

many rays emitted from that fiery spirit always in ebullition. From them is Molière judged, and from even a superficial study of them all critics must admit he was a poet in the true sense of the word.

The comedy of Molière is one of character. Of course allusion is here made to his masterpieces. Intrigue is developed only so far as it will break the monotony of the dialogue and excite curiosity. We do not laugh at ludicrous situations, nor at a play on words, but at the very comicality of the thought expressed by the various characters of the play, and the genius of the poet was such that there is no inconsistency between these thoughts and the character of the personage expressing them. His plays are not the *farce* so much in vogue now-a-days where truth to nature is sacrificed to a desire of forcing the audience to laughter by means of the extravagant and grotesque. In Molière there is no harlequin, no zany; high comedy is the term that best describes the productions of this great master. As a delineator of character Molière is surpassed by none. Shakespeare whose chief merit lies in being true to nature in characterization should not be placed above the French comic poet in this respect. The latter is his equal. His ability in this essential to dramatic writing is nowhere so evident as in *Le Misanthrope*. This play is the greatest gallery of typical moral pictures that can be found in any work of the kind.

Dialogue has been carried to a very high degree of perfection in the comedy of Molière, chiefly because of the lack of intrigue in all his plots. It is lively, natural, and never declamatory. In the mouth of a speaker there is never found an incongruous word, and thus the characters being contrasted, display their idiosyncrasies to the reader with the most powerful effect possible.

As regards the management of a drama Molière is a strict observer of the three unities. His versification, easy and natural, flows on without the constraint noticeable in Corneille. Though unable to do away with the monotony of rhyme, essential to French verse, he never forced the thought in order to adapt it to this construction. It is admitted that he is not happy in the catastrophe of his plots. But notwithstanding this he easily escapes censure when it is considered that action is of secondary importance in his comedies, and that these masterpieces were pro