

A Comparison  
of 'Le Joueur' by Regnard, and  
'The Gamester,' by Mrs. Centlivre

by Ruth E. Hunt

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A COMPARISON

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A Comparison  
of "le Joueur" by Regnard and  
"The Gamester" by Mrs. Centlivre.

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In 1696, the French author Regnard<sup>(1)</sup> published the play which many critics consider his best, the comedy "le Joueur." Less than ten years later (1705) a London house brought out another comedy of the same name, Mrs. Centlivre's<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Regnard, Jean François, (1655-1709): Regnard was born at Paris, the son of a wealthy "bourgeois." He traveled in Italy, in Algiers (where he was held as a slave for ransom), in Holland, in Poland, in Sweden, in Lapland and in Germany. He wrote for la Comédie-Française, for the Italian theatre, and for la Foire. His chief works are: "le Joueur," 1696; "les Folies amoureuses" 1704; "les Ménechmes," 1705; "le Légataire," 1708.

A particularly good biography may be found in "le Théâtre de Regnard," the Introduction by Louis Moland. As the facts of his life are very well known, any History of French literature may be consulted for further details.

(2) Mrs. Centlivre (1667?-1723): Very little is known of the early life of Mrs. Centlivre. It is supposed that she was the daughter of a Mr. Freeman of Holbeach, a man of some position although impoverished by the religious persecutions which followed the Restoration. According to the most reliable biographers, when still very young, she ran away to London to earn her living. Here, disguised as a boy, she was cared for by Anthony Hammond, then a student at Oxford. Later, a nephew of Sir Stephen Fox pro-

"The Gamester." The most superficial examination will show the similarity of these plays, and the obvious indebtedness of Mrs. Centlivre. So apparent is the English author's obligation that "The Gamester" is seldom mentioned without due reference to its French predecessor.

In spite of their likeness, however, the two plays are far from being identical. Differences occur in the substance, in the treatment of the material, and in the spirit of the

vided for her. Whatever her associations were, at least she had the opportunity to acquire a good education during this time. Lardner credits her with being proficient in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish.

After one year of married life with a Captain Carrol, in 1684 she was left a widow, at the age of nineteen. It was then that, thrown entirely upon her own resources, she began writing plays; subsequently she took part in the plays herself. Cast in the same mold as the racy Mrs. Behn, she mingled in politics--a strong Whig--and was on intimate terms with such literary men as Rowe, Farquar, and Steele.

In 1706, she married Mr. Centlivre, chief cook to the King; and lived in great plenty the rest of her life.

Of the seventeen plays which Mrs. Centlivre wrote, the best are: "The Gamester," 1705; "The Busy Body," 1708; "The Wonder, a Woman keeps a Secret," 1713; "A Bold Stroke for a Wife," 1718.

Biographies are to be found in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia; in Allibone's Dictionary of Authors; in the Dictionary of National Biography; in Doran's Annals of the English Stage, Vo. I; and in the Preface of Volume I of Mrs. Centlivre's Works, 1872.

whole--not to mention the noticeable deviations from exact translation in the English play.

The aim of this paper will be, therefore, to establish the extent to which Mrs. Centlivre was indebted to Regnard, the points of difference in the plays, and the causes which led to these differences.

Plays on Gaming. The mere coincidence of titles in these plays would not in itself have signified any similarity, for gaming and the gamester are subjects treated frequently, and under very different aspects.

As early as 1582, a "comodie or morall," called "A Game of Cards," was presented before the Queen; what the treatment was in this case we have no means of telling. We do know, however, that "The Gamester" by Shirley, in 1633, really contains little that justifies its title. The hero is simply a *débauché* for whom gaming was a comparatively innocent recreation. This comedy is typical of the Elizabethan school, and bears no resemblance to the gamester plays which follow it.

In France, the first play we know with this theme is an anonymous comedy, "les Joueuses,"

published in 1683; it was presented but once, and then lost from sight. Four years later appeared Dancourt's "la Désolation des joueuses," a clever little impromptu written during the time that gaming was forbidden in France. Next in order comes the play which will be discussed in the body of this paper, "le Joueur" by Regnard in 1696. Dufresny's "le Chevalier joueur" followed closely, appearing early in 1697. Since this study will have to do with the relation of Regnard and an author who has used his material, it is interesting to note that Regnard's own play did not pass without dispute as to its origin. Dufresny hotly charged Regnard with having stolen the plot from his "Chevalier joueur;" and found a number of friends to declare themselves his supporters. Louis Moland says of Dufresny<sup>1</sup> in regard to the quarrel which ensued; "il fit représenter sur la même scène, le 27 février 1697, c'est à dire deux mois et huit jours après la pièce de Regnard, "le Chevalier joueur," comédie en cinq actes en prose, qui n'eut aucun succès.

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(1) Théâtre de Regnard, Introduction, p ix.

Il ne pouvait y avoir de meilleure preuve de l'illégitimité de la revendication de Dufresny, dont la critique, Voltaire en tête, a depuis longtemps fait justice." Many other critics, like the frères Parfaict agree that, even if Regnard did take the material to himself in a questionable manner, he so improved upon the original as to make his action quite justifiable.

After Mrs. Centlivre's "Gamester" in 1705, nothing else appeared in this vein until 1753, when Edward Moore brought out his domestic tragedy called "The Gamester." Nothing could be further removed from the type of Shirley's comedy, or even from Regnard's, than this very popular play of the "larmoyant" character. Later in the century as France herself cultivated the "comédie larmoyante," as the domestic tragedy was termed, the process of adaptation which had taken place earlier was reversed: this time the English play was taken over into the French, and the new gamester play, as "Beverley",<sup>1</sup> delighted all Paris.

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(1) The adaptation was made by Saurin in 1768.

There have been, then, at least three distinct types of play under this title: the Shirley type, in which the hero is a profligate who games merely for diversion--the "Dissipateur" by Destouches would come under this head--; the Regnard type which shows the comedy in a gamester's life; and the Moore type which deals with the tragedy to which such a life may lead.

Gaming in  
France and  
England.

The frequent returns to the subject were fully justified by existing social conditions. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, gambling became a veritable scourge both in England and on the Continent. In France, in particular, every class was touched by its blight, from the nobles to the idlers in the taverns. Fortunes were made and lost again in an hour, dishonesty became almost legitimate. Women as well as men played, and their play was even more reckless. The clergy inveighed against the evil; Bourdaloue<sup>1</sup> in his sermon on "les Divertissements du monde" attacked it mercilessly. Had it not been that the royal

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(1) Œuvres, Tome II.

family itself deserved the greatest part of the blame for the spread of gambling, doubtless many more sermons would have been preached against it, and the plays in condemnation much more numerous.

In England, also, the vice was widespread, though not in the same sense. Gaming seems to have been indulged in less for its own sake than simply as an easy means of filling the time. We find, for instance, the unhappy Catherine of Braganza whiling away her lonely days at the basset-table, and the Duchess of Mazarin trying to forget in a mad whirl of play the disappointment and desertion she was suffering. It was this attitude, perhaps, that made gaming somewhat less a matter of rebuke in England than in France, where the game itself was the object of passion. This may also account for the fact that the subject of the Gamester was treated in France before it was in England, and the first English play dealing with it a mere adaptation.

Later in the eighteenth century when the character of English society had changed greatly, we have noticed that the evil was attacked anew, but this time in England first and

in France only through adaptation. At the time of Mrs. Centlivre's "Gamester," however, a translation from the French was no less influential in England than an original play would have been; and we may safely say that it commanded even more respect; for England had been seized late in the seventeenth century with an unbounded admiration for French literature, even to the point of despising her own.

Prevalence of translations in England. In Mrs. Centlivre's day, that is, the period between 1660 and 1720, the practice of translating French books and passing them off as originals had become extremely prevalent. With the Restoration a great flood of foreign literature threatened entirely to submerge English originality. French books of every character were introduced: the religious works of the seventeenth century "prédicateurs," the treatises on grammar which were outgrowths of the "précieux" movement, treatises on agriculture and anatomy, tales of travel,--and above all, translations of innumerable French plays.

France, at the close of the seventeenth century, was at the full height of her great dramatic period: Corneille, Racine, and Molière were still virtually alive in their glory and inspiration. The English realized this genius as acutely as even the French themselves; and their admiration took tangible form in wholesale pillaging and imitation. Molière, in particular, suffered from this treatment. Some half dozen of his plays escaped, because from their nature they were not suited for the entertainment of an English audience. The rest were taken over in some form, either translated bodily, or incorporated into plays with English settings.

It is sufficient to mention only a few of the dramatists indebted to France to determine the extent of this borrowing. Wycherley owed his "Country Wife" to the "École des femmes" and the "École des maris;" Dryden, his "Mock Astrologer" to the "Dépit amoureux," and his "Sir Martin Mar-all," which Pepys found so pleasing, to Cavendish's translation of "l'Étourdi." D'Avenant, Crown, Ravenscroft--whom Lang-

baine wrathfully calls "un collecteur d'esprit,"<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Behn and Lee, are among those who owe most to France. We have not included our honest Mrs. Centlivre, who openly gave to her play, "Love's Contrivance," the subtitle of "le Medecin malgre lui."

La Calprenède, as may be imagined, furnished a certain class of these dramatists, such as Mrs. Behn, Lee and Pordage, with abundant material. As for the Scudéry's--Charlante tells us: <sup>2</sup>"Dryden, en somme, c'est Scudéry avec un vêtement plus brillant et plus somptueux; mais Scudéry, plus richement vêtu, c'est encore Scudéry."

So immediate and unblushing were the translations and adaptations that often we find two authors pouncing upon the same original and quarreling bitterly over which should have the first right to it. Ravenscroft complains that Otway took unfair advantage in publishing the "Cheats of Scapin" while Ravenscroft himself was working on a sort of medley made up of this

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(1) Charlante, p 278.  
 (2) Id. (Influence française en Angleterre, p 229.)

play and several others. Mrs. Centlivre, whose reckless borrowing was never denied, in turn accuses Colley Cibber of stealing from her translation of Thomas Corneille's "le Double galant" --quite unmindful of the fact that he had as much right as she to the play and probably much more ability in translating it. Shadwell speaks complacently of his "Miser,"<sup>1</sup> which was an imitation of "l'Avare;" he was only a month in writing it. His reason for borrowing, he adds jealously, was not from sterility of wit, merely from laziness.

English admiration Such a condition as this  
of France. would seem at first highly unnatural. However, upon examination, it proves to be a very logical outcome of the times. The admiration of the English for the French had been undisguised for centuries. The English had always looked across the Channel for culture, and had accepted it as the product of a more advanced civilization. It is worth while noting

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(1) Works, Vol. III.

that the first two books Caxton printed while still in Brussels were translations of French books; and after he had come to England, his next two likewise were of French origin. It is settled beyond dispute that most of Shakespeare's knowledge of the classics came through the French. In spite of the continual political strife, England had unhesitatingly followed French ideals.

This natural admiration, however, received great impetus from the return of Charles II to the throne. The establishment of the Commonwealth had driven many of the nobles as well as the rightful ruler out of England; and besides these, a number of the younger men of wealthy family, like Wycherley, had been sent away to avoid Puritan contamination. Practically all of these refugees sought protection in France. There, surrounded by the luxury of the court of Louis XIV, they indulged tastes which the severity of Puritanism would not tolerate. The contrast between the life they led and the sombre restraint of the Commonwealth left no

room for choice. France with its spirit of elegance and pleasure was their ideal in all things.

We have already spoken of the splendor of the drama in France at this time; the theatre was preeminently the most brilliant form of amusement. Very naturally, Charles, in whom the love of pleasure was all-absorbing, developed a passionate fondness for the stage. Upon his return to England, the ban upon players was immediately lifted and the houses opened with only the flimsiest restrictions upon them. Consequently a wave of play-writing commenced, scarcely less prolific than the great dramatic era under Elizabeth; unlike the Elizabethans, however, the Restoration authors, instead of drawing their material from the classics, took it directly from contemporaneous French drama. The matter of translation caused no difficulty, for every one who made any pretensions to education was familiar with French. Next to Latin, French was the language of the gentleman. It was always taught in the schools, very often to the exclusion of English.

French con-  
tempt for  
England.

In marked contrast and yet a corollary to this blind devotion to French models is the open contempt in which England was held by France. In the first place, the French were highly satisfied with their own country and its productions. They had no desire to travel. Of Italy and Spain they had some knowledge, but of England practically none at all. The very few venturesome souls who had crossed the Channel brought back tales worthy of a Mandeville. There were some routes of travel in England which were safe enough, but by far the most sensible procedure was not to go there at all.

This kind of opinion seems, at one period, to have been quite justifiable; and even as late as the Restoration England was in a far ruder condition socially than France. France, however, was slow to notice any change for the better. Besides, she could not forgive the affront to monarchy in the beheading of Charles I. Bossuet speaks of the English<sup>1</sup> as a guilty nation more turbulent within its own

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(1) Texte, p 3.

borders and own havens than the ocean which washes its shores." <sup>1</sup>D'Avenant contemptuously refers to those "rebellious times" when he was forbidden to act tragedies or comedies "because they contained matters of scandal to those good people who could more easily dispossess their sovereign than endure a wanton jest." Their boisterous coarseness and roughness was but little abated by Puritan sanctimony.

That the French had reason for their contempt, at least in part, we must admit after a glance at the work of these Restoration dramatists. The plays of Moliere and other French authors of high rank are scarcely recognizable, so vulgar and melodramatic have they become. Scarcely a character has been left unsullied in the effort to render the plays interesting to an English audience.

The French theatre during the entire seventeenth century had been on a remarkably high level. The refining influence of the "precieux" movement had wrought a decided change in the spirit of the people, completely weaning

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(1) Texte, p 3.

them from the characteristic Moyen age grossness. The English on the other hand, had undergone no such purifying process. Their euphuism, which corresponded in some respects to the "préciosité" of France, was superficial in its effect. It applied rather to a refining of diction and a care for quaint conceits than to a real refining of the mode of thought.

The Puritan ascendancy put a temporary stop to excessive license of speech; but the restraint was little to the taste of the people and smacked of hypocrisy. Taine explains the situation thus: Puritanism was simply one extreme to which the unsettled public mind had recourse; the vulgarity which followed was a reaction--equal and contrary--an outburst of suppressed animal life. Fitzgerald, however, sees in the unpleasant nature of this literature a reflection of the evil life at court. Unquestionably it was a result of the licentiousness of society; and the center of all social life was the court. Here the idle courtiers whiled away their time in intrigues, scandal and debauchery. Charles earned for himself the title of the Merry Monarch.

We can readily see the effect of this attitude on the spirit of his reign. His successor, James I, ostensibly held more rigid principles, but it is well known that the plays which pleased him most were among the grossest of all that were written.

To suit the standards of the court, then, as well as to meet with the approval of the public, the adaptations of the French plays were filled with every sort of coarseness; the original characters were profaned far beyond excuse. Taine says in speaking of Wycherley: "Il prend à tâche de révolter même les sens; l'odorat, les yeux, tout souffre devant ses pièces.....s'il traduit le rôle de Célimène, il efface d'un trait les façons de grande dame, les finesses de femme, le tact de maîtresse de maison, la politesse, le grand air, la supériorité d'esprit et de savoir-vivre pour mettre à la place l'impudence et les escroqueries d'une courtisane forte en gueule."

The lowering of the characters was accompanied by a multiplying of episodes. The

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(1) Histoire de la littérature anglaise, p 53.

French plays were for the most part too analytic for the taste of a London audience, which leaned rather toward the complicated intrigue of the Spanish theatre. For that reason, in the hasty translations that were made, much new action was introduced. Murders, duels, dances, and burlesques lent variety, but always to the great detriment of the original.

Most unjust of all the results of the translations, however, was the ingratitude and contempt with which the English treated the originals. Confessing their admiration by their unlimited borrowing, they attempted partially to conceal their thefts by a lofty scorn of their models. Langbaine, who derived a sort of rancorous satisfaction from exposing such conduct, attacks in Dryden the sins of the whole school: <sup>1</sup>"But for Comedy, he (Dryden) is for the most Part beholding to French Romances and Plays, not only for his Plots, but even a great Part of his Languages; tho' at the same Time he has the Confidence to Prevaricate, if not flatly deny the accusation, and equivocally to vin-

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(1) Critical Essays, p 111.

dicate himself, as in the Preface to the "Mock Astrologer" where he mentions Thomas Corneille's "le Feint astrologue" because 'twas translated, and the Theft proved upon him, but never says one Word of Molière's "Dépit amoureux," from whence the greatest Part of "Wild Blood" and "Jacinta" (which he owns are the greatest Parts of the Play) are stollen (sic)."

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Having discussed the conditions in France and England which would affect the theatres in both countries, we will now proceed to a discussion of the two plays in question, "le Joueur" and "The Gamester;" comparing them as to external structure, internal structure, and style.

In Part I, we will speak of the external structure; in Part II, of the internal structure, which comprises a comparison of the Dramatis Personae, of the substance of the plays, and of the values of the characters; in Part III, of the style.

PART I.

Differences in  
form.

(a) Form in  
Regnard.

A very characteristic difference in the two plays is evident at a first glance:

"Le Joueur" is in verse, "The Gamester" in prose. While at first this might seem of little significance, it gathers importance when we remark that authors very often wrote their plays hurriedly in prose, and afterward leisurely turned them into verse. Regnard, like the other French dramatists of the seventeenth century, employed verse almost entirely. Indeed, Dryden<sup>1</sup> stated that rhyme was a French fashion. This we are ready to believe; for the reason that verse, even though not of the highest type, necessarily involves more care than prose. With their natural love of order and regularity, the French easily fell into this manner of writing, until it seemed the only natural vehicle for their thought.

Regnard had naturally a taste for verse-making, a talent which we would scarcely

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(1) Works, Vol. 15, p 342.

call poetic; in his *Épître* II, he speaks of it:

1 "Un démon ennemi du repos de ma vie  
De rimer en naissant m'inspira la folie,  
Et je n'eus pas encore assemblé douze hivers  
Qu'errant sur l'Hélicon je composai des vers."

What the merit of his lively verse was, we may judge from Boileau's remark when some one spoke in his presence, of Regnard as a mediocre poet: "Il n'est pas médiocrement gai."

Mrs. Centlivre, in spite of the title of "Poetess" which one of her admiring biographers<sup>2</sup> persistently gave her, wrote most of her plays in prose. In this she was only following the English custom. The Restoration dramatists made much less use of verse than did the French, as we may see by glancing through the works of

(1) *Theatre de Regnard*, Int. iii.

(2) This biographer, a woman-friend of Mrs. Centlivre's, wrote anonymously the account addressed "To the World," found in the preface of Volume I of Mrs. Centlivre's Works. The article is highly interesting, not only for the information it contains on the "Poetess," but also for the vehemence with which the author defends women's rights; this would scarcely be expected at so early a date as this (1750).

such representatives as Steele, Wycherley, Congreve and Otway. D'Avenant confined himself to metrical form; but this may have been due to the fact that when he was forbidden to act tragedies, he consoled himself with introducing "examples of moral virtue, writ in verse." Through his instrumentality, heroic poetry gradually came into vogue. Dryden makes the rash statement that "even those who have written worst in it (heroic poetry) would have written worse without it." But when we consider the character of the theatre at this time, we are thankful that the majority of the play-wrights, including our Mrs. Centlivre, were content to use prose.

At the rate translations were made by all these dramatists, the speediest medium available was made use of. Quite often the English authors whom we found quarreling over the first right to translation clinched their proprietorship with a hasty prose version afterward if the material of the play had met public approval, they put it into metrical form. The plays themselves, intended primarily for immediate presentation, were not valued for their

plot and action. The public was not trained to expect the same degree of elegance that the French audience demanded as a matter of course.

The prose of Mrs. Centlivre is quite as lively as the verse of Regnard. While not altogether above reproach it is excellent for a woman whose opportunities had been so limited as hers. There is a boldness about it, however, that seems to mark it as a product of the uncultured. Full of oaths and local references her play contrasts with the French play which is singularly free <sup>from blemishes</sup> in this respect. It is evident that Mrs. Centlivre was criticised for her lack of restraint in some of her other plays, since we find in the preface of the third volume of her works this characteristic <sup>and ingenious</sup> defence:

"These snarling Sparks were pleased to carp at one of the inferior Characters in the Drama; and without considering the Reputation of the Persons in whose Mouths the Language is put, condemn it strait for loose and obscure. Now I cannot believe that a Prayer Book should be put into the Hands of a Woman, whose innate

Virtue won't secure her Reputation; nor is it reasonable to expect a Person, whose Inclinations are always forming Projects to the Dishonour of her Husband, should deliver her Commands to her Confident in the Words of a Psalm."

If the few stanzas in the "Camester" are sufficient to serve as an example of Mrs. Centlivre's poetic ability, we must admit that there is in them more of doggerel than of poetry. The jingle is altogether unlike the easy rhythm of Regnard. The rhyming verses which are addressed to the audience at the end of each act, and sometimes even in the midst of a scene are common enough in English plays; they are a curious bit of conventionality which persisted like the Epilogue and Prologue for more than two hundred years. It was unparalleled on the French stage, and in Regnard we find the transition from act to act made with as little break as possible. These concluding rhymes sum up epigrammatically the feeling of the speaker, usually with a moral reflection, as though the actor were sharing with the audience the secrets

of his conscience. Thus we find Angelica summoning her resolution: :

<sup>1</sup>"For when from Ill a Proselyte we gain,  
The Goodness of the Act rewards the Pain:  
But if my honest Arts successless prove,  
To make the Vices of his Soul remove,  
I'll die--or rid me from this Tyrant Love."

The Unities It is always interesting to  
(a) in the  
French play. note the different attitudes  
taken by the two nationalities in the matter of  
the unities; usually they are guarded so pains-  
takingly by the French, and defied with bravado  
by the English. In the case of these two au-  
thors, however, the distinction was not so no-  
ticeable. One reason for this was Regnard's  
laxity which in a Frenchman was extraordinary.

The unity of place Regnard observes  
very consistently. All the action takes place  
in an "Hôtel garni," where Angélique and la  
comtesse also have temporary lodgings. Valère  
has come here after being turned out of his  
☞ father's house. The unity of time causes Regnard  
little trouble. As far as the continuity of  
events is concerned, all the incidents might,

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(1) The Gamester, Act III.

if necessary, have come within the twenty-four hours. The countess has seen the marquis but once before the play opens; yet a violent wooing takes place, several quarrels and their subsequent reconciliations; a fortune is lost, won, and lost again at different games, a marriage is arranged for <sup>and</sup> a broken off--all in one day.

However, even if we grant Regnard this latitude, we cannot pretend that he was faithful to the third unity, the unity of action. There are two distinct threads in the story, the love-plot of Angélique and Valère, and that of la comtesse and the marquis. To be sure, the comtesse plot is properly subordinated; although the intrigue in which she is occupied takes up a good portion of the play, it ends abruptly, after the disguise of the marquis is discovered. The marquis and the Trictrac teacher are altogether unnecessary as far as the main story is concerned, and add only a touch of low comedy to the play. As the frères Parfaict observe, Regnard could not resist putting in these characters to heighten the fun--that is their only

excuse for existing. Such an excuse, had the author been a whit less entertaining and gay, would scarcely have been tolerated by a French audience of that century.

(b) in the English play. If Regnard is thus lax, we need expect little from his English imitator. Sentiment in England toward the unities was at this time unsettled; Dryden with his fluctuations from one position to another, now approving, now condemning, typified the situation exactly. Mrs. Centlivre approved of the rules of the theatre, yet she said quite frankly:

1\*The criticks cavil most about decorums, and cry up Aristotle's rules as the most essential part of the play. I own they are in the right of it; yet I dare venture a wager they'll never persuade the town to be of their opinion.

.... I do not say this by way of condemning the unities of time, place, and action; quite contrary, for I think them the greatest beauties of the dramattick poem; but since the other way of writing pleases full as well and gives the poet a larger scope of fancy with less trouble,

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(1) Mrs. Centlivre, Works. Pref. Love's Contrivance., Vol.II, London, 1761.

care and pains, serves his and the players' ends, why should a man torture and rack his brain for what will be of no advantage to him."

In this play Mrs. Centlivre is as independent as we might expect. The unity of time is preserved fairly well; the one indication that more than one day has passed is Valere's exclamation that he must have left the miniature in his bed--in the swiftly moving action, he certainly had had during the day no time for rest. However, this point is very trivial, and one that Mrs. Centlivre herself would have scorned to consider. The unity of place was absolutely disregarded, the action changing in the same act from a gambling-hall, to a lady's living-room, one moment in a street, the next in a boarding house. As for unity of action, this is not expected of an English play. It is against the genius of the English theatre; the more intricate the plot the better. In one sense, Mrs. Centlivre was more consistent than Regnard. She adopted the character of the countess without questioning its value; yet to make the part logical and finished she inserted an entirely new personage, the pair

in a secondary plot; thus both love plots ended, as they should always end in true comedy, in marriage. It is safe to say that if there were any conformity to the rules in this play, it would be quite accidental and due to no thought on Mrs. Centlivre's part.

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## PART II

## A.

In the main, the characters in "le Joueur" and the "Gamester" run parallel, the same persons under different names. In order to show this correspondence, we shall give the dramatis personae of each play.

<u>Le Joueur.</u> Personnages.	<u>The Gamester.</u> Dramatis Personae.
Géronte, père de Valère.	Sir Thomas Valere, Father to Valere the Gamester.
Valère, amant d'Angélique.	Young Valere, a Gentleman much in love with Angelica.
Angélique, amante de Valère.	Angelica, in love with Valere.
La Comtesse, soeur d'Angélique.	Lady Wealthy, a very vain, coquettish Widow, very rich, Sister to Angelica.
Dorante, oncle de Valère et amant d'Angélique.	Dorante, Brother to Sir Thomas, a Gentleman in love with Angelica. Mr. Lovewell, in love with Lady Wealthy.
Le marquis.	Marquis of Hazard, a supposed French Marquis.
Hector, valet de Valère	Hector, Valet to Valere.
Nérine, suivante d'Angélique.	Favourite, Woman to Angelica. Betty, Woman to Lady Wealthy.
M. Toutabas, maître de trictrac.	Count Cogdie, a Gamester.

Mme. la Ressource, reven- deuse à la toilette.	Mrs. Security, one that lends Money on Pawns.
Galonier, tailleur.	Mr. Caloon, a Taylor.
Mme. Adam, sellière.	Mrs. Topknot, a Mil- liner.
Trois laquais du Marquis.	Two Gentlemen, Came- sters.
Un laquais d'Angélique.	Box Keeper.

. . . . .

It will be noticed that two entire-ly new characters are brought into the Centlivre play. Of these two, Mr. Lovewell and Betty, Mr. Lovewell is the only one requiring mention. As a character, Lovewell has nothing whatever to do with the Valere-Angelica plot, and would be quite apart from it except for his friend-ship with Valere; this furthers his suit to Lady Wealthy. The marquis, as we have said, is an excrescence in both the English and the French plays; but in the English, he serves to make the Lovewell thread more complicated. Compared to some of the changes made in the course of translation in other French plays, the addition of one important character is slight. The complaint often made by the Eng-lish was that the French stage was deficient not only in action but in the number of per-

sonages. It was not uncommon to find a whole new thread inserted.

Names of the Characters in Regnard      The names of the characters in the Regnard are typical of the French theatre. Since comedy had taken its classical form, the names had become conventional. Although at first descriptive of a type, little by little the signification was lost in the type itself. Thus the characters we find in Regnard--Géronte, the old man; Valère, the young spendthrift; Angélique, the tender-hearted heroine; the soubrette Nérine acting as friend and advisor; Hector, the clever valet--all these named may be found in the plays of any of a dozen authors of the time.

In Hector, there is an interesting touch which those not acquainted with French customs would not appreciate: in French playing cards,<sup>1</sup> all the court cards are named; therefore, the valet's name, rightfully Richard, was changed by Valere to Hector after the valet, or Jack, of diamonds. Geronte sarcastically remarks when he hears how Hector

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(1) Kings--David, Alexandre, César, Charlemagne; Queens--Pallas, Argine, Rachel, Judith; Valets--Hector, Lancelot, Ogier, Lahire.

came by his name:

<sup>1</sup>"Le beau nom! Il devait appeler Angélique Pallas, du nom connu de la dame de pique."

Names in Mrs. In the French play, there is only one name which is made obviously to fit the type, that of Mme. la Ressource. In the English play, however, there are several of these descriptive names: Mrs. Security, Cogdie, the Marquis of Hazard, Lady Wealthy, and Lovewell. Such naming was extremely common in English Restoration comedy. We find everywhere such characters as Sir Jolly Jumble, Lord Frothy, Lady Simple, Alderman Gripe, Mrs. Grossbite, and scores of others of which perhaps the best-known is the famous Mrs. Malaprop.

The name Cogdie recalls a custom very common at that time in connection with the Gambler's halls. Cheating had become a fine art, and one of the most prevalent forms it took was the loading or "cogging" one side of the dice with lead. On both sides of the Channel, there were many "maîtres de trictrac" and "Count

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(1) Acte III, scene iv.

Cogdies" who made their living by skill in this practice.

It is curious to find in the Centlivre the name Valere used as a surname, the family name of the Gamester and his father. The Geron-  
te of the French play is called Sir Thomas Va-  
lere, and Valère appears as "Young Valere,"  
"James Valere," and once even as "Jemmy." As  
"Valère" always indicated a young man, and was  
a given name, the use of it in connection  
with the father is especially inappropriate.  
In Regnard's play, there is an extraordinary  
usage in calling Geron-<sup>1</sup>te, "Mathurin Geron-  
te;" this would seem in itself to make of the given  
name a surname. Whatever the reason may be  
for it, however, we may say that it is almost  
without parallel on the French stage.

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(1) Acte III, scène iv.

## PART II.

## B.

Résumé of Acts in "le Joueur."

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## Acte

## I

The setting for "le Joueur" is an "hôtel garni" in Paris, where both of the leading characters have lodgings. It is early morning when the play opens, and Hector, the Gamester's valet is sleepily awaiting the return of his master who has been out the entire night. "Que servir un joueur est un maudit métier," he laments; then, with characteristic optimism, consoles himself with a vision of what he would do were he lackey to a "sous-fermier:"

<sup>1</sup>"Je ronflerais mon sou<sup>l</sup> la grasse ma<sup>i</sup>née  
Et je m'eniverais le long de la journée.

Je serais dans la suite un conseiller du  
roi,

Rat-de-cave ou commis; et que sait-on?  
peut-être

Je deviendrais un jour aussi gros que mon  
maître."

His soliloquy is interrupted by the entrance of Nérine, Angélique's maid, who demands an audience with Valère.

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(1) Acte I, scène i.

In spite of Hector's loyal protest that his master is asleep, Nérine forces him to admit that Valère is away gaming. Her scornful picture of the gamester as he appears after a night at play is too disconcerting for even Hector to deny. Following up her advantage, Nérine shows her trump: Angélique is sending word to Valère that she has determined never to see him again; she despairs of his reform. She adds that Angélique is at last going to accept Valère's uncle, Dorante.

Hector is incredulous. Only yesterday the lady had promised his master her picture set around with jewels. But Nérine assures him that it is Dorante who will receive the gift. As long as Nérine remains, Hector answers taunt with taunt; left alone, he admits to himself the absolute truth of her accusations.

These indignant charges are fully verified when Valère enters; haggard and dishevelled, he bears every mark of the unlucky gamester. To Hector's chagrin, he is too greatly agitated to sleep, and insists upon keeping the valet

with him to divert him with gossip. Even more conclusive proof of his ill-success is his violent protestation of love for Angélique. Hector observes sadly:

"Tant pis: c'est un signe fâcheux.  
 Quand vous êtes sans fonds, vous êtes  
 amoureux;  
 Et quand l'argent renaît, votre tendresse  
 expire."

Valère's spirits rise, however, when he knows that Hector has taken steps to get money from a usurer, a Madame la Ressource; that means an opportunity for more gaming. Angélique's decision causes him very little uneasiness, since he is confident he can make his peace with her-- that failing, he might make use of "la comtesse," her wealthy widowed sister as <sup>1</sup>"une éponge à presser au besoin." Hector shakes his head over "la comtesse." She is desperately eager to marry, and is being courted by a marquis equally desirous of marrying. This marquis, Hector has heard, lives entirely by gaming and is said to have been a <sup>2</sup>"valet de chambre avant d'être marquis."

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(1) Acte I, sc. vi.  
 (2) Id.

At this moment, G ron te, Val re's father, enters. Exasperated beyond endurance at Val re's conduct, he has resolved to disinherit him. The profuse promises of amends at first have no effect; he is determined not to relent as he has so many times before. Little by little, however, he softens in spite of himself. One great reason for his giving the young man another chance is his fatherly desire to have Val re marry Ang lique; the thought of his own brother, Dorante, as a rival to his son finally effects his yielding. He agrees to forgive all, if Val re will reform and marry as he wishes. He even asks Hector for a list of the boy's debts.

When Val re has gone, and Hector with him, to attempt a reconciliation with Ang lique, G ron te, lingering in his son's lodgings, is surprised by a visitor. This visitor, a Mr. Toutabas, has come with the laudable intention of teaching Val re some tricks with cards and dice; he has heard of his lack of skill in playing. Being an utter stranger, he mistakes Ge-

ronte for Valère, with the result that he is promptly ejected from the house. The disgust of honest G ronte may be imagined.

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## Acte II.

At the opening of the second act, we see Ang lique in her room, protesting to N rine her determination to part from Val re forever. Evidently N rine has heard the same speeches before. Although she approves highly of her mistress's breaking with the Gamester, she has no faith in her power to withstand his pleading. "La comtesse," also, is delighted to know that her sister is no longer engaged to marry Val re; a gamester, of all men, makes the worst husband, she declares. Then to the amazement of Ang lique, "la comtesse" announces her intention of marrying Val re herself. Why not? she is experienced in men's ways, she has money enough for him to indulge his passion, and he is madly in love with her; his suit to Ang lique is only a blind. Woman-like, Ang lique makes up her mind to receive her lover again, and allow him one more chance to prove himself worthy of

her. "La comtesse" gets highly indignant at the suggestion that perhaps she is not the sole object of Valère's visits.

The marquis now enters for the first time. He has come to call upon "la comtesse." The consolation he might have proved, however, is quite destroyed by his obvious desire to meet Angélique. From time to time, as he is discoursing on his life at court, he is interrupted by messages from different ladies of quality. This serves to raise him slightly in the esteem of "la comtesse," so that she is flattered by his ire when she hints he has a rival.

The marquis is no sooner gone than Valère appears. The countess, very sure of a triumph over her sister, endeavors to bring out Valère's avowal; but so far from being successful, she receives only the frank statement from Valère that his love is for Angélique. Angélique, in spite of her deep displeasure at Valère, is too human not to be gratified at this. Nérine's remonstrances are of no avail. A complete reconciliation takes place, as pledge of which Angélique gives her lover the promised

diamond-set miniature. Valère henceforth will game no more.

Just as Valère gets home, radiantly happy over his gift, Hector ushers in Madame la Ressource, the usurer. Valère still needs money, and to obtain it he must give security. The temptation is too strong: he offers Angélique's picture. Even Hector is shocked at this breach of faith; he protests:

"Vous faites là, monsieur, une action inique."  
to which, "le Joueur" airily responds:

1" Aux maux désespérés il faut de l'émétique:  
Et cet argent, offert par les mains de  
l'amour,  
Me dit que la fortune est pour moi dans  
ce jour."  
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### Acte III.

Now that Valère is thoroughly reestablished in Angélique's graces, it follows that Dorante is proportionately out of favor. It devolves upon Nérine to tell him the situation, which she does with great reluctance. His manly acceptance of the disappointment wins the girl's

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(1) Acte II, sc. xv.

sincere admiration. He is very honest with himself: <sup>1</sup>"Je dois tout au dépit, et rien à son amour;" and he admits the same to his brother. To show Nérine that he does not blame her or resent his failure, he gives her a ring. Even G ronte is moved to pity him.

Then Hector approaches G ronte with a list of Val re's debts. Naturally, first on the list is the sum owed Richard, who proves to be Hector himself. Next are named some debts of honor, some bills from different trades people, finally a debt to a Margot de la Plante whom he has engaged to support. This last is too much for G ronte. In disgust he drives Hector away, and refuses to pay any of the debts.

Val re comes home quite unconscious of his last change of fortune. He has been successful and dilates gaily upon the joys of the gamester's life. His ardor for Ang lique is consequently so diminished that he feels in no haste whatever to reclaim her picture. Hector takes advantage of his master's unusual opulence

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(1) Acte III, sc. i.

to ask for back wages; but to no avail. Valère is opposed to paying debts, as his shameless lies to two of his creditors show full well. Madame Adam and Mr. Galonier threaten to remain there until paid; but Hector relieves his master's embarrassment by promising payment when the marriage settlement with Angélique is concluded.

The marquis now makes his appearance, determined to force Valère to relinquish any claims he may have upon the countess. Valère's gentlemanly irony is too fine for the marquis to appreciate. Certain that he has Valère thoroughly cowed, he takes every means of insulting and abusing him. The most ludicrous scene in the play is that which takes place when Valère forces the protesting little marquis to fight. Contemptuously, Valère sends him off, then goes to the gaming-hall--<sup>1</sup>"Tant va la cruche à l'eau"--warns Hector.

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#### Act IV.

When the fourth act opens, Nerine is reproaching Angélique for her weakness in al-

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(1) Acte III, sc. xiii.

lowing Valère again to gain her favor; even this minute, she declares, she can swear he is playing. Angélique will not believe it, so to settle the dispute they call in Hector who happens to be passing. Hector admits that Valère is playing, but only to get rid of his money so that in future temptation will be out of his way. Angélique has no further defense to make.

At this moment Dorante chances in, and Angélique too much chagrined to speak to him, leaves him to her sister. When "la comtesse" wishes to make him propose, he, like Valère tells her frankly he does not want to marry her. In the anger of her wounded vanity, the countess falls back on the marquis, for whom she really has little regard. He cavils over a legitimate marriage; but as she insists, he finally agrees, only begging permission to take <sup>leave,</sup> ~~songe~~

<sup>1</sup>"A des beautés sans nombre à qui mon cœur renounce."

In high glee, he sings his "Allons, saute, marquis," which gives Hector such umbrage that he threatens to call in Valère.

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(1) Acte IV, sc. ix.

Shortly after, when Valère does re-  
 turn, he is furious. Everything has gone wrong;  
 he is altogether ruined. To divert his mind,  
 which is certainly in a fearful state, Hector  
 reads him Seneca. The valet's gusto in reading  
 the philosopher is ludicrous: he <sup>feels</sup> finds in Sen-  
 eca a kindred spirit. When Géronte finds his  
 son thus listening to moral reflections, he a-  
 gain hopes for reform. He will forgive all if  
 Valère succeeds in winning Angélique.

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Acte V.

Dorante's nobility of character is  
 fully shown when he tells Angélique that he  
 harbors no feeling against her and that he  
 gives his unqualified consent to her marriage  
 with Valère. "La comtesse" consoles him with  
 the reflection that his loss is a small one,  
 and may easily be repaired. Just then Madame  
 la Ressource enters to show her goods; while  
 she is there, the marquis comes to claim his  
 bride. The revelations the woman makes are  
 startling to all, especially to the countess:  
 the marquis is the son of a coachman, <sup>and</sup> her own

cousin whom she has supported for four months. The discomfiture of the marquis is not so great as might be expected. With bravado, he exclaims:

l" .....<sup>P</sup>Cour le coup je vous quitte.  
 J'ai, pour briller ailleurs, mille talents  
 acquis;  
 Je vais m'en consoler. Allons, saute, mar-  
 quis!"

The poor countess withdraws, utterly crushed. She will live in retirement forever after.

Wishing to show more of her goods, Mme. la Ressource allows Angélique's portrait to be seen, although the picture is not for sale. In the excitement which follows its discovery, Dorante takes possession of the picture. Valère comes, only to find himself hopelessly disgraced. Géronte, who has run up in advance of the notary, is thoroughly enraged at Valère's duplicity; he disinherits him without listening to the apologies his son is so ready to make. Angélique gives her hand to Dorante.

Hector, still irrepensible, pre-

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(I) Acte V, sc. iv.

pares to leave this unpleasant scene, saying  
to his master:

<sup>1</sup>".....Je vais à la bibliothèque  
Prendre un livre et vous lire un traité de  
Sénèque."

and Valère replies

"Va, va, consolons-nous, Hector: et quelque  
jour  
Le jeu m'acquittera des pertes de l'amour."



(1) Acte V, sc. xii.

PART II.

B.

Comparison of Acts in "The Gamester."

Act I.

Mrs. Centlivre's play, like Regnard's, opens in a lodging house. Hector is awaiting his master's return, apostrophizing his neglected bed. The sparring between him and Mrs. Favourite is practically the same as in the French play, except that in the Centlivre Hector openly twits Mrs. Favourite with being in Dorante's employ. When Valere enters, apparently he is the same gamester we have met before--haggard and irritable, passionately devoted to his mistress now that he has lost her.

Very soon, however, we are aware that this Valere has some entirely new characteristics. He indignantly repudiates the suggestion of cultivating Lady Wealthy, where Regnard's Valere was at first quite content to consider her. The English Valere remembers Lady Wealthy's tyranny over his friend Lovewell, who for several years, patiently endured her caprices until

her marriage to Lord Wealthy; then, after she became a widow he renewed his suit. Valere's interest in Angelica causes Hector the same disquietude: "Ah! That's an ill Sign. Now do I know he has not a Penny in his Pocket. Ah, Sir, your Fob, like a Barometer, shews the Temper of your Heart, as does the Weather." This is an almost literal translation.

The father, Sir Thomas Valere, proves to be even more irascible than Geronte under the same conditions. He ends, however, by forgiving his son, with the stipulation that he pay his debts, win Angelica and thwart Dorante. Cogdie is identical with Mr. Toutabas. After the scene between Sir Thomas and Cogdie there occurs a slight episode not found in the Regnard. Hector rushes into Sir Thomas's presence, to tell how Valere has been arrested for debt and is being held by his creditors. As the valet is not prepared to answer the very natural question as to where Valere is held, Sir Thomas guesses the strategem and leaves the lodgings in disgust.

Valere, who all this time, has been in the house, sends Hector after Mrs. Security, <sup>just</sup> passing at this opportune time--in the Regnard there are none of these chance encounters. This woman usurer is quite as obdurate as Madame la Ressource; when she finds Valere has no security to offer, she leaves him. In his desperate situation, Valere's affection for Angelica increases with a bound. He is resolved to win her.

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#### Act II.

The second act begins as in the other play with Angelica's declarations against Valere. This time, however, the interest taken in Dorante by the maid is altogether mercenary, and Angelica recognizes it as such. As Favourite is not allowed as much familiarity as Nerine, it is Lady Wealthy who pictures the pretended despair of Valere repentant. Her subsequent avowal that she herself is going to marry the gamester brings upon her a sharp rebuke and the certainty that she will have a rival in her sister. The Marquis of Hazard is received with even less favor

than in the other play. In connection with the marquis in this act, we find not only some surprising French ("Vous parlez Français mieux que je parle l'Anglais") but a most baffling song by the Marquis himself. His first song "To the Widow" is regular enough, beginning:

"In vain You sable Weeds put on,  
Clouds cannot long eclipse the Sun."

But the second which he sings, apparently without any urging, is addressed "To the Gamester, when he has won Money." What the reason for this song is, we cannot tell. The only mention so far of a gamester has been in Lady Wealthy's warning to her sister, and that was before the arrival of the marquis.

The only explanation might be that the Marquis, who in the Regnard is a gamester, is foreshadowing his plan for laying siege to Lady Wealthy's hand. Part of the song runs:

"Stay but till her Hand is out,  
And she become your Debtor,  
Address her then, and without Doubt  
You'll speed a great deal better."

The successive messages that come to the Marquis from different ladies of quality

produce an effect far other from that made upon "la comtesse." Lady Wealthy sends him off in disgust, only to receive with more distaste her constant lover, Mr. Lovewell. As Valere is expected, however, Lovewell is dismissed with little ceremony.

At this point a slight complication occurs; Valere, eager to make his peace with Angelica falls at the feet of Lady Wealthy begging her to intercede for him with her sister. It goes without saying that Angelica comes in just at this moment. Valere's attempt to explain the awkward situation forces him to tell Lady Wealthy point blank that she is not the object of his desires. The reconciliation with Angelica then takes place as in the French play, and again the picture is given as a pledge of good faith. Favourite, angry at this *frustration* of her hopes, mutters, "Now my old Man may go hang himself."

Far from hanging himself, however, Dorante does not lose hope at this rebuff. He engages Mrs. Favourite's aid by a new gift and

resolves to bide his time. The last scene in this act is almost identical with the early part of Regnard's third act. Hector presents the list of Valere's debts, item for item like those of the French play, even to the bill for Margaret de la Plante. Again this so angers the father that he refuses to pay ~~a~~ one of the debts.

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### Act III.

The third act begins with the scene in which Valere returns home radiant with his gains. He is quite as opposed to paying his debts as was his French model in the same situation. Hector's pleas for back-wages is unheeded, even the suggestion that part of the money be laid by for a rainy day. He <sup>valet</sup> asks, "Is paying Debts unlucky then?"

Valere answers: "Ay, certainly; the most unlucky thing in the world." The bills presented by the milliner and the tailor meet with no better success. The two are turned away with the promise that Angelica will settle the

the bills after the marriage takes place. The scene between the Valere and the Marquis is practically identical with the Regnard; the Marquis's great-grandfather was not like the French ancestor, a mere vice-baillie, but the viceroy of Naples.

Next we are taken to Lady Wealthy's lodgings. Just before Lovewell enters swearing revenge on his unknown rival, Lady Wealthy has sent a message to Valere offering him money. Although she scarcely dares any longer cherish the thought of having Valere for her own, yet she means to break off his marriage with Angelica. The surest way, she thinks, is to urge him on to gaming by furnishing him money, with which to play. Mrs. Betty, her maid, full of curiosity as to the contents of the letter sent to him, follows the porter who is to deliver it.

Angelica, in the meantime, is being tormented by Dorante and the letters that come from him through Favourite. Her reception of this lover is very unlike her apologetic bearing toward Regnard's Dorante in the fifth act of "le Joueur," when she says:

"Que votre emportement en reproches éclate,  
Je mérite les noms de volage, d'ingrate."

In the English play, when Dorante asks if he can help being in love with her, she answers pointedly, "No more can Favourite being in Love with you." The English Dorante takes a malicious delight in keeping Angelica informed as to Valere's misconduct.

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#### Act IV.

The fourth act of the *Centlivre* is entirely new. There is nothing which corresponds to it in the *Regnard*. The scene is shifted now to a gaming house, resounding with the excited jargon of the players. Mrs. Betty, eager to know if the letter does not contain something to Lovewell's disadvantage, has posted herself where she may watch Valere and see what remark he makes on the message. The letter comes to Valere as a great temptation; his need of money at this moment would lead him to any extremity. He knows the price he must pay for it, however. "If I accept this Present," he debates with himself, "I must make my Returns

in Love; for when a Widow parts with Money,  
't's easy to read the Valuable Consideration she  
expects:--But then Angelica, the dear, the Faith-  
ful Maid--But then a Hundred Guineas, the dear  
tempting Sight!"

Lovewell arrives just in time to save  
his friend from yielding ignominiously. In an-  
swer to his almost frantic appeals to Valere  
to help him find out his rival, Valere shows  
him Lady Wealthy's note and assures him of his  
utter lack of interest in the lady.

Mrs. Betty hastens home delighted to  
be able to give her mistress news which will  
discredit Valere and raise Lovewell in her af-  
fections. Lady Wealthy can scarcely believe  
that she has been so disdained until a magnani-  
mous, but convincing note from Lovewell confirms  
Betty's story. To crown her humiliation the  
marquis rushes in to announce that Valere had  
submitted to being insulted by him rather than  
fight for her. The reward the marquis earns is  
instant and final dismissal.

At this juncture, Hector appears in  
a short scene with Sir Thomas. The father is

so delighted at the news of the recent reconciliation that he actually forgets to cuff the valet. Instead he gives him a sixpence and runs away to get a lawyer to draw up the marriage contract.

The best scene is startlingly realistic. It shows a game in full progress. Valere is winning; Cogdie, who for once is playing fairly, is losing heavily. Then Angelica enters disguised as a boy. Without any ado she sits down and plays a game with Valere that causes even the sharpers to look at her in amazement. When she has won all his money, he stops, takes out the portrait, hesitates, refuses to stake it, hesitates again--and is lost. Angelica wins it.

Immediately Valere repents of his rashness, and tries to force the supposed boy to a duel. Outsiders intervene, however; in the commotion Angelica makes her escape. Valere's contrition is very different from the gay insouciance Regnard's Valere exhibits after deliberately parting with the portrait.

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## Act V.

The Seneca scene opens the fifth act, Valere as desperate as in the other play, Hector equally philosophical. Although Valere is at first firmly bent upon joining the army, he soon decides to follow Hector's advice to marry Angelica immediately, before she learns of the loss of the picture. With this intent he sets out for his lady's home, braced by a fresh resolve "to touch the curst infectious Dice no more."

A reconciliation is effected between Lady Wealthy and Lovewell, and at last their lives promise to run very happily together. "Wish me Joy, Friends, wish me Joy," Lovewell cries; "Sure never Man was blest like me." Lovewell's generosity has been apparent through the entire play, but it is not until now <sup>that</sup> we see the better side of Lady Wealthy.

Valere's last lapse into his old life offers Dorante and Mrs. Favourite their great opportunity. Dorante is certain that Angelica will no longer hesitate to accept him in place

of his nephew. His satisfaction in Valere's open humiliation find vents in vindictive rail- lery. The scene of the discovery of the Game- ster's perfidy is very like that in the French play. After trying to throw the blame on Hec- tor, Valere is confronted by the miniature in Angelica's hands. There is no defence to make; all that remains for him to do is to leave for- ever, begging that Angelica may not think too harshly of him in the years to come. To increase his distress, Sir Thomas arrives, learns the situation, and disinherits his son immediately.

At this point, the English play di- verges from the French. Valere's suffering is too much for Angelica's pity. Instead of main- taining her offended dignity, she again relents. Sir Thomas follows her example; and once more the Gamester has full forgiveness. In the gen- eral celebration which follows, the Marquis of Hazard makes his appearance. His sorry congratu- lations to Lovewell and his bride are interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Security. The supposed Marquis was not even a Frenchman, except as he

had been employed as footman in the establishment of the Prince of Conti. Valere throws the impostor out, and the play ends with a country dance.

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## PART II.

## C.

Comparison of Characters.

The Valère      The leading character of both  
in  
"le Joueur"      the plays, the Gamester himself,  
would be a rather attractive figure, were it  
not for his one great vice. The very fact of  
his being a young man of good family, debonnaire  
and handsome, makes his failing more lamentable  
than if he were a "chevalier d'intrigue" by  
profession. <sup>1</sup>"Il fallait," say the frères  
Parfaict of the Valère in Regnard's play, "pour  
toucher l'auditoire, trouver le secret de l'in-  
téresser pour le héros de la pièce, et le met-  
tre dans une espèce d'obligation de la plaindre  
et de déplorer le sort d'un galant homme, qui,  
livré par un fatal ascendant à une passion fu-  
neste, n'a ni assez de force ni assez de pru-  
dence pour y résister." Just the reverse is  
the Gamester in Dufresny's "le Chevalier jou-  
eur," a libertine who would have no entrance  
at all into society were it not for his <sup>gambling</sup> ~~playing~~.

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(1) Frères Parfaict, Vol. xiv, 36.

It is undeniable, however, that Valère was quite lacking in a sense of honesty. At the beginning of the play, he proposes to fall back on "la comtesse" if he fail in his suit to Angélique. He pawns his lady's picture without the least compunction, he lies shamelessly to needy creditors--and in the end, when his perfidy is discovered, shows no real contrition. Nevertheless, all of this is consistent enough, when we remember that the passion for gaming overrules all the other interests of his life. The desire for money which prompted his dishonesties is not in the least the mark of an avaricious nature. As Pascal has said, the gamester never plays for the money; but money he must have or he cannot play. Therefore, Valère's careless disregard of the feelings of others when he himself is in need.

Valère's love for Angélique is never sincere. It is as much so, perhaps, as any of his emotions; but, compared to the love of gambling, it has no real significance in his life. Although prompt with his promises to her, and

quick to plead repentance, he does not once show that he has been really touched. His real happiness and sorrow depend altogether upon the fortunes of the gambling-table. The final rupture between Valère and Angélique has no great effect upon the Gamester's spirits. He was vastly more agitated after a losing night at play.

The Valere in The Valere of Mrs. Centlivre's "The Gamester." play, however, is from the first, somewhat more in earnest in so far as his love for Angelica is concerned. It may be noted to his credit that he refused absolutely to consider Lady Wealthy as a substitute for her sister, and forbade Hector's speaking lightly of his lady. His passion for cards and dice is fully as strong as in the other Valère, and has the same effect upon his varying affections. The great difference in the outcome of the two plays is occasioned by his reluctance to part with the miniature, and his desperation when it is beyond his reach. This offers some excuse for his being forgiven.

Angelica, relenting, makes him promise "upon Honour" to forsake the vice that is ruining their lives. This is the only assurance we have of his ultimate reform.

It is this striving for a happy ending that weakens the *Centlivre* play. However unpleasant it may be to take leave of the hero under such conditions as exist in the last scene of the *Regnard*, the reader feels the perfect logic and justice of his punishment. So strong was his mania for gaming that reformation was absolutely impossible. His whole life was wrapt up in this passion to the exclusion of other interest, to such a degree that a lasting change would have meant a complete remaking of his character. *Angélique's* life, had she married *Valère*, would have been a fit subject for a tragedy rather than for a comedy. *Regnard* who never touched tragedy, could not leave her thus; the French mind was too logical not to foresee at once the inevitable and real result of such an ending. On the other hand, *Mrs. Centlivre* would have sacrificed anything to get her leading characters married. We might

notice this same trait in many of the eighteenth century authors--in Pamela, for instance, where the virtuous heroine finally succeeds in marrying a dissolute but wealthy man, without thought of what her life must be afterwards.

Angélique. The character of Angélique differs but little in the two plays. In both she is a young woman of means, thoroughly in love with Valère and ready to forgive him as long as there is any possibility of his reform. Unlike many of the heroines of Regnard's time, however, she is not colorless. Her gentleness is lost abruptly in a fit of anger when "la comtesse" announces her intention of marrying Valère. There is a distinctly feminine jealousy exhibited in her sarcasm when, in reply to the countess's indignant protest--

"S'il m'aime, lui, s'il m'aime! Ah! quel aveuglement!  
On a certain attrait, un certain enjôment,  
Que personne ne peut me disputer, je pense."--

she answers:

"Après un si long temps de pleine jouissance,  
Vos attrait sont à vous sans contestation."

She is not slow to remind her sister of her first marriage, yet the French Angélique is not quite so harsh as the English Angelica in this scene.

The same difference may be noted through the entire play. Angélique is feminine in a more ladylike way. The English heroine's adventure into the gambling hall would have been impossible for her. Her pity for Dorante and her dread of meeting him bespeak a refinement which was quite foreign to Angelica. Moreover, according to Sainte-Beuve, it was "amour-propre" which kept Angélique from forgiving Valère for his last offense; she was too grievously hurt and offended to risk herself again. One can scarcely imagine the English girl hesitating for such a reason. Just as she risked her reputation to test his faith, when she played with him disguised as a boy, she risked her happiness when she resolved to call him back. She was altogether a creature of impulse.

Nérine and      The French heroine shows a great-  
Mrs. Favourite.      er dependence upon her maid than

does the English. Nérine is almost a confidante,  
 1 "Habile en tous métiers, intrigante parfaite."  
 Counselling her mistress, and aiding her in every  
 way, she does her best to prevent her falling  
 into the hands of a gamester. Angélique has ab-  
 solute confidence in her judgment; and there is  
 no indication that her confidence was misplaced.

Angelica's maid, Mrs. Favourite, was  
 a much coarser woman than Nérine. Her interest  
 in Dorante we know to be quite mercenary; her  
 affection for her mistress is at all times a  
 minor consideration. Angelica often treats her  
 rudely to keep her from presuming too grossly,  
 so we feel that she is distinctly a servant.  
 Angelica, even when uncertain of herself, asks  
 no advice from her. Nérine, on the contrary,  
 is indispensable to Angélique.

La comtesse      The elder sister in both plays  
and  
Lady Wealthy.    is unnecessary to the leading  
 plot. "La comtesse" is characterized very apt-  
 ly by Hector:

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(1) Acte V, sc. iii.

"C'est dans son caractère une espèce parfaite,  
Un ambigu nouveau de prude et de coquette,  
Qui croit mettre les cœurs à contribution,  
Et qui veut épouser: c'est là sa passion."

Parfaict says that Dufresny's countess is "un  
peu moins folle" que the countess in "le Joueur."

The English character, Lady Wealthy,  
is of much the same disposition as "la comtesse,"  
with the difference that in her the coquette  
predominates over the prude. Valere says of  
her: "She's a Coquette of the first Rate; ad-  
dresses all, and cares for none." "La comtesse"  
has a "précieux" sentimentality about her--An-  
gélisque once calls her a "connaisseuse en maris"--  
which makes her desirous of playing with any man  
who will notice her. Lady Wealthy, on the con-  
trary, sets her heart upon one man, and devotes  
all her energy to winning him. She never turns  
until she is convinced that she cannot possibly  
secure him for a husband.

To satisfy her public, Mrs. Centlivre  
put an additional character into her adapta-  
tion, and thus finished out a secondary plot.  
Lady Wealthy is finally redeemed; for the reason  
that she possesses at all times a certain strength

of mind that indicates latent worth. There is an almost masculine character even to her coquetry. "La comtesse" is hopelessly frivolous; and does not, like Lady Wealthy finally find a mate. She simply drops out of the play, without consolation. This is an instance of the French feeling for unity plot. Although Regnard made no pretence of observing any of the rules, some concession to popular taste he had to make. In keeping this thread subservient to the main plot as he did, he was probably unconscious of having a second thread.

Lovewell. Lovewell, as we have said, appears only in the *Centlivre* play, serving as the complement of the Lady Wealthy intrigue. As a character, he is too self-sacrificing to be natural. In every situation he places himself under Lady Wealthy's feet, and accepts humbly whatever treatment she chooses to give him. He is typically the faithful lover, more common in pastorals than in comedy.

Le Marquis and The marquis, like Lady Wealthy  
the Marquis and "la comtesse," is another  
of Hazard. extraneous character. The comic  
 part he plays justifies his place. Outrageous-  
 ly pompous, he makes himself ridiculous upon his  
 first visit to "la comtesse;" although "la com-  
 tesse" does not see it. As we might suppose  
 from the natures of the two women, "le marquis"  
 is decidedly more arrogant with "la comtesse"  
 than the Marquis of Hazard is with Lady Wealthy.  
 The latter keeps him severely in his place.

It is noteworthy that the imposture  
 of the marquis is suspected from the first in  
 the French play. Hector says that he is "fait  
 par le lansquenet," this <sup>1</sup>"grand épouseur--qui,  
 dit-on jadis, était valet de chambre avant d'être  
 marquis." Later, when he finds him skipping  
 around the room singing his "Allons, saute, mar-  
 quis!" Hector again suspects that he is only  
 assuming his title of nobility. In the English  
 however, no hint is given until the end of the  
 play. Then is revealed the startling fact that  
 not only is the supposed French marquis not a

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(1) Acte I, sc. vi.

marquis, but also not even French. The situation is puzzling when we take into account that Mrs. Centlivre lost no opportunity to poke fun at the French. Why the impostor should not have been really a Frenchman put to shame we cannot determine. Perhaps this disguise was thought to be more effective than the ~~simple~~ character of an English nobleman; *would have been.*

Dorante: There is perhaps no better instance of the manner in which the eighteenth century author in England treated a borrowed personage than the Dorante of Mrs. Centlivre as compared with Regnard's Dorante. The French Dorante is a thoroughly upright man. Although deeply disappointed in his suit to Angélique, he was generous enough to give his full consent to his nephew's marriage.

"Et quand je perds un cœur qui cherche  
à s'éloigner,  
Mon frère, je prétends moins perdre que  
gagner."

The English Dorante, on the other hand, was as far removed as possible from his model, who is really over-righteous. He schemes continually, is never content to accept the refusals

given him from time to time. At every opportunity he belittles his nephew to further his own courtship.

Neither one is worthy of the rather prominent place given him. We are almost tempted to say of them what the frères Parfaict said of Regnard's Dorante and the one which appears in Dufresny's <sup>1</sup>"le Chevalier joueur:" both are aussi sots, ennuyeux, et inutiles, l'un que l'autre.

Hector. By far the most comical character of the plays is Hector, named for the knave or Jack of Diamonds. The frères Parfaict, in their critique of "le Joueur," again make a very harsh estimate. Not only is Hector unessential to the plot, but he is inconsistent as a character: at one time he acts prudently, at another he deliberately brings bad influence to bear upon his master; in one act he draws up a list of debts, in the next he does not know how to read.

Neither of these statements seems strictly true. It is undeniable that Hector at

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(1) Frères Parfaict, Vol.xiv, p

times played the role of restraining friend, only to aid Valère later by every means in his power in getting money from the usurer. We must remember, however, that Hector's moral code was of necessity limited; whatever he did was simply to meet the exigency of the moment. The character is intended only as the typical unscrupulous valet, who serves his master and himself as best occasion offers. Both the Hectors seem sincerely attached to their master: both complain of not receiving their wages, yet neither dreams of deserting the gamester in his distress.

The point of Hector's <sup>in</sup>ability to read is likewise scarcely borne out. Hector says in "le Joueur."

<sup>1</sup>"Je n'ai lu de mes jours que dans des almanachs"--

which certainly does not mean he could not read in anything else. His humorous application of Seneca is extremely effective in both plays. Of all the characters, the French Hector and the English Hector are the most

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(1) Acte IV, sc. xiii.

closely paralleled; possibly because Mrs. Centlivre saw in the clever valet, living by his wits, at one moment confided in, at the next cuffed, exactly the figure which would amuse her English audience.

Value of the Characters. It is Sainte-Beuve who says that  
 (a) Valère. Regnard's Valère just fails of being a literary character. If he had not been so superficial in every respect he would probably have lived as a type of the gamester. As it is, he is a mere mask. His affection for Angélique has no real foundation; there is never a struggle between his craving for play and his better self. With the Valere of Mrs. Centlivre, the situation is slightly different. Her hero does have moments of contrition, which might to a certain extent, justify the ending of the play. However, in the main, the character is the same. Mrs. Centlivre's Valere does not hesitate to lie brazenly to his creditors or to attempt to outwit his father. Yet it is this man thoroughly reformed and quite exemplary whom Angelica marries. In this English hero,

there is not even an approach to a "literary character," as we understand the term.

(b) Mme. la Ressource. Lemaître remarks upon the likeness of Mme. la Ressource to Molière's character in "l'Avare," Frosine, "revendeuse de toilette." The likeness does not extend further than this, though, since Frosine is essentially a "femme d'intrigue," and Mme. la Ressource has no office except to reveal Valère's perfidy and expose the marquis. In the English play, Mrs. Security is even less involved in the plot, coming in at the last moment as she does only to reveal the fraud of the Marquis of Hazard.

She does have, however, a role very similar to that of one of LeSage's characters, Mme. Jacob, in "Turcaret." This Mrs. Jacob, who belongs to the "petite bourgeoisie" brings about the fall of Turcaret by telling his wealthy friends that he is only posing as a man of high family and that he is her own brother. This, of course, brings her very close to the character, Mme. la Ressource.

The part of Mme. la Ressource must have been taken by a very clever actress; for in no other way can we account for the freres Parfaict's statement that this character is one of the best in the play.

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## PART III.

## A.

"Le Joueur" a To those familiar with the  
clean play. theatre of the late seventeenth  
and early eighteenth centuries, the tone of  
both "le Joueur" and "The Gamester" seem re-  
markably clean. There is scarcely a place  
in either which merits serious objection. In  
Regnard, this is not surprising, since the  
public hailed Regnard as a second Molière, and  
Exaggerated as such an estimate as this was,  
it shows the very apparent similarity of the  
authors. Molière was the child of his time.  
All during the seventeenth century, French  
culture had been far higher than that of other  
countries--this the appreciation of eloquence  
and pulpit oratory ~~alone~~ will bear witness.  
It is only natural to find that this greatest  
of all comedy-writers was never wantonly  
gross. Sir Walter Scott attributes Charles  
the Second's dislike of Molière to the fact  
that he was too clean a writer for him. As  
one of the closest of his disciples, Regnard

in turn could revel in fun without falling into license. The very tastes of his public kept him from having to pander to the lower instincts; he did not need to be coarse to win a laugh.

"The Gamester" It is the difference in audience also clean. that would lead us to expect in Mrs. Centlivre a play full of blemishes in this respect. The general wholesomeness of the "Gamester" is so exceptional that we are at a loss to account for it; particularly as the rest of the author's works are not above reproach. No alteration she might have made in translating "le Joueur" would have been objected to, provided the general tone of comedy was preserved.

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PART III.

B.

Difference  
in style.

(a) The Reg-  
nard.

The great difference in the style of these plays lies largely perhaps in the character of the authors. "Le Joueur" is obviously the work of a man free from political rancor. Bright, full of fun and humor, the play is quite without those flashes of bitter satire which later characterized the work of Le Sage. Social conditions he does satirize, but with the easy good nature of a Chaucer.

Regnard's life was a very carefree one. "Aimable épicurien," as M. Lion terms him, he had apparently nothing to do but seek his own pleasure. In the one taste of hardship he experienced, when he was held for ransom in Algiers, his family sent the money post-haste for his release. All his life he was amply provided for, with the result that his outlook on life was singularly cheerful. His own words show this satisfaction: "Je jugeais<sup>(1)</sup> sainement de toutes choses. Je connais que

(1). Lemaitre, p. 85.

tout cela était directement opposé à la société de la vie (style bizarre), qui consiste uniquement dans le repos, et que cette tranquillité d'âme si heureuse se trouve dans une douce profession, qui nous arrête comme l'ancre fait dans un vaisseau retenu au milieu de la tempête."

The "douce profession" of which he speaks was the position of Treasurer of France, a sinecure.

(b) the Centlivre Mrs. Centlivre's play shows evi-

dences of an entirely different attitude. There is a boldness in its tone which stamps it as the work of a woman who has had to make her way in the world. Pope speaks of Mrs. Centlivre as a "noted common woman" (naming her with doubtful compliment as one of the several remarkable poetesses and scribblers then in London); and, from the little we know of her life, we may judge that she brushed against all classes in her struggles for a livelihood. She is entirely frank, with a reckless disregard of consequences. Naturally strongly in sympathy with politics, she aired her Whig opinions wherever there was opportunity. "The Gamester" with its air of taunting satire points

plainly to its origin in the "petit@bourgeoisie."

It is inevitable that there should have been this boldness of tone of which we have spoken, for Mrs. Centlivre's play was written for a strolling company and by a woman who herself traveled in one. The strollers of England were infinitely removed in caste from the cultured class, and never mixed in it except on a footing of toleration. This situation was of long standing, and resulted from the liberties taken in former times by the unlicensed troupes as they went from town to town. Even in Mrs. Centlivre's time disturbances were frequent in the theatres in which they played; personal attacks, scandalous mimicry

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(1) "Unlicensed troupes:" the licensing of troupes dates from a very early time in the history of the theatre. At first, the only troupes in existence were owned by the King. As a favor, the kings allowed the different companies to go from town to town giving their plays--Richard III was especially generous in lending his troupe--; until, at length, each nobleman had his own troupe, and sent it out through the country under his protection. Other companies were organized, independent of any such control; and these players it was who made trouble for the town authorities wherever they went. The offenses were doubly

and the most dissolute conduct were the causes of innumerable brawls. A woman was forced to have a certain amount of effrontery, good natured though it might be, to protect herself in such a surrounding as this.

One form that Mrs. Centlivre's boldness takes is an almost aggressive pride in her own country. She delights in giving a thrust to the other nations, Switzerland, Holland, and above all to France. Regnard as we might suppose, concerns himself little with anything outside of France. He makes many allusions to the different provinces, <sup>Auvergne</sup> Avergnac, Gasconne, Maine, Champagne and Poitou, and to French cities; but scarcely one to a foreign country. Apparently, it never entered his head to jeer at England. As England, however,

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serious because the officers could not fix upon any one person the responsibility for the damage done. By the time of Elizabeth, enough pressure had been brought to bear to enforce a law barring from the cities all players who did not belong to a company protected by a "baron of the realm." (1572)

Of course, after the Restoration, all play-houses were opened and many restrictions taken off the theatre. However, the strolling companies had a reputation which was hard to live down, and which, in many cases, was richly merited.

had been held in contempt for so long, she is very natural to find Mrs. Centlivre jealous of her country's reputation. The speech she has Hector say to the Marquis is a fair sample of her English scorn of self-satisfied France:

<sup>1</sup>"For what, what the Devil do you come into our Nation, to crow over us--I believe we shall find a Time in this Campaign to teach you better manners--your capering Country is fitter for Dancing Masters than Soldiers."

One cannot forget, on reading such an ungrateful speech, the preface to Shadwell's translation of "l'Avare," which ends thus:

<sup>2</sup>"For our good natured Nation thinks it fit,  
To count French Toys, good Wares; French Nonsense  
Wit."

Mrs. Centlivre had had, moreover, a great deal to bear from the critics; and this had tended to put a reckless defiance into her play which is quite without parallel in Regnard. In the "Gamester" there is a significant remark by Valere: "Now will he rail as heartily against Gaming, as the Fanaticks against Plays." It will be remembered that only a very few years

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(1) The Gamester, Act III, p 166.  
(2) Works, Vol. III.

previous (1698), Jeremy Collier had made his memorable attack on the stage. Mrs. Centlivre, in the preface to Volume I of her works, throws this bitter taunt at him: "I should not trouble my Reader with a Preface, if Mr. Collier had taught Manners to Masks, Sense to Beaus, and Good-nature to Criticks, as well as Morality to the Stage." Most of the Restoration dramatists had succumbed to Collier's attack without so much as a reply; Hazlitt tells us that Mrs. Centlivre was the last to hold out in the old vein. Evidently the pressure was strong even upon her.

The unfairness of the critics was another point which galled the English author. Regnard may, of course, have had the same grievance; but, if he did, his play shows no traces of it. Mrs. Centlivre says of women of fashion, in particular:

<sup>1</sup>"Oh! the charming Company of half a Dozen Ladies.....to hear their delicious Scandal which they vent between each Sip just piping hot from Inventions Mint, wherein they spar (sic) none, from the Statesman to the Citizen and damn Plays before they are acted, especially if the Author be unknown."

(1) The Gamester, Act III.

So far we have shown only the differences in the style of two plays. They were, however, very similar in one respect, in the attitude they took toward gaming. Most authors treated the vice far differently. La Bruyère, for instance, has left us a picture which we can hardly imagine as a setting for our gay Valère: <sup>(1)</sup>"Un jeu effroyable, continuel, sans retinue, 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 un carte, ou à la fortune du dé, la sienne propre, et celle de sa femme et <sup>de</sup> ses enfants."

Bourdaloüe was even more eloquent:

<sup>(2)</sup>"Quel spectacle de voir un cercle de gens occupés d'un jeu qui les possède, et qui seul est le sujet de tous les désirs de leur coeur. Quels regards fixes et immobiles, quelle attention.-----De là les dépits secrets et les mélancolies; de là les aigreurs et les chagrins; de là, les désolations et les désespoirs, les

(1). La Bruyère, p. 268.

(2) Bourdaloüe, p. 130.

colères et les transports, les blasphèmes et les imprécations.

In the face of such a sentiment toward gaming both Regnard and Mrs. Centlivre consistently maintained their humorous treatment of the Gamester, not allowing for an instant the tragic tenacity of his passion to cloud the comedy. Near to the line of demarcation as the subject was, there was no wavering; with M. Lion, all may cry, "Courage, Regnard, voilà la bonne comédie!"

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(1) Petit de Julleville, Tome vi., p 561.

Conclusion.

When we gather together the points of difference in these plays, the conclusion is easily drawn. To begin with, Regnard's play, with its easy verse, at once elegant and rapid, shows much more care than Mrs. Centlivre's play written in prose; this prose, though equally gay and not without a certain verve, lacks the polish which characterises Regnard.

As we have shown, nothing is to be inferred from a comparison of the unities. The difference in plot motivation is very evident. In the Regnard every action is prepared for; in the Centlivre, there are chance happenings, and alterations made in one part of the translation throws the remainder out of order. The same fault may be found in some of the character delineation by Mrs. Centlivre; Valère, in particular, undergoes abrupt changes without consistent development. All of the characters in "Le Joueur" are superior in literary value, and lack the boldness of attitude which characterizes the people in the English play. The

French play, containing as it does less action but more clever dialogue, is written to suit an audience of cultivated tastes. The endings of both comedies are very significant; we may say that Regnard's is psychologically correct, Mrs. Centlivre's correct only according to the judgment of her public who wanted a happy outcome.

The whole tone of "le Joueur" betokens an author of culture and ease; "The Gamester" bears the mark of an author who has had to elbow her way through the world--the one delightfully gay, the other boldly hearty. In conclusion, we may state that Mrs. Centlivre owed the greater part of her material to Regnard, she lowered the original in her adaptation of it. Regnard's "le Joueur" is obviously much the more valuable of the two plays.

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A Comparison  
of 'Le Joueur' by Regnard, and  
'The Gamester,' by Mrs. Centlivre

by Ruth E. Hunt

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