

**CLARENDON PRESS SERIES. FRENCH
CLASSICS. A SELECTION OF PLAYS BY
REGNARD, BRUEYS
AND PALAPRAT. REGNARD`S LE
JOUEUR BRUEYS AND PALAPRAT`S LE
GRONDEUR MASSON. VOL. VI**

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GUSTAVE MASSON

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A SELECTION OF PLAYS

BY

REGNARD, BRUEYS AND PALAPRAT

EDITED

WITH ENGLISH NOTES

BY

GUSTAVE MASSON, B.A.

UNIV. GALLIC.

VOLUME VI

Le Joueur, a Comedy by Regnard.

Le Grandeur, a Comedy by Brueys and Palaprat.

Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

M.DCCC.LXXV

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INTRODUCTION.

IT would be impossible to form an adequate idea of the French stage, if the reader confined himself to the study of Molière, Racine, and Corneille. Besides these three celebrated writers, who represent what is generally designated as *les classiques du premier ordre*, I might name a host of dramatic authors, slightly inferior to them, but at the same time occupying a distinguished rank in the annals of literature. It is not too much to say that Regnard, as a comic poet, ranks immediately next to Molière, and the following appreciative notice from the pen of Mr. Hallam, will, I hope, justify me in selecting 'Le Joueur' as part of a fresh volume in this series of classical *chefs-d'œuvre*.

'Regnard is always placed next to Molière among the comic writers of France in this, and perhaps in any age. The plays, indeed, which entitle him to such a rank, are but few. Of these the best is acknowledged to be "Le Joueur." Regnard, taught by his own experience, has here admirably delineated the character of an inveterate gamester; without parade of morality, few comedies are more usefully moral. We have not the struggling virtues of a Charles Surface, which the dramatist may feign that he may reward at the fifth act; Regnard has better painted the selfish ungrateful being, who, though not incapable of love, pawns his mistress's picture, the instant after she has given it to him, that he may return to the dice-box. Her just abandonment, and his own disgrace, terminate the comedy with a moral dignity which the stage does not always maintain, and which, in the first acts, the spectator does not

expect. The other characters seem to me various, spirited, and humorous; the valet of Valère the gamester, is one of the best of that numerous class, to whom comedy has owed so much; but the pretended marquis, though diverting, talks too much like a genuine coxcomb of the world. Molière did this better in "Les Précieuses Ridicules." Regnard is in this play full of those gay sallies which cannot be read without laughter; the incidents follow rapidly; there is more movement than in some of the best of Molière's comedies, and the speeches are not so prolix.

The text here printed has been carefully revised from M. Garnier's edition (Paris, 1810, 6 vols. 8vo), and especially from the excellent one published by M. Delahays in 1854 (2 vols. royal 8vo). The biographical notice of Regnard and the critical sketch which follows it will be found very interesting; they are both the work of M. Garnier, and are given with a few trifling alterations.

In addition to the notes supplied by the commentators just named, I have profitably consulted M. Nisard's 'Histoire de la littérature française' (vol. iv, 8vo. Paris, 1861); M. Sainte-Beuve's 'Causeries du Lundi' (vol. vii, 12mo. Paris, 1853); M. Gêruzcz 'Histoire de la littérature française' (vol. ii, 8vo. Paris, 1861); M. Geuffroy's 'Cours de littérature dramatique' (vol. ii, 8vo. Paris, 1825); La Harpe's 'Lycée ou cours de littérature ancienne et moderne' (vol. vi, 8vo. Paris, 1829); M. Merlet's 'Extraits des classiques français' (12mo, Paris, 1869); and two remarkable articles by M. Weiss, published in the 'Revue de l'Instruction publique,' for 1859.

GUSTAVE MASSON.

Harrow-on-the-Hill.

AVERTISSEMENT

DE L'ÉDITEUR SUR LE JOUEUR.

Cette comédie a été représentée pour la première fois, le mercredi 19 décembre, 1696. On regarde avec raison cette comédie comme le chef-d'œuvre de Regnard. C'est à cette pièce principalement qu'il doit le titre de meilleur de nos poètes comiques après Molière. Nous n'entreprendons pas de faire ici l'éloge d'un ouvrage qui réunit depuis long-temps les suffrages de tous les amateurs du théâtre, et nous croirions aussi mériter de justes reproches, si nous relevions de légers défauts, que les critiques du temps se sont permis de relever dans cette charmante comédie. 10

Il nous parait plus à propos de dire ici quelque chose des démêlés que cette comédie a fait naître entre Regnard et Dufresni, et de la manière dont s'est formée et dont a été rompue la société de ces deux poètes.

Regnard a commencé à travailler pour le Théâtre Italien, 15 C'est aussi sur cette scène que Dufresni a fait l'essai de ses talens¹. Ces deux poètes étaient à peu près du même âge. Cependant Regnard, quoique plus jeune, a débuté le premier dans la carrière dramatique. La première pièce qu'il a donnée au théâtre est le *Divorce*, joué par les comédiens 20 Italiens en 1688. Celle par où Dufresni a débuté est l'*Opéra de campagne* représenté par les mêmes comédiens en 1692.

C'est dans cette même année que les deux poètes s'unirent d'amitié, et travaillèrent ensemble. Dufresni fut bien aise, en commençant sa carrière, d'être appuyé par un poète 25

¹ Regnard est né en 1656 et Dufresni en 1648.