

Sganarelle. In the third play *Mascarille* is again of the witty and brilliant type.

The Sganarelle of Molière, says Saint Beuve, in all his various aspects of valet, husband, father of Lucinda, brother of Artiste, guardian, wood-cutter, physician, is a person who belongs to the poet as much as Panurge to Rabelais, Falstaff to Shakespeare, Sancho to Cervantes; he represents the ugly side of human nature—the old, crabbed, morose, selfish, low, cowardly, side. In Molière's next comedy, *L'École des Maris*, we have another Sganarelle, a more important but less humorous personage than his predecessor. He is rough, morose, and domineering, and treats his brother, his senior by twenty years, with contemptuous insolence. But the prominent feature of his three characters is his arrogant confidence in his own wisdom, and especially in his theory of education, and it is upon this that the humour of the play depends. The subject of the more famous *L'École des Femmes* is almost identical, but Arnolphe is a very different character from Sganarelle; he is equally positive and self-opinionated, but here the resemblance ends. He is no rude, vulgar bourgeois, but a polished, open-handed gentleman, who not only fancies that he knows the world, but really does know it, especially the female portion. This play was produced nine months after the marriage of Molière with Armande Bégart, of the man of forty with the girl of seventeen, and the bitter *oh* with which Arnolphe quits the stage seems almost prophetic of what the author and player of the part was to suffer at the hands of his own wife.

In *L'École des Femmes* we see the serious and pathetic side of Molière's humours. In *Le Mariage Forcé* we return to the comic side, and Sganarelle re-appears in the chief part. The marriage of an old man with a young girl is again a leading motive. But the girl is no longer an innocent fool; she is what Molière had by this time found his own wife to be—a finished coquette. Sganarelle, her intended husband, is one of the true breed, vulgar, conceited, sensual, cowardly, always asking other people's advice, and never taking it. We now come to the greatest of all the Sganarelles, the valet of *Don Juan* or *Festin de Pierre*, the greatest of Molière's prose-plays. Groundless though the accusations were which churchmen and moralists made against the author of *Tartuffe* and *Le Misanthrope* of having turned religion and virtue into ridicule, they had some right on their side when they attacked *Don Juan*. Even as we read the play we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that scepticism is not without its attractions to the pupil of Gassendi; and that *Don Juan* is not merely a reckless atheist and libertine, but the forerunner, not only of Voltaire and Diderot, but also of the modern Positivist who does everything "for the love of humanity." The Sganarelle of the play, *L'Amour Médecin*, which succeeded *Don Juan*, and was written and rehearsed in the almost incredibly short space of four days, is neither a very interesting nor a very humorous person, but he is an excellent type of a narrow-minded egotist. It is doubtless only a coincidence, but it is worth noticing, that *L'Amour Médecin* was written in the same year as the publication of the first edition of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*. There could not be a better illustration of the theory which is put forth so prominently in that edition that self-love is the root of human action than the conduct and sentiments of Sganarelle. The Sganarelle of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, for the vigour and realistic force with which he is drawn, stands next to his brother, *Don Juan*, but while the valet of the latter play is, morally, the best of the Sganarelles, this one is unquestionably the worst. Sosie, in the story of *Amphitryon*, is in everything but the name a true Sganarelle. The character, like the rest of the play, is borrowed from Plautus; but by virtue of certain touches which only a great humourist could have given, Molière has made it his own. Even if Michelet were right in his theory that the play of *Amphitryon* was meant to be an allegory of the loves of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, Molière's Sosie has taken good care to let us know that for his part he did not think dishonour any the more honourable because it was conferred by Royalty. In *Amphitryon* Molière adhered very closely to Plautus' play, but in *L'Avare*, which was produced in the same year, 1669, little is borrowed from Plautus, except the mere outline of the story. Harpagon is one of Molière's finest characters, and one which, perhaps more than any other, seems to refute the charge often brought against him by English critics that—like Regnard and our own Ben Jonson—he portrays humours rather than living men and women. He did occasionally, it is true, paint mere humours, as in *Les Facheux* and *Les Précieuses Ridicules*; but the great majority of his characters are real human beings. It is this fidelity to nature, this entire freedom from exaggeration, which gives such freshness to his work. The part of Harpagon was taken by Molière; and Frosine's remark to him, "How gracefully you cough!" is a characteristic allusion to the cough which never left him, and of which he was rapidly dying. Five months after the production of *L'Avare*, on February 5, 1669, *Tartuffe*, written as long ago as 1664, but played for one night only in public, exactly eighteen months before, was re-introduced on the boards of the Palace Royal. There is not much humour in *Tartuffe*. The play is too serious an attack on hypocrisy to admit of humour. There is indeed one comic element in the character of Dorine, and all the scenes in which she appears are amusing; but she is witty and vivacious rather than humorous. The only characters which partake of real humour, and in these it is of a severe kind, are those of Madame Pernelle and Orgon, Molière's part. Madame Pernelle is an excellent instance of how Molière, like the greatest creators, like Homer and Æschylus and Shakespeare can draw a character in a few strokes. Chrysale, the father in *Les Femmes Savantes* (played for the first time March 11, 1672), is a far more interesting and humorous character. He is not very brilliant; he is a trifle vain, and likes to recall

his young days when he was a bit of a rake; but he is a thoroughly kind-hearted, genial gentleman, and his sympathy for the two lovers endears him to our heart. *Les Femmes Savantes* is no doubt inferior to *Le Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe* in depth and power, and it has no great central figure like that of Alceste and *Tartuffe*, but as a work of art it must rank with the former. What marvellous delicacy and finish, and, above all, what masterly portraiture it contains!

M. Jourdain, of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, occupies a far larger space on Molière's canvas than the *Bonhomme Chrysale*, but he is not so subtly delineated, and is altogether a broader style of portrait; moreover, M. Jourdain is only the type of a class, while a Chrysale may be found in any rank of life. Almost exactly a year before the production of the last named play came *M. de Pourceaugnac*, which is a farce from beginning to end. It is an admirable specimen of that rollicking, exuberant fun of which Rabelais and Aristophanes are such consummate masters. The part of Pourceaugnac was played by Molière himself; and from the time he abandoned the rôle of Mascarille for that of Sganarelle he always took himself the humorous character of the piece, whether he called it Sganarelle or not. It was not always the principal part; it was not so in *Tartuffe* or *Don Juan* or *Les Femmes Savantes*; it was generally an undignified part, but it was always one with the greatest amount of humour in it. The only exception to his otherwise invariable rule seems to occur in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, in which he is said to have acted the part of Scapin—of the duper, not the dupe, of the witty, not the humorous, character. In Molière's last play, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, there is no diminution of power; the fun is as irresistible, the situations as dramatic, and the dialogues as vivacious as ever. The characters too are well drawn. As one reads the play-book, one's thoughts go back inevitably to that night of the 17th February, 1673, the fourth representation of the piece, in which Molière played for the last time. It was a strange irony that this actor, who excited the laughter of the audience as he now ran shouting about the stage in boisterous health, now dropped exhausted into his chair, should have been in stern reality, beneath his player's mask, a dying man. In all Molière's comedies there is not so much humour as in the closing scene of his life, and a grim, bitter, cruel humour it is.—E. S.

#### MONTREAL LETTER.

THE usual autumnal bazaar craze has now taken possession of the fair portion of our community. During three days last week a grand fair was held in the Victoria Rink, the proceeds of which are to be devoted to the buying of surgical instruments for the General Hospital. It is a pity that such an institution should, in the first place, want money at all, and in the second, have to resort to this means of getting it. However, the sale was perhaps an idea emanating rather from over-active feminine minds than suggested by serious necessity. There is much more charm, if less honesty, in swindling avaricious old gentlemen and stick-twirling bank clerks than performing that too self-sacrificing and thankless task—"collecting."

Of course the Victoria Fair proved an immense success; and well it might, for novel and pretty effects abounded. The rink was charmingly decorated with flags and trophies of war, and instead of long, heavily laden tables which every one dreads to approach, there were numbers of pretty booths. Now it is a Japanese chamber, crowded with "airy nothings;" now, in a miniature parlour "home-made candy" lies temptingly for sale. The tiny French café seems all too small to supply the needs of those about its door, longing to enter, I fear, less on account of refreshment than to obtain a closer view of the bewitching waitresses who peep out slyly every few minutes from behind the curtains. Some clever citizen offered a prize of \$100 to him whose guess should approach most nearly the number of beans packed in a large glass jar. The winner could not but pass over the prize to the hospital which would still be the gainer of ten cent throws and all. A very happy idea was the dressing of the sellers in nurses' garb. Nothing is so becoming and bewitching as these great white caps and aprons, prim collars and cuffs, and Quaker-like black dresses. No wonder the costume gains every day in popularity, and we behold with alarm a general exodus of our fair friends from the drawing-room to invade the hospital ward.

As the dear old Vicar of Wakefield hath it: "Though I did not entirely believe all the fellows told me, yet I reflected that the number of witnesses was a strong presumption that they were right." Mr. Moody has taken us by storm. The "copy" innumerable fires offered reporters is now more than substituted by that gained from the great evangelist's daily, one might almost say hourly, discourses. Inquiry meetings, women's meetings, business men's meetings, evening meetings, are the order of the day, and they are regularly crowded. It is a very extraordinary manifestation of a very extraordinary power,—the power of child-like simplicity in thought and expression. He has one great quality much needed in this *blasé* age—enthusiasm. Then again, he is so positive he is right that every one who goes to his meetings feels ere long tempted to admit it also. There lies a great deal in these qualities, perhaps the secret of Mr. Moody's success. For the rest, his discourses have fallen into what Disraeli would call their "anecdoteage." They are full of "experiences" and little stories one might expect to find relegated to a "children's corner."

SOME cry has been raised with regard to the state of our public thoroughfares, some suggestions made as to the advisability of opening a boulevard from north to south in the eastern extremity of the city. However, it would show a woful ignorance of Montreal's streets were you to imagine our generation shall see such improvements.

Montreal, October 12, 1887.