèdre & Grondeur

1718

Jan 3 " : Dieux Comédiens & Fêtes du Cours
 " 4 " : Tartuffe & Crispin Médecin
 " 5 " : Phèdre & Fêtes du Cours
 " 7 " : Dieux Comédiens
 " 9 " : "

February (nil)

March (nil)

April (nil)

April 22 - retired.

APPENDIX B

During the course of research, a number of Cartons and Dancourts have been encountered who may have some connection with the playwright and his family, although there is, as yet, no positive evidence of this. It is hoped that, in the light of further research, more information might be found to provide a fuller picture of Dancourt's family ties.

Marie Dancourt.

1633, 11 April, Contrat de Mariage.

furent presens en leurs personnes Charles de Champagne escuier seigneur en partie de Leuze y demourant d'une part et damoiselle Marie Dancourt fille de deffunct Anthoine Dancourt vivant escuier sieur du Neufmoitié et de la tour de Mebertin paroisse de Sains d'autre part, lesquelz parties de l'advis auctorité et consentement scavoir le dict Charles de Champagne escuier de Claude de Champagne chevalier seigneur de Mortin Louis de Champagne chevalier seigneur de Villeneuve ses freres Anthoine de Champagne escuier...damoiselle Magdelene de Champagne femme de Michel de Chalmaison escuier, Michel de Chalautre escuier aussy Charles de Chalmaison escuier ses cousins, et ladicte damoiselle Daulcourt (sic) de Charles Daulcourt son oncle escuier sieur de Neufmoitier et du fief de la guitonnerie et a Saint, damoiselle Radegonde de Bourgoin vefve de feu Louis de Champagne vivant chevalier de La Noüe et de Leschelle tant de ladicte future damoiselle Barbe Dancourt femme de Antoine de La Renier escuier des chevaulx legers de la garde de sa Magesté Philippe de Champagne chevalier sieur de Lechelles et des Fiefs de la Forge, de Lundy, de Malard de Gantain et de Bontiller, cousin germain du costé maternel de ladicte future et damoiselle Marie de la Serre femme dudict Philippes de Champagne damoiselle Nicolle de La Riviere femme dudit feu de la Riviere et damoiselle Suzane Despres ses parans et amis. (1)

Pierre Carton, Sieur de Val.

1657, 28 June, Titre de Carton.

Devant nous notaires de la Cour de Lamballe a comparu en personne noble homme Pierre Carton sieur de Val residant en la ville de Nemours Lequel a ce jour vandu a Messire Annas de la Villion Seigneur des Maraix La vieuxville au Senechal et residant en la maison noble des Maraix Parroisse de Hillion scavoir est trois terres un quart et trois godet fourment Mesure de Nostre cour de Lamballe luy deubt par ledit sieur des Marraix de rente aux fins d'un acord faict entre ledict sieur des Marraix et deffunt noble homme Christoffle Carton vivant sieur dudit lieu de Val pere dudit vendeur Ladite vante ainfin faicte pour la somme de 412 livres 10 sols...faict au Bourge de Hillion ce 28e jour de juin. (2)

(1) Archives Départementales de Seine-et-Marne, B 437.

(2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Carrés d'Hozier, 154.

Antoine Carton

1698, 3 November, Reglement d'Armoiries pour le Sr Antoine Carton.

Sa Majesté...permet aud. Sir Carton de porter des armoiries timbrées telles qu'elles seront réglées et blazonnées par nous, comme exerçant l'office de Juge d'Armes de France. (1)

Guillaume Carton.

1713, Contrat de Mariage, fils de feu Antoine Carton. (2)

Philippes Dancourt.

1703, 1 January, Mariage.

Furent presens Philippes Dancourt bourgeois de paris y demeurant rue de l'observance paroisse Saint Cosme pour luy et en son nom d'Une part Et Marie Anne Domergue majeure et en ses droits demeurante rue Saint Honore parroisse Saint Eustache fille de deffunt Jacques Domergue maitre tailleur d'habis a paris et de Anne Clerambourg sa femme a present Sa Veuve...demeurant rue des petits champs susdite paroisse aussy pour elle et en son nom d'autre part Lesquelles en la presence de leurs parens et amis cy apres Savoir dudit Dancourt de Philippes Dancourt marchand limonadier a paris et de Gabrielle Guignet sa femme de luy autorisée ses pere et mere de Mathieu Pochet gentilhomme de la maison de feu son A. R. Monsieur et Philippes de Vienne Sellier a paris amis...fait et passé a Paris en la demeure dudit futur epoux Lan mil sept cens trois le premier jour de Janvier apres midy et ont Signé

DANCOURT

MARIEANNE
DOMERGUE

GABRIELLE GINET
ANNE CLERAMBOUR
MATHIEU POCHET
DEVienne (3)

1718, 4 January, Procuration.

Pardevant les Conseillers notaires du Roy soussignes Residans en la ville de Dijon a comparu en sa personne sieur Jean Marlot Marchand demeurant audit Dijon place Royale, Lequel a par ces presentes Cree et Constitue son Procureur general et special Me Philippes Dancourt sous secretaire des Commandemens de S. A. R. Monseigneur le Duc Auquel il a donné pouvoir et en son nom Sa personne Representant Toucher et Recevoir de Messieurs les Tresoriers payeurs des Rentes de l'Hotel de Ville de paris Tous les jnterests qui peuvent estre deux et escheus audit Sieur Constituant jusqu'a ce jour Ensemble...Soixante Sept livres par Reduction au Denier Vingt Cinq du principal de Seize cent soixante quinze Livres ...

J MARLOT

deposé pour minutte pour Me Lorimier notaire par ledit sieur Dancourt demeurant rue des Cordilliers paroisse Saint Sulpice de luy Certifié veritable conjointement avec Alexandre Pochet Bourgeois de Paris y demeurant rue de guenegaud.

DANCOURT

POCHET (4)

- (1) Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouveau d'Hozier, 83.
- (2) Bibliothèque Nationale, Pièces Originales, 606.
- (3) Minutier Central, XXIII, 388.
- (4) Minutier Central, XXIII, 394.

1720, 2 April, Procuration.

Pardevant le No(tai)re Royal en la Ville de Cremieu En Dauphiné...fut present Dame Marie Madeleine Danglurre Delaissee de Monsieur de Lombard des Gardes et a present femme de Messire Philippes Routtier de la Mothe gouverneur de Lisle de grenade habittante en cette ville Laquelle a volontairement Et de gré fait et constitué son procureur general et special Monsr. Philippes Dancourt sous secretaire de S. A. S. Monseigneur le Duc auquel ladite Dame Constituante donne pouvoir de recevoir en son nom une année des arrerages Escheus...de Cent cinquante livres de Rente Viagere provenant de la Lotterie Royale constituez sur les Aydes Et gabelles de france au proffit de la ditte Dame Constituante par contrat passe devant Touvenol et Gaillardre No(tai)res a paris le vingt neuf may mil sept cent Deux

M.M. D'ANGLURE DES GARDES DE LA MOTTE

deposé par ledit sieur Dancourt demeurant rue des fossez

DANCOURT (1)

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- L, 164 - 1680, 7 April : Procuration - Florent Carton II.
- - 1680, 9 April : Marriage contract - Dancourt and Marie Thérèse Lenoir.
- L, 165 - 1680, 26 July : Testament of François Lenoir de la Thorillière.
- - 1680, 6 August : Settlement of La Thorillière's estate.
- XCII, 232 - 1680, 23 October : Admission of Dancourt and Marie Thérèse into the Troupe de Rouen.
- XXXIII, 359 - 1685, 14 August : Purchase by Boileau of a country residence in Auteuil.
- I, 183 - 1685, 2 November : Marriage contract - Pierre Lenoir de la Thorillière and Catherine Biancolelli.
- XLIV, 97 - 1686, 11 November : Estate of Marie Petitjean.
- CVI, 82 - 1689, 29 March : Sale of Marie Thérèse's share in her mother's estate.
- LII, 122 - 1689, 18 April : Transaction between Florent Carton II and Daniel Carton.
- - 1689, 25, May : Settlement of an estate on the children of Judith Boutinon and Daniel Lemaistre.
- XLIV, 116 - 1692, 14 April : Declaration by Marie Thérèse.
- CXIII, 148; - 1692, 7 July : Procuration: Dancourt and Marie Thérèse (missing).
- XXIII, 370 - 1693, 12 November : Reconciliation of Dancourt and Marie Thérèse.
- XLIV, 142 - 1698, 22 March : Settlement of a debt of 4828^{fr} 1^s owed by Dancourt to certain un-named creditors.
- XLIV, 146 - 1699, 12 February : Settlement of a debt of 7012^{fr} owed by Dancourt to certain un-named creditors.
- XLIV, 159 - 1701, 1 July : Settlement of a rente on Marie Thérèse by the Marquis de Créquy.
- XLIV, 160 - 1701, 20 September : Acceptance by the Dancourt couple of the tenancy of a house in the Rue de Condé.
- XLIV, 164 - 1702, 29 October : Marriage contract - Manon Dancourt and Guillaume de Fontaine.
- XXIII, 388 - 1703, 1 January : Marriage contract - Philippes Dancourt and Marie Anne Domergue.
- LII, 157 - 1703, 14 June : Purchase by the Dancourt couple of an estate in Auteuil.
- XLIV, 166 - 1703, 18 June : Payment of 5000 livres by Marie Thérèse to Bonenfant for the above-mentioned estate.

- XCVII, 128 - 1704, 6 December : Marriage contract - Georges Guillaume Lavoy and Anne Françoise Dauvilliers.
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- XCVII, 129 - 1705, 6 April : Settlement of a rente on Benjamin Carton by Florent Carton II and Louise de Londy.
- XCVII, 132 - 1706, 22 April : Admission of Nicolas Desmares into the Comédie Française.
- XCVII, 133 - 1706, 5 May : Purchase by Marie Thérèse of land in Auteuil.
- - 1706, 21 May : Settlement of a debt of 841 livres owed by Lavoy to Dancourt.
- XCVII, 136 - 1707, 12 May : Statement of a debt of 300 livres owed by Marie Thérèse to Thomas Pouru.
- XCVII, 138 - 1708, 28 January : Renewal of the lease on Dancourt's house in the Rue de Condé.
- XCVII, 144 - 1710, 23 March : Purchase by the Dancourt couple of a locking pew in the parish church of Auteuil.
- XCVII, 152 - 1712, 12 June : Marriage contract - Mimi Dancourt and Samuel Boutinon Deshayes.
- XCII, 361 - 1712, 5 August : Settlement of a debt of 400 livres owed by Dancourt to Jean Dussol.
- XLIV, 206 - 1712, 8 August : Amicable settlement between Laurent Bonnard and Dancourt.
- XCVII, 154 - 1713, 2 March : Purchase of a seigneurie and a farm by Marie Thérèse.
- - 1713, 7 March : Cancelling of the above contract.
- XCVII, 164 - 1714, 9 June : Purchase by the Dancourt couple of Courcelles-le-Roi.
- XCVII, 179 - 1717, 1 March : Payment by the Dancourt couple of a rente to the Ursuline sisters of Gien.
- XXIII, 394 - 1718, 4 January : Procuration - Phillippe Dancourt.
- XLIV, 244 - 1718, 28-30 July : Settlement of a cumulative debt of 12,626 livres owed to Dancourt's creditors.
- XCII, 421 - 1719, 3 December : Settlement by Dancourt of a rente on Louise de Londy.
- - 1720, 15 January : Guarantee of payment of the above-mentioned rente by Marie Thérèse.
- XCII, 413 - 1720, 2 April : Procuration - Phillippe Dancourt.
- XLIV, 271 - 1721, 14 June : Reduction of the rente payable to Manon Dancourt under the terms of her marriage contract of 1702.
- XCVII, 208 - 1727, 29 January : Settlement of the estate of Courcelles-le-Roi on Samuel Boutinon Deshayes and Mimi Dancourt.

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Courcelles-le-Roi
(side view)

Messieurs

Mes affaires n'ayant pû estre Terminées pendant
cette quinzaine de Pasques Jay encor besoin de huit
ou dix Jours pour les finir entièrement Il nous sera
d'autant plus facile de me les accorder que nous auez
à joier pendant cette semaine deux piéces ou Jene
huis pour necessaire, a l'égard de Mr. Arrière Jelay
prié de me faire donner son Rolle entier, sil prend la
peine de me l'envoyer Je seray present a le joier sans
faute de mercredi en huit, Je vous demande bien pardon
Messieurs de la necessité ou Je me trouve de preferer
mes affaires particulieres a celles de la Compagnie
Jene le fais que dans la Nécessité de pouvoir dans la suite
travailler avec plus de tranquillité pour le bien commun
Je vous prie d'estre persuadez que Je le feray autant
que Je seray capable de le faire. et que Je suis de
tout mon cœur



Messieurs

ce lundy 11. d'Avril 1695

Votre très humble et
très obeissant serviteur
Dancourt

DANCOURT'S PLAYS PERFORMED AT THE COMEDIE FRANÇAISE:
1685-1958.

[illegible]

THE CARTON DANCOURT FAMILY

