

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report

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This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Thomas Wainwright Busson final oral examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. We recommend that the degree of Doctor of Philosophy be conferred upon the candidate.

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The Tragedies of Pradon.

A thesis submitted to the
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by

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To

Professor Everett Ward Olmsted
in appreciation.

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Preface.

The purpose of this study is an attempt to revalue certain plays of one who, rightly or wrongly, suffered during his life from the violent attacks of Boileau and the sarcasm of Racine. The dicta of these masters of 17th century literature on Pradon were accepted by literary historians and found their way into all the literary histories, manuels de libraire, and anecdotes of the theatre from the death of Pradon to our own times. While certain biographers and historians have displayed a more sympathetic attitude toward this unfortunate rival of Racine, their efforts have been restrained by a careful regard for the opinions of Boileau, lest they might seem to err in judging more favorably one who had received wholesale condemnation at the hands of the great satirist. Whenever such tolerance is expressed, there follows a quick return to the spirit of the attacks of Boileau so that all favorable bias is lost sight of in a mass of general condemnation.

In this connection it has seemed advisable to go over the field of Pradon's dramatic activities, separating that part of the general criticism of his work which had its source in Boileau from the more favorable attitude as expressed in the histories of the French stage so numerous in the 18th century; to make, as it were, a revaluation of Pradon's "théâtre"; and to fix if possible his position in his century irrespective of the remarks and criticisms so generally directed against the man and his work, with more regard to the works themselves than to the judgments of his adherents or opponents. In how far this can be justified in the case

of Pradon must be left to the reader. The very name of the author of "Phèdre et Hippolyte" immediately prejudices one familiar with the struggle of Racine with his detractors. This attitude of mind, certainly justifiable in the case of the tragedy in which Pradon attempted to rival the master, should not be used to condemn all the works of the man merely from dislike for a position which he was unfortunate in taking upon the advice of friends who were more interested in furthering their own aims than in seeing justice done to one of their own company. Unfortunately for the poet and his works this attitude of "parti pris", fostered and as it were thrown into the white light of literary dispute by Boileau, has come down to us in all its vigor and original force, while the circumstances of the time, the diverging literary ideas and aims of the opposing parties have been lost sight of.

The position of the great satirist and arbiter of literary judgment has been secure. His preëminence in his age along with the other great figures, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, and La Bruyère, has colored the judgment of succeeding ages, leading to an acceptance of his opinions upon contemporaries with a credence not usually accorded to those of lesser reputation. We have come in a measure to regard these great Classic writers as the only important literary forces in this century, as arbiters of taste whose aesthetic judgments were the accepted literary attitude of their age. The mere mention of French Classicism recalls immediately the masterpieces of Racine, the comedies of Molière, the "Satires" and the "Art Poétique" of Boileau, the "Fables of La Fontaine, and the "Caractères" of La Bruyère. Yet these are but a few names from an age in which the purely social activities of

the cultivated were never so varied, so much a part of the general business of life, an age in which writing was an integral part of the social scheme if not an actual pendant to the political glories of a sovereign whose court was as much arbiter of fashion for the whole of the European civilization as he himself was the dominant political force therein.

That the cultivated society surrounding the "Roi Soleil" should have interested itself in literature is but natural. That it should have accepted as interpreters of its greatness those pre-eminently great masters of literature whose works have stood the test of time is not to be believed. The history of the times is too full of political and social quarrels. The social qualities so highly valued, so consistently used as standards by the men and women of the "grand siècle" necessarily brought with them a petulance, social intrigue, and a divergence of view in literature, morals, and manners the intensity of which was aided by the elegant idleness of the great and the fostered protection of the near great.

Not until the close of their lives and even then largely through the constant support of Louis XIV did Racine and Boileau become acknowledged masters of literary art. Their lives were filled with a continual struggle against that very society which, so tardy in acclaiming them, has come to be regarded by us through their eyes. Is not this society better mirrored by those lesser writers who, favored by their contemporaries, bent upon pleasing the king and court, were more interested in writing for the applause of their associates after the manner best understood and received. The Great Classic writers are classic in spite of their

age. They are in a measure above it in that they are bent not upon a mere adaptation of their genius to the spirit of the time but to a heightening of tone, an elevation of mind by which they are able to present the great general truths of human nature to their contemporaries in a form and style above the level of their own society. To us they represent the 17th century and this century has indeed been fortunate in having for its expositors those who were so great. By them we have been lead to judge the "siècle de Louis Quatorze" at its great moments. The true spirit of the century lies midway between its greatest and its worst writers.

It would seem then, in the case of Pradon, that the dicta of Boileau might not represent contemporary opinion. The history of the French theatre shows that two of his tragedies, "Pirame" and "Tamerlan" were deemed of enough importance to be reintroduced upon the stage a considerable time after their initial production while "Regulus" reached its twenty-eighth performance and according to the historian¹ was as enthusiastically received at its twenty-eighth presentation as at the first. The famous quarrel of the Phedres was of sufficient social import to move some of the great to the defense of their favorites as well as to leave its trace in the literary history of that and the succeeding century. It has even been mentioned as one of the causes for Racine's retirement from dramatic writing.²

In spite of the invectives of Boileau, in spite of the satire of Racine and the poor reception accorded certain of his tragedies, Pradon was apparently not discouraged. He continued to gain a hear-

¹Frères Parfaict - "Histoire du Théâtre Français", Paris, 1747, Vol. XIII, p. 68-85.

²Bruntière - "Etudes Critiques", Paris, 1888, p. 159.

ing before an audience which would not have tolerated his work had he been both in person and in his writings such a poltroon as Boileau represents him. The "honnête homme" was far too exacting in standards of politeness, elegance, and refinement to take pleasure in listening to the plays of one ignorant of the forms and manners of his time. It is this very persistence of Pradon and his ability to gain a hearing that has suggested the present study.

Of late two compatriots of the poet have come to his defense. M. Charles Beaurepaire in a monograph devoted to the poet's early life³ has cleared up some of the mystery surrounding his existence at Rouen. Mlle. Bosquet⁴ has contributed a sympathetic study of certain parts of his work while questioning the validity of the accepted opinion of him. In view of the uncertain attitude of literary historians to his tragedies and the condemnation which Boileau and his friends hurled at the man throughout his life, it might be of interest to restudy his tragedies with regard to the forces opposed to him and the general tone of the society of which he was a part and for which his writings were intended.

³ "Notice sur Pradon", Rouen, 1899.

⁴ Revue de Rouen et de Normandie", 15^e Année 1847, "Une Victime de Boileau", p. 274-301.

Introduction.

The theatre of the seventeenth century in France presents a variety of treatment which may not be apparent to the reader who forms his idea of the period from a reading of the great classic writers. Judged by and through the masterpieces of Racine, the French Classic theatre manifests an elevation of tone, a keenness of psychological analysis, and an adherence to form which has come to represent a type of dramatic composition the excellent qualities of which have stood the test of varied and opposing criticism, persisting in those same qualities of beauty which were accepted in the age for which they were written and which we, more remote from and less influenced by the social tone of the "ancien régime," have come to admire in equal measure even if we have been at times seduced by the more showy and externally more varied form of later writers.

If we place ourselves amid the surroundings of Racine, Boileau and the classicists of their age in the circle where the spirit of the "honnêtes gens" had absolute sway, we would find a milieu somewhat different from that which we have created for ourselves while reading the great writers of that century. Our judgment of this milieu as well as our conception of its likes and preferences have been founded upon a slight illusion, that of idealizing the "honnête homme," of forming our picture of the elegant man of the seventeenth century with his refined tastes on the model of that part of the literature of the age which, as the work of the best minds thereof, must necessarily be somewhat above and beyond the

actual reality. Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine and other great names represent truly the court of Louis XIV but only in so far as they were men of that court influenced by its ideas. Far more are they individualists than types of the "honnête gens." To attribute to the century all the elegance and subtle distinction of taste so admired in Racine is to misjudge an age by accepting the specific as representing the general.

The history of the classic idea as developed in the French theatre of the 17th century is not so much an evolution from the heterogeneous to the formal as a constant struggle of the individualistic, heterodox theories of art to avenge themselves upon that spirit of careful selection, of order and insistence upon the general truths of human experience which the classic writers were so careful to present in their works. These are just the qualities that have made them great, which have carried them through all the vicissitudes of narrow criticism, misunderstanding, and willful malice which their age directed against them, and which have survived to us through the succeeding ages. Their party, however, was that of the minority. Polite society if it understood the spirit underlying the masterpieces of Racine did so with certain reservations dependent upon the milieu, the group, or the personal characteristics of the particular member of this society who, called upon to pass judgment upon the great writers, was confronted with acceptance of a theory of art not at all a generally acknowledged one, a treatment of literature constantly attacked by even one's own friends.

The close relation of a society whose sole occupation was to stand attendance upon the king, whose daily existence was so

much a round of visits, an exchange of "bons mots," a meeting in circles of similar taste, in fact whose very intellectual life was dictated by social convenience made for a narrowness and intolerance of any deviation from the accepted norm. To be individual in one's tastes or actions was to become at once marked as different from the general run of society. One might be suspected of lacking some of those necessarily useful graces which made one accepted in this society where conformity to the laws of social intercourse was so absolutely demanded of the aspirant to social honors. The spirit of the "honnête homme" and "honnête femme" ruled in daily contact. A society given up to forced admiration of the sovereign, whose favor brought with it success, flitting about the white light of his radiance, must formulate a rule to protect itself from the intrusion of types more forceful than elegant whose competition in mental ability might prove disadvantageous. By reducing the social qualifications to the general characteristics of the "honnêtes gens" there was gained a basis for judgment of the fitness for introduction into this society. The rationale of life for the "honnête homme" was an elegant observance of polite urbanity from which the vulgar, the accidental, and the irrational were excluded. Starting from a fundamentally accepted basis it became easier to receive this man or reject that one in so far as each lived up to or failed to fulfill this necessary standard of social sufficiency.

Had the court of Louis XIV been composed wholly of families who by heredity and training were noble, the social criterion might have arranged itself and standards become a matter of breeding, to the manor born; but this reign was rather marked by the

disregard of old families as far as the administrative offices of the crown were concerned. However much the great old families were represented at court as elegant pendants to the crown, the real administrative officials were gathered from the members of the robe or from the upper bourgeoisie. The latter class, by favor of the sovereign or through exigencies of a successful life, were able to find an entering wedge through which they gained admittance into this polite society. While not accepted in all circles, especially in those where a century old family tradition kept clearly defined the limits within which the bourgeoisie could be tolerated, yet the power and influence which administrative officials could exert on the sovereign, and the royal favors, so desired by all, which could be had or lost depending on society's attitude toward this bourgeoisie, made for their acceptance by the prouder and more exclusive set. Likewise these bourgeois families who by direct favor of the sovereign had made of themselves persons to be reckoned with or, on the other hand, sufficiently established in society, could wield influence here and there among the great and near great sufficient to make them acceptable if only for their connection with others more powerful than they. Fouquet and Colbert, both from the bourgeoisie, rose to important administrative posts.

Indeed one of the most astute administrative ideas of Louis, one which separates him in governmental methods from his predecessors, was his habit of selecting his important officials from the ranks of the bourgeoisie where industry, ability, and habit of work were so much a part of life and which when put into the employ of the state would produce results of solid advantage in a

successful administration of the complicated affairs over which the sovereign reigned supreme. The advantages thus opened to this class were enormous in extent, provided the work done could commend itself to the sovereign's attention. Far better was it to work near the giver of all favors than to be forever confined as in previous reigns to the vicious circle of bourgeois restrictions.

At the base of this opening up of a larger life to the bourgeoisie on the part of the sovereign was his distrust of the old families, his recollection of the Fronde, his own precarious existence throughout those troublesome times, together with the general inability of the old houses to apply themselves wholeheartedly to the sovereign's work without special and individual aims. The nobility lacked disciplinary training, special knowledge, and had a disinclination for detail, added to which were family precedence, traditional pride, and a none too easily forgotten spirit of independence, making of this class an altogether undesirable one for administrative office in a system of government where the sovereign was as much all important as all sufficient. Those too powerful, crafty or clever to be entrusted with important posts were best kept in careless ease, attendant upon the sovereign's wish, ever hoping to attain distinction but never quite in a position to realize it apart from and independent of royal favor; while those whose ability was not of the disturbing kind could be well content to bask in the royal light and add by the luster of their factious importance to the gaiety, wit, and glamor of the court. Thus both parties, that of nobles and of favored bourgeoisie, mingle, rub elbows, and exist in the society

about the sovereign, the former learning to tolerate those of inferior birth, both alike subservient to the will of the sovereign in matters of state and party, governed by the standards of the "honnête homme."

Upon the observance of this social tone depended the success of the bourgeoisie in the society of which they had now become an accepted part. The workings of this amalgamating and refining process noted in the early years of the century in the salon of Madame de Rambouillet and her imitators can be readily observed as it continues throughout the century in the salons, ruelles, academies, and at the court. The first academicians were not in the main of the nobility; the habitués of the salons of Madame de Rambouillet as of Madame de Sablé, Madame de Lafayette, Madame de Bouillon and others were composed equally of nobles and of litterateurs, wits, and men of letters many of whom came from bourgeois ranks. Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau and other well known names of literature, even Segrais Quinault, Boursault, and Pradon of lesser fame came from the bourgeoisie and were accepted and generally acclaimed in the salons of the best born.

If this is the society for which Racine wrote are we right in assuming that his elegant turn of phrase, the careful regard for form most Greek in the delicacy yet rigidity of outline, and the sacrificing of the occasional, the individual for the general truths of human actions represent the thought, manners, and philosophy of life of his contemporaries? Elegance of language was indeed a necessity of social intercourse in a world of social favorites schooled in the early precepts of the "Précieuses," whose daily life was so much a matter of conversation, polite, urbane, wherein the real

thought of the speaker was masked behind the delicate phrase, the polite and well turned sentence giving the half truth of the thought; yet the other qualities so marked in Racine could not be totally representative of any polite society inasmuch as they represent a rigidity of etiquette into which human beings cannot be forced. No matter how cultivated a society nor to what extent its members are held in check by a social form, the complexity of human nature seeks ever to break bonds and free itself from rules or by accepting them attempts in some way to utilize the forms so as to circumvent them, thereby escaping their dominion,

If we regard the "honnête homme" in relation to the literature of his time, how does he appear? - not so much a constant but a changing figure according to this or that new idea which, assimilated into his milieu, became a part of the general ideas of his age. The Hôtel de Rambouillet through its refining influence was a factor in forming the social side of the "honnête homme." This socializing influence began toward the end of the reign of Henry IV and continued throughout two centuries.⁵ In the circle half Italian, half French of this "Hôtel" where Corneille, Balzac, Voiture, Segrais met with the grands seigneurs and grandes dames of the age, the refining spirit went on. Its influence on literature is as clearly marked as upon manners. The salon idea developed and copied by others in the feminine world runs all through the 17th century, exerting its influence, varying and changing as the character and tendencies of mind varied in the habitués of the salons.

The salons of Madame de La Fayette, Madame de Bouillon, the Duchesse de Maine set a standard which is reflected in such bourgeois salons as that of Madame Pelissari, the wife of a rich banker, and in

⁵ Gustave Lanson: - "Nivelle de la Chaussée et la Comédie larmoyante," Paris, 1903.

the group of the academicians. At the salon of Madame de Scudéry we find Ménage, Cotin, Rapin, Chapelain, the Duc de Noailles, St. Aignan, Fontenelle; at Madame Pelissari's were wont to assemble Furetière, Quinault, Bensérade, Perrault, Tallemant who were all found likewise at the salon of Madame La Duchesse de Bouillon. Subligny, Pellisson, Segrais, Ménage frequented the salon of Madame de Suze.⁶ As time goes on and salons become more numerous certain circles or cliques form where views on events and aims coincide. The same litterateurs who frequented the salon of the Duchesse de Bouillon are to be found at that of Madame Des Houlières. The idea of the social gathering as aide and corrector of manners takes on, as regards literature, a certain partisan tone. In literature impartiality is rare. Personal preferences, tendencies of the times, or "parti pris" begin to play.

The society of the Fronde once grouped together in salons where congeniality of taste and spirit sought to soften and forget the rancor of the lost cause put its stamp on the literature of the time.

The influence on Corneille is sufficiently marked to allow a generalization to other writers of the period. The manner of the grand seigneur, the point of honor, the sacrifice of self to duty, of love to political expediency, with the heroics of the Cornelian stanza, recalling as they did to the frondeuse society those experiences which had played so great a part in its life and the realization of which had fallen so far short of reality - in this attitude of the heroic all the century was schooled. This attitude gave way before the changed circumstances of political and social life with the coming to

⁶ Deltour: - "Les Ennemis de Racine," Paris, 1859, p. 87.

the throne of Louis XIV. The experiences, nevertheless, of a lifetime with their influences and impressions were not so easily to be obliterated. However much those of the old régime were forced to find contentment in the new society of bourgeois influence and of benevolent supervision from the throne, they nevertheless longed for the days of action, the great moments of heroic sacrifice. The admiration for the tragedies of Corneille and the ceaseless parallel of his works with those of Racine which occupied the "honnêtes gens" during the reign of Louis XIV, show to what extent the influence of the salons kept alive the old recalcitrant spirit while outwardly accepting the new order.

The habitués of the salons admired the "théâtre" of Corneille because they found in it a reflex of their own thoughts and aspirations. They found intrigue, conspiracy, revolts, gallantry, politics, and love which had been the gamut of life under the Fronde. The Roman or Greek figures of kings and royal personages were but the external garment to clothe real French men and women, necessitated by the artistic theory of the times. Accepting the application of the Aristotelian theory of the theatre as employed by Corneille and as set forth in the first efforts of the Academy, in La Mesnardière's "Poétique" and the "Pratique du Théâtre" of d'Aubignac, society admired the great tirades of Corneille's heroes, the intricate study of the psychology of duty, and his "politique." Moreover, the language was that of polite, cultivated people of the world, of the ruelles and salons of Madame de Rambouillet, the Montausiers, and similar ones.

With regard to the acceptance of the Greek and Roman types and the attitude toward antiquity, that was a matter of taste inherited

from the Renaissance, moulded and fixed into an order by the academic spirit of the first half of the century. Rejecting the confusion of genres, tragic and comic of the earlier dramatists, Corneille makes, after his earlier comedies, a sharp distinction between the two. As only two types were to be found among extant Greek or Roman dramatists and as literary taste influenced by Italian aestheticians and their expounders in France sought to conform to that of Antiquity, this spirit of limitation fell into accord with the new spirit of order which replaced the confusion of the reigns of Henry IV and Louis XIII. That this love of antiquity was very deep is open to doubt. Corneille's interpretation of the antique spirit was not the main appeal of his works. The general truth of his characters, the appeal of situations long since experienced, and the admiration for the qualities of heroic, passionate gallantry together with the order and form of composition influenced society in his favor. That this understanding of antiquity was superficial will easily appear if we turn from tragedy to other literary forms so admired during the period.

The pastoral novel after the manner of D'Urfé, *La Calprenède*, or *Mlle. de Scudéry* the style of which was well adapted to the salon-society aimed to reflect contemporary manners under the guise of shepherds and shepherdesses, or under the roles of Cassandra, Scipio, and other names borrowed from antiquity. Lacking the classic idea of form, these novels treating of the romanesque, the idyllic, the heroic, almost the impossible, with long adventures recounted through endless volumes were the intellectual stimulant of the day. Society saw itself as much reflected therein as in the tragedies of Corneille. The influence of the pastoral and romanesque tended to pervade the drama but was held in check by the interpreters of Antiquity. That

the observance of the Aristotelian rules of the unities was not well received in all quarters can best be illustrated by such an individualist as Théophile who was well thought of by the salons and ruelles. The prefaces to Corneille's earlier plays show with what reservations he accepted the current theory. This narrow exclusion from literature of the capricious, the fantastic, in short the individual and personal touch, was the barrier against which the salons were ever contending. As the century progressed this limitation of the scope of artistic activity became keenly felt in circles where early training had moulded ideas and taste in ways to which a strict observance of the rules of the classic antiquity was abhorrent. The spirit of "préciosité" in the salons of the first half of the century fell into an absurdity of manner which, as soon as it began to offend the sense of proportion of the "honnête homme" was condemned, receiving its death blow at the hands of Molière. That it persisted in spirit we can well believe. Too many had affected it in the salons where it reigned to suffer a complete change of heart. Those coming later to these salons would be influenced by the persistent atmosphere of précieuse gallantry with its almost pastoral conception of love, a polite toying with this sentiment without any desire to push the affections and emotions beyond the point of genteel expression, a merely exciting game of intellectual pastime.

The attitude toward antiquity was much that of an elegant interest in works whose literary value was accepted as a matter of course upon the estimate of such academic writings and theatrical examples as were most in vogue. The acquaintance with the masterpieces of Greece and Rome was made through translations wherein the more forceful and less elegant expressions of the ancients were

softened to the tone of contemporary society.⁷ Very few studied the original and in fact the method of teaching the ancient culture was such that a polite and urbane society could not be expected to find any great interest in the subject. Except the Jesuits and the masters of Port Royal, instruction in the ancient culture was given with such pedantic adherence to the text, such insistence on petty grammatical detail without the necessary interpretation of the spirit of the work that those who studied by this method developed a serious dislike for the pedantry of their teachers and were driven to seek the beauties of antiquity in translations. The idea of antiquity was thus gained more or less at second hand. The unities, the names and historical data found in the ancient writers were accepted. In the matter of character interpretation, the Greek and Roman figures were conceived on contemporary lines, upon the model of the "honnête homme" whose psychology of action was the motive force behind the tragedies of antique name, plot, and external form. This would explain the persistent admiration for the Corneillian tragedies which were drawn from the same common source of Antiquity as were Racine's but the characters of Corneille had more of interest for the "honnête homme" with his love of the heroic and of analytical mental debates about duty, love, or self interest, strongly individualistic in tone, which society conceived of as really representing the century. When Racine, so carefully instructed in the workmanship of the ancients as well as in the aesthetic appreciation of their literary tradition, began to place before his audiences tragedies built on the universal qualities of man in his

⁷ H. Gillot: - "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914.

relation to life he was not thought to have a profound understanding of Antiquity. From this came the comparing of his works as they appeared with those of Corneille, so that during a good part of the latter half of the 17th century there arose in literary taste a conflict between this false idea of antiquity on the one hand and the greater, more modern presentation of Racine.

In this way Racine and equally Boileau were for their day really innovators and moderns in that their conception of the value of the antique spirit as applied to literature was aesthetically more sound and certainly more advanced than the more superficial idea then prevalent. But a curious fact must be noted that as these writers gained in favor, they were accused of attempting to limit literary expression by a pedantic adherence to Greek and Roman models; to deny the value and worth of their own modern society in favor of the ideas of Antiquity. The "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes" made of the great writers partisans of a side in which were included many whose idea of antiquity scarcely rose above a dull adherence to the printed rules. The quarrel in itself is no more than the effort of those independent minds of the age to free themselves from the dogmatic application of rules, of aesthetic as well as historical judgments. That Boileau and Racine, forced at times to yield to the spirit, still insisted on an exact regard for form and selection as well as on an appreciation of the great human qualities represented in ancient models was to their opponents of little concern.

The taste of the 17th century was at base a "précieuse" one, of sparkling wit, romanesque, at times petty when confronted with its short-comings, with a love of intrigue and cabal developed in

salons amid the talk of women and mediocre writers whose education was neither profound nor extensive. Glittering, superficial, attractive exposition went for profound knowledge. Erudition suspected of an alliance with pedantry was regarded with suspicion. Self admiration, a certain amount of adventurous independence fostered by the Libertines seemed to make for disregard of conventional forms. Around the old Corneille rallied all those who by tradition, early intercourse, and hereditary wrongs found a cause of grievance in the new order in politics as well as literature. The spirit of the Fronde takes on a literary tone aided by certain litterateurs who saw in the achievement of Racine and Boileau an effort to dictate what was "dans l'ordre" and what was not.⁸

The Hôtel de Bouillon, the salon of Madame Des Houlières, the example of Cotin, Segrais, Ménage, Tallemant, Subligny, the opinions of Des Marets, of St. Évremond, Fontenelle, Perrault, the insipidities of La Calprenède, the Scudérys, brother and sister, of Quinault with their pastoral, love-lorn, adventurous gallants or the Roman love-sick sentimental hero, - these are the potent factors of the century. The great Classics were classic in spite of their environment. That they improved and heightened the aesthetic taste of their society is to their credit. They were modernists in their day and to what extent they felt the effort they had to exert in order to gain appreciation can be seen in Racine's withdrawal from his chosen field when he had by dint of his own excellencies and in spite of continued opposition brought his age to an acceptance of his viewpoint. Brunetière points out that the Pré-

⁸H. Gillot:—"La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914.

cieuses so cruelly ridiculed by Molière had their revenge at the time of the production of "Phèdre".⁹

Quite in accord with their disregard for ancient models the self-styled Moderns chose as one source of inspiration Christian antiquity. In poetry and the drama under the influence of Tasso and Ariosto subjects were chosen from Christian history which offered good ground for combatting the persistent legends of classic antiquity. They argued that France, a Christian nation, should exalt the great Christian figures of ennobling and inspiring lives and abandon absurd characters of ancient mythology. Such was the idea of Des Marets who in 1648 sought to divert the theatre from the way of ancient models to a Christian tone. The liberal party were well content to oppose this distasteful mythology by an influence so highly developed by such renowned moderns as Tasso and Ariosto. No critic could well afford to deny the great moral and spiritual good to be drawn from the lives of the martyrs without being accused of light-mindedness or graver still of a disregard for religion. The didactic trend of this new theory of aesthetics may be a reason for its little success, for, with the exception of "Polyeucte," "Esther," and "Athalie," there were no works of outstanding merit.

The influence of the Orient on dramatic literature is more marked. In a sense the novelty of foreign manners and a current interest in Turkish affairs lent itself to the special aim of those in search of new and striking material. This interest in the Orient was stimulated by the colonial policies of Colbert which turned men's attention to that part of the world wherein it

was hoped France would play an important commercial role. The unknown East became the subject of discussion at the court and in the salons. This interest was aided by the reports of travelers. Translations of Byzantine and Arab court histories began to appear. Pradon in the preface to his tragedy of "Tamerlan" says the plot can be found in Calchondile: "et surtout dans une traduction d'un Auteur Arabe, où la vie de Tamerlan et ses grandes actions sont écrites tout au long. "This exoticism occurs in novels such as "Ladice ou les Victoires du grand Tamerlan" of Du Bail (1610), later in the "Astérie et Tamerlan" of Madame de Ville Dieu (1675). In the theatre Mayret ("Soliman" - 1630), d'Alibray ("Le Soliman" - 1630), Scudéry ("Ibrahim ou l'Illustre Bassa - 1642), Des Marets ("Roxelane" - 1643), Le Vayer ("Le Grand Selim" - 1643), Desfontaines (Perside ou la Suite d'Ibrahim Bassa - 1644), Magnon (Tamerlan" - 1647), Rotrou ("Cosroès" - 1658), Tristan l'Hermite ("La Mort d'Osman" - 1656), Boyer ("Oroposte"- 1662), Racine ("Bajazet"- 1672), Pradon("Tamerlan"- 1675), all show the interest in oriental subject matter.¹⁰

In society the Orient was as little understood as was the civilization of the Ancients. Its application to the theatre was made in the same manner. The external features, that of names and places, were utilized to present characters who although Turks in name were but thinly disguised Frenchmen. Particularities of manners and local color or exact detail were as lacking as were the documents upon which were based such details.

Such is the social and intellectual milieu for which Pradon wrote; which he aspired to please; and which gave him the support in

¹⁰ Pierre Martino:- "L'Orient dans la Littérature française," Paris, 1906.

the unequal struggle he maintained with his illustrious contemporary Racine. This society issued from the political quarrels of the Fronde with all the heart-burnings of lost causes and shattered illusions, proud of its ancestry and its personal worth, with an independence of spirit chafing at the imposition of a sovereign force from above, was made up of all types; but, of these, women were the most influential. In the early days they had set the tone and guided the rougher masculine minds toward an acceptance of a more polite, more worldly, and congenial intercourse among their fellowmen by an insistence on good manners, on urbanity of conduct and speech, with a sufficiency of enlightened culture to make conversation a stimulant to ideas instead of a dull narration of personal happenings enlivened only by the egotism of the successful or the jealousy of the defeated. Somewhat superficial was this society, sufficiently if not extensively informed in matters of general culture, with a secret admiration for the niceties of the *Précieuse* refinement (in itself a lost cause), somewhat romantic from much reading of pastoral idylls and delighting in sonnets and madrigals wherein one's friends were easily discerned behind a thin veil of poetic machinery. It was a society pleasant in tone for the most part with a narrowness of vision limited to the circle of the court or of the city, with abundant leisure time to indulge in gossip, in political and literary cabal, admiring Antiquity on its superficial side as culled from translations and imposed by aesthetic theorists in vogue. There was a tendency to break away from rules and dogma for a more individualistic, particular, and self-assertive expression of the greatness and importance of the time. Receptive of novelty in so far as it could be assimilated into his scheme, the "honnête homme" wished mainly to please and to be admired.

He was susceptible of feeling and emotion, especially of the heroic and the sentimental, but he guarded against a too open expression of these feelings, lest he become too individual and invite scorn by oddities outside the social frame wherein lay all his success. Somewhat emotional, rather analytical as to motives and tendencies in his contemporaries, he sought favor of those nearest to the throne, envious of the fortunate, tolerant of his equals in so far as he derived benefit from them.

Judging the work of Pradon by its reception in this society and realizing the influence which particular groups had upon him, it may be possible to present his tragedies in a light somewhat different from that which has prevailed in the past.

* * *

CHAPTER I.

VITA.

Biographical facts concerning the poet Pradon have been scanty and of slight significance. This is not strange when we consider that there is not a manuscript, a letter, or bit of handwriting of the poet that has come down to us. During his lifetime the butt of ridicule, a mark for the satirical scorn of Boileau whose judgment was repeated by successive compilers of literary history, enriched and enlarged by piquant anecdote and epigram to the discredit of the man and his writings, his name has become a synonym of bad taste, ignorance, and literary ineptitude. Most of the historians of the theatre have been content to copy their data from preceding manuals, carrying on and sustaining the unfortunate reputation acquired by Pradon, and assigning to him a name not justly his, while advancing the date of his birth some twelve years. Biographers of his time as well as those of the 18th century, devote to him slight space wherein he is mentioned either as Mr. Pradon or simply Pradon, and with the exception of Guilbert, who in his "Mémoires biographiques et littéraires"¹¹ has him born at Rouen in 1632, no date of birth is given nor is the name Nicolas associated with him. All agree that he came from Rouen. The Frères Parfaict in their "Histoire du Théâtre français"¹² note that neither Titon du Tillet¹³ nor Nicéron¹⁴ from whom they drew their information have thrown much light upon

¹¹ Vol. II, p. 285.

¹² Vol. IX, pp. 350-351, Paris, 1747.

¹³ Le Parnasse français, Paris 1732, pp. 471-472.

¹⁴ Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Hommes Illustres de la République de Lettres, Paris 1745, Vol. XLIII, pp. 371-397.

Pradon's life. They suggest the possibility of obtaining more definite facts: "Le Continuateur des Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Hommes Illustres de la République des Lettres ne nous apprend rien de la personne de Nicolas Pradon, né à Rouen, dépendant s'il eut voulu s'adresser au curé de St. Vivien de cette ville, Paroisse où les deux soeurs de Pradon ont été enterrées, il y a quelques années¹⁵ on se put informer de leurs héritiers, et on auroit sçu quelques particularités touchant ce poète"¹⁶

This suggestion was never followed out until a compatriot of the poet in the last century, Mr. Charles Beaurepaire, made a study of his family connections along the line suggested by the Frères Parfaict.¹⁷ Even as late as Jal we have the statement that he was born in 1632, although the author advances this fact with certain reservations which express the uncertainty in the question of Pradon's early history. "Les biographes," says Jal, "le nomment Nicolas Pradon, et l'on n'est pas sûr que son nom fut Nicolas; ils le font naître en 1632, et il est presque certain qu'il vint au monde plus tard. On tient qu'il est né à Rouen et l'on n'a pu trouver l'acte de son baptême dans les vieux registres des églises de cette ville."¹⁸ There is here a tendency to disregard the date of birth 1632 given by Guilbert as too early, and as for the name Nicolas ascribed to him by Nicéron and copied by the Frères Parfaict, there was at this late date, as the above quotation shows, doubt of

¹⁵Reference to the sister of Pradon, Françoise, died Aug. 6th, 1702, and Marguérite died April 24th, 1714.

¹⁶Frères Parfaict, ~~ibid.~~ op.cit.

¹⁷Notice sur Pradon, Rouen, 1899.

¹⁸Dictionnaire critique de Biographie et d'Histoire, Paris, 1867, p. 998-999.

its authenticity. It remained for Beaurepaire to discover the baptismal record hitherto unknown which advances the date of Pradon's birth to 1644 and shows him not as Nicolas Pradon but Jacques.

In his "Notice sur le Poète Pradon" Mr. Beaurepaire finds that the name Pradon belonged to a south French family not appearing in the region of Rouen before the middle of the 16th century. At Rouen there were three branches springing from a common source. The first member of this family to acquire prominence was a certain Jean Pradon who in 1607 was "procureur du Roi en la vicomté de Rouen" and whose son, Louis, "avocat au parlement" November 9th, 1595, became likewise procureur. To this branch belong a Louis Pradon mentioned November 21st, 1636 as "religieux du prieuré de Beaulieu" and his brother George Pradon of the parish of Notre Dame de la Roche, both "nobles hommes". This George married on February 22nd, 1631 Anne de Cahaigne and appears for some reason to have gone to the island of Guadeloupe where he died in 1639, leaving his widow and a daughter Marguérite. There is a record of the 21st of November, 1639 wherein Geoffrey Le Maistre, Marin Le Tellier, and Jean de Cahaigne, citizens of Rouen, together with Pierre Goumet, Pierre Dieppedalle and Anne de Cahaigne, "veuve de feu George Pradon," all interested in a building constructed by the late George Pradon in Guadeloupe, delegate Toussaint Bellenger, a tanner of Rouen, to go to Guadeloupe and take possession for them of this building. During his lifetime it is noted that George had a lawsuit with the widow of a certain Louis Pradon, sieur d'Esnauville, May 4th, 1637.¹⁹

To the second branch of the family belongs this Louis Pradon,

¹⁹Tablette de Rouen.

sieur d'Esnaville whose widow is mentioned above as contesting at law with George Pradon. The sieur d'Esnaville was in 1609 conseiller-auditeur at the Chambre des Comptes and died in 1636 leaving a widow, Barbe Le Roux and among other children Jacob Pradon, the eldest, who became in 1636 seigneur du Truit-Angers and later "lieutenant-général à la Table de Marbres du Palais" at Rouen.

The third branch is represented by Jean Pradon of Rouen, "huissier aux Requêtees" in September 17th, 1592, later transferred to Caen, 1596. The Tablettes de Rouen mention a Jean Pradon, "bourgeois de Rouen, propriétaire des droits attribués à l'office de premier commissaire des Tailles des Paroisses de Guinseniers, Arquency, et Travaillles, supprimés par édit de février 1634, 12 juillet 1636." Jean Pradon married a Marie de Blosseville. Their son Jacques was received "avocat au parlement de Normandie" on May 27th, 1631. This man was the father of our poet.

On January 7th, 1635 Jacques married Marguérite Delastre, daughter and heiress of the late Charles Delastre, lawyer and "greffier de l'officialité" of Rouen. She was also the heiress of one Jean Ballaudonne and it appears that she brought a dowry of 5000 livres to her husband. The families of Jacques and his wife belonged to the "bonne bourgeoisie" of Rouen. Jacques is spoken of as "noble homme;" appears in a lawsuit with Pierre d'Angouille, sieur des valeurs 1643, again with Pierre de Varroc, sieur de Liéville in the same year; as lawyer in several acts of tabellionage, May 15th, 1646; and in April of the succeeding year in a case concerning the acquisition of some houses for the

establishment of a monastery for repentant women. This same year he was made receiver general and "dépensier ordinaire" of the local hospital for a term of three years expiring December 18th, 1647. He lived in several parishes, Saint-Nicaise, Saint Denis, Saint Godard and Saint Vivien. While at Saint-Nicaise his father Jean died, 1639, at the age of 69 years, and three years later his mother, Marie de Blossenville, buried in the chapel of La Vierge, church of St. Godard. After his parents' death Jacques went to St. Godard where his son the poet, Jacques, was born and was baptised, according to the baptismal register, on the 21st day of January:- "21 janvier 1644, baptême de Jacques, fils de Mr. Jacques Pradon, avocat en la cour, et damoiselle Marguérite de Lastre, Parrain noble homme maître Guillaume Godefroy, Grenetier au magasin à sel d'Evreux; marraine Anne Loiset." The child's name appears in some "letters d'affiliation" to the convent of the Carmes Déchaussés-- Paris, 17th Sept. 1645:- "lettres accordées Jacopo Pradon, Mariae Pradon, Marguérite Delastre, Marguérite Pradon, Franciscae Pradon, Joseph Pradon."

The family was composed of two boys, Jacques and Joseph, and three girls, Françoise, Marguérite, and Thérèse.²⁰ Of the girls little is known beyond the fact that Françoise died August 6th, 1702, Marguérite April 24th, 1714. These are the sisters of the poet to whom the Frères Parfaict refer in their suggestion that more detailed facts of his life might be had from the curé of St. Vivien of Rouen:- "Paroisse où les deux soeurs de Pradon ont été enterrées, il y a quelques années."²¹ Thérèse died in 1729 at

²⁰ A son Claude died in 1639, buried in the chapel of La Vierge, at St. Godard.

²¹ Histoire du Théâtre français, Paris, 1747, 350-352.

the convent of the Hospitaliers de St. François, Rouen.²²

Joseph Pradon became an acolyte in 1685, "sous diacre" and priest in 1687, and curé of Bracquetuit January, 1689. This benefit carried with it a rather large revenue. The Jansenist inclined Duchesse de Longueville had named to it two successive ecclesiastics. Upon the death of the last one in 1665, the son of the great Condé, Henri Jules de Bourbon, as honorary guardian of the feeble-minded son of the Duc de Longueville, appointed Joseph Pradon to the parish. He became curé in 1689 and died January 17th, 1711. Joseph took an interest in poetic composition and had his works crowned at the Palinods of Rouen in 1674, 1675 and 1677.²³ He is mentioned as follows in the history of the Palinods of his city: "Il (the poet) avait un frère nommé Joseph, mort curé de Bracquetuit, au diocèse de Rouen, en 1711, et était en 1672 le Pradon qui ajoutait le jeune pour se distinguer de Nicolas. Il remporta en cette année le prix de l'ode française; Laodice, en était le sujet. Il mit cette ode en vers alcaïque en 1677 et fut également couronné. Dans cet intervalle, et en 1674, il avait réussi dans le même genre; et cependant de deux odes latines qu'il avait présentées, une seule obtient le Miroir d'Argent, elle était sur Horace Cocles: le héros de la seconde était Jupiter dans tout l'appareil de sa puissance, conformément à la pensée

²² She was pensionnaire. By her will she asked to be buried in the cemetery of the Hospitaliers in her religious garb. In a request to the Intendant she signs herself Thérèse de Nauville-Pradon. The seignorial name Nauville for Esnaville which she joins to her name proves she was related by parentage to the branch of the Pradons d'Esnaville and that this branch must have been extinct in 1729.

²³ Ginot et Tougard:- "Les Trois Siècles Palinodiques" - Rouen, 1698, 176-177.

d'un grand poète (Horace Canu 811 l,7) clarus giganteo triumpho: ce tableau ne fut que votif et purement gratuit. La Victoire de Judith lui valut un autre prix de vers alcaïques en 1675, et celle d'Hippomène sur Atalante, un prix de vers alexandrins."²⁴

The son Jacques was a lawyer like his father but a lawyer "ad honores," for there is no record of his pleading at Rouen. Father and son belonged to the congregation of St. Vierge founded by the Jesuits of Rouen. In the register of this congregation for January 24th, 1665 to January 17th, 1667, there is mention of alms given by Messrs. Pradon, father and son, 3 livres, at the same time that other alms were given by lawyers of the congregation. The same register shows under Mises 1676 a sum of 6 livres for readings at the burial of Messrs. de Freuilles, Langlois, Alexandre, and Pradon. Thus Jacques' father died July 24th, 1676, at the age of 74 years.

His mother, Marguerite Delastre, is mentioned at her marriage in 1635 as the daughter and heiress of the late Charles Delastre.²⁵ This name of Delastre was a well known one in Rouen. Bernard de Lastre is recorded in 1625 in the epitaphs of the church and cloister of the Convent des Jacobins of Rouen, chapel of St. Bernard.²⁶ A Dom Fustian de Lastre, Prieur de Saint Vandrille, appears in 1648 among the documents of the abbey of St. Vandrille: "Acte d'absolution

²⁴ Ginot et Tougard; - "Les Trois Siècles Palinodiques" - Rouen, 1698. 176-177.

²⁵ Beaurepaire- Notice sur Pradon, 16.

²⁶ Farin-Histoire de la Ville de Rouen, Part III, 1608, 247:-
"Cy gisent les nobles Fondateurs de plusieurs obits en ceste Chapelle de St. Bernard à eux affectée par noble Seigneur Bernard de Lastre, écuyer vivant, Seigneur et Chatelain de Monderville, qui décida en 1625, et noble Dame Jeanne Esteur de son vivant femme du dit Seigneur, laquelle décida le 8 oct. 1619. Ils ont donné la vitre peinte de la chapelle."

laquelle les dits religieux receivrent;"²⁷ and better known than these was the poet Charles De Lastre well known in the annals of the Palinods of Rouen where he was crowned in 1614 for some verses on "La Vierge heureuse entre les mauvais signes." Two years after this he received the palm which was first prize for the "chant royal." He again received this favor in 1620 for some descriptive verses about the deluge; and in 1623 for "Une Palme d'or croissant dans la terre;" in 1627 for a descriptive piece, "La Métamorphose de la Massue d'Hercule en olivier." Two years before he composed a poem for which he received the prize for the French ode.²⁸ This Charles DeLastre was undoubtedly the father of Margu rite DeLastre, mother of the poet Pradon. The date of her marriage to Jacques Pradon is given as 1635 and at that time she was mentioned as the daughter of the late Charles DeLastre. The activities of Charles cease with 1627 for he no longer appears at the Palinods where he had appeared during some thirteen years. The date of his death is uncertain but as he does not appear in the records of the Palinods after 1627, it is probable that he died soon after that date. As there is no other Charles DeLastre whose death is recorded between 1627 and 1635 it seems probable that "le feu Charles DeLastre" mentioned in connection with the marriage of Margu rite to Jacques Pradon was the grandfather of the poet.

Pradon therefore inherited the poetic strain which he was to follow in later years from his maternal grandfather, and like his

²⁷ Mercure de Gaillon ou Recuell de Pi ces curieuses, 1644.

²⁸ Guinot et Tongard: "Les Trois Si cles Palinodiques", Rouen, 1698, 233-4.

brother Joseph, crowned on three occasions at the Palinods, received the same inspiration toward literary effort. In this connection it is worthy of note that the poet Pradon was also awarded the crown at the Palinods in 1664 for some verses on "Le Péché originel."²⁹ There seems, ^{to be,} therefore, in the literary beginnings of the brothers, a direct influence of the poetic vein coming from the mother's side, aided and influenced by the example of the grandfather whose success at the most important literary event of the city during successive years was marked.

The family fortune of the Pradons during this period seems to have been in an uncertain state. The father while engaged in his legal practice was not successful in the management of his wife's affairs. She was forced to obtain, on April 30th, 1674, a separation of what property belonged to her from her husband's control. His will bears the date of May 9th, 1672; but on May 25th, 1675, presumably on account of this separation of property, an agreement between Jacques and his wife was drawn up in the study of one Maubert, notary of Rouen, in which the contracting parties declare: "Craignant d'estre prévenue par la mort, ils reservoient Dlle. Marguërite, Françoise, et Thérèse Pradon, leurs filles, en partage de leur succession, tant mobile qu'héréditaire." By this act the sons are excluded from the inheritance of their parents. This act was an effort on the part of the parents to provide for their unmarried daughters whose future was not at all assured and who were more in need of what little financial aid their parents could leave them than were Jacques, at the time a promising young dramatist in Paris,³⁰ or Joseph, whose career in the priesthood had probably been decided upon.

²⁹ Beaurepaire:- Notice sur Pradon, 17.

³⁰ His first tragedy, "Pirame et Thisbé", was produced 1674.

The same solicitude for the daughters is apparent in the will of the mother, Margu rite DeLastre, in which she calls upon Joseph to waive his rights to the inheritance she was leaving in favor of his two sisters:³¹ "J'exorte mon fils   vivre avec ses soeurs en v ritable fr re et de correspondre   toute l'amiti  qu'elles ont pour luy. Il est le chef de la famille,³² et elles ont quelque droit d'atendre de luy les seceours dont elles peuvent avoir besoin pour se maintenir et vivre selon leur condition. Pour cela, j'estime qu'il feroit chose bien digne de luy et de son bon nature s'il vouloit bien leur abandonner la jouissance du peu de bien que je laisse, pour subvenir   leur subsistence. Comme il est pourvevd'un bon b n fice,³³ ce petit surcroit dont elles feroient leur n cessaire ne seroit pour luy qu'un superflu peu utile. D'ailleurs, estant plus jeune qu'elles; et leurs infirmit s ne pouvant pas leur faire esp rer longue vie, il y a toute aparence que le retour de ce bien ne sera pas fort esloign  et que ce ne sera qu'une jouissance de quelques ann es qui rendra leur vye un peu plus commode sans rien d ranger dans le cours de la sienne. J'adjousteray, si les derniers sentiments d'une m re toute pleine de tendresse pour luy peuvent encore quelque chose sur son coeur; qu'il ne me sauroit faire un plus grand plaisir que de faire ce petit effort sur son interest, qui ne sauroit manquer de luy atirer les b n dictions du ciel, ainsy que l'estime et l'aprobation des hommes." There is no record to show whether Joseph carried out the request of his mother after her death on September 7th, 1709.

³¹ Fran oise Pradon died August 6th, 1702, buried cemetery St. Vivien.

³² Jacques Pradon died in 1698.

³³ Joseph Pradon became cur  de Bracquetuit, 1689.

His sisters Margu erite and Th er ese lived on after his death, which occurred in 1711,³⁴ so that he like his brother the poet had no material aid from his parents.

The poet Pradon, "le fameux Pradon", as one of his contemporaries not very flatteringly calls him,³⁵ was of the good and respectable bourgeoisie, a "noble homme" of the robe as were his ancestors, of good standing among his townspeople. On his mother's side he had the renown of Charles Delastre whose literary successes made of him a well known figure in the intellectual and cultured life of the city, an honor and distinction which would be of service to the success of his grandsons in the society of Rouen. That they did take advantage of their birth and relationship is apparent from the early success the brothers attained in the literary competition at the Palinods where their grandfather had excelled. The career of Joseph from priest to cur e of one of the best organized charges of the region and appointed as he was by one of the most powerful as well as the most aristocratic personages of the time, Henri Jules de Bourbon, seem to point to a social fitness and a cultivated refinement of manners which his early training and home influence must have induced. With the poet Jacques the home environment must have been the same. If later experience made of his a ridiculous figure, ignorant and ill-kept as the biographers represent him,³⁶ there is no evidence of such a pitiful

³⁴ Margu erite Pradon died in 1714, buried chapel St. Vivien. Th er ese Pradon died in 1729, buried cemetery Hospitaliers de St. Fran ois.

³⁵ Vigneul-Marville: M langes d'Histoire et de Litt rature, Paris, 1725, II, 89.

³⁶ Ibid., II, p. 90 and Niceron: M moires pour servir etc. XLIII, 371-79, and Le P re Ducerceau: La N cessit  de la Critique, Paris, 1733, p. 116.

figure in the young poet who began his career by winning the applause of the intellectual society of his native place. It is possible that his biographers were as mistaken upon this point as they were in ascribing to him the name Nicolas which was not his and in presuming that he was born in 1632 when in fact we know him to have been born some twelve years later.

It is indeed curious that almost all the literary historians have written him down Nicolas Pradon. This is especially true of biographers of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Among those contemporary to the poet there is no mention of the poet's first name. Baillet in his "Jugements des Savans" speaks of him as "Mr. Pradon aujourd'hui vivant" with a supplementary note concerning his death.³⁷ Neither the "Mélanges d'histoire littéraire" of Vigneul-Marville³⁸ nor "Le Parnasse français" of Titon de Tillet³⁹ refer to him otherwise than Pradon; while the same indefinite mention is made of him in the "Recherches sur le Théâtre français," of De Beauchamps.⁴⁰ Nicéron in his "Mémoires"⁴¹ refers to him as Pradon. The title of the article gives "N. Pradon" but the article begins with the word "Nicolas". As the Frères Parfaict in their history of the theatre⁴² in the article on the poet give Nicéron as source of their information, they have therefore accepted the

³⁷ Paris, 1724, p. 387.

³⁸ " 1725, Vol. II, p. 89.

³⁹ " 1732, p. 476.

⁴⁰ " 1735, p.

⁴¹ " 1745, Vol. XLIII, p. 371.

⁴² " 1747, Vol. IX, p. 350.

name Nicolas and this name has persisted through the various later biographies down to the nineteenth century when the original error in Nicéron was explained by Foisset in an article of the *Biographie Universelle* of Michaud.⁴³ The *Frères Parfaict* refer also to the "Mercure Galant" for January, 1698, but there the poet is again referred to as "Pradon". The fault, then, appears to have been that of the editor of Nicéron. These *Mémoires*, beginning in 1727 and continuing to appear until 1745, were the work of Nicéron aided by le Père Oudin, the abbé Bonardi, J. B. Michault, and the abbé Goujet.⁴⁴

J. B. Michault, born 1707, died 1770, contributed the articles in the last volume, the 43rd, on Gaguin, Boyer, Porta, Cesalpin, Dupleix, and Pradon which fill the half of this volume.⁴⁵ In writing the biographical notes to his article on Pradon and unable to state the baptismal name of the poet, he wrote the letter N to signify that the baptismal name was unknown: "Comme Michault ignorait le nom de baptême de Pradon, il avait écrit N. Pradon, ce qui signifiait que le nom de baptême était inconnu; mais au lieu de suivre exactement son manuscrit, le signe N fut métamorphosé en Nicolas. La faute a été copiée et répétée depuis dans le *Calendrier historique des sciences*, dans les *Tablettes dramatiques*, dans tous les *Dictionnaires historiques*, jusques et compris le *Nouveau Dictionnaire universel historique*, en 20 volumes, et même dans son abrégé en 3 volumes in-8°. Cependant l'Abbé Desfontaines, qui était du pays de Pradon, et qui avait fait vainement beaucoup de recherches sur le prénom de son compatriote,

⁴³ Paris, 1814.....See note under Michaud, Vol. 28, p. 219.

⁴⁴ Quérard-LaFrance littéraire, Paris, 1835, p. 408-424.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 40.

écrivit à Michault lui-même qui donne ces détails dans un Fragment d'une lettre à M. l'Abbé Bonardi qu'on trouve à la page 157 du tome 1^{re} des Mélanges historiques et philologiques.⁴⁶ The original error of ascribing to Jacques Pradon the name Nicolas goes back therefore to Nicéron. If Michault wrote nearly the last half of the last volume of Nicéron's Mémoires, appearing as they did from 1727-45,⁴⁷ wherein the article on Pradon is found, the Frères Parfaict must have copied from Nicéron the word Nicolas as written by Michault for their own "Histoire du Théâtre," published in 1747 where Nicéron is given as source of information on the poet: "Le Continuateur des Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des Hommes Illustres de la République des Lettres ne vous apprend presque rien de la personne de Nicolas Pradon, né à Rouen."

The early career of Jacques Pradon in his profession of the law remains largely a matter of conjecture. There is no record of his pleading before the local court nor have we any documentary evidence of his following the profession at all. Of his early attempts at literary composition we have the following verses which were crowned at the Palinods in 1664. These stanzas on "Le Péché originel" were recorded in the register of the Palinods under the name of Pradon with nothing to show whether they were of Jacques or Joseph. The latter, however, was accustomed to affix "le jeune" to his signature after 1672 to distinguish himself, in all probability, from his brother.⁴⁸ It was in this year that Joseph received the prize for the ode which encouraged him to further efforts at the Palinods:-

⁴⁶ Paris, 1754, Vol. I, p. 157, note.

⁴⁷ Quérard:-La France littéraire, p. 408.

⁴⁸ Les Trois Siècles palinodiques, p. 177.

Ce crime originel ayant souillé notre estre,
 En chassa l'innocence en la faisant périr,
 Tel en devint l'effet que, sur le point de naistre,
 Par son poison fatal, on nous vit tous mourir.

Mais cette triste loy n'a pas esté suivie,
 La Fille de Sion eut un plus heureux sort,
 Et l'arbre qui devoit porter le fruit de vie,
 Ne pouvoit pas servir de victime à la mort.

Bienqu'il ait triomphé de toute la nature,
 L'ayant fait succomber dessous sa pesanteur,
 Il se voit terrassé par cette créature
 Qui nous devoit un jour donner le créateur.

Le démon, furieux, qui craint cette conquête,
 Pour en rompre l'effect oppose les enfers,
 Mais ce captif vaincu par cette illustre teste,
 Auroit-il pu jamais la charger de ses fers?

Cet astre dissipa ces nuages funèbres
 Par l'ornement pompeux d'un éclat non pareil;
 Cette aurore naissante au milieu des ténèbres,
 Malgré tant de brouillards fit lever un soleil.

De la Divinité cette image fidelle,
 Dans la conception de son corps virginal,
 Ne pouvoit recevoir de tache originelle,
 Puisqu'elle fut conformé à son original. ⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Beaurepaire - Notice sur Pradon, p. 24.

All the biographers maintain a silence concerning the early life of Pradon. Beaurepaire, the most recent, finds no trace of further literary effort of the poet at Rouen beyond the date of his appearance at the Palinods. In this he has followed the statement of Nicéron: "Il vient d'assez bonne heure à Paris" - an idea which has held ground throughout the various biographical dictionaries. It was assumed that he came to Paris early living in intimate relations with some of the wits of the day, supporting himself in some unexplained way until the production of his first tragedy, "Pirame et Thisbé," in 1674; yet the poet states in the dedicatory epistle to the play addressed to the Duc de Montausier:- "Plus d'une raison indispensable m'oblige à vous dédier cet Ouvrage. Il est né dans une Province où les Muses font gloire d'estre de votre Gouvernement, aussi bien que ses Peuples; et d'ailleurs, Monseigneur, vous l'avez trop honoré de vostre protection à la Cour, pour paraître sous un autre nom que le votre."⁵⁰

Charles de Sainte-Maure, Baron de Montausier, born 1610, was appointed governor of Normandy upon the death of the Baron de Longueville, March, 1663: "en attendant que le jeune duc put succéder à son père."⁵¹ The following year he went to meet the Cardinals Chigi and Imperiali, Papal legates, in whose hands were the arrangements for settling at Fontainebleau certain diplomatic questions leading out of damages to the French embassy building at Rome. In July of this year he became Duc de Montausier. Four years later in spite of his age, he took part in the short campaign of a few months which resulted in the conquest of la Franche-

⁵⁰ Epitre de Pirame et Thisbé.

⁵¹ Victor Cousin:-La Société française au XVII Siècle. Paris, 1905, Vol. II, p. 45.

Compté; then he betook himself to Rouen upon learning of the ravages of the plague in that city, bringing strength and encouragement to the panic-stricken inhabitants, preserving order, and making generous contributions of alms. He made an excellent impression not only in the province over which he was governor but likewise at the court. This action of devotion added to the esteem in which he was held by the king who thereupon appointed him in 1668 "gouverneur" of the Dauphin.⁵² Thus Montausier was governor of Normandy from 1663 until 1668.

If Pradon, then, could say in his epistle to the Duc de Montausier that his tragedy took life "dans une Province où les Muses font gloire d'estre de votre Gouvernement aussi bien que ses Peuples" it is evident that "Pirame et Thisbé" was not written at Paris under the influence of the précieux salons of the day as has been maintained by literary critics,⁵³ but in his native city of Rouen at some time between the years 1663 and 1674, the date of its production, in the period succeeding the first literary triumph of the author at the Palinods in 1664. The Duc de Montausier left Rouen in September, 1668⁵⁴ to take up his new duties with his royal pupil. It is between this date and that of the production of the tragedy in 1674 that Pradon left his native city, with his first ambitious literary work completed, to try his fortune at the capital, trusting to gain the protection of the doubly important duke whom he most certainly must have known in some manner at Rouen. Indeed it was the custom for the governor to be present at all sittings of the Académie des Palinods where Pradon's name and that of

⁵² Nouvelle Biographie générale (Didot) Paris, 1861.

⁵³ See Mémoires of Nicéron; Biog. nouvelle, Didot, article Pradon: Mlle. Bosquet, Revue de Rouen and Quérard:-La France littéraire.

⁵⁴ Mémoires de M. le Duc de Montausier écrits sur les Mémoires de Madame la Duchesse d'Uzès sa fille par H. (le Père Petit) Paris, 1736, 2 vol; also Amédée Roux;- "Montausier, sa vie et son temps," Paris Didier, 1861

his family were not unknown.⁵⁵ Furthermore, he, a Norman man of letters, could depend upon a reception at the Hôtel Montausier, for "c'est ainsi que par un de ses gouverneurs, la Normandie se rattache étroitement à toutes les graces raffinées de cet hôtel célèbre.....et où se rassemblaient souvent, avec beaucoup d'autres célébrités, la plupart des spirituelles normandes dont nous aimons à évoquer la presence dans la grande salle des Palinods, le jour de la fête de la Conception de la Vierge."⁵⁶ Such protection Pradon acknowledges in his dedicatory remarks when he says: "et d'ailleurs, Monseigneur, vous l'avez trop honoré de vostre protection à la Cour, pour paroître sous un autre nom que le votre."⁵⁷

In this connection and as additional light upon Pradon's efforts to obtain the favor and protection of the Montausiers are some verses included in the dedicatory epistle of the "Pirame" which were apparently written some years before the production of the play. This passage of the epistle seems curious enough to warrant its citation in full, for none of the biographers of the poet mention the verses and it has been generally assumed that with the exception of the poem on "Le Péché originel" there were no extant examples of the poet's work previous to his first tragedy:-

Pour effacer un jour tous leurs faits inouis,
 Qu'il suive seulement les traces de Louis;
 L'Antiquité n'a point de si parfait Modèle,

⁵⁵Edmond Frère:-Une Séance de l'Académie des Palinods en 1640, Rouen, 1867, p.2-3.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 7.

⁵⁷Epître de Pirame et Thisbé.

Ta gloire est de l'en rendre une Image fidelle,
 Un exemple si grand suffit à l'exciter,
 Et pour les passer tous, il n'a qu'à l'imiter."⁵⁸

Je n'ay pu m'empescher, Monseigneur, de répéter icy ces Vers, que j'eus l'honneur de vous présenter il y a quelques années; Vous les receutes si favorablement, que j'espère un pareil traitement pour Pirame et Thisbé. C'est un coup d'essay pour le Théâtre, que vous avez eu la bonté d'approuver."

The tragedy of "Pirame" was then his first long composition. As for the verses in the Epître, it is possible that they were written either in 1668 or the year following when Montausier had already assumed direction of the Dauphin's education; that Pradon composed them at Rouen on the eve of his departure for Paris, congratulating the duke on his appointment as governor of the Dauphin and hoping thereby to gain favor and secure the production of his first dramatic work. It is clear that they precede the first tragedy and attach the author to the society in which the Duc de Montausier moved.

A recent historian has pointed out that Montausier was accustomed to offer protection to the poets of the day, especially to those who had been of service to him in the composition of the famous *Guirlande de Julie* (1641) of whom Corneille was the most illustrious:⁵⁹ "On connaît le zèle emporté de M. de Montausier pour tous ces auteurs qui avaient travaillé à la fameuse *Guirlande de Julie*. L'époux de Julie d'Angennes, représentant et héritier

⁵⁸ The quotation marks are Pradon's.

⁵⁹ Gustave Lanson: Histoire de la Litt. française, 11 edit., p.428. note.

direct du fameux hôtel, était engagé d'honneur à la défense des hommes qui en avaient fait l'ornement et la gloire. Aussi menaçait-il d'envoyer les médisants rimer dans la rivière; aussi s'employait-il à faire refuser le privilège nécessaire à la publication de l'Art poétique."⁶⁰ At the time of Pradon's entrance into this society fashion had changed somewhat in literature and manners but the précieux spirit of the hôtel de Rambouillet had taken a more pronounced form among those who surrounded Julie d'Angennes, Duchesse de Montausier.

The beginnings of the poet were modest, but in no way obscure. His early attempts in literary composition, such as have come down to us, were not numerous yet he had no cause for discouragement when he set out for Paris with his first tragedy.

"Pirame et Thisbé" was presented at the théâtre de la Bourgogne in 1674.⁶¹ In his preface the author speaks modestly of himself, calling attention to his inexperience in the ways of the theatre: "Après que le Public est venu en foule à cette Pièce, et l'a honorée assez longtemps de son assiduité, je ne devois point répondre avec scrupules de quelques Particuliers; c'est plutôt un remerciement qu'une justification que je luy dois aujourd'hui. Cependant sans me prévaloir d'une réussite qui a bien passé mes espérances, je dirai d'abord ingénument que je ne prétends pas que ce coup d'essai pour le Théâtre soit un chef-d'oeuvre. Il y a sans doute bien des choses qui pourroient être mieux tournées; mais quoi qu'il en soit, elle a eu le bonheur de plaire; et c'est la première Règle du Théâtre."⁶²

⁶⁰Deltour:-Les Ennemies de Racine, Paris, 1859, p.64-5.

⁶¹Frères Parfaict:-Hist. de Théât. français, Vol. XI, p. 438.

⁶²Preface de Pirame et Thisbé:Oeuvres de M. Pradon en deux tomes, nouvelle édition, corrigée et augmentée, Paris, par la compagnie des Libraires Associés 1744.

The Particuliers to whom he refers will give him trouble later and will pursue him throughout life. It is evident that his first efforts brought forth criticism on the part of certain individuals whom one is tempted to identify with those who later caused him trouble. Pradon seems well pleased with the reception accorded the piece but the historians of the theatre make no mention of it as meritorious at the time. There is, however, a record in the Régistre of La Grange of a "Pirame" represented three times:- 1679, 1680 and 1681 which is in all probability the play of Pradon. Encouraged by his initial success Pradon in his preface, speaking of the effect of the play on his audience, promises a second tragedy: "Ce recit a tiré tant de larmes et a fait un si grand effet que s'il échape à ma Plume une seconde Pièce de Théâtre, je souhaite de tout mon coeur qu'elle soit remplie de fautes de cette nature." ⁶³

His second play, "Tamerlan ou la Mort de Bajazet" was presented at the Théâtre de Bourgogne 1675 ⁶⁴ and printed 1676. ⁶⁵ The play after a short run was withdrawn, due, as the poet claims, to the enmity of his critics and a deliberate effort to stifle the play:- "Si Thisbé n'avoit pas été si loin peut-être qu'on eût laissé un libre cours à Tamerlan et qu'on ne l'eût pas étouffé (comme on a fait) dans le plus fort de son succès. C'est le jugement que tous les Gens désintéressés, et qui n'agissent point par les ressorts de la Cabale ont fait de cette injustice, qui m'a été plus glorieuse dans le monde qu'un plus ample succès. Cependant je ne doute pas qu'il n'y ait plusieurs fautes dans cet Ouvrage; je ne prétends pas

⁶³ Préface de Pirame et Thisbé: Oeuvres de M. Pradon en deux tomes, nouvelle édition, corrigée et augmentée, Paris, par la compagnie des Libraires Associés 1744.

⁶⁴ Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât. Vol. XI, p. 430.

⁶⁵ Coursel:-Nouvelle Biographie normande 1866, p. 388.

être infallible: et si nos Maîtres du Théâtre, qui y regnent avec tant d'empire et de justice, sont exposés eux-mêmes à des Critiques qui leur ont donné tant d'emotion, pourquoi un jeune Auteur qui commence, et qui n'est encore qu'à sa seconde Pièce en seroit-il plus exempt qu'eux? Il seroit seulement à souhaiter que ces Messieurs tinssent le même langage qu'ils font tenir à leurs Héros; qu'en faisant admirer leurs Ouvrages, ils fissent admirer en même temps leur procédé, et que les sentimens de leur coeur fussent aussi généreux et aussi grands que ceux de leur esprit." ⁶⁶

The Particuliers mentioned in the preface to "Pirame" have now become Critiques and Maîtres du Théâtre, those who will later pursue the poet and with their satire will make a place for him, none too desirable in the literature of his age. Evidences of the success of this play are confusing. Pradon gives the impression that it was not given a fair trial. Titon de Tillet in his commentary on it says:- "La Tragédie de Tamerlan eut de grands applaudissemens dans le temps qu'elle parut pour la première fois et on disoit le heureux Tamerlan du malheureux Pradon." ⁶⁷ This evidence is in contradiction to that of Subligny, a contemporary of the poet and not too unfavorably disposed to him: "Je ne veux point examiner si la brusque fierté de Tamerlan doit sa prompte chute aux brigues indignes de M. Racine ou au défaut de sa propre." ⁶⁸ La Grange notes that the play was taken up by the Troupe de l'Hôtel de Guénégaud, November 26, 1677, and had then six performances. ⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Preface to Tamerlan, edition, Paris, 1744.

⁶⁷ Titon du Tillet:- Le Parnasse français Paris, 1732, p. 471.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Régistre de La Grange, 1658-1685.

The Tragedy was dedicated to "Monsieur Des Marets, Conseiller du Roy, en Tous les Conseils, et Maistre des Requestes, ordinaire de son Hostel." This epistle is rather curious in that it throws some light on the aims and method of the poet to gain a livelihood which he certainly could not acquire from the production of two tragedies the success of which were not sufficient to provide for his maintenance. Details of his life and manner of living at this time are lacking. We can only conjecture what source of income he had at his disposal. The reference to him quoted above as "le malheureux Pradon" suggests not only misfortune in his literary efforts but in his private life as well. The favor of the Duc de Montausier could not have sufficed for his personal needs. In a society such as that of the time when litterateurs were wont to rely upon the favors of the great, Pradon was justified in seeking to gain such favors from one whose fortune was ample and whose position was such that he could be of assistance. This was, therefore, an effort on Pradon's part to gain financial aid from Des Marets either directly or through his influence.

This Des Marets was Nicolas Des Marets, nephew and pupil of the great Colbert, born 1650 and died 1728, appointed "maître des requêtes" upon his uncle's recommendation, later "intendant des finances" (1683), and in the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV "contrôler général," February 27th, 1708.⁷⁰ Saint Simon in his "Mémoires" says of him:—"C'étoit un grand homme très bien fait, d'un visage et d'une physiognomie agréable, qui annonçoit la sagesse et la douceur, qui étoient les deux choses du monde

⁷⁰ Michaud:—Biog. universelle, Paris, 1814. p. 206-28.

qu'il tenoit le moins. Son père étoit trésorier de France à Soisson, qui étoit riche dans son état, fils d'un manant, gros laboureur d'auprès de Noyon, qui s'étoit enrichi dans la ferme de l'abbaye d'Orcamp, qu'il avoit tenue bien des années, après avoir labouré dans son jeune temps. Son fils, le trésorier de France, avoit épousé une soeur de M. Colbert longtemps avant la fortune de ce ministre, qui depuis prit Des Marets, son neveu, dans ses bureaux, et le fit après intendant de finances. C'étoit un homme d'esprit net, lent et paresseux, mais que l'ambition et l'amour du gain aiguillonoit au sorte que M. de Seignelay, son cousin germain, l'avoit pris en aversion, parce que M. Colbert le lui donnoit toujours pour exemple.....Des Marets, élevé et conduit par son oncle, en avoit appris toutes les maximes et tout l'art du gouvernement des finances.....Il avoit très bien pris avec le Roi, mieux encore avec Mme. de Maintenon, par les charmes de la finance et le goût qu'elle commençoit à prendre pour sa femme..... Il avoit pour soi Madame la Dauphine, par les manèges de sa femme et par les soins qu'il avoit de plaire pécuniairement à tout ce qui l'approchoit véritablement."⁷¹

At the time of the dedication of "Tamerlan", Des Marets had been made Maître des Requêtes through his uncle's influence and although not of great prominence was independently wealthy and moreover in a position to obtain favors for others through his relationship and close connection with the minister of finance. By nature disposed, as Saint Simon says, to give financial assistance to those who favored him, he would be a fitting person to whom a poet might dedicate his tragedy. "Vous m'avez trop fait connoistre," says

⁷¹ Mémoires Vol. II, p. 324-5, édition Chereulet-Regnier, Paris, 1883; vol. IX, p. 15-16.

Pradon, "que vous estiez ennemy des louanges pour vous en donner; aussi n'ayez plus de crainte d'une Epistre Dédicatoire. Je supprime aux moindres choses qui pourroient allarmer vostre modestie. Cependant prenez garde, que pour éviter une affaire avec elle, vous ne m'en fassiez une avec la Vérité. Mais, Monsieur, vous en répondrez et pour elle et pour moy; j'aime mieux la condamner au silence que de luy servir d'un faible Interprète: D'ailleurs vous faites assez connoistre ce que vous valez sans avoir besoin qu'un autre que vostre Mérite en parle pour vous. Tout le monde sçait avec quelle assiduité vous vous acquitez des Emplois qui vous attachent incessamment auprès de Monseigneur vostre Oncle, et que vous donnez tout au travail et rien au plaisir, lors que vous estes dans le plus bel âge de le prendre; mais Monsieur, je voy que cecy pouvoit encore vous déplaire, et j'aime mieux vous offrir TAMERLAN, qui vous épargnera la fatigue d'une Epistre plus longue. J'espère que malgré le grand nombre d'Affaires qui vous environnent vous donnerez quelques momens à la lecture de cet Ouvrage, et que vous me ferez la grâce de le recevoir comme une marque du respect avec lequel je suis Monsieur, Vostre très humble et très obéissant Serviteur, Pradon."⁷²

The epistle is well turned with a flattery well modulated to please. The opening lines suggest the poet's acquaintance with Des Marets to the extent of allowing him to presume again upon his good nature. In how far this dedication brought aid to Pradon is unknown; it is possible some aid was given him according to custom, a supposition which may be supported by what is known of Des Marets' character.

⁷² Epître de Tamerlan.

On Sunday the third of January, 1677, the third tragedy, "Phèdre et Hippolyte" was produced. The composition of this piece took but a short time, for the poet acknowledges in the final remarks to the preface that he spent three months in the writing:- "Au reste, je ne doute point qu'on ne trouve quelques fautes dans cette Pièce, dont les vers ne m'ont coûté que trois mois, puisqu'on en trouve bien dans celles qu'on a été deux ans à travailler et à polir."⁷³ The relation of this work to Racine's "Phèdre" will be discussed later. That Pradon wrote his play in the spirit of rivalry is apparent from the following:- "Ainsi j'avoue franchement que ça n'a point été un effet de hasard qui m'a fait rencontrer avec M. Racine, mais un pure effet de mon choix."⁷⁴ The quarrel of the "Phèdres" was most unfortunate for the poet. By working in direct competition with Racine he brought upon himself the attacks of Boileau and all the partisans of Racine who had until then, although hostile to the aesthetics of Pradon, lacked a direct cause and suitable subject for attack. The preface shows that Pradon felt this general attack against him and was aware of its source:- "Ces anciens Grecs dont le style est si sublime et qui nous doivent servir de Modèles n'auroient point empêché dans Athènes les meilleures actrices d'une troupe de jouer en premier rôle comme nos modernes l'ont fait à Paris, au théâtre de Guénégaud. C'est ce que le public a vu avec indignation et avec mépris, mais il m'en a assez vengé et je lui ai trop d'obligations pour différer plus longtemps à l'avertir, de ce qui se trame contre lui; on le menace d'une satire où l'on l'accuse de méchant goût, peut-être parcequ'il a osé applaudir

⁷³ Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât. Vol. XII, p. 46-60.

⁷⁴ Préface de Phèdre et Hippolyte, Paris, Jean Ribou, 1677.

à mon ouvrage, et l'on me menace aussi de la partager avec lui pour avoir été assez heureux pour lui plaire. La satire est une bête qui ne me fait point de peur et que l'on range quelquefois à la raison; de sorte que si le succès de Phèdre m'attire quelques traits du sieur D.....⁷⁵ je ne m'en vengerai qu'en faisant mon possible de lui fournir tous les ans de nouvelle matière par une bonne pièce de théâtre de ma façon afin de mériter une satire de la siennè..."⁷⁶

The attack of Boileau referred to in the preface occurs in the Epître VII addressed to Racine:-

Mais pour un tas grossier de frivoles esprits,
 Admirateurs zélés de toute oeuvre insipide,
 Que, non loin de la place où Brioche⁷⁷ préside,
 Sans chercher dans les vers ni cadence ni son,
 Il s'en aille admirer le savoir de Pradon.

From "Phèdre" dates the bitter campaign carried on by Boileau against Pradon until the poet's death. The tragedy is dedicated to the Duchesse de Bouillon who took a lively interest in its success. The play had sixteen performances before the tragedy of Racine gained the public's full approval. The reason for the encouragement which Madame de Bouillon and her brother the Duc de Nevers gave to Pradon's play will be discussed later. Its initial success depended upon the favor of prominent social figures, aided by the précieuse spirit of the Montausier salon. Among the habituées of the Hôtel de Rambouillet had been Mlle. de la Garde, afterward Madame Des Houlières, who, according to Saint-Beuve:- "avait fréquenté les der-

⁷⁵ Boileau-Despréaux.

⁷⁶ Preface to "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

⁷⁷ Jean Brioche, manipulator of marionettes, located near the Pont Neuf at the end of the Rue Guénégaud, theatre in which the "Phèdre et Hippolyte" of Pradon was played.

niers jours de l'Hôtel Rambouillet et pris un rang distingué, entre les précieuses, Somaise n'a pas manqué de l'enregistrer dans son grand Dictionnaire sous le nom Dioclée."⁷⁸ It is quite probable that Pradon met her at the Montausier salon. The daughter of La Des Houlières, Mlle. Des Houlières, tells us that Pradon frequented her mother's salon:- "Pradon venait souvent chez ma mère pour laquelle il avait beaucoup de considération, et au goût de qui il avait assez de confiance pour la venir consulter sur les ouvrages qu'il faisait."⁷⁹ It was this same Madame Des Houlières who introduced him at the Hôtel de Bouillon,⁸⁰ Thus once more the poet found protectors in the home of one of the most important families of the capital. The Duchesse de Bouillon and the Duc de Nevers became from a spirit of "parti pris" and for other reasons Pradon's protectors. This was not a new role for the Duchesse de Bouillon, for she had favored La Fontaine in his early career.

Her brother, the Duc de Nevers, was according to St. Simon:- "Un Italien de beaucoup d'esprit qui faisoit les plus jolis vers du monde; qui ne lui coûtoient rien, et sur-le-champ; fort riche, il ne tient qu'à lui de faire une grande fortune à l'ombre de la mémoire du Cardinal Mazarin."⁸¹ He too had been a frequenter of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Pradon was therefore not so much passing from one set of powerful friends to another as he was continuing in the same environment with a mere change of influential persons. His lack of judgment in competing with a poet so far beyond him in poetic skill

⁷⁸ St. Beuve:- Portraits de Femmes: Une Ruelle poétique sous Louis XIV, p. 365.

⁷⁹ St. Beuve:- Causeries, Vol. XIII, p. 386: Les Nièces de Mazarin.

⁸⁰ Deltour:- Les Ennemis de Racine, Paris, 1859, p. 85.

⁸¹ Mémoires, Vol. V, 175.

was due either to a misconception of his powers as dramatic poet or to a desire to please those social leaders whose favor he sought and who had urged him to such a competition. The dubious success of "Pirame" should not have encouraged him to attempt to equal Racine. The poet's modesty in the prefaces to his earlier plays is in marked contrast to the peculiar effrontery of the "Phèdre" preface and would lead one to suspect that he was advised to make the fatal attempt which cost him his reputation.

Angered at the criticism directed against "Phèdre et Hippolyte" and possibly at its ultimate failure, Pradon attempted to defend his manner of treating the subject and at the same time to ridicule his critics in a comedy to which he refers in his preface:-
 "Je n'ai point parlé ici de la conduite de cet ouvrage; elle a été généralement trop approuvée quoique je me sois un peu éloigné de celle d'Euripide et de Sénèque, mais j'en feroi voir la raison en un autre lieu par une dissertation plus ample que je donnerai au public,"⁸² and later in his "Nouvelles Remarques sur Tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D.....":⁸³ "J'avois même fait en ce temps une Critique en vers sur la Phèdre de M.R.**** parceque le bruit courut qu'il en faisoit une sur la mienne. Celle que j'apportay à l'Hôtel de Guénégaud étoit une pièce en un Acte que je leus à des personnes du premier Rangs; elle les divertit asses et auroit peut-être fait connoître que les endroits les plus beaux, et les plus sérieux sont quelquefois susceptibles du plus grand comique. Cela n'ôte rien de la Phèdre de M. Racine que j'estime fort. Cette petite Critique s'intituloit: Le jugement d'Apollon sur la Phèdre des anciens.

⁸² Preface of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

⁸³ Paris, 1685, with fictitious printing mark: La Haye chez Jean Stick.

Elle étoit prête à paroître sur le théâtre de Guénégaud mais par politique on la supprima."

On December 17th of the same year the "Electre" of Pradon was produced at the Théâtre de Guénégaud but with slight success, having only eight performances.⁸⁴ Owing to the bad reception accorded it by the public or to its little worth, he never saw fit to publish it. De Visé in the "Mercure Galant" makes slight mention of it:- "Comme nous allons entrer dans la Saison des Plaisirs, je croy que j'auray à vous parler le Mois prochain de plusieurs Divertissemens. On n'a veu que les anciens Opera pendant celuy ci et rien n'a paru de nouveau sur le Théâtre, à l'exception de l'Electre de Mr. Pradon qui a esté jouée par la Troupe du Faubourg S. Germain."⁸⁵ That Pradon's success with the public was not wholly a fictitious one is apparent from the efforts of the troupe of the Guénégaud during the period preceding the production of "Electre" to attract the public to the forthcoming performance.

They gave on the 26th of November a representation of his "Tamerlan" which was repeated three times thereafter. The Frères Parfaict in explaining the statement of the "Mercure Galant":- "On n'a vu que les anciens Opera, et rien n'a paru de nouveau sur le Théâtre" give us what little information we possess on the tragedy of "Electre." It seems the players hoped to find a play in this one which not only would tide them over a season made up largely of revivals but which would introduce something new to their public and bring them profit:- "Cette année fut presque aussi sterile en nouveautés que la précédente, les deux Troupes

⁸⁴ Régistre de La Grange.

⁸⁵ De Visé:-Mercure Galant, Paris, 1677, p. 314.

se trouvèrent obligées de recourir aux anciennes Pièces: celle de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne fit paroître le Jodelet Maître et Valet de M. Scarron, et le Dom Bertrand de Cigarral de M. Corneille de L'Isle. La Troupe de l'Hôtel de Guénégaud donna cinq représentations des Visionnaires de M. Desmarets autant des Charmes de Félicie, Pastorale de M. de Montauban et ensuite trois du Désespoir Extravagant, Comédie d'un Auteur Anonyme, vrai-semblablement très foible puisqu'elle n'a jamais été imprimée. Pour appuyer cette dernière Pièce, ils la firent précéder par les Fourberies de Scapin. Voilà de quelle façon cette Troupe passa son Été espérant néanmoins que le succès d'Electre la dédommageroit amplement. Les Comédiens voulurent prévenir le Public en faveur de l'Auteur par quelques représentations de sa Tragédie de Tamarlan."⁸⁶

At this point there is a lapse of two years during which time nothing is known of the poet. He does not appear on the register of the theatres and there are no facts to reveal in what he was engaged or how he maintained himself. It is possible that chagrined at the notoriety which had attended his "Phèdre et Hippolyte" and the ill-success of "Electre", he abandoned the theatre.

His tragedy of "La Troade," produced January 17th, 1679, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne⁸⁷ is barely mentioned in La Grange.⁸⁸ The "Mercure Galant" would give the impression that the play attracted

⁸⁶ Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât. français, Vol. XIII, p. 72.

⁸⁷ Ibid, Vol. XII, p. 138.

⁸⁸ This piece and the succeeding one, Statira, both produced at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, could not have been of interest to the troupe of Molière whose union with the troupe of the Bourgogne does not take place until the succeeding year.

some attention:- "La Troade, Tragédie nouvelle de M. Pradon, a paru depuis quinze jours sur le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne. Leurs Altesses Royales en ont honoré une représentation de leur préférence. C'est une avantage qui s'attirent ordinairement les Pièces qui font du bruit."⁸⁹ The poet's remarks in his preface lead one to suppose that it had more than a passing performance:- "Cependant je ne dois pas me plaindre du destin de cette pièce: puis qu'après avoir attiré toute la cour à Paris dans ses premières représentations, elle a eu l'honneur d'estre représentée devant sa Majesté; qui l'a honorée d'une attention particulière, et de ses applaudissements."⁹⁰ It is apparent that it ran for a sufficient time to allow the critics to circulate this sonnet which, if accepted as an unbiased opinion of the piece, gives us a poor idea of the subject matter:-

D'un crêpe noir Hecube embeguinée,
 Lamente, pleure, et grimace toujours;
 Dames en deuil courent à son secours;
 Onques ne fut plus lugubre journée.

Ulysse vient, fait nargue à l'hymenée,
 Le coeur féru de nouvelles amours;
 Pyrrhus et lui font de vaillans discours;
 Mais aux discours leur vaillance est bornée.

Après cela plus que confusion,
 Tant il n'en fut dans la grande Ilion,
 Lors de la nuit aux Troyens si fatale,

⁸⁹ Mercure Galant, Jan. 1679, p. 33.

⁹⁰ Preface to La Troade, Paris, 1679.

En vain Baron⁹¹ attend le brouhaha,
 Point n'oseroit en faire la cabale,
 Un chacun vaille, et s'endort, ou s'en va.⁹²

The following epigram is equally severe:-

Quand j'ay vu de Pradon la Pièce détestable,
 Admirant du destin le caprice fatal,
 Pour te perdre, ai-je dit, Ilion déplorable
 Pallas a toujours un cheval.⁹³

Pradon, in the meanwhile, had found a new protector, one sufficiently close to the royal person to obtain any aid and assistance of which the poet might be in need. The dedicatory epistle of this play is addressed to "Monseigneur le Duc d'Aumont, Pair de France, Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre du Roy, Gouverneur de Boulogne et du Boulonais, etc." in which the poet says: "Je n'aurois pu, sans une extrême ingratitude, mettre un autre nom que le vostre à la teste d'un ouvrage, qui n'auroit peut-estre jamais paru à la cour sans la protection dont vous l'avez honoré à Paris..... je ne dis rien, Monseigneur, de cette générosité particulière, de cette bonté prévenante, de cette magnificence extraordinaire que vous faites si souvent admirer à toute la France, puisque vostre modestie m'impose un silence que mon peu de capacité à estaler des vérités si éclatantes devoit déjà m'avoir imposé....je vous supplie donc, Monseigneur, très humblement de me continuer l'honneur de vostre protection."⁹⁴

⁹¹ "Il jouait le rôle de Pyrrhus et Champmeslé celui d'Ulysse" - Parfaict Frères, Vol. XII, p.140-1.

⁹² Le Portfeuille de M.L.D.F. - Cologne, 1695, p. 144-5.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Epître.

Louis Marie Victor duc d'Aumont et de Rochebaron, born December 9th, 1632, died at Paris 1704, was of the illustrious house from which had come two marshals of France. Appointed captain of the guard at the age of 16 years, he accompanied Louis XIV in his campaign of the Low Countries with the rank of "brigadier." Later named gentilhomme de chambre and governor of Boulogne, he gave particular attention to the fortifying of the coast in the region of Boulogne. He was a member of the Academy of Inscriptions.⁹⁵

St. Simon states that he was first gentleman "de la chambre." He died very suddenly 1704 of apoplexy.⁹⁶ It is evident that Pradon sought his protection as he had done that of Des Marets for his tragedy of "Tamerlan." One can only surmise what aid the Duc d'Aumont afforded the poet in a more substantial manner than the mere favor of allowing his name to be connected with the tragedy of "La Troade." It may have been he who persuaded the king to honor the play by his attendance. The royal presence was a sure means of attracting the favor of the polite public for a tragedy.

The "Mercure Galant" for December, 1679 announces a new tragedy, "Statira."⁹⁷ The play was probably produced during the latter half of the month of December at the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. This was the second play that Pradon furnished to the troupe of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, his earlier ones having been given by the troupe of the Rue Guénégaud. Without too much speculation on the reason for this change,⁹⁸ one may suppose it was caused

⁹⁵ Michaud: Biography universelle, Paris, 1811, Vol. III, p. 70.

⁹⁶ Mémoires, Vol. I, 182; Vol. IV, 68.

⁹⁷ "Statira, Pièce nouvelle de M. Pradon, a paru depuis peu de jours sur le Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne" - Mercure Galant, Dec. 1679, 353.

⁹⁸ The union of the two troupes took place the following year, 1680.

by the poet's dissatisfaction with the efforts of the troupe of the Rue Guénégaud with his tragedy of "Electre." Whatever the reason, the production of two plays in the same year shows a renewed activity on his part after a silence of two years. We have no information concerning the success of "Statira." The "Mercure Galant" merely mentions it, although it announces in January, 1680 among the notices "des Livres Nouveaux du mois de Mars: Statira, Tragédie de M. Pradon indouze, 15 sols."⁹⁹

In his preface the author informs us that the play was interrupted in its run by the illness of one of the actors:- "Au reste, quoy que le cours de cette Pièce ait esté interrompu par la maladie d'un des Acteurs, j'espère que la lecture pourra n'en pas déplaire, puisqu'elle a paru assez bien écrite aux plus délicats."¹⁰⁰ The author says it pleased even the most exacting. If the silence of the critics is a measure of its success with the public, one would be justified in assuming for it a mild success, for there is no evidence of sarcastic comment, epigram, sonnet, or literary quarrel connected with its production. Boileau in his "Satires" and "Epîtres" either did not deem it of enough significance or purposely neglected to mention it among Pradon's sins. The Frères Parfaict, influenced by the closing remarks in the preface quoted above, have assumed that the play had very few performances.¹⁰¹

After a silence of two years Pradon appears with a new tragedy,

⁹⁹ Mercure Galant, vol. IX, 1680.

¹⁰⁰ Preface to "Statira", Paris, 1680.

¹⁰¹ "Nous ne nous arrêtons pas davantage sur une Pièce qui n'a pas eu un grand nombre de représentations. L'Auteur, à la fin de sa Préface dit qu'elles ont été interrompues par la maladie d'un des Acteurs, mais il ajoute qu'il espère que la lecture pourra n'en pas déplaire, puisqu'elle a paru assez bien écrite aux plus délicats. Il est vrai que la versification est un peu plus passable que celle de ses autres ouvrages."— Frères Parfaict, vol. XII 156-162.

"Tarquin", at the Hôtel de Guénégaud, Friday, January 9th, 1682, which had but four performances, two of January 9th and one of the 13th and 15th.¹⁰² The play was never printed.

From 1682 until the production of his "Regulus" in 1688, no new tragedy by the poet was presented. During this period he wrote two critical essays against the Satires of Boileau, occasioned, as he says in the prefaces, by the frequent attacks of the satirist upon him. The first of these critical diatribes, "Le Triomphe de Pradon sur les Satires du Sieur D****" appeared at Lyon 1684¹⁰³ with a later edition of 1686 at Lyon and La Haye. It begins with a dedicatory epistle to Alcandre under which name is represented the Duc de Nevers.¹⁰⁴ The Duc's dislike for Boileau was of long standing, dating from the time of "Phèdre et Hippolyte." Suspecting him of collaborating on the unfortunate sonnet against his sister, the Duchesse de Mancini, De Nevers made no secret of his ill-will for the Satirist. It is not strange, then, that Pradon should dedicate to him his diatribe against Boileau. The opening lines of the epistle recall the quarrel of the "Phèdres:"

"Amy de la justice et de la Vérité
 Alcandre, dont l'esprit est rempli de clarté
 Admiré des savants, Critique de Critiques
 Qui puises ton Discours des Salines Attiques,
 Il est temps de montrer d'un Rimeur insolent
 Le Mérite imposteur et le petit talent."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Régistre de La Grange.

¹⁰³ Not in 1686 as stated by Coursel in his "Nouvelle Biographie normande, Paris, 1886, p. 388.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Dräger - Le Triomphe de Pradon (Lyon, 1684) Eine Kritik des Discours du Roi und der drei ersten Satiren B.D.- Inaugural dissertation, Greifswald, 1886.

¹⁰⁵ Le Triomphe de Pradon etc., Lyon, 1684.

That Pradon intended to avenge himself for remarks about his work is evident from the following: "Je m'étois persuadé avec quelque apparence que l'Auteur satyrique dans une seconde Edition, ne manqueroit pas de corriger ses ouvrages; mais puisqu'il n'est pas voulu donner cette peine, je crois qu'il est à propos de la prendre pour luy. Et s'il n'est pas d'humeur d'en profiter j'espère au moins que le public en pourra tirer quelques lumières qui ne seront pas tout à fait inutiles. Examinons donc un peu ce Critique, exterminateur du menu peuple du Parnasse, qui a tracé de si belles Règles aux Poètes--ce style badaud, le fléau des petits Auteurs, ce fameux Despréaux qui a eu l'Art d'imposer si longtemps avec le plus faible talent du monde, quelque nouveauté dans ses manières, ses citations modernes, ses émistiches revez, quelques vers frapans, enfans d'une longue méditation, mal amenés souvent, et plus mal placés, ont d'abord surpris et abusé bien des gens, Il a joui quelque tems de l'approbation de la multitude: mais après un peu de réflexion, on n'a plus crié au miracle, on a ouvert les yeux, on a connu qu'il étoit homme, et comme tel, capable de faire ses fautes. Nous admirons, s'il le veut ainsi, la force de ses vers, et la nouveauté de ses expressions, mais il nous permettra en même tems de remarquer la stérilité de son imagination, et la petitesse de son génie. Nous louerons ce qu'il y aura de bon dans ses ouvrages, et nous prendrons la liberté de blâmer ce qu'il y aura de mauvais."¹⁰⁶

The second of these attacks against his arch-enemy, Boileau, appeared in 1688 with a fictitious name of printer as well as place of printing.¹⁰⁷ It purports to come from the press of Jean Stich,

¹⁰⁶ Preface to "Le Triomphe de Pradon", etc., Lyon, 1684.

¹⁰⁷ Beaurepaire- Notice sur Pradon, 10.

La Haye, and is mentioned by La Chèvre in his "Biibliographie des Recueils" as a continuation of "Le Triomphe de Pradon-----"¹⁰⁸

However, the author in his preface accuses his enemies of hindering the printing of these "Nouvelles Remarques sur Tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D***" for a year:- "Ami Lecteur, cet ouvrage ne part point d'une démangeaison d'écrire assez naturelle à tous les Auteurs; je n'ay point envie d'insulter à Monsieur D*** quoy qu'il ait insulté tout le monde, et mon dessein n'est pas d'écrire contre luy, mais pour moy-même; j'abandonne donc au Public ce petit ouvrage, et même à tous les Libraires qui le voudront imprimer. C'est une étrange chose qu'il ait en luy seul le Privilège de médire de tout le genre humain, et que l'on n'ait pas celui de luy dire ses vérités. On a retenu un an entier les papiers qui le concernent et après avoir promis le visa pour les faire imprimer, on a manqué de parole, et ceux mêmes de qui il a fait des portraits Satiriques et Sanglans."¹⁰⁹

In the dedicatory epistle Pradon speaks of this work as a "coup d'essay" in the satirical style:- "Je vous jure que je n'eus jamais la moindre envie de Satiriser personne. C'est mon coup d'essay, où je réuissiray très mal, mais je serois fâché d'y réuissir mieux et que la nature m'eut fait un présent aussi pernicieux que le talent de la Satire."¹¹⁰ The "Remarques" were therefore published clandestinely in 1685, in all probability at Paris, but, if we accept the poet's statement that the privilege to print was withheld for a year, the date at which he wrote them was 1684, the year in which appeared his "Triomphe de Pradon" at Lyon. Were they then written before or

¹⁰⁸ Paris, 1904, vol. III, p. 486-88.

¹⁰⁹ Preface to "Nouvelles Remarques, etc.," La Haye, 1685.

¹¹⁰ Préface à Monseigneur le Duc de ****

after "Le Triomphe?" The title "Nouvelles Remarques" ~~was~~ lead La Chèvre to infer that they are a continuation of the "Triomphe," but the delay in the printing might well have occasioned the present title, inasmuch as his satirical remarks in the "Triomphe" had already appeared. Furthermore, the poet designates this work as a "coup d'essay" in the satirical vein.

The tragedy of "Regulus" was represented Sunday, the 4th of January, 1688 with great success. The play was for Pradon a real triumph. According to the Frères Parfaict it was as well received at its 28th presentation as at its first:- "Cette Tragédie eut dans sa nouveauté un succès prodigieux: la vingt-huitième représentation fut reçue avec les mêmes applaudissemens que la première. La vingt-huitième et dernière représentation est du samedi 13 Mars: on reprit cette Tragédie le 25 juin suivant, et on en continua encore de suite quatre représentations. Elle est restée au Théâtre où on la reprend de temps en temps avec assez de succès."¹¹¹ This would signify its inclusion in the repertory of the theatre during the eighteenth century. The "Mercure Galant" for January, 1688 gives considerable space to this subject:- "On représente depuis un mois avec beaucoup de succès une Tragédie intitulée Regulus. Les plus grands hommes avoient tasté ce sujet, et quoy que l'action de ce Romain, qui retourna à Cartage, assuré de la mort qui luy estoit préparée, leur eust paru fort touchante, ils avoient trouvé des obstacles qui leur sembloient invincibles à la réduire au Théâtre. M. Pradon a eu moins de scrupules, ou peut-estre plus de lumières, et pour faire mieux briller une si belle action, il a presté à l'Histoire des choses

¹¹¹ Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât., Vol. XIII, p. 69-85.

qu'elle ne luy fournissoit pas, et il l'a mesme changée dans les circonstances de l'action principale. Ce que fit Regulus est si éclatant et part d'une si grande âme, qu'on ne peut l'entendre sans l'admirer. Vous pouvez juger par là qu'il doit y avoir de grandes beautés dans cette pièce."¹¹²

Pradon himself was overjoyed at its success. "Enfin sans faire une plus longue discussion, je puis dire que cet Ouvrage a frappé si vivement tout le public, et les Acteurs en ont remply si dignement les caractères, que cela me doit encourager à l'avenir à travailler avec plus d'application que jamais, et à chercher des sujets dont la grandeur soutienne celui de Regulus."

The tragedy was dedicated to Madame La Dauphine¹¹³ with two dedicatory epistles, one in prose, and the other in verse. Marie-Anne de Bavière, Dauphine de France was much admired by Louis XIV for her wit and grace. St. Simon in his "Mémoires" gives a very favorable portrait of her:- "Le feu Roi qui aimoit la majesté de sa cour regrettoit toujours celle des cercles de la Reine, sa mère, parmi lesquels il avoit été nourri, et dont la splendeur finit avec elle. Il essaya de les soutenir chez la Reine sa femme, dont la bêtise et l'étrange langue les étreignirent bientôt. Le Roi, qui ne s'en pouvoit départir, les releva du temps de Madame la Dauphine,

¹¹² Mercure Galant, January, 1688, p. 341.

¹¹³ Marie Anne Christine Victoire de Bavière, fille de Ferdinand, électeur de Bavière, naquit à Munich en 1669. Elle épousa Louis dauphin, fils de Louis XIV le 7 mars 1680 à Chalons sur Marne, où toute la cour était allée la recevoir. ----- Dès son début à la cour, elle y parut à son aise et tellement accoutumée qu'on eût dit qu'elle était née au Louvre." - Biographie universelle (Michaud) Paris, 1820, vol. XXVII, 89.

après la mort de la Reine. Elle avoit l'esprit, la grâce, la dignité, et la conversation très propres à cette sorte de cour." ¹¹⁴

She was a person of distinguished manners, well informed, speaking French and Italian perfectly, a lover of the arts. ¹¹⁵ Why should Pradon dedicate his tragedy to her? Never before had he directly sought the favor of royalty. Perhaps Montausier's early assistance had now brought him to the attention of the Dauphine, for the Duc had been the "gouverneur" of the Dauphin. While the royal pupil had no great liking for his master's methods, the influence of Montausier probably persisted after the Dauphin's marriage. The Duc's retainers would certainly come to the attention of this household and be favored by the royal couple. Des Marets, likewise, to whom Pradon dedicated his second tragedy, had succeeded in late years in gaining the good-will of Madame la Dauphine. ¹¹⁶ Then there was Madame Pradon, for the "Journal de Dangeau" for Wednesday, August 16th, 1684 ¹¹⁷ mentions a woman of this name attached to the Dauphine's household:- "On commença à voir Madame la Dauphine qui gardait encore le lit. Madame Pradon, sous gouvernante des filles eut permission de se retirer. Le roi ne voulut pas qu'elle vendit sa charge, mais il lui fit donner 8000 francs: on devoit mettre en sa place deux sous-gouvernantes qui ne sont pas encore nommées." ¹¹⁸ Was this Madame Pradon the poet's wife? It is difficult

¹¹⁴ Mémoires, Vol. IV, p.198.

¹¹⁵ Lavissee- Hist.de France, part II, Vol. XII, p.391.

¹¹⁶ "Des Marets avoit pour soi Madame la Dauphine par les manèges de sa femme" - St. Simon, Mémoires IX, p. 15.

¹¹⁷ Philippe de Dangeau, favorite of the Dauphin and of the king: St. Simon, "Mémoires", vol. VIII, p. 226.

¹¹⁸ Journal de Dangeau, August, 1684, vol. I.

to say, for there is no further record of her. It would be natural for Pradon to dedicate his tragedy of "Regulus" to his wife's mistress. He would be sure of gaining protection and favor from the Dauphine and possibly some reward from the king who four years before this time, as the quotation shows, was well pleased with the capable Madame Pradon. As if to recall to the Dauphine's attention his past achievements, Pradon writes:-

"Pour moy, tout pénétré de tes rares merveilles,
 Quoy que foible, je veux te consacrer mes veilles,
 Bienque depuis un temps dans un profond oubly,
 Tranquille j'aye esté toujours ensevly,
 Sur mes écrits enfin daigne jeter la veue,
 Ma Muse au Grand Louis ne fust pas inconnue,
 Tamerlan et Thisbé par un sort glorieux,
 Eurent tous deux l'honneur de paroistre à ses yeux."
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With these flattering remarks Pradon dedicated his most successful tragedy to the Dauphine:- "Souffrez que Regulus paroisse à vos yeux sur le papier, après avoir paru sur le Théâtre avec assez de bonheur----- C'est à Vous, Madame, à qui la Tragédie doit uniquement ses beautez; c'est par le goust exquis que vous en avez, par ces lumières pénétrantes à qui rien n'échappe, que vous animez encore ceux qui sont capable de faire de ces sortes d'Ouvrages, à en produire de nouveaux; c'est, Madame, ce qui va me faire redoubler mes soins, pour me rendre un peu moins indigne de l'honneur de vos applaudissement."¹²⁰

"Le Satirique françois expirant" - 1689,- a diatribe against Boileau, has been ascribed to Pradon upon the authority of Saint-

¹¹⁹ Dédicace en prose de Regulus.

¹²⁰ Epître en vers de Regulus.

Marc.¹²¹ The arguments used to prove this the poet's work are unconvincing.¹²² La Chèvre in his "Bibliographie des Recueils"¹²³ has not seen fit to include it among the works of Pradon.

In 1694 appeared "La Réponse à la Satire X du Sieur D***"¹²⁴ a criticism in prose of the tenth satire of Boileau. Pradon states in the preface his reasons for attacking this satire: "Enfin la Satire X du Sieur D*** attendue depuis si longtems, vient de paroître. Il ne doit pas trouver étrange de voir son Nom dans mes Vers, puisqu'il a mis le mien tout au long dans les siens, et comme il a la bonté de laisser au public la liberté de juger de son Ouvrage, je m'en serviray, s'il luy plaist, pour luy marquer les fautes que ce même public y trouve, malgré la présentation qu'il a du contraire."¹²⁵ This pamphlet contains critical remarks of some justice concerning the subject matter of Boileau's tenth Satire on "Les Femmes," composed during the years 1692 and 1693 and appearing the latter year. This satire produced at its appearance considerable discussion among the beaux esprits whose time was spent in the circles of women and who felt called upon to rush to their defence.¹²⁶ The reason Pradon

¹²¹ G. Lanson:- "Hist. de la Litt. française", Paris, 1910, 497, note. Didot:- "Nouvelle Biographie générale," Paris, 1862, T. XL, 967

¹²² K. Draeger:- "Le Triomphe de Pradon, Eine Kritik des Discours au Roy und der drei ersten Satiren Boileau Despréaux," Inaugural Dissertation, Greifswald, 1886.

¹²³ Paris, 1904, III, 486.

¹²⁴ Paris, 1694, chez Robert J. B. de la Caille in-12, avec permission de M. le Chancelier.

¹²⁵ Preface to the "Réponse à la Satire X, etc." (Bibl. de IV Arsenal #6896 ter B. L.)

¹²⁶ Le début de cette satire fut extraordinaire; mais elle excita des critique si vives et si nombreuses, que l'auteur en fut presque entièrement décourage. Racine, pour le rassurer, lui dit: "Vous avez attaqué tout un corps, qui n'est composé que de langues, sans compter celles des galants, qui prennent parti dans la querelle." - Bolaeana, CXV.

gives for his attack against this particular satire is not the only motive. His name had frequently appeared in previous satires of Boileau,¹²⁷ but he had already replied to these in his "Nouvelles Remarques sur Tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D***". Naturally one expects that Pradon, the poet of the ruelles, the favored of certain salons where the influence of women made for his success, would use this occasion to defend those who felt in this satire an attack on their judgment and taste. This is especially true in the case of Madame Des Houlières at whose salon he was well received and whose connection with the affair of the sonnets concerning the two "Phèdres" made of her no friend of Boileau. The lines in the tenth satire devoted to this lady would be sufficient cause for reply on the part of one who had twice written against the satirist and who had every reason to defend the woman attacked. No one can blame Pradon's rashness in replying to these lines:

Mais qui vient sur mes pas? C'est une précieuse,
 Reste de ces esprits jadis si renommés
 Que d'un coup de son art Molière a difammés.
 De tous leurs sentiments cette noble héritière
 Mantient encore ici leur secte façonnrière.
 C'est chez elle toujours queles fades auteurs
 S'en vont se consoler du mépris des lecteurs.
 Elle y reçoit leur plainte; et sa docte demeure
 Aux Perrins, aux, Coras, est ouverte à toute heure.
 Là, du faux bel esprit se tiennent les bureaux;
 Là, tous les vers sont bons, pourvu'qu'ils soient nouveaux.
 Au mauvais goût public la belle y fait la guerre;
 Plaint Pradon opprimé des sifflets du parterre."¹²⁸

¹²⁷Satires VII, IX; Epître VI, VII, VIII.

¹²⁸Satire X, édition A, Ch. Gidel, Paris, 1872. 83.

In justification of women Pradon says of the Satire X:- "Tous les gens de bon goût demeurent d'accord qu'il (Despréaux) n'a point touché aux caractères des Femmes de la Cour dont les manières luy sont inconnues, et qu'il n'a depeint tout au plus que celles de la rue S. Denis, ou de la Place Maubert."¹²⁹ The same idea is expressed in the main body of the critique in some verses addressed to Boileau:-

"Il est vray que privé des dons de la nature,
 Le Ciel ne te forme que pour lui faire injure;
 Toujours mélancholique, ou toujours furieux,
 Tu n'as jamais senti les traits de deux beaux yeux,
 Qui malgré ton humeur et farouche et sauvage
 Auroient de tes écrits adouci le langage.
 Après que le beau Sexe en méprisant tes traits
 Ne se reconnoist point dans tes galants portraits;
 Tu suis mal ta Préface humble avec arrogance,
 Avançant plusieurs mots dont la pudeur s'offense,
 Et ton style cynique aux Dames inconnu
 Ne seroit pas admis même chez la Cornu
 Dont le nom doit blesser les moins chastes oreilles,
 Et qui seul fait rougir jusques à ses pareilles."¹³⁰

Regarding the line "Plaint Pradon opprimé des sifflets du parterre," the poet felt called upon to remind his critic that three of his tragedies had not been so ill received by this public in whose disfavor he was supposed to be:- "C'est à ce même Parterre à y répondre pour moy, et je croy que si le Sieur Despréaux vouloit se mêler de venir siffler Thisbé, Tamerlan, ou Regulus qu'il y

¹²⁹ Preface to the "Réponse à la Satire X."

¹³⁰ Réponse à la Satire X, etc.

seroit sifflé luy même."¹³¹

The tragedy of "Germanicus" which was presented the 22nd of December, 1694, had but six performances, the last of which occurred on the fifth of January of the ensuing year.¹³² The play was never printed. The only information we have of it comes to us from an epigram of Racine "Sur le Germanicus de Pradon":-

Que je plains le destin du grand Germanicus!
 Quel fut le prix de ses rares vertus!
 Persécuté par le cruel Tibère,
 Empoisonné par le traître Pison:
 Il ne lui manquoit plus, pour dernière misère,
 Que d'être chanté par Pradon.

The following rather amusing incident is told in connection with this tragedy:- "A la première représentation de cette Tragédie, les Spectateurs, étonnés de n'avoir vu paroître que des hommes dans les deux premiers Actes, se disoient les uns aux autres en riant: Voilà une vraie Tragédie de collège, il n'y a point de femmes. Au commencement du troisième Acte on vit sortir tout à la fois du fond du théâtre, deux Princesses et deux Confidentes: et l'on entendit en même temps dans la Salle une voix perçante et gasconne, qui prononça ces paroles: Quatorze de Dames, sont-ils bons? ce qui excita un battement de mains général."¹³³

The last tragedy of Pradon, "Scipion l'Africain", was produced Friday the 22nd day of February, 1697.¹³⁴ The play was presented to the comedians on the 25th of December of the preceding year but was refused. A second reading took place on January 22nd

¹³¹Réponse à la Satire X, etc.

¹³²Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât. français, vol. XIII, p. 391.

¹³³La Porte et Chamfort:-Anecdotes dramatiques; Paris, 1775.

¹³⁴Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théât. français, vol. XIV, p. 46-57.

after which it was accepted for production provided certain changes were made by the author.¹³⁵ The play was not a success. De Visé makes no mention of it in the "Mercure Galant." The only information we have about its reception by the public comes from two epigrams, one of Jean Batiste Rousseau, the other of the poet Gacon. Rousseau in the verses addressed to Pradon confuses the "Grand Scipion," tragedy of Prade, with the "Scipion" of Pradon.

A Pradon qui avoit fait une Satire pleine d'invectives contre Boileau:-

Au nom de Dieu! Pradon, pourquoi ce grand courroux,
 Qui contre Despréaux exhale tant d'injures?
 Il m'a berné, me direz-vous:
 Je veux le diffamer chez les races futures.
 Hé croyez-moi, laissez, d'inutiles projets.
 Quand vous réussiriez à ternir sa mémoire,
 Vous n'avanceriez rien pour votre propre gloire.
 Et le grand Scipion sera toujours mauvais."¹³⁶

The epigram of Gacon is still more unfavorable- and Gacon was no very gifted poet himself:-

Dans sa Pièce de Scipion
 Pradon fait voir ce Capitaine
 Prêt à se marier avec une Africaine.
 D'Annibal, il fait un poltron.
 Ses Héros sont enfin si différens d'eux-mêmes,
 Qu'un quidam les voyant plus masqués qu'en un Bal
 Dit que Pradon donnoit, au milieu de carême
 Une Pièce de Carnaval."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Frères Parfaict: Hist. du Théât. français, vol. XIV, p. 46-57.

¹³⁶ J. B. Rousseau; Oeuvres, Paris, chez Lefèvre, 1624.

¹³⁷ Gacon:- Poète sans fard, Paris, 1701, 279.

Pradon did not live long enough to regain the favor which Regulus had brought him and which was lost with Scipion. His life had been a constant struggle with opposition from a powerful party whose ideas were not his. Boileau, especially, made his road hard by the excessive ridicule which he heaped upon him. Some credit is due the man for his perseverance in the face of such opposition and in spite of the bad impression spread broadcast about his works and their unfavorable reception by the public. Had he not entered into direct competition with Racine in the unfortunate quarrel of the "Phèdre" he might have escaped much of the ridicule of Boileau and Racine, and would have been classed among many other writers of tragedies of his age who, while not great, were content to turn out just such tragedies as the public desired. Historians represent him as one swollen with pride, lacking in judgment, and so obsessed with his own merit as to imagine he could rival Racine. Such characteristics are not revealed in the prefaces to his plays and critical remarks. With the exception of "Phèdre et Hippolyte", where the heat of party strife caused excess of speech and the taking of attitudes, the poet speaks of his work in a modest manner, free from bombast and self-praise:-

"Cependant, sans me prévaloir d'une réussite qui a bien passé mes espérances, je dirai d'abord ingénument que je ne prétends pas que ce coup d'essai pour le Théâtre soit un chef-d'oeuvre. Il y sans doute bien des choses qui pourroient être mieux tournées."¹³⁸

"A la vérité je ne croyois pas être encore digne d'une si grand déchainement; mais l'envie m'a trop fait d'honneur, et m'a

¹³⁸ Preface to "Pirame et Thisbé."

traîné en plus grand Auteur que je ne suis.-----Cependant, je ne doute pas qu'il n'y ait plusieurs fautes dans cet Ouvrage; je ne prétends pas être infaillible, et si nos Maîtres du Théâtre qui y regnent avec tant d'empire et de justice, sont exposés eux-mêmes à des Critiques, qui leur ont donné tant d'emotion, pourquoi un jeune Auteur qui commence, et qui n'est encore qu'à sa seconde Pièce en seroit-il plus exempt qu'eux?"¹³⁹

"Le succès de Regulus a esté si grand que son titre seul pourroit servir d'Apologie et de Préface pour répondre à quelques Critiques. Cependant sans me prévaloir des beautés que ce sujet m'a fournies, et des larmes que le public y a répandues, j'ose dire que je me sçais un peu de gré d'avoir trouvé une route que plusieurs Auteurs avoient vainement cherchée." ¹⁴⁰

"-----c'est une Guerre (la critique) fort innocent quand on n'attaque ny les moeurs ny la personne; je lui (Boileau-Despréaux) passeray, s'il le veut, que je suis un fort méchant Poète, pourveu qu'il me passe aussi qu'il fait quelque fols de méchants vers et de grandes fautes de jugement."¹⁴¹

"Enfin sans faire une plus longue description, je puis dire que cet Ouvrage a frapé si vivement tout le public, et les Acteurs en ont remply si dignement les caractères, que cela me doit encourager à l'avenir à travailler avec plus d'application que jamais, et à chercher des sujets dont la grandeur soutienne celui de Regulus."¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Preface to "Tamerlan."

¹⁴⁰ " " "Regulus."

¹⁴¹ Dédicace to "Nouvelles Remarques, etc."

¹⁴² Preface to "Regulus."

These remarks from the poet's printed works do not show an excess of arrogance or lead one to believe that he was as vain of his ability as to merit such verses as these:-

Pradon tu pris si fort l'indigne caractère,
 Que ta témérité croissant avec le tems,
 Comme les immortels tu demandas l'incens;
 Nos premières faveurs furent peu reconnues,
 La folle ambition l'éleva sur les nues:
 Lors il n'écoula plus qu'une fougveuse ardeur,
 Mais pour lui le mépris courut de coeur en coeur."¹⁴³

Not satisfied with representing the poet as an arrogant ego-
 tist, his critics, as if to round out his portrait, accused him of
 gross ignorance. The following anecdote is found in Brossette's
 note to a line of Boileau's Xth "Epître" where Pradon figures in
 this fashion:-

"Huer la métaphore et la métonymie;

(Grands mots que Pradon croit des termes de chimie)-

"Un jour, dit-on au sortir d'une de ses Tragédies, M. le
 Prince de Conti l'aîné, luy ayant dit qu'il avait transporté en
 Europe une Ville qui est dans l'Asie: je prie Votre Atesse de
 m'excuser, répondit Pradon, car je ne sçais pas trop bien la
 chronologie."¹⁴⁴ This anecdote is told elsewhere in connection
 with Pradon's tragedy of Tamerlan.¹⁴⁵ Two reasons make one doubt
 the authenticity of this tale, at least as applicable to Pradon:

¹⁴³Mlle. de la Roche-Guilen:- "La Pradonnade," Amsterdam, 1711.
 in-12 (Bibl. de l'Arsenal #17053.)

¹⁴⁴Brossette.

¹⁴⁵La Porte et Chamfort:-Anecdotes dramatiques, Paris, 1775.

first, for the reason that Brossette was on friendly terms with Boileau; secondly, that Brossette accepts the tale on hearsay evidence, using it as an explanation of the lines in the *Epître* wherein Pradon is satirized. Of like quality is the anecdote copied extensively by historians from Vigneul-Marville.¹⁴⁶

"Pradon le fameux Pradon, ayant fait une pièce de Théâtre, s'en alla le nez dans son manteau avec un ami se mêler à la foule des gens qui remplissent le parterre à l'Hôtel des Comédiens, afin de se dérober à la flaterie, et d'apprendre par lui-même sans être connu, ce que le Public pensoit de son Ouvrage. Dès le premier Acte la Pièce fut sifflée. Pradon qui dans le fond ne s'attendoit qu'à des louanges et des exclamations, enragé de se voir si maltraité, perd contenance. Il rougit, il pâlit, il se mord les doigts, frappe du pied et écume de la bouche. Son ami le voyant dans ce trouble, le tire par le bras et lui dit: Monsieur, Monsieur, tenez bon contre ce revers de fortune, et si vous m'en croiez, vous moquant de ses inconstances, siffliez hardiment comme les autres. Pradon revenu à lui, et trouvant ce conseil à son goût, prend son sifflet et sifle des mieux. Un Mousquetaire qui assistoit au spectacle le poussa rudement, et lui dit tout en colère: Pourquoi siffliez vous, Monsieur? La pièce est belle: son Auteur n'est pas un sot, il fait figure et bruit à la Cour. Pradon un peu trop chaud repousse le Mousquetaire, et jure comme un chartier embourbé qu'il sifflera jusqu'au bout. Le Mosquetaire prend le chapeau et la perruque de Pradon, et les jette jusques sur le Théâtre. Pradon donne un soufflet au Mousquetaire, et le Mousquetaire, l'épée à la main, tire deux lignes en croix sur le

¹⁴⁶ Mélanges d'Histoire et de Littérature, Paris, 1725, vol. II, p. 89-90.

visage de Pradon et le veut tuer. Pradon porte à son ennemi qui l'avoit terrassé quelques coups de poings et de pieds à la déro- bée: mais enfin retire de dessous les mains de ce rude joueur par les charitables spectateurs, Pradon sifflé et battu pour l'amour de luy-même gagne la porte et va le faire penser."¹⁴⁷

This anecdote has been accepted on its face value by the biographers of Pradon as another bit of evidence of the poet's stupidity. The historian who first noted this tale wrote in 1725, some seventy years after Pradon's death. He gives no source for the anecdote and as it does not appear in the writings of the poet's contemporaries, there is room for doubt whether Pradon was really the person of the story, for any mediocre author of doubtful success with the public would have suited just as well. While not wholly rejecting it, the story must be taken with reservations.

The Frères Parfaict have given a portrait of the man after the report of those who knew him:- "Il étoit de moyenne taille et avoir l'air extrêmement commun, le visage long et le menton fort avancé. Au reste sa triste fortune et son extérieur négligé ajoutoient encore à sa mauvaise mine."¹⁴⁸ The few extant details of his life furnish little to judge in what manner he lived. The theatre which gave such scanty livelihood to Racine must certainly have been insufficient for Pradon's needs. How he supported himself and what favors he received from the circles in which he moved we do not know. If his personal appearance was as careless as the above portrait suggests, and this in a society where external ap-

¹⁴⁷ Frères Parfaict:-Hist. du Théâtre français, vol. XIII, p. 68-85.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

pearance counted considerably for social preferment, the cause undoubtedly lay in the hard circumstances in which he lived. "On nous le représente comme un homme gonflé de vanité, et ce vaniteux n'a pas fait graver son portrait; puis, lorsqu'en 1696 tout le monde courut chez les commissaires délégués par le Roi pour la révision de la noblesse et la délivrance d'armes aux vilains qui voulaient bien les payer 20 livres, il s'abstint," says one of his biographers. There is, however, a portrait drawn and engraved by Corot after Rigaud of a J. N. Pradon, dramatic author, but there is some doubt whether the portrait represents the poet.¹⁴⁹

Niceron ascribes to Pradon a tragedy, "Antigone," on the authority of some verses of Le Père Ducerceau:-

Sur le manteau de Regulus
On eut épargné sa personne,
Mais le pauvre homme n'avoit plus
Que le juste-au-corps d'Antigone."¹⁵⁰

"Cette Tragédie," says Niceron, "fut fort mal reçue, et Pradon lui-même qui estimoit toujours beaucoup ses Ouvrage, n'a jamais osé la faire imprimer. -----C'est par allusion au sort de ces deux Tragédies, Regulus et Antigone qu'un Seigneur ayant trouvé Pradon qui portoit un assez mauvais juste-au-corps sous un beau manteau d'écarlate, lui dit: Pradon, voilà le manteau de Regulus et le juste-au-corps d'Antigone."¹⁵¹

The Frères Parfaict have corrected Niceron on this point and destroyed one of the legends about Pradon:- "Pour détruire ces autorités (Niceron and le Père Ducerceau) il suffit de remarquer que

¹⁴⁹ Beaurepaire:- Notice sur Pradon.

¹⁵⁰ Le Père Ducerceau:- La Nécessité de la Critique ou le grand Prévot de Parnasse, Paris, 1733-in 8°.

¹⁵¹ Niceron:- Mémoires etc., Vol.43, p. 371-97.

depuis M. Rotrou aucun Auteur n'a donné de Tragédie sous le titre d'Antigone que M. d'Assezan qui fit paroître sa Pièce en 1686 deux ans avant Regulus. Sa Tragédie est imprimée; à l'égard de M. Pradon, il est certain qu'il n'a jamais traité ce sujet. C'est par méprise que le Père du Cerceau est tombé dans cette erreur, que sert de fondement au petit conte qu'on y a ajusté et le Continueur des Mémoires a adopté l'une et l'autre, parce qu'il ne s'est pas donné la peine de rechercher la vérité de ce fait." ¹⁵² Notwithstanding the above, La Chèvre in his Bibliographie des Recueils has ascribed the tragedy of Antigone to Pradon. ¹⁵³ He also mentions a novel, "Frédéric de Sicile" ¹⁵⁴ ascribed to Mlle. Bernard which M. Eugène Asse believes to be the work of Pradon. ¹⁵⁵ Pradon is known to have been in correspondence with Mlle. Bernard and according to one of his biographers ¹⁵⁶ was in love with her:- "Pradon étoit devenu amoureux d'une jolie Gasconne, elle ne l'aimoit pas; mais ses saillies la divertissoient. Il lui écrivoit une lettre en prose et en vers, où sa passion avoit plus de part que sa Muse. Elle lui fit une belle réponse qui ne laissoit voir que de l'esprit: il l'admira; mais il n'en fut guère content et il ne réplique par ces quatre vers:-

'Vous n'écrivez que pour écrire;
C'est pour vous un amusement;
Moi qui vous aime tendrement;
Je n'écris que pour vous le dire.'

¹⁵² Frères Parfaict:- Hist. du Théât. Vol. XIII.

¹⁵³ Paris, 1904, Vol. III, p. 486-88.

¹⁵⁴ Paris, 1680, 3 parts, in-12.

¹⁵⁵ La Chèvre:- Bibl. des Recueils.

¹⁵⁶ La Porte et Chamfort:- Anec. dramatiques, Paris, 1775, vol. III, p. 408-10.

The quatrain is addressed to Mlle. Bernard and has seemed of sufficient merit to be included in Quitard's "Anthologie de l'Amour."¹⁵⁷ The biographer is at fault in representing Mlle. Bernard as a "jolie Gasconne."

Catherine Bernard was born at Rouen, 1662, of a Protestant family and was the niece of Corneille and friend of Fontenelle who aided her in her work. She came early to Paris where she moved in the best society, gaining the esteem of Madame de Sévigné, of Madame de Coulanges, and the friendship of the chancellor, M. de Pontchartrain. She became converted to the Roman church in 1685 whereupon she was much favored by Madame de Maintenon. Besides poetry she wrote several novels: "Frédéric de Sicile," (1680), ascribed to her by "La France Protestante" and which is thought to be of Pradon; "Eléonore d'Yvrée (1687); "Le Comte d'Amboise" (1689); "Inès de Cordoue (1696); and two tragedies, "Léodamie" (1690) and "Brutus" (1696), in five acts and verse.¹⁵⁸

The fact that she was a compatriot of Pradon, a niece of Corneille, throws an interesting light upon the society in which Pradon moved. Born himself at Rouen and favoring in his writings the dramatic method of Corneille, while moving in a circle where Corneille's work was greatly admired, it is only natural that he should have known Mlle. Bernard whom he probably met in the salons frequented by her uncle.

It has been said that Pradon's occasional verse has been lost. In addition to the "Péché originel" for which he was crowned at the Palinods, the few lines addressed to the Duc de Montausier in the preface to "Pirame," and the quatrain to Mlle. Bernard, the following

¹⁵⁷ Page 140.

¹⁵⁸ La Chèvre:-Bibl. des Recueils, Paris, 1904, vol. III, p. 209-10.

examples have been overlooked by all historians. While of little value they found their way into an eighteenth century collection of fugitive verse:

CONTRE UN FILOU.

Colin, à ce qu'on dit, trois Archers inhumains
 T'ayant pris à l'écart, faisoient mal tes affaires;
 Mais tu t'es fine-ment dérobé de leurs mains:
 C'est le moindre larcin qu'on t'ait jamais vu faire.

 Faut-il être étonné qu'à la jeune Isabelle,
 Malgré tout ton esprit, tu plaises moins que moi:
 Tu ne l'entretiens que de toi;
 Et je ne l'entretiens que d'elle.

Pradon.¹⁵⁹

Pradon lived but a short time after the production of his "Scipion l'Africain." The "Mercure Galant" for January, 1698, under the caption "Morts" announces "M. Pradon. Il étoit de Rouen, et nous a donné plusieurs Pièces de Théâtre, et entr'autres Pyrame et Thisbé, et Regulus, qui ont paru avec beaucoup de succès."¹⁶⁰ In a post-scriptum to a letter of Bourdelot to the Abbé Nicaise at Dijon, January 15th, 1698, we find "Pradon mourut hier, les cartes à la main."¹⁶¹ His death was attributed to apoplexy.¹⁶² His epitaph has the appearance of having been composed during his lifetime:-

¹⁵⁹ Nouvelle Bibliothèque de Société, Londres et Paris chez Delalain Rue St. Jacques, 1782, 104.

¹⁶⁰ Mercure Galant, Jan. 1698, p. 268.

¹⁶¹ Jal:Dict.critique, Paris, 1867, p. 998.

¹⁶² ibid

"Cy git le Poète Pradon,
 Qui durant quarante ans, d'une ardeur sans pareille,
 Fit à la barbe d'Apollon,
 Le même métier que Corneille."¹⁶³

The biographical facts concerning the poet are few. Certainly he has not been treated quite fairly from the point of view of his work by biographers content to accept what had already been said of him without weighing the merit or considering the source of their information. His work was not entirely rejected by his time. Certain of his tragedies had a success comparable to that of other writers for the stage of his day, whose names now have reached a peaceful oblivion. This man, the favorite of certain polite salons, was he then such a ridiculous figure as he has been represented, or is this judgment the result of conflicting literary standards, embittered by party strife, in a war in which fairness was unknown? Would he have been received in such a society if he had been such as he is represented? The truth is perhaps half-way between, in that he was the favorite of a group which was in itself a little out of touch with the current thought and thus a little ridiculous, as is every "rétardaire" movement in the eyes of those who will afterwards be its judges. It may be worth while to see just what influence such a social milieu could exert on the poet.

¹⁶³ Frères Parfaict- Hist. du Théâtre français, vol. XIII, 69-85.

CHAPTER II.

Influences.

Rouen in the seventeenth century was the second city of France. Its importance in the realm of commerce and the arts was only eclipsed by that of the capital. In fact, it was considered the second capital of the kingdom,¹⁶⁴ and was in close touch with the intellectual and social life of Paris. The chief city of the important province of Normandy, its life sought to imitate the more brilliant and worldly gaiety of the capital. Travel between the two was constant. No social success was possible without a first-hand acquaintance with the latest fashion in speech, style, and taste for the moment in vogue at Paris. The manners of the *ruelles* and salons, the current scandal of court and city society found a ready acceptance at Rouen, where the irksomeness of a provincial existence was enlivened by the imitation of a more brilliant milieu. This close contact with the latest and most approved in manners as well as in art brought the Rouennais society to a level of cultural existence whose inferiority to that of the capital was only measured by the absence of those important personages who set the tone for the society of the day. Hardly had the influence of the salons appeared in the capital when the society of Rouen formed its salons on the models offered by the Parisian world. What was fitting in Paris was essential at Rouen. In manners, the spirit of the *précieuse* gallantry with the refinement of the "honnêtes gens" held sway among those whose social position and local importance allowed of their entrance into the "beau monde" of the provincial capital.

¹⁶⁴ E. Magne - "Le Plaisant Abbé de Boisrobert," Paris, 1909, p.32.

Norman society could well afford to exact more than a mere flippant attention from its Parisian betters. Had it not in a measure furnished the material by which the intellectual life of the capital had been enriched? Especially true was it in literary art that Normandy had given forth men whose influence had been marked in the formation of the literary taste of their day. Malherbe with his somewhat dry and austere remarks had brought society to a realization of the importance of purifying the language, fitting it for poetic expression; Sarrasin and Segrais brought a mannered grace and elegance to the written line that caught admiration in the "honnêtes gens", while Boisrobert, as if reacting against the refinement of the time, introduced his rougher humor to amuse, although careful to mask it behind an external coating of gentility almost Italian. The great Corneille, invigorating this prettiness of speech and manner by the glow of his oratory, and gathering into his phrase all the emotional high lights of society became the great interpreter of society under the regency of Anne d'Autriche, an influence lasting well into the "siècle de Louis Quatorze," deep-rooted, persistent, which even the changed times could not readily obliterate from the hearts of his early admirers. More banal, lacking the genius of his brother, Thomas Corneille played no mean figure in the cultural life of the capital. The elegant and somewhat malicious grace of Bensérade, the fervor of Brébeuf, the realism of Petit, and the fantasy of St. Amant, added to the brilliant intellectual life which Normandy and Rouen in particular gave to Parisian society.¹⁶⁵

Aside from literature, Norman society was not unknown to the capital, nor, in turn, neglected by it. The archbishopric of Rouen

¹⁶⁵ Harmand:- "Georges de Brébeuf," Paris, 1897, p. 15.

had had a worthy representation in the family de Harley whose eminence and reputation spread far beyond the confines of the provincial seat. Of François III, archevêque de Harley history records: "que l'étendue de ses connaissances, la vivacité de son esprit, la fidélité de sa mémoire, la force et la douceur de ses paroles, la clarté et l'ordre exact de sa méthode attiraient tout ce qu'il y avait de savants et de curieux dans la ville de Rouen."¹⁶⁶ The president of the Chambres des Comptes de Normandie, M. de Motteville, would be today but a name were it not for the brilliancy of his wife, who, connected with Normandy through her uncle Bertaut, évêque de Sées, was an outstanding figure in a brilliant "siècle." Likewise the Duc de Longueville, erstwhile governor of the province, has been dimmed in historical importance by the luster of his wife, the all too celebrated sister of the great Condé, La Duchesse de Longueville. Mlle. de Scudéry was not an unworthy compatriot of the preceding women of social importance. Probably no one woman of her age exerted such a wide influence on her associates than did she. Her novels were as much the intellectual and social guide of her day as they are for us its reflector. With this company of the socially elect, one may include the Duc de Montausier who gave to Rouen and to Normandy several years of excellent government following the death of the Duc de Longueville. The husband of Julie d'Angenne might be expected to exact from those surrounding him ~~was~~ a tone and social convenance in harmony with that elegant forerunner of all salons, the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Last only in social importance were the brothers Corneille, Pierre, Antoine, and Thomas representing the gentlemen of the robe, the legal life of the city. If not as well known in that profession as they became in their chosen fields, by

family tradition and early education the law had claimed them as it did many others of Norman birth.¹⁶⁷

Was this influence of Normandy in the literature and social history of the seventeenth century derived from any special attribute of the Norman racial stock? As one historian points out, the importance of the Norman role in French letters is due neither to race nor to the climate from which it issued, "mais à la prospérité de la Normandie, au goût naturel des habitants pour les lettres et les arts, à la haute culture intellectuelle qui régnait dans les grandes villes. Les traditions littéraires y étaient conservées avec un soin jaloux."¹⁶⁸ Rouen had its salons where the polished provincial beaux esprits and belles dames vied with each other in emulating the taste and tone of the better known Parisian models. An occasional visit to the capital sufficed to introduce into the Rouennais salons the latest turn of phrase, of speech, as well as manner. To be but slightly behind the great world of the court was the aim of the provincial seigneurs. Literary taste, following and, at the same time, rounding out the manner of the day, stood well to the fore, as at Paris, in the Rouennais provincial life. The Palinods of Rouen each year by contest and gentle rivalry urged to new efforts the native poets, while providing a court for the reception of ambitious young aspirants. The Académie de l'Immaculée Conception de la Vierge supplemented what was done at the Palinods. Colleges flourished, especially that of the Jesuits. The homes of the great, the salons of the refined, and the ruelles of bourgeois and seigneur, made up a world of life and letters where taste, social intercourse, literary competition and polite culture were as much

¹⁶⁷ Deltour:—"Les Ennemis de Racine," Paris, 1859, p. 63, et seq.
Ed. Frère:—"Une Séance de l'Académie des Palinods en 1640," Rouen, 1867.

¹⁶⁸ Harmand—"Georges de Brébeuf," p. 16.

the acceptable and usual basis of the "honnêtes gens" as they were in the Paris of greater fame.

Such was the social and intellectual milieu in which Pradon appeared in 1664. Coming as he did from a family of legal and literary training, his entrance into the cultured circles depended upon his own initiative and intelligence. His success at the Palinods, however small, singled him from the mass as one of promise to whom society could open its door. One may well suppose that he early learned the distinction between what was "dans l'ordre" and what not in accordance with the fashion most prevalent; what was expected of the "honnête homme"; and perhaps more significant for him, what was in the world of letters the most approved literary manner and style. It seems probable that he was educated at the Jesuit College, as the documents mentioned heretofore suggest,¹⁶⁹ and that his education was directed if not in person, at least in precept by Marguérite Delastre, his mother, in whose family literature had been of more than passing interest. His brother's success at the Palinods points to a literary tradition or strain which was perhaps a mere expression of the influence of this polite world in his case, and which ran deeper and fuller in that of Jacques.

To a young man of Rouen who essayed a literary career, what hope for success was before him in 1644 beyond the philosophic or gallant discourses of salons or the acclaim for an occasional well-turned ^dmarigal, quatrain, or chanson? This was still the time of the "poésie mondaine" although somewhat worn from overuse; the précieuse influence still held its sway in the salons. The novel, the epic, tragedy bear that common trait, a striving for "grandeur" in all degrees. Balzac,

¹⁶⁹ See chapter I, p. 30.

Gomberville, La Calprenède, Scudéry, Corneille, supply the type. The Corneilles, Pierre and Thomas, had but lately left their native city to reside at Paris,¹⁷⁰ from which they made occasional trips to their place of birth. During this period the elder Corneille had made for himself a reputation of which Rouen could well be proud. He had formed and directed the taste of his contemporaries "emportés par un souffle de passion qui les soutient et les élève; c'est même cet enthousiasme, cet élan du coeur qui explique en grande partie les qualités, les défauts, les fautes des hommes de ce temps. Tous les auteurs sont doués d'une vive imagination, à laquelle se mêlent la subtilité de l'esprit et l'abus d'une énergie qu'ils ne savent pas modérer."¹⁷¹ This imitation of the grand manner of Corneille with his taste for the heroic, the enlarging of the human type to extreme limits, the pompous style, and the brilliant phrase was the general literary attitude.

Thomas Corneille, following close upon his brother's footsteps, was rapidly gaining fame with the court by methods somewhat under the lofty level of the true Corneillian excellence. Taste changes with society. From 1647 ~~to~~ when he presented "L'Engagement du Hasard," a translation of a play by Calderon, "Los Empeños de un acaso," Thomas Corneille had succeeded sufficiently to arouse the jealousy of those who followed the same career.¹⁷² "Dans les premiers temps de son séjour," says his biographer, "Thomas avait été fort recherché dans les sociétés élégantes, particulièrement où régnait encore le goût du romanesque et du précieux et qui continueraient à leur manière les traditions de l'Hôtel de Rambouillet. Après avoir

¹⁷⁰ They left Rouen in 1662.

¹⁷¹ Harmand: "Georges de Brébeuf," p. 32.

¹⁷² Regnier: "Thomas Corneille, sa vie et ses oeuvres," Paris, 1892, p. 4.

été le protégé de la comtesse de Noailles, de la comtesse de Fiesque, de la duchesse de Montpensier, il avait été fort bien accueilli dans le salon de Mme Des Houlières qui, plus jeune que Mlle. de Scudéry, recueillit vers 1665 l'héritage de l'illustre Sapho."¹⁷³

Brebeuf whose death had occurred a few years before¹⁷⁴ was still esteemed by his compatriots, while the Abbé Boisrobert, whose life had been so much a mirror of his times¹⁷⁵ had left a genial recollection behind him. Ménage in his eulogy of Sarasin points the way to success for the young and ambitious writer: "Ne me demandez point ce qu'avoit Monsieur Sarrasin pour plaire si universellement. Il n'avoit rien de ce qui déplaisoit en la plupart des gens d'esprit, et de ceux qui font profession des lettres. Les uns, ou par une vertu trop austère ou par un mépris qui les rend eux-mêmes méprisables, n'ont de commerce qu'avec les sçavans et renoncent volontairement à l'entretien de la plus grande partie du monde..... On en voit d'autres qui n'ont ni ce chagrin ni cette fierté, mais qui par une trop forte application à leurs desseins, sont toujours distraits et ne portent en aucun lieu que la moitié de leur esprit, tournant sans cesse la veue d'un autre costé, comme un amant éloigné de ce qu'il aime. Quelques-uns ayant peu de connoissance du monde et assez de jugement ne marchent qu'avec crainte, comme en un pais méconnu: ils ne disent rien pour trop choisir ce qu'ils ont à dire: on divine plutôt leur esprit que l'on ne le voit."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³Regnier:- "Thomas Corneille, sa vie et ses oeuvres," Paris, 1892,

¹⁷⁴p. 72.

Harmand:- "Georges de Brébeuf," p. 85.

¹⁷⁵Died September 17th, 1661.

¹⁷⁶Discours sur les Oeuvres de M. Sarrasin par Ménage," preceding the edition of the Oeuvres de Sarrasin, 1658.

The society of Rouen thus modeled on the polite circles of Paris and basking in the glamor which its sons reflected, read their Calprenède and their Scudéry, applauded the verses à la Sarrasin, delighted in the précieux spirit of the Montausiers, with that admiration for the "grandeur" of Corneille which was already stamped with Parisian approval. The theatre of the provincial capital gave the tragedies of the great fellow-townsmen. When Pradon was fourteen, the troupe of Molière came to Rouen, May 19th, 1658, and played until October, after which it departed to launch forth into the Parisian world. The Régistre de la Grange shows twenty-five performances of the plays by Thomas Corneille: "Le Géôlier de soi-même" and "Don Bertrand." The tragedies of Corneille must have come early to Pradon's attention, especially since their author had for so long a time made his home in Rouen. It is possible that Pradon knew Corneille at this time, for Corneille undoubtedly attended sessions of the Palinods and may have been present at that of 1664 at which Pradon was crowned. Then, too, the influence of his mother might have helped the boy toward this introduction. Montausier, as governor of the province, had an honorary seat at the meetings of the Palinods. He, too, as has been said heretofore, probably extended his hospitality to the young poet, for the verses which Pradon addressed to him on the occasion of his departure for his new duties with the Dauphin, suggest an acquaintance with the governor which, if not extensive, was of a character sufficient to allow his reception in the salon of the duke, where Corneille was as warmly received as his works were admired. The times, the milieu, and fortune all tended to make of the young Pradon an ardent admirer of Corneille and to direct his poetic efforts toward

dramatic verse. Society, presentation of plays, and a reading of the latest in literature added to this tendency. Rouen was one of the most active cities in the matter of book publishing. The printers of Rouen vied with those of the capital in the amount of reading matter turned out from their presses. For the young writer raised in this atmosphere, in itself but a gleam of the larger world beyond, all roads led to Paris. Thither had gone the men who had made a success. Cramped by the limitations of a provincial city, however brilliant its society, these men had broken away from Rouen and gone to seek a wider field at the source of all activity, in that capital where court and king gave favor only to those who in turn paid them homage. These men had been faithful to their native soil: "Peut-être même ont-ils plus facilement que les autres étouffés leur vanité pour obliger un compatriote, faciliter ses debuts et lui procurer de solides protections."¹⁷⁷ Bois-robert, Segrais, Scudéry, willingly introduced their compatriots into salons and ruelles near the great and the powerful where they themselves had already won the right of entrance. By maintaining a polite mean in the matter of literary effort, by following the beaten track of common excellence, not deviating into the extraordinary or the bizarre, a man of letters with a sufficient entrée into the great world of society would be well on the way toward acquiring that protection and aid from the great which was desired by all literary workers. Had not Corneille himself upon his arrival in the capital lodged at the house of the Duc de Guise as did his brother Thomas? The success of the master at the salon of Madame

¹⁷⁷ Harmand:- "Georges de Brébeuf," p. 17.

de Rambouillet was even at this time a matter of tradition. Brébeuf through his friends had sought the protection of the great and the favor of ministers, neglecting nothing which might further his fortune.¹⁷⁸ What if poets did waste their talents on frivolous subjects, little suited to establish their fame! Provided they found a generous protector, they cared not whether their reputation went further than the particular salons or ruelles in which they were accredited.

The example of so many of Pradon's compatriots in leaving Rouen to try their fortune in the larger field of a Parisian and court audience, must have influenced him to make the same decision, especially since he could expect no financial assistance from his parents, nor does he appear to have been satisfied with a legal career. The example of Boisrobert, Thomas Corneille, not to mention the great Corneille himself, in abandoning the solid profits of a steady professional life for the more showy, less stable, and certainly more financially uncertain career of a dramatic writer, must have led him to make this choice. He, like his contemporaries, in leaving the home surroundings for the capital, was wont to look about him, choosing for protector and possible Maecenas, the representative of some honorable family of high social position whose favor would open for them the doors to the exclusive salons, guardians and arbiters of "le bon goût." There they might find means to success, freedom from pecuniary ills, and possibly reception at court. Pierre and Thomas Corneille lodged at the home of their noble patron: Brébeuf throughout his life bent his efforts toward

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Harmand:- "Georges de Brébeuf." p. 34.

pleasing the important figures of his day, while La Fontaine was fortunate in gaining the interest of the duchesse de Bouillon. Pradon arrived in Paris with his first tragedy dedicated to Montausier, recently governor of Normandy, a friend of Corneille, whose salon was a rendezvous for Norman society as well as for those whose taste still lingered in the atmosphere of the Hôtel de Rambouillet.¹⁷⁹ One would like to believe that he lodged at the duke's residence where either a previous acquaintance with its owner or the introduction of the Corneilles procured for him a welcome. It must not be forgotten that Pradon's father was a lawyer of some practice and must have known the Corneille family. The verses which the poet dedicated to Montausier upon the latter's departure from Rouen; the success which he had at the Palinods while Montausier was yet residing in Rouen; the professional relations which might have existed between the families Corneille and Pradon, and the dedication of this first tragedy to so special a personage as Montausier all point to an actual acquaintance and possible friendship between the two men.

In 1674, Pradon must have found the theatre at Paris in the process of a transformation. One cannot believe that the provincial stage of Rouen did not echo the new manner of tragedy which was beginning to displace the Corneillian aesthetics. Racine had already produced his *Andromaque* (1667), *Britannicus* (1669), *Bérénice* (1670), *Bajazet* (1672), *Mithridate* (1673);¹⁸⁰ Molière lodged in the Palais Royal since 1661, had given his *Précieuses Ridicules* (1659), *L'Ecole des Femmes* (1662), *Tartuffe* (1665), before the

¹⁷⁹ Ed. Frère:—"Une Séance de l'Académie des Palinods en 1640," Rouen, 1867, p. 17.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Mesnard:—"Oeuvres de Racine," édition Grands Ecrivains, Paris, 1886.
Gustave Lanson:—"Histoire de la littérature française, 13th ed. p. 514-15

Princesse Palatine, not, however, presented without restrictions until 1667, Don Juan (1665), Le Misanthrope (1666), George Dandin (1668), L'Avare (1668), Les Femmes Savantes (1672), Le Malade Imaginaire (1674),¹⁸¹ not to mention Thomas Corneille with seven of his tragedies already produced and Quinault about to forsake the tragic muse for the more popular style of operatic libretto, and a crowd of lesser craftsmen. Corneille had produced his masterpieces. He was now in the sear and yellow period of "Sertorius" and "Suréna." This last of the plays of Corneille suffered the disdain of the public in the very year of Pradon's first attempt, 1674. Boileau was in the hey-day of his fame with the completion of some seven satires, the "Dialogue des Héros du Roman" and his "Art Poétique."

For Pradon, the Parisian scene must have seemed a world upside down where new worlds were replacing old, with the ancient charm of good breeding, family tradition, and all the studied mannerisms of the précieuse spirit, if not dead, at least in disfavor. To succeed meant pleasing an audience which wavered between admiration for the old Corneille and a none too fervent applause of the new master of tragedy, Racine. Thomas Corneille, Quinault, Bensérade, De Visé drew its applause. These writers at least took advantage of popular approval without a too subtle attempt to institute new schools for old. Pradon could say, then, in the Preface to "Pirame et Thisbé," apropos of his tragedy: "Elle a eu le bonheur de plaire; et c'est la première Règle du Théâtre, et celle à qui l'on doit plutôt s'attacher, qu'à toutes les Règles de la

¹⁸¹ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," édition Grands Ecrivains, Paris, 1886.

Gustave Lanson:- "Histoire de la Littérature française," 13th edition, p. 514-15.

Poétique d'Aristote." ¹⁸² Had he had the good sense to omit the reference to the Aristotelian rules, this remark might well pass for a commonplace which every dramatic writer carried in the back of his head, despite the necessity of mouthing the so-called dicta of the Aristotelian unities. Pradon need only have read the prefaces to Corneille's early plays to learn how to snap politely his fingers at Aristotle. Indeed is this quotation much different in external sense from that of Racine in the preface to "Bérénice": "La principale règle est de plaire et de toucher. Toutes les autres ne sont faites que pour parvenir à cette première." ¹⁸³ The phrase is much more skillfully put than Pradon's and less open to the attack of critics. The younger man neither knew himself nor his public. Moreover, he chose to recall that his subject had been treated by Théophile and Ovid, two names not in pronounced favor with the arbiters of Parnassus:- "Je ne me répons donc point d'avoir traité un Sujet où Théophile avoit réussi; on voit bien que je ne lui ai rien emprunté que les noms de Pirame et Thisbé, ¹⁸⁴ que le Galant Ovide nous a donnés à tous deux."

Furthermore this preface, in the statement that follows, might well suggest to the opponents of Corneille's methods a return to the politico-galant style of the early master or of the novel à la Scudéry: "Si Bélus conserve ses droits contre la violence d'Amestris, et si Amestris par sa politique et par son adresse le veut détourner du Gouvernement, et de l'Etat, Pirame est l'objet qu'elle regarde, et Thisbé celui de Bélus; et c'est

¹⁸² Préface de "Pirame et Thisbé".

¹⁸³ Préface to "Bérénice."

¹⁸⁴ Préface to "Pirame et Thisbé."

par leurs différends qu'ils causent les cruels embarras de ces Amans malheureux, qui attachent et qui intéressent toujours le Spectateur jusqu'à la fin de la catastrophe."

With this spirit of party strife abroad in the field of art, a young writer, desirous of keeping a neutral or middle ground, had great difficulty. The narrow circle of the "honnête homme" did not allow such a middle ground. Coteries, parties pro and con, tended to divide cultivated society into definitely marked camps in matters not political, for that sphere was of course not open to discussion. With the coming to the throne of Louis XIV the disappearance of the older salon spirit so dear to the Frondeur, the subtle search for position and royal favor in a society made up of hereditary aristocracy and bourgeois self-sufficiency, the Cornelian hero, in fact the whole mechanism of the Cornelian "grandeur" was out of date, old fashioned, and possibly just a little ridiculous. The more Corneille struggled against this tendency, the more he forced the note in his later plays, so that even Montausier, one of his most ardent supporters, in 1674 could say of "Suréna":- "Monsieur Corneille, j'ai vu le temps que je faisais d'assez bons vers; mais ma foi, depuis que je suis vieux, je ne fais rien qui vaille. Il faut laisser cela pour les jeunes gens."¹⁸⁵

With the rise of Racine, poets of the old school saw themselves confronted by a rival far more skilled than they in the mechanism of composition, imbued with aesthetic principles so novel as to appear almost feminine in refinement for the reason that the brilliancy of presentation no longer rested on a surface of polished and glittering points, tinselly prettiness of external

form but on a motive force of the internal life of the characters. Those who still held to the beauties of Corneille, accused the public of forsaking the old for the untried new, forgetting that it was not Racine who had enticed it from the old style - the transition would have been too sudden - but Quinault. He it was who made the ground fertile for the reception of "Andromaque." The cause of Corneille had been that of all poets in the preceding age. In attacking Racine, they attacked not only him but his ardent defender, Boileau, who had so cruelly included the writers of the old school in his satires. By attacking him, they avenged Chapelain, Benserade, Cotin, Boyer, Mlle. de Scudéry, as much as Corneille. Cotin, the most gallant of poets was the butt of Boileau's ridicule and of the raillery of Molière. The titles of his works show what sort of poetry was his, a poetry full of "propos d'alcôve," compliments of "chères et spirituelles", conceits, and "jeux de mots," so dear to the earlier salons.

The gap between the opposing parties continued and even grew wider as the divergence of taste, the changed conditions of society became more apparent. For these changes some either were not prepared, or refused to concede to them. Added to this was a jealous dislike of the success and strength of a newcomer whose attempts were supported by the brusque and brutally frank Boileau. While the older school were unable or unwilling to understand Racine's more modern treatment of the theories of the Ancients in his characters, he himself helped to widen this gap by his haughty and at times impertinent refusals to compromise with his opponents. In his treatment of Corneille, the younger author, angered undoubtedly by foolish, malicious criticism from adherents of the old school,

sometimes expressed himself in a manner tending to offend as well as question the judgment of the older writer. Corneille's failures seemed to encourage Racine in his bearing toward the master who was forced at this time through poverty to continue his writings when he should have rested as judge of new effort. This attitude somewhat arrogant and satirical, shows itself in the preface to "Britannicus":- "Mais, disent-ils ce Prince n'entroit que dans sa quinzième année lorsqu'il mourut. On le fait vivre, lui et Narcisse deux ans plus qu'ils n'ont vécu. Je n'aurois pas parlé de cette objection, si elle n'avoit été faite avec chaleur par un homme qui s'est donné la liberté de faire régner vingt ans un empereur qui n'en a régné que huit, quoique ce changement soit bien plus considerable dans la chronologie, où l'on supporte les temps par les années des empereurs.¹⁸⁶ Que faudroit-il faire pour contenter des juges si difficiles? La chose seroit aisé, pour peu qu'on voulût trahir le bon sens. Il ne faudroit que s'écarter du naturel pour se jeter dans l'extraordinaire. Au lieu d'une action simple, chargée de peu de matière, telle que doit être une action qui se passe en un seul jour, et qui s'avancent par degrés vers sa fin, n'est soutenue que par les intérêts, les sentiments et les passions des personnages, il faudroit remplir cette même action de quantité d'incidents qui ne se pourroient passer qu'en un mois, d'un grand nombre de jeux de Théâtre, d'autant plus surprenants qu'ils seroient moins vrai-semblables, d'une infinité de déclamations où l'on feroit dire aux acteurs tout le contraire de ce qu'ils devoient dire. Il faudroit, par exemple, représenter quelque héros ivre qui se voudroit faire haïr de sa maîtresse de gaieté de coeur, un

¹⁸⁶ Preface of "Britannicus." Reference to Corneille's "Héraclius."

Lacidémomien grand parleur¹⁸⁷ un conquérant qui se débiteroit que des maximes d'amour,¹⁸⁸ une femme qui donneroit des leçons de fierté à des conquérants.¹⁸⁹ Voilà sans doute faire récrier tous ces Messieurs."¹⁹⁰ The above quotation is sufficiently pointed to have wounded the pride of the old Corneille as well as to array against the new school all those writers steeped in admiration for the Cornellian stage.

Not content with baiting the master, Racine turned his attention in the preface to "Bérénice", to his satellites. In reply to the "Critique de Bérénice" which the abbé de Villars circulated, he wrote: "Car pour le libelle que l'on a fait contre moi, je crois que les lecteurs me dispenseront volontiers de répondre. Et que répondrais-je à un homme qui ne pense rien et qui ne sait pas même construire ce qu'il pense? Il parle de protase comme s'il entendoit ce mot, et veut que cette première des quatre parties de la tragédie soit toujours la plus proche de la dernière, qui est la catastrophe. Il se plaint que la trop grande connaissance des règles l'empêche de se divertir à la comédie? Certainement, si l'on en juge par sa dissertation il n'y ait jamais de plainte plus mal fondée."¹⁹¹ Then, as if to include all his critics in one full sweep of his scorn, he added; "Toutes ces critiques sont le partage de quatre ou cinq petits auteurs importunes, qui n'ont jamais pu par eux-mêmes exciter la curiosité du public. Ils attendent toujours l'occasion de quelque ouvrage qui réussisse, pour l'attaquer. Non point par jalousie. Car sur quel fondement sero-

¹⁸⁷ Reference to Agésilas or Lysander in Corneille's "Agésilas."

¹⁸⁸ " " Cesar in Corneille's "Pompée."

¹⁸⁹ " " Cornélié..

¹⁹⁰ Preface of "Britannicus."

¹⁹¹ Preface of "Bérénice."

ient-ils jaloux? Mais dans l'espérance qu'on se donnera la peine de leur répondre, et qu'on les tirera de l'obscurité ou leurs propres ouvrages les auroient laissés toute leur vie."¹⁹²

Racine was right. His critics were men of inferior ability, poetasters of small merit, but the saying of this truth only solidified the malcontents into a strong party whose ranks were reinforced by leaders of the social world, which felt inclined to continue their early favoring of these poets. Boileau, it will be remembered, took occasion to express some frank statements about dead and living literatures in his IX^{me} Satire,¹⁹³ with greater force than he had done in previous satires. As mentioned before, he was the arch-enemy of all the lesser writers whose taste lingered still in the style of the previous reign, and many were the diatribes launched against him.¹⁹⁴ Literary preference of society wavered between the two schools. Quinault's part in refining the taste of his time was forgotten; society saw, for the moment, but the party of Corneille and that of Racine. Personal preferences, early admiration, social rivalry led the "honnête homme" to one side or the other. A few rare spirits kept an independent opinion and a well balanced judgment, but, for the most part, the public was biased. The celebrated quarrel of the ancients and moderns was but a concomitant to this general situation. This dispute, although general and of marked interest, necessitates a treatment apart, which will be taken up

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Preface of "Bérénice."

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Composed 1667, published 1668.

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Cotin, "La Satire des Satires;" Coras, "Le Satirique berné en vers et en prose;" Boursault, "La Satire de satires;" Corel de Sainte-Garde, "Défense des beaux esprits de ce temps;" Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, "Défense du poème héroïque;" Pradon, "Nouvelles Remarques Sur tous les ouvrages du sieur D**," and "Le Triomphe de Pradon;" Bonnecorse, "Lutigot,"

later. Let us consider for the moment the strength of the opposition to Racine in its individual force and Pradon's position in this mass of complex, partisan motives.

The writers who had begun their career under the influence of Corneille and the older literary taste held their ground against new theories, attacking them by satire, cabal, epigram, and sly innuendo, both in and out of salons. With the fall of "Suréna" in 1674, their chief withdrew from the dramatic field. Quinault, too, after the production of his "Bellérophon" (1670) wisely turned from his tragic style to a new field in which he was to succeed. The admirers of Corneille fall into several more or less distinct classes, making up a considerable portion of the social and intellectual world of the period. To the first class belong those bound to Corneille by relationship, friendly spirit, self-interest, or literary collaboration. Connected with these in interest are those social figures who, with the most disinterested motives, yet felt a warm attachment for the preference of their youth, their past loves, noble ideals and the literary tradition which had been a part of their early lives. In greater numbers come the envious and malicious, opposing the new school from jealousy or difference of opinion, making common cause with, often included among, the writers attacked by Boileau. This party found fertile soil for the seed of its discontent in the salons of certain "honnêtes gens", prejudiced in favor of old manners and ideas whether in literature or politics. The last vestiges of "préciosité" and a "frondeur" spirit pervaded these circles. Running through these coteries is the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Deltour:- "Les Ennemis de Racine," p. 37.

At the head of those favorable to Corneille and socially most influential was Mademoiselle, daughter of Gaston d'Orleans. Her experiences during the Fronde and her career in the salon of the Hôtel de Rambouillet made of her the leader of this party. For her the "Cid" was the perfect tragedy, wherein she found the old admiration, the glorious experiences of her youth. Naturally the rise of the young Racine, threatening the supremacy of her beloved model, was displeasing. Her "gentilhomme ordinaire," Segrais, could be expected to share her views, likewise her protégés Cotin, Chapelain, Ménage, Boyer. Mention has been made of Ménage's eulogy of Segrais as an elegant, polished writer of his day. Cotin's verses well display his relations with this particular group. Segrais himself is the authority for Corneille's criticism of Bajazet: "Etant une fois près de Corneille sur le Théâtre à une représentation de Bajazet il me dit, 'Je me garderois bien de le dire à d'autres que vous, parcequ'on diroit que j'en parlerois par jalousie, mais prenez-y garde il n'y a pas un seul personnage dans le Bajazet qui ait les sentiments qu'il doit avoir et que l'on a à Constantinople; ils ont tous, sous un habit ture, le sentiment qu'on a au milieu de la France.'" ¹⁹⁶ Segrais, echoing this opinion, continues: "Il avoit raison, et l'on ne voit pas cela dans Corneille; le Romain y parle comme un Romain, le Grec comme un Grec, l'Indien, et l'Espagnol comme un Espagnol," ¹⁹⁷ an excusable remark from a partisan but not from a good critic.

Montausier, whose connection with the family of Rambouillet is well known, was, as has been said, quite willing to defend those

¹⁹⁶ Segraisiana.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

who had worked valorously for him on the "Guirlande de Julie" so that naturally his salon reflected the earlier spirit. In it were welcome all poets and litterateurs who were content to keep the old fire aglow. The friends of Mademoiselle were his friends. The Longuevilles, the Sévignés, the DeNevers and the Bouillons were accustomed to receive the polite verses of Cotin, Chapelain, Boyer as of the Corneilles, Pierre and Thomas. Madame de Longueville, passing into the retreat of her convent, left the legacy of her literary preferences to her husband. He, until his death while governor of Normandy, continued to protect Cotin, Ménage, and other writers of his circle; while Madame de Sévigné whose early education had passed through the Hôtel de Rambouillet where she had heard Corneille declaim his tragedies, must return again and again to her early admiration for his work. In 1672 she wrote: "Racine a fait une comédie qui s'appelle Bajazet et qui enlève la paille; vraiment elle ne va pas en expirando comme les autres. M. de Tallard dit qu'elle est autant au-dessus de celles de Corneille que celles de Corneille sont au-dessus de celles de Boyer; voilà ce qui s'appelle bien louer; il ne faut pas tenir les vérités cachées. Nous en jugerons par nos yeux et nos oreilles."¹⁹⁸ Two days later her opinion has changed:- "Le personnage de Bajazet est glacé; les moeurs des Turcs y sont mal observées.....Il y a pourtant des choses agréables, et rien de parfaitement beau, rien qui enlève, point de ces tirades de Corneille qui font frissonner."¹⁹⁹ Be it said to the credit of Madame de Sévigné that her critical judgment was based on no mean partisan view. Her admiration for

¹⁹⁸ Madame de Sévigné:-"Lettres," letter of Jan. 13th, 1672.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*, letter of Jan. 15th, 1672.

Corneille was deep-seated. For Racine she felt all the admiration that a superior genius can command from one whose taste and feeling are not in accord. She apparently never allowed herself to be drawn into the net-work of cabal which occupied so many of her associates. Not once does Pradon's name occur in her letters. In this she resembles another refined spirit of the time, Saint Évremond, whose long absence from the heat of literary wrangles made of him a less partisan even though an insufficient critic.

On the occasion of "Andromaque" Saint-Évremond wrote: "Ceux qui m'ont envoyé, Andromaque m'ont demandé mon sentiment. Comme je vous l'ai dit, elle m'a semblé très belle; mais je crois qu'on peut aller plus loin dans les passions et qu'il y a encore quelque chose de plus profonde dans les sentiments que ce qui s'y trouve: ce qui doit être tendre n'y est que douce, et ce qui doit exciter de la pitié ne donne que de la tendresse. Cependant, à tout prendre, Racine doit avoir plus de réputation qu'aucun autre après Corneille."²⁰⁰ He preferred Corneille yet he recognized the ability of the younger man, although he mistook the study of the passions and emotions for a prettiness of style and a sweetness of tone. Was he not seeking in Racine a reflex of the "fadeur" which Quinault had brought into fashion? Saint-Évremond's judgment began to waver so that when called upon to pass an opinion on "Britannicus" he took refuge in a statement of Corneille's superior craftsmanship: "J'ai lu Britannicus avec assez d'attention, pour y remarquer de belles choses. Il passe, à mon sens, l'Alexandre et l'Andromaque: les vers en sont plus magnifiques; et je ne serois pas étonné qu'on y trouvât du sublime. Cependant, je déplore le malheur de cet

²⁰⁰ Saint-Évremond:- Lettre à M. de Louvois, "Oeuvres de Saint-Évremond," Amsterdam, 1706, II, 319-320.

auteur d'avoir si dignement travaillé sur un sujet qui ne peut souffrir une représentation agréable."²⁰¹ He had early declared in favor of Corneille by his "Dissertation sur Alexander."²⁰² His attacks are usually against the taste of the times, "qui n'aime que la douleur et les larmes.....le trop grand usage de l'amour, dont on enchante présentement tout le monde."²⁰³ Had he lived in France, he would have been included with those opposing Racine:- "J'ai soutenu qu'il fallait faire entrer les caractères dans les sujets et non former la constitution des sujets après celle des caractères; que nos actions devaient précéder nos qualités et nos humeurs; qu'il falloit remettre à la philosophie de nous faire connaître ce que sont les hommes, et à la comédie de nous faire voir ce qu'ils font; et qu'enfin ce n'est pas tant la nature qu'il faut expliquer, que la condition humaine qu'il faut représenter sur le Théâtre."²⁰⁴ His intimacy in England with the Duchesse de Mazarin put him in relation with those in Paris who were aiding in the attack against Racine, with Madame de Bouillon and the Duc ^{de} Nevers, brother and sister of La Mancini.

Saint-Evremond and the Duc de Nevers had met in their youth at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. A poet of some merit, De Nevers never disassociated his mind from its early literary training. An outspoken enemy of Boileau and the new school, even before the quarrel of the "Phèdres" he had collaborated with Des Marets and the Abbé Testu on the pamphlet. "Défense du poème héroïque avec quelques remarques sur les oeuvres satiriques du sieur D** (1674)

²⁰¹ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," édition Grands Ecrivains, (II, 237.)

²⁰² See "Dissertation sur Alexandre."

²⁰³ Deltour:- "Les Ennemis de Racine," p. 80.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

the year of Pradon's "Pirame et Thisbé"²⁰⁵ It will be remembered that to him Pradon addressed his "Épître à Alcandre" at the head of his "Nouvelle Remarque," etc. When Boileau and Racine were named royal historians, De Nevers took that occasion for the publication of the lines:

Aussi bien dans le monde, hors deux auteurs célèbres,
Le reste est englouti dans l'horreur des ténèbres;
Ces illustres du temps, Racine et DesPréaux,
Sont du mont Hélicon les fermiers généraux.

A présent de la rime abandonnant les lois,
Ils veulent que Phébus reprenne tous ses droits;
Et sortant tout à coup de l'ordre poétique,
Ils entrent étrangers dans le monde historique."²⁰⁶

With his sister, the Duchess de Bouillon, he continued the fashion of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, protecting as did Montausier those poets who were in accord with his literary taste.

The Duchess de Bouillon, protectrice of La Fontaine, had from the first years of her marriage held a salon to which the great Corneille was wont to come. There the adversaries of the new school, Ménage, Segrais, Boyer, Bensérade, Mme. de Houlières, were accustomed to assemble to speak ill of Racine's productions, to receive with interest Saint-Évremond's letters, and to concoct material which found its way into the "Mercure Galant." However impartial her intentions were, the associates who flocked to her salon certainly drew her to the support of mediocre authors against Racine, forcing upon her a cause which in the light of history detracts from her otherwise brilliant career. It is interesting to find among the habitués of this society Madame des Houlières, whose name was to be so closely associated with Pra-

²⁰⁵ Deltour:- "Les Ennemis de Racine," p. 82.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 83.

don's. She too had a salon where Corneille's adherents assembled. Her association with the production of Pradon's "Phèdre" has connected her to such an extent with his life and perhaps with his ill-success that a short account of her career may in a measure explain her position among Racine's enemies.

Mlle. de la Garde, born at Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, the 2nd of January, 1638²⁰⁷ was married early in life²⁰⁸ to M. des Houlières, an officer attached to the staff of the Prince de Condé throughout the troubles of the Fronde, and later following him to Spain. Her first years were spent in a retired life at her family home. Later she joined her husband in Flanders where he was attached to the court surrounding Condé at Brussels. There she was known for her beauty, wit, and natural charm. By too much intriguing to secure better appointments for her husband, she brought upon herself the disfavor of the powerful and suffered imprisonment for some eight months. Upon her return to France after removing the disfavor into which her husband had fallen, she was never able to repair her fortune, greatly decreased during her absence. Her husband reentered the service, but spent little time in her society. Her life was made miserable by a continual lack of money which interfered with her social aspirations. Saint-Beuve says of her: "Elle avait, à sa rentrée en France, fréquenté les derniers jours de l'hôtel Rambouillet, et pris un rang distingué entre les précieuses. Somaise n'a pas manqué de l'enregistrer dans son grand Dictionnaire sous le nom de Dioclée. Son ton, son goût s'était fixé dès lors, et à la différence de Mmes. de Sévigny et de la Fayette, elle ne le modi-

²⁰⁷ Saint-Beuve:—"Portraits de femmes, une Ruelle poétique sous Louis XIV.

²⁰⁸ July 18th, 1651.

fia guère en avançant: de là, dans ses poésies une mode qui pouvait, dès les années finissantes du siècle; paraître un peu vieillie. Au plus plein milieu du règne de Louis XIV, aux années d'Iphigénie et de Phèdre, elle croyait à la décadence..... Disons seulement qu'elle fut fidèle aux souvenirs, et aux admirations de sa jeunesse, à l'ancienne et galante cour, comme elle l'appelait; elle remontait ainsi en idée jusqu'aux Bellegarde et aux Bassompierre: tout ce qui survenait de nouveau, même à Versailles, lui paraissait peu poli; elle ne s'y mêlait que malgré elle, et se croyait au moment de perdre les seuls derniers auditeurs auxquels volontiers elle s'adressait." ²⁰⁹ Subligny, a frequenter of her salon, a literateur of whom there will be occasion to speak later, in connection with Pradon's "Phèdre", has given the names of her associates: "Elle fut en liaison avec un grand nombre des plus beaux génies de son siècle, particulièrement avec M.M. Corneille, Pellisson, Benéserade, Conrart, Perrault, Charpentier, les deux Tallemants, Fléchier, Mascaron, Quinault, Ménage, de la Monnaie.....les ducs de la Rochefoucauld, de Montausier, de Nevers, et de Saint-Aignan. le comte de Bussy, les Maréchaux de Vivonne, et de Vauban, c'est à dire tout ce qu'il y avoit de seigneurs les plus distingués par leur esprit et leur goût l'admirent ainsi dans leur société, applaudirent à ses poésies, et souvent en furent l'objet."²¹⁰

By early training she belonged to the society of the précieuses. Her literary preference was for the gallant and pastoral verse so much beloved by the salon Rambouillet. In later life she continued to surround herself with those whose tastes were

²⁰⁹ Saint-Beuve:- "Portraits de femme."

²¹⁰ A. Fabre:- "De la correspondance de Fléchier et de Madame Des Houlières et sa fille," Paris, Didier, 1871, ch. 11. p. 21-23.

similar. Her connection with Corneille, having its origin in the atmosphere of the "Guirlande de Julie" made her acceptable in the salon of the Montausiers. Her intimacy likewise extended to the Duc de Nevers and the Duchesse de Bouillon. At her salon were to be found writers of the old school as well as newcomers, admirers of the Corneillian aesthetics. Ménage, Cotin, Bensérade, Boyer, Fontenelle, Des Marets, Perrault, De Visé, Thomas Corneille, Quinault, Subligny, the abbé Tallemant, were flattered and praised in her salon and they in turn returned the favor in the acclaim they bestowed upon her verses. All the so-called Moderns gathered about her. Her house, as much as that of De Nevers, was the starting point for much of the gossip, dispute, and cabal launched against Racine and Boileau. The latter gave her a most unflattering place in his Xth Satire. For her the new school was an abomination. She neither understood it nor cared to understand it. Her spirit was that of the Fronde, preferring independence of action and freedom of choice, hating rules and all the restrictions of the "Académie". She belonged to those intransigent spirits who, like an undercurrent from the preceding reign, running beneath the great classic current of the Seventeenth Century as libertines and free thinkers, breaks out in the philosophers of the Regency and of the Eighteenth century. The "Mercure Galant" published her verses. This is to be expected, for De Visé, the founder, and Thomas Corneille, a collaborator, were in constant attendance at her salon.

The "Mercure Galant", beginning in 1672 under the management of De Visé, published until 1673 news items in the form of weekly letters about current topics. After an interruption of four

years due to the illness of the editor, it reappeared, continuing until 1681. This publication, which represents the beginning of journalism in France, fell upon two men, De Visé and Thomas Corneille.²¹¹ The editor, De Visé, exerted through this publication considerable influence on the literary opinion of the day and his paper offers interesting commentaries on the literature of the period as judged by a contemporary. De Visé, was the type of man of the hour, eager for the latest news item, fluent of pen, an antagonist skillful in irony, bending to the popular taste, and careful to maintain society's good-will. At twenty he had begun his career by attacking with great violence the best authors of the time, Corneille in his "Sophonisbe" and later Molière's "Ecole des Femmes." Considering that he had attracted sufficient attention unto himself to make his name remembered, he made a volte-face, supporting against the attacks of D'Aubignac this same "Sophonisbe" which he had previously condemned. Becoming reconciled with Molière, he turned his attack against Quinault whom he accused of stealing the plot of one of his plays, for De Visé wrote somewhat for the stage. Public interest in this dispute sufficed to keep one play running until its 18th performance. De Visé knew the art of advertising. In choosing Thomas Corneille to assist him with the "Mercure Galant" he had probably weighed the advantage which he would derive by attaching to his enterprise an author whose success was assured.²¹²

Thomas Corneille had made for himself a reputation before leaving Rouen. Success continued with him until 1670 when his "Mort d'Achille" failed to gain public favor but was rather a

²¹¹ Deltour:- "Les Ennemis de Racine," p. 77.

²¹² Regnier:- "Thomas Corneille," p. 43.

"succès de lecture" in the salons.²¹³ Pierre Corneille had applauded the success of "Ariane," "Circe," "l'Inconnu" when his own "Pulchérie" and "Suréna," which had cost him more labor than Thomas was accustomed to expend, went unacclaimed. Thomas had been much sought after by society and was very well received at the salon of Mlle. de Scudéry.²¹⁴ Toward 1695 this success had waned and he was quite willing to serve on the staff of the "Mercure Galant." He soon fell into the fluid style of De Visé's reviews so that it is now difficult to decide which articles came from his pen and which from the editor's. The position of this review made of its editors persons to be reckoned with in literary circles. Although young, the press was beginning to exert an influence on letters and taste. Both De Visé and Thomas Corneille were in a position to favor authors whose style was to their liking and whom they were in the habit of meeting at the salons they frequented. It was through the influence of Thomas Corneille that Fontenelle began his literary career.

A nephew of the Corneilles, Fontenelle came to Paris in 1674 to live with his uncle Pierre. Thomas encouraged his first attempts at literature by publishing his verses in the "Mercure Galant."²¹⁵ Soon he became known to and applauded by the salons and ruelles:- "Il rime des petite vers, des riens ingénieux, à propos des circonstances les plus futiles, avec le mannerisms d'un Voiture et l'élégance tortillé d'un Bensérade."²¹⁶ With his uncle Thomas he frequented the society of the least classic, those who were adver-

²¹³Regnier:- Thomas Corneille," p. 45.

²¹⁴ibid, p. 71.

²¹⁵ibid, p. 89.

²¹⁶Gillot:- "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914, p. 492.

saries of antiquity. Frivolous, light, "précieux," the favorite of the Rouennais and Parisian salons, he applauded Bensérade, Boyer, Pradon, all the writers opposing Racine.

Boursault, likewise a favorite of the salons, was the "gaze-tier," the correspondent of all the social favorites, of the Duchesse, d'Angoûlême, Montausier, Fouquet, Créqui, Turenne; of Tallemant, Pellisson, Charpentier and Scudéry. He preferred to antique fable the tales of modern history and the novels of Scudéry.

All these figures of the social and literary world moving in the same environment made up a powerful party of similar tastes and literary preferences. The rise of the young Racine was looked upon with disfavor, for he did not represent the literary standards to which they were accustomed. Observing that his style was not that of Corneille, they judged him inferior. Seeing that Boileau supported him, Boileau whom they hated for his dogmatic manner and his intolerance of all their cherished literary ideals, they set about harassing the young Racine, denying the beauty of his work, setting up rivals in his path, far inferior to him in merit but whose methods were suited to catch the public taste, and in spreading throughout society in general an impression unfavorable to his dramatic efforts. This struggle runs through the century. From 1660 until 1680 the spirit of the Academy had not changed. It remained faithful to the traditions of the age of Mazarin -- Consart was still secretary; Chapelain and Des Marets reigned; Segrais was defending Cotin, Boyer and Quinault.²¹⁷

The battle which Racine was forced to wage throughout his dramatic career began almost with his first appearance as a writer

²¹⁷ Deltour:- "Les Ennemis de Racine," p. 401-9.

for the stage. His "Alexandre" called forth the dissertation of Saint-Évremond which was the rallying point for the opposition who saw therein a just distinction between the preeminence of Corneille and the aspirations of the young rival. Saint-Évremond indeed was not blinded by a partisan spirit to the extent of denying a considerable ability to the younger man, while expressing at the same time an admiration for the beauties of versification, yet this tolerance did not extend to the greater part of polite society. For the précieux circles of that period, Racine was the bold rival, the innovator whose methods and style must be condemned. Subligny, the year after "Andromaque" was presented, brought out his "Folle Querelle ou la Critique d'Andromaque," attacking the newcomer as he had done Molière in his "Critique de l'École des Femmes." The first preface which Racine wrote for his "Britannicus" shows with what vigor the partisans of Corneille had been pressing him. Indeed, the play itself did not meet with the success that its author had expected. The circumstances surrounding the presentation of his "Bérénice" helped to divide the parties, for the favorable reception accorded Racine's tragedy beside the meagre one given to Corneille's on the same subject, the coincidence of the rivals working upon the same subject, Racine's vigorous attack upon his critics, accusing them of jealousy, branding them mediocre writers whose success depended upon notoriety, all these facts injured his cause. Corneille's criticism of "Bajazet" as reported in the "Segraisiana," Madame de Sévigny's attitude toward "Bajazet" after her first outburst of approval, give an idea of the state of public opinion. The "Mercure Galant" for January 9th, 1672 could find nothing more to say upon the "Bajazet" than the brief notice:- "On représenta ces jours passés, sur le théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne, une tra-

gédie intitulée Bajazet, et qui passe pour un ouvrage admirable,"
a meagre announcement, as if the play were but a passing
 fancy over which the editor did not care to waste time. The au-
 thor's name is not even mentioned, as if he like his play had e-
 merged from obscurity. De Visé finally dismissed the subject in
 a cavalier fashion:- "Le sujet de cette tragédie est turc, à ce
 que rapporte l'auteur dans sa préface.Je ne puis être
 pour ceux qui disent que cette pièce n'a rien d'assex turc: il y
 a des Turcs qui sont galants; et puis elle plaît, il n'importe
 comment; et il ne coûte pass^{plus}, quand on a à peindre, d'inven-
 ter des caractères d'honnêtes gens et de femmes tendres et galan-
 tes, que ceux de barbares qui ne conviennent point au goût des
 dames de ce siècle, à qui sur toutes choses il importe de plaire."

"Mithridate" drew no more favorable comment from the "Mer-
 cure." In closing an article on "Théodat" by Thomas Corneille,
 De Visé found it necessary to mention "Mithridate" in a few lines:-
 "Ensuite de cette pièce on verra sur le meme théâtre le Mithridate
 de M. Racine. Cet à ouvrage réussira sans doute, puisque les
 pièces de cet auteur ont toujours eu beaucoup d'amis." ²¹⁹ A year
 later, referring to the character of Mithridate he said:- "Et
 quoique ce prince fût barbare, il l'a rendu en mourant un des
 meilleurs princes du monde." ²²⁰

Boursault in 1674 wrote his "Germanicus" to correct the
 imaginary faults of "Mithridate," although the latter play had
 far surpassed the success of Corneille's "Pulchérie." Le Clerc
 in 1675, after the production of his "Iphigénie" and a few months

²¹⁸ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," p. 457 T III.

²¹⁹ ibid, p. 463.

²²⁰ ibid, and Mercure Galant, Aug.6th, 1673.

after Racine's tragedy of the same name, had the audacity to write:-

"J'avouerai de bonne foi que, quand j'entrepris de traiter le sujet d'Iphigénie en Aulide, je crus que M. Racine avoit choisi celui d'Iphigénie dans la Tauride, qui n'est moins beau que le premier. Ainsi le hasard seul a fait que nous nous sommes rencontrés, comme il arriva à M. de Corneille et à lui dans les deux Bérénice."²²¹ The good faith of Le Clerc is open to question.

We know from the Abbé de Villars that this tragedy was spoken of in advance and declared more beautiful than Racine's. "On peut donc l'affirmer," says one of Racine's editors, "la concurrence fut préméditée et volontaire, les adversaires de Racine eurent recours à cette nouvelle manœuvre pour combattre sa renommée.

Ceux qui lui donnerent bientôt Pradon pour émule peuvent bien s'aveugler jusqu'à croire que Le Clerc aidé de Coras, soutiendrait la lutte avec le grand poète, et qu'ils pourraient entraîner ce public dans la complicité de leurs préférences intéressés et ridicules. Mais leurs espérances furent bien trompés; et, quoique Le Clerc se félicite dans sa préface de l'accueil fait à sa pièce, après cinq représentations elle disparut sans retour du Théâtre de l'Hôtel Guénégaud."²²²

This was the year of Corneille's last effort, "Suréna," which failed to win popular favor. Bayle in a letter of December 15th, 1674 wrote concerning this play:- "On joue à l'hôtel de Bourgogne une nouvelle pièce de M. Corneille, l'aîné, dont j'ai oublié le nom, qui fait à la vérité du bruit, mais pas en égard au renom de l'autre."²²³ With the failing powers of Corneille more and more appar-

²²¹ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," p. 308.

²²² *ibid.*, III, p. 309.

²²³ *ibid.*, p. 289, note 2.

ent, his adherents were confronted with the problem of finding someone to oppose to his rival's steady advance. Diatribe, invective, and mockery passed about in salons were of little practical use. Boileau had been lampooning their friends in and out of his satires. The numerous replies to his attacks, remarks upon his works, criticisms of his style failed to drive him from the field. On the contrary, both he and Racine were gaining in favor at the court and would soon, if they were not already, be on the road to royal favor so much desired by all. Public taste kept a middle ground between extremists of both parties. The opposition must find new material to carry the fight upon the stage to oppose Racine's success by a similar excellence in the older manner. Coras and Le Clerc were tried but to no avail. As Saint-Beuve says:—"Sans doute ses deux dernières pièces, Iphigénie et Phèdre, avaient excité contre l'auteur un redoublement d'orage; tous les auteurs sifflés, les jansénistes pamphlétaires, les grands seigneurs surannés, et les débris des précieuses, Boyer, Le Clerc, Coras, Pradon, j'allais dire Fontenelle, Barbier d'Aucourt, surtout dans le cas présent le Duc de Nevers, Madame Des Houlières et l'Hôtel de Bouillon, s'étaient ameutés sans pudeur et les indignes manœuvres de cette cabale avaient pu inquiéter le poète mais, enfin ses pièces avaient triomphé."²²⁴

Looking about for a new-comer to replace Le Clerc and Coras, the adherents of Corneille chose Pradon with the result that he was led to play a part in the history of the stage of his day which brought down upon him the ridicule of those more skillful than he and the everlasting condemnation of succeeding ages. For him the

²²⁴ Saint-Beuve: "Causeries de Lundi, Les Nièces de Mazarin," XIII, 386-89, édition Garnier.

road to success seemed to lie through the salons of the best born. This view was not peculiar to him alone. Others of his time had thought likewise but few had imagined themselves the equal of the great writers of their day, or if they did they had avoided the pitfall of an actual competition. Had Pradon been content to continue in the manner pleasing to his benefactors without setting himself in direct opposition to Racine, he could very well have disregarded the occasional jibes of Boileau or at least taken solace in the thought that he was not the only writer of his day whose methods met the disfavor of the great Satirist. Furthermore, he would not have placed himself in the ridiculous position of attempting to overstep the limits of his ability. His downfall was caused not by a lesser ability than many of the minor dramatists of the century but to a lack of judgment.

Coming to Paris from a provincial milieu where the greatness of Corneille was still the admiration of the salons, Pradon dedicated his first tragedy to Montausier at whose home he perhaps took up his abode. Here he certainly met all these social favorites whose verses were admired by a précieuse society. To these staunch Corneillians the advent of a young writer from Rouen whose literary interests followed the stage was an occasion. He might be used to good advantage against Racine, were he at all capable of pleasing the public. Corneille was failing; Racine had already written the major part of his tragedies. Mastery of the stage appeared won by the younger man. Boileau was continuing in his war against the most favored writers. The salons were changing with the loss of the old galant and précieux spirit. The older party, thus would naturally favor a young writer like Pradon. His "Pirame et Thisbé" bid fair to advance in popular favor their candidate. In his preface

Pradon wrote:- "Elle a eu le bonheur de plaire; et c'est la première Règle du Théâtre, et celle à qui l'on doit plutôt s'attacher, qu'à toutes les Règles de la Poétique d'Aristote." He thus served notice that the ancient rules were but rules taken seriously only in certain quarters. The Frères Parfaict have summed up the public feeling at this time when they say:- "Ce grand succès n'est dû qu'à certaines circonstances. L'indulgence ordinaire qu'on a pour les nouveaux Auteurs, et la brigue des ennemis de M. Racine qui cherchoient qu'à lui trouver un Antagoniste, firent la fortune de M. Pradon."²²⁵

Pradon must certainly have heard of Racine's success before he came to Paris in 1674. His temperament and environment had been shot through with admiration for Corneille so that his debut in the Corneillian manner was to be expected. The society in which he moved tended toward a strengthening of this feeling, modified of course by such changes as the exigencies of the times necessitated. His defense of the character of Bélus in "Pirame et Thisbé" is an argument à la Corneille, while the preface to "Tamerlan" outlines in clearer fashion his position:- "J'ai fait un honnête homme de Tamerlan contre l'opinion de certaines gens qui vouloient qu'il fût tout à fait brutal, et qu'il fit mourir jusques aux Sardes. J'ai tâché d'apporter un tempérament à sa férocité naturelle, et d'y mêler un caractère de grandeur et de générosité, qui est fondé dans l'Histoire, puisqu'il refusa l'Empire des Grecs, et qu'il a été un des plus grands Hommes du Monde."²²⁶ Herein lies much of the dramatic reasoning of Corneille's followers: to make one's hero first an "honnête homme," wherein elegance of contemporary manners

²²⁵ Frères Parfaict:- "Histoire du Théâtre français," XI, 348-58.

²²⁶ Preface of "Tamerlan."

should predominate over historical characteristics, fierce or barbaric; to combine with that softening of tone something of "grandeur" which should produce the "frisson" sought by Madame de Sévigné; to show a generous character which would draw popular favor. Historical facts came last, necessary supports to the work.

By the time of "Tamerlan" the poet was well aware that he worked against opposition. Nor were his opponents idle. They had seen a new antagonist in Pradon. There occurs in the prefaces a continual complaint from Pradon that certain persons had attempted to stifle the play or lessen its chances for success:- "Si Thisbé n'avoit pas été si loin, peut-être qu'on eut laissé un libre cours à Tamerlan, et qu'on ne l'eut pas étouffé (comme on a fait) dans le plus fort de son succès. -----Après cela je dois être plus que content, et me mettre fort peu en peine, lorsqu'elle a été universellement approuvée de tous les honnêtes gens de la malice et du chagrin de quelques particuliers.²²⁷ D'ailleurs, s'ils faisoient réflexion sur plusieurs de leurs Pièces, ils verroient, qu'ils font eux-mêmes encore moins scrupuleux sur des imitations plus fortes et on pourroit leur faire connoître qu'ils souviennent aussi bien des Modernes que des Anciens, et qu'ils possèdent avec autant d'avantage les beautés de Tristan, de Mairet, et de Routrou que celles d'Horace, de Sophocle, et d'Euripide."²²⁸

Subligny, who was of Pradon's circle, in discussing the early withdrawal of "Tamerlan" says:-"Je ne veux point examiner si la brusque fierté de Tamerlan doit sa prompte chute aux brigues indignes de M. Racine, ou au défaut de sa propre conduite."²²⁹ This criticism

²²⁷ Preface of "Tamerlan."

²²⁸ *ibid.*

²²⁹ Subligny:-"Dissertation sur les Tragédies de Phèdre et Hippolyte," imprimée à Paris 1677 in-12 (Recueil de Diss. sur plusieurs tragédies de Corneille et Racine, tome II p.351-414 Granet Paris, 1740, in-12, dissertation attributed to Subligny.

points out to what party these "Particuliers" belonged. Subligny evidently considered Racine the enemy of Pradon. He would probably have added Boileau. Was it then the actions of his critics that urged Pradon to come forth into the open and match wits with Racine, or was it upon the advice and council of the circle to which he belonged? Historians have been at variance on his motives for rivaling Racine, although most of them have been willing to attribute it to the poet's arrogance. In attempting to pass judgment on the quarrel of the "Phèdres", one historian leans to the side of Pradon: "Mais à juger la cause avec impartialité, on est forcé de reconnoître qu'il a été aux prises avec une cabale cruelle, et qu'il avoit assez de talent pour n'être pas tué par le ridicule. Bien au contraire, des esprits distingués et même délicats se déclarèrent pour lui, et il put balancer le succès de son rival."²³⁰

Lotheisen also sees Pradon influenced by an ambitious group of clever schemers:- "Die niedrigen Umtriebe die Racines Feinde gegen die Iphigénie ins Werk gesetzt hatten, niederholten sich in hoherem Mass gegen das folgende Stück des Dichters, seine Phèdre."²³¹ Jal, likewise, is of the opinion that the partisans had more to do in the matter than Pradon:- "Une coterie de précieuses et de beaux esprits l'oppose à Racine l'adopte, cabale pour assurer le succès de ses ouvrages en fait un homme enfin, un héros que sais-je."²³² Subligny, who was probably a party to the cabal of the Duchesse de Bouillon, writes more in favor of Racine. His "Dissertation" on the two Phèdres, while praising the masterpiece-- the play at this time had demonstrated its superiority over Pradon's-- displays a

²³⁰ Lotheisen:- "Geschichte des Lit. des 17 Jahrhunderts," Wien 1883, Band IV, ch. IV, p. 178-180.

²³¹ "Bibliothèque Dramatique de M. de Soleinne," Paris, 1844, II, 23.

²³² Jal:- "Dictionnaire critique de Biographie et d'Histoire, Paris, 1867, p. 998.

lukewarm and meticulous spirit, evidently having in his mind Saint-Évremond's "Dissertation sur Alexandre":- M. Racine avoit pris," says Subligny, "la peine de l'accomoder à notre scène, et que M. Pradon avoit eu l'audace de la doubler, sans considérer la haute réputation qui s'est acquis dans ces sortes d'ouvrages un si grand homme,-----laissant donc à part les raisons que ce nouvel Auteur étranger à la Cour, appuyé de fort peu d'amis, et connu du Peuple seulement par le succès d'une Pièce et le naufrage d'une Autre, eut d'attaquer cet illustre génie, favorisé des Puissances, admiré du Peuple, et approuvé des Sçavans."²³³

Mlle. Des Houlières, daughter of the celebrated Madame Des Houlières, at whose home were concocted many of the attacks against Racine, is of the opinion that Pradon of his own volition entered into competition with the rival:- "Dans le temps que M. Racine faisait des tragédies, Pradon en faisait aussi. Quoique M. Racine fût bien au-dessus de Pradon, il ne le laissait pas de le regarder comme une espèce de concurrent, surtout quand il sut que Pradon composait en même temps que lui sa tragédie de Phèdre par émulation.-----Pradon venait souvent chez ma mère, pour laquelle il avait beaucoup de considération, et au goût de qui il avait assez de confiance pour la venir consulter sur les ouvrages qu'il faisait."²³⁴

The Frères Parfaict were of the same opinion "Pradon (fier de quelque succès que la cabale avoit procuré à ses premières Tragédies) composa sa Phèdre."²³⁵

The truculent preface that Pradon affixed to the first edition of "Phèdre et Hippolyte" seems to bear out this contention.

²³³ Subligny:- "Dissertation sur les deux Phèdres."

²³⁴ Saint-Beuve:- "Causeries", XIII, p. 386-89.

²³⁵ Frères Parfaict:- "Hist. du Théâtre français," XII 1-18.

This preface is a curious reflex of the poet's mind, summing up, as it does, past grievances, at the same time trying to justify himself for the rather ridiculous position in which he found himself. The contentions have so much bearing upon the question of his part in the cabal that the preface is here given at length:-

"A l'arrivée d'un second Hippolyte à Paris, toute la République des lettres fut émue; quelques poètes traitèrent cette entreprise de témérité, ironie et de crime de lèse-majesté poétique:

surtout

La cabale en palit et vit en frémissant

Un second Hippolyte à sa barbe naissant

Mais les honnêtes gens applaudirent fort à ce dessein; ils disoient hautement qu'Euripide, qui est l'original de cet ouvrage, n'auroit jamais fait de procès à Sénèque pour avoir traité son sujet, ni Sénèque à Garnier ni Garnier à Gilbert. Ainsi j'avoue franchement que ça n'a point été un effet du hasard qui m'a fait rencontrer avec M. Racine, mais un pure effet de mon choix-----

Il seroit même à souhaiter pour le divertissement en public que plusieurs auteurs se rencontrassent quelquefois dans les mêmes sujets pour faire naître cette noble émulation qui est la cause des plus beaux ouvrages. Mais quelques auteurs intéressés n'ont pas été de ce sentiment, ils se sont érigés en régents du Parnasse, ou plutôt en tyrans, et ils ont établi entre eux (en étouffant les ouvrages des autres ou en les empêchant de paraître) cette maxime des Femmes Savantes de Molière:-

'Et nul n'aura d'esprit hors nous et nos amis."

En vérité, n'en déplaise à ces grands hommes, on me permettra de leur dire, en passant, que leur procédé et leur manière sont fort éloignés de ce sublime qu'ils tâchent d'attraper dans leurs ouvrages. Pour moi,

j'ai toujours cru qu'on devoit avoir ce caractère dans ses moeurs avant que de le faire paroître dans ses écrits, et que l'on devoit être bien moins avide de la qualité de bon auteur que de celle d'honnête homme que l'on me verra toujours préféré à tout le sublime de Longin. Ces anciens Grecs dont le style est si sublime et qui nous doivent servir de modèles, n'auroient point empêché dans Athènes les meilleures actrices d'une troupe de jouer en premier rôle comme nos modernes l'ont fait à Paris au théâtre de Guénégaud. C'est ce que le public a vu avec indignation et avec mépris, mais il n'en a assez vengé et je lui ai trop d'obligation pour différer plus longtemps à l'avertir de ce qui se trame contre lui-- c'est une trop plaisante nouvelle pour n'en pas réjouir mon lecteur. Il ne pourra pas apprendre sans rire que ces messieurs veulent ôter la liberté aux auteurs de faire des pièces de théâtre, aux comédiens de les jouer, aux libraires de les imprimer, et même au public d'enjoyer."²³⁶

In spite of his statement that he entered into competition deliberately with Racine in the choice of subject, it seems more probable that this plan arose in the minds of the coterie wherein he moved. There is nothing in his earlier prefaces to suggest the egotism shown in this one. As was mentioned in connection with his life, this is the only place in his writings where an excess of self-esteem breaks out. Subligny himself is authority for the statement that Pradon, at the time of "Phèdre et Hippolyte," was a new author, unknown to the court, of whom the public knew only by one success, and a dubious failure. No young author with such scanty success to his credit would willingly choose a subject which he knew was being treated by the most talked-of dramatist

²³⁶ Preface of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

of the day, one who already had six important tragedies to his credit, unless urged to do so from motives other than those of pride. He would know too well that in any such competition, fortune favored the older, more successful poet. As for Subligny's criticism there is in it too much the air of currying favor with Racine to make his opinion reliable; while, in the case of Mlle, Des Houlières, she would be well content to shift to Pradon the blame for an act of bad taste in which her mother had been considerably involved.

Behind this rhetorical preface, full of grievances real and imaginary, appears the man trying to assume a role of whose ridiculousness he is all too aware, but which, like an ill-fitting garment, annoys him. The situation, he feels, is not of his making. When one becomes the dupe of clever tricksters, from self-defense one must play up to one's part. And so, even in his dedication to the Duchesse de Bouillon, Pradon passes gaily over the cabal of his own party to an attack upon his opponents for the very thing in which he has been involved:- "Ne vous étonnez pas, Madame, s'il vous paroît dépouillé de cette fierté farouche et de cette insensibilité qui lui estoit si naturelle mais en auroit-il pu conserver auprès des charmes de V. Altesse? Enfin si les Anciens nous l'ont dépeint comme il a esté dans Trézène, du moins il paroît comme il a dû estre à Paris; et n'en déplaît à toute l'Antiquité, ce jeune Héros auroit mauvais grâce devenir tout hérissé des epines de Grec, dans une Cour aussi galante que la nostre. Ce n'est pas, Madame, que V. Altesse ne pénétre admirablement toutes les beautés des Anciens. Outre témérité de sa personne et l'éclat de son Rang, Elle possède encore au-dessus de celles de Sexe, des avantages plus solides du caste de l'Esprit puisque (si je l'ose

dire) elle sçait puiser dans leurs sources les beautez d'Horace, et d'Ovide, et des plus célèbres Auteurs dont elle nous pourroit donner des leçons. On sçait d'ailleurs Madame, que V. Altesse ne juge jamais des Ouvrages par cabale, ou par prévention, mais toujours avec un discernement si juste, accompagné de tant de pénétration et de délicatesse, et dans une si grande droiture de raison, qu'elle ne laisse rien à répondre aux plus entestez. Ce sont ces raisons, Madame, qui ont forcé Hippolyte à venir vous rendre ses respects et vous remercier des bontez dont V. Altesse l'a déjà daigné honorer au Théâtre." ²³⁷

That Racine was working upon a tragedy whose subject was Hippolyte was certainly known to his associates, for in certain circles he frequently read portions of his works while in preparation. Bayle, writing from Sedan, October 4, 1676, to Minitoli at Geneva, says:—"M. de Racine travaille à la tragédie d'Hippolyte dont on attend un grand succès." ²³⁸

In 1676 Racine wrote to the Père Bouhours:—

"Je vous envoie les quatre premiers actes de ma tragédie, et je vous enverrai le cinquième, dès que je l'aurai transcrit. Je vous supplie, mon Révérend Père, de prendre la peine de les lire, et de marquer les fautes que je puis avoir faites contre la langue, dont vous êtes un de nos plus excellents maîtres.

Si vous y trouvez quelques fautes d'une autre nature, je vous prie d'avoir la bonté de me les marquer sans indulgence. Je vous prie encore de faire part de cette lecture au Révérend Père Rapin, s'il veut bien y donner quelques moments.

Je suis votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

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Racine.

²³⁷ Epître of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

²³⁸ Oeuvres diverses de Bayle, La Haye, 1731, IV, p. 567.

²³⁹ Paul Mesnard:—"Oeuvres de Racine," VI, p. 528-9.

The tragedy referred to is evidently "Phèdre" upon which, as Bayle's letter shows, Racine was working in 1676. The editor of this letter derives its date by the following argument:- "La lettre est sans date. Celle que nous proposons par conjecture a, nous le croyons, beaucoup de vrai-semblance. Racine, dans sa lettre nomme le P. Bouhours 'un des plus excellents maîtres de notre langue'. Cela ne donne-t-il pas à penser qu'elle a été écrite non-seulement après la publication des "Doutes sur la langue françoise" (1674), mais même après celle des "Remarques nouvelles sur la langue françoise" (1675)? La tragédie envoyée au P. Bouhours serait donc "Phèdre", que Racine achevait en 1676. Quant aux deux tragédies sacrées, il ne saurait en être question ici puisque Racine le P. Bouhours de faire part de sa lecture de sa pièce au P. Rapin, qui mourut en 1687. Cela nous dispense de faire remarquer que la tragédie sur laquelle notre poète désirait avoir les observations critiques du célèbre jésuite ne pouvait être "Esther," qui n'a que trois actes."²⁴⁰

If Racine was in the habit of reading parts of "Phèdre" to his friends and allowing others to look over the partly finished work in manuscript, the subject matter and method of treatment undoubtedly became more or less known. In a restricted society such as that of Louis' court, wherein the members were in close social contact, such a matter as the treatment in Racine's new work would be welcome news for his opponents. Certain habitués of the salons, Bouillon and Des Houlières, may have been present at a reading of the "Phèdre", or in some way have become conversant with its contents. Information thus acquired would be imparted to Pradon.

²⁴⁰ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," VI, p.528-9.

Gazier in his article on "Racine et le théâtre français,"²⁴¹ explains Bayle's reference to a new tragedy, Hippolyte by name:- "Lorsque la tragédie de Phèdre n'avait pas encore paru, et que cependant on commençait déjà à s'occuper dans le public de l'imitation de l'Hippolyte d'Euripide, à laquelle Racine travaillait, c'était, nous l'avons vu, sous ce même titre d'Hippolyte choisi par le poète grec que Bayle avait entendu parler de la nouvelle pièce---Racine sentant bien qu'il devait lui imposer un autre nom, et adopta comme Pradon le fit à son imitation celui de "Phèdre et Hippolyte." Lotheisen also is of the opinion that Racine's enemies were present at a reading of the unfinished tragedy:- "Vielleicht hatten Freunde von Pradon einer Vorlesung Racines beigewohnt und ihm darüber berichtet."²⁴²

In his preface Pradon again makes the charge, as in the preface to "Tamerlan," that certain persons had attempted to stop the performance of the piece as they had tried to do with his previous play. Their method, he declares, was to discourage the better actresses from essaying the role of "Phèdre." It would appear that an appeal was made to the king concerning the propriety of allowing Pradon's play to be presented, and Louis, to his credit, did not withhold from the rival what he had permitted to Racine. Of this Pradon speaks later in his "Nouvelles Remarques sur tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D***".

Brossette tells us that Racine produced his "Phèdre" at this time contrary to the advice of Boileau who feared just such a quarrel as arose: "La tragédie de M. Racine fut représentée pour la

²⁴¹ Augustin Gazier: "Racine et le théâtre français," Revue hebdomadaire des Cours et Conférences, #16, 1, 1907-8.

²⁴² Lotheisen: "Geschichte der französischen Lit. im 17 Jahrhundert."

première fois le vendredi premier jour de l'année 1677 par les comédiens de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne. Le dimanche suivant ceux de la troupe du Roi lui opposèrent La 'Phèdre' de Pradon. M. Despréaux avoit conseillé à M. Racine de ne pas faire représenter la tragédie dans le même temps que Pradon devoit faire jouer la sienne, et de la réserver pour un autre temps afin de ne pas entrer en concurrence avec Pradon. Mais La Champmeslé, qui savoit déjà son rôle, et qui vouloit gagner de l'argent, obligea M. Racine à donner sa pièce."²⁴³

As for the claim which Pradon makes that his enemies prevented the better actresses from undertaking the role of Phèdre: "Rien ne pouvoit arriver de plus favorable à M. Pradon," says the Frères Parfaict, "que de se trouver en concurrence avec M. Racine. Cependant ce bonheur auroit peu duré, si ce dernier, et ses amis, allarmés mal à propos, n'eussent cherché à faire tomber la Pièce nouvelle par une brigade tout à fait indigne d'eux et qui ne servit qu'à donner pendant deux ou trois mois une espèce de réputation à cet audacieux rival."²⁴⁴ If Racine's party as it appears tried to hinder the production, it is natural that Pradon should suspect that the leading actresses who refused the role were influenced in their attitude by his rival. The Frères Parfaict continue:- "Il y a lieu de présumer que cette Actrice qui refusa de jouer le rôle de Phèdre, dans la crainte de ne pouvoir égaler l'inimitable Mademoiselle Champmeslé, étoit Mademoiselle de Brie, la meilleure Comédienne de l'Hôtel de Guénégaud, et l'autre qui ne voulut pas accepter ce rôle au refus de la dernière étoit

²⁴³ A. Laverdet:- "Correspondance entre Bouleau Despréaux et Brossette," Paris, 1858, appendix: "Mémoire de Brossette sur Boileau, p. 562.

²⁴⁴ Frères Parfaict:- "Hist. du Théât. français," XII, 47-60.

vraisemblablement Mademoiselle Molière. Mademoiselle Du Pin joua sans doute le rôle de Phèdre."²⁴⁵ Pradon's misfortune, as one of his biographers says, was:- "De voir cette pièce soutenue, à l'Hôtel Guénégaud, par de maladroits admirateurs du génie de Corneille, par de beaux esprits que la passion rendait aveugles sur les beautés des tragédies de Racine."²⁴⁶

The history of the cabal carried on by Madame de Bouillon with the aid of her brother, the Duc de Nevers, and Madame Des Houlières is so well known that a hasty account of it will suffice here. The furor it created can be well seen in the "Mercurie Galant" which devoted an article of some length to it, and in Boileau's "Epître" VII, to Racine beginning:-

"Que tu sais bien, Racine, à l'aide d'un acteur,

Emouvoir, étonner, ravir un spectateur!"

Racine's success was ascribed by his enemies to the skill of the actors:- "Les Partisans de Corneille attribuoient le succès des Pièces de son Rival au jeu des Acteurs, auxquels il communiquoit, par ses leçons, le grand talent qu'il avoit pour la Déclamation, et Saint-Évremond étoit du nombre de ceux qui rejettoient sur les comédiens une partie de la gloire d'Andromaque."²⁴⁷

The first skirmish in the war of the "Phèdres" is usually ascribed to the Duchesse de Bouillon who with the Duc de Nevers, Madame Des Houlières and others of her salon, whose names have already been mentioned, let herself become a party to a rather petty affair. She proceeded to buy up all the best seats for the first performance at both the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the

²⁴⁵ Frères Parfaict:- "Hist. du Théât. français," XII, 47-60.

²⁴⁶ Beaurepaire:- "Notice sur Pradon."

²⁴⁷ Louis Racine:- "Remarques sur les tragédies de Jean Racine," Amsterdam, 1752, I, 127.

Hôtel de Guénégaud, thus causing the boxes at the first presentation of Racine's "Phèdre" to remain empty, and thereby spreading the impression that his tragedy had failed to gain the applause of the best people; while she crowded the Hôtel de Guénégaud with her favorites.²⁴⁸ In this connection the account which Mlle. Des Houlières made to Brosette of this affair is interesting for the picture of the times and also since it suggests another reason for the actions of the Duchesse:-

"Ma mère voulut voir la première représentation de la Phèdre de Racine; elle envoya retenir une loge, quelques jours d'avance, à l'hôtel de Bourgogne mais Champeslé (le mari de la célèbre actrice) qui avoit soin des loges, fit toujours dire aux gens qui venoient de la part de Madame Des Houlières, qu'il n'y avoit pas de places et que toutes les loges étoient retenues. Ma mère sentit l'affectation de ce refus et en dépit d'eux, dit-elle, et je verrai la première représentation. Quand l'heure de la comédie fut venue, elle se mit en négligé avec une de ses amies qui prit des billets. Elle se cacha tout de son mieux sous une grande coiffe de taffetas, et au lieu d'entrer par la porte du théâtre, comme elle avoit accoutume de faire, elle entra par la porte des logis et s'alla placer au fond des secondes loges, car toutes les autres étoient remplies. Elle vit la pièce qui fut jouée en perfection. Elle revint souper chez elle au logis avec cinq ou six personnes, du nombre desquelles étoit Pradon."²⁴⁹

There is here a discrepancy in the commonly accepted story that Madame de Bouillon bought the best seats at the Bourgogne. Had this been true, Madame Des Houlières would have had no difficulty

²⁴⁸ La Porte et Chamfort:- "Anecdotes dramatiques," Paris, 1775, II, pp. 59-62.

²⁴⁹ Saint-Beuve:- "Les Nièces de Mazarin," Causeries, XIII. 386-89.

in finding a place, had she desired one, unless she were ignorant of the action of the Duchesse, an unbelievable supposition. This has led Saint-Beuve to reject the traditional story:- "Il n'est pas du tout exact de dire, je le crois, que la duchesse de Bouillon ait d'emblée louée la salle pour faire tomber la pièce!"²⁵⁰ It may be that Champmeslé's refusal of Madame Des Houlières's request angered her to such an extent that she invoked the aid of the Duchesse, who certainly was financially in a better position than Madame Des Houlières to pay the "quinze mille livres" which she is supposed to have given for the desired seats. Her decision to buy the seats for succeeding performances at the Bourgogne as well as for the initial performances at the Guénégaud may have resulted from this occurrence. Yet, as the legend runs, she controlled the best seats at the initial performance of both theatres. Champmeslé's attitude, as given by Mlle. Des Houlières, points to a decision on his part that Racine's enemies should receive little favor in the allotment of boxes. He as manager would not be disposed to have his best seats bought en masse by Madame de Bouillon. Saint-Beuve explains this question by supposing that Madame de Bouillon, angered at the discourteous sonnet concerning the Duchesse de Mazarin, her sister, decided to rent the hall for the following performances: "Quant à la duchesse de Bouillon, ce fut sans doute pour prendre sa revanche au sonnet qu'elle loua la salle aux représentations suivants. On sait le reste: la guerre était déclarée."²⁵¹

Mlle. Des Houlières states that after the performance her mother returned home accompanied by friends among whom was Pradon.

²⁵⁰ Saint-Beuve:- "Les Nieces de Mazarin," *Causeries* XIII, 386-89.

²⁵¹ *ibid.*

In this gathering were in all probability the Duc de Nevers, his sister, and other friends of Pradon's circle. "On ne parla d'autre chose," she continues, "pendant tout le souper et chacun dit son sentiment sur la tragédie, et on se trouva plus disposé à la critique qu'à la louange. Ce fut pendant ce même souper que ma mère fit ce fameux sonnet:-

Dans un fauteuil doré, Phèdre tremblant et blême,
Dit des vers où d'abord personne n'attend rien.
Sa nourrice lui fait un sermon fort chrétien,
Contre l'affreux dessein d'attenter sur soi-même.

Hippolyte la hait presque autant qu'elle l'aime;
Rien ne change son coeur ni son chaste maintien.
La nourrice l'accuse; elle s'en permit bien;
Thésée a pour son fils une rigueur extrême.

Une grosse Aricie ²⁵² au teint rouge, au crins blonds,
N'est là que montrer deux énormes têtens,
Que, malgré sa froideur, Hippolyte idolâtre.

Il meurt enfin, traîné par ses coursiers ingrats;
Et Phèdre, après avoir pris de la mort aux-rats,
Vient, en se confessant, mourir sur le théâtre." ²⁵³

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Frères Parfaict:—"Hist. du Théât. français," XII, 1-18: "Des Maizeaux ascribed the role of Aricie to Mlle. Des Oeillets. The Frères Parfaict point out that it was impossible for her to play the role as she died in 1670:—"Ainsi il faut rendre ce portrait satirique de l'Actrice qui fit alors le rôle d'Aricie à Mlle. d'Ennebaut qui étoit blonde et grasse mais très jolie."

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Frères Parfaict:—"Hist. du théât. français," XII, 1-18.
La Porte et Chamfort:—"Anecdotes dramatiques," II, 59-62.

This sonnet, in whose composition quite likely all the guests took part, was circulated the next morning among the wits of society and became a "pièce de scandale." At about eleven o'clock the Abbé Tallemant des Réaux, thinking he brought a novelty of great interest, arrived at the hotel of Madame Des Houlières, showed her the sonnet, which he had copied, and took unto himself the authorship.²⁵⁴ The sonnet naturally came to the attention of Racine and Boileau who thought it came from the pen of the Duc de Nevers. The same day another sonnet appeared on the same rhymes against De Nevers who promptly put it down as the work of Racine and Boileau. Its insulting language angered the Duc, especially on account of the insulting allusion to his sister, the Duchesse de Mancini, which it contained. The sonnet runs:-

Dans un Palais doré, Damon, jaloux et blême,
 Fait des vers, où jamais personne n'entend rien,
 Il n'est ni courtisan, ni Guerrier, ni Chrétien;
 Et souvent, pour rimer, il s'enferme lui-même.

La Muse, par malheur, la hait autant qu'il l'aime;
 Il a d'un franc Poète et l'air et le maintien.
 Il veut juger de tout, et ne juger pas bien,
 Il a pour le Phébus une tendresse extrême.

²⁵⁴ Saint-Beuve:- "Les Nièces de Mazarin:"- "L'abbé Tallemant qui étoit appelé le Père Tallemant, pour le distinguer d'un autre abbé Tallemant, tous deux de l'Académie françoise," (Mlle. Des Houlières.)

Frères Parfaict:- "Hist. du théât. français:"- "François Tallemant des Réaux abbé de Val-Chretien. On l'appeloit l'aîné pour le distinguer de Paul Tallemant, son cousin, qui étoit aussi Ecclésiastique."
 TXII, 1-18.

Une soeur vagabonde, aux crins plus noirs que blonds,
Va partout l'univers promener deux têtons,
Dont, malgré son pays, Damon est idolâtre.

Il se tue à rimer pour des lectures ingrats;
L'Enéide, à son goût, est de la mort aux rats, 255
Et, selon lui, Pradon est le Roi du Théâtre."

At the insulting reference to Madame Mazarin, his sister, the intimate friend of Saint-Evremond at the English court, the Duc was scarcely pleased, nor did he receive with favor the mention of his poetic talents, for he composed verses with great facility, and passed for a litterateur "à la mode." Furthermore, his honor was attacked in the line:

"Il n'est ni Courtisan, ni Guerrier, ni Chrétien."

Both Racine and Boileau, whom De Nevers accused of writing it, hastened to deny the authorship of the sonnet, but the Duc, unappeased, let it be noised abroad that he would have them assassinated. In the meanwhile he replied to the insult by a sonnet of his own making:-

Racine et Despréaux, l'air triste et le teint blême,
Viennent demander grâce, et ne confessent rien.
Il faut leur pardonner, parce qu'on est chrétien;
Mais on sait ce qu'on ^{doit} au public, à soi-même.

Damon, pour l'intérêt de cette soeur qu'il aime,
Doit de ces scélerats chatier le maintien,
Car il serait blâmé de tous les gens de bien,
S'il ne punissait pas leur insolence extrême.

Ce fut une furie, aux crains plus noirs que blonds,
 Qui leur pressa du pus de ses affreux tétens,
 Ce Sonnet qu'en secret leur cabale idolâtre.

Vous en serez punis, Satyriques ingrats;
 Non pas en trahison, avec la mort aux rats
 Mais à coups de bâton donnés en plein théâtre." ²⁵⁶

To Racine and Boileau the affair began to look menacing, although they were still proclaiming their innocence. Henri Jules de Bourbon, son of the great Condé, calmed their fears by telling them: "Si vous n'avez pas fait le Sonnet, venez à l'Hôtel de Condé, où M. le Prince saura bien vous garantir de ces menaces, puisque vous êtes innocents; et si vous l'avez fait, venez aussi à l'Hôtel de Condé; et M. le Prince vous prendra de même sous sa protection, parce que le Sonnet est très plaisant et plein d'esprit."²⁵⁷ The Prince de Condé let it be known that he would resent any attack upon his friends,²⁵⁸ whereupon the Duc de Nevers, thinking it more discreet to let the matter drop, made no further move. Brossette reports that Pradon had said at a dinner given by M. Pellot, "premier président à Rouen," that Despréaux had received a beating.²⁵⁹ To this Boileau refers in line 60 of his "Epître" VI:-

"Le bruit court qu'avant hier on vous assassina."

During the month of October Racine and Boileau were chosen to write the history of Louis' reign.²⁶⁰ The Duc de Nevers probably thought it unwise to proceed against two men favored by the sovereign.

²⁵⁶ La Porte et Chamfort:- "Anecdotes dramatiques," II, 59-62.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Paul. Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," III, 260.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 259.

²⁶⁰ *ibid.*

According to Mlle. Des Houlières the author of the original sonnet remained unknown for some ten or twelve years.²⁶¹ Racine, having occasion to disavow to the Duc de Nevers any part in the sonnet attributed to him, the duke, on his part, swore that he had had no part in the first one, at which Racine remarked, "qu'apparément celui qui avait fait le premier sonnet, avait aussi fait le second."²⁶² Nicéron claims that, "M. Despréaux et M. Racine assurèrent depuis que le Sonnet contre le Duc de Nevers avait été fait par le Chevalier de Nantouillet, par le Comte de Fiesque, par le Marquis de Manicamp, par le Marquis d'Effait, et par M. de Guilleragues. C' était en effet l'Ouvrage de tous ces Messieurs ensemble."²⁶³ Louis Racine in his "Vie de Racine" denies that either Boileau or his father had anything to do with the composition of this sonnet.²⁶⁴

Pradon himself does not appear much to the foreground in this dispute. While some may have suspected him of writing the sonnet or at least of being a party to its composition, the quarrel passed by him, centering more about the leaders of the opposing forces, Boileau and Racine on the one hand, and Madame Des Houlières, Madame de Bodillon, the Duc de Nevers, and Montausier on the other. Boileau accused Montausier in "Epître" VII of favoring the enemy. Pradon, knowing what part Madame Des Houlières had in the affair, with creditable reticence kept silent. The affair of the sonnets was but an afterglow of the quarrel of the "Phèdres." Pradon's reputation

²⁶¹ Saint Beuve:- "Une Ruelle politique, etc."

Goujet:- "Bibliothèque française," Paris, 1756, XVIII:- "On ignore l'auteur pendant quelque temps."

²⁶² *ibid.*

²⁶³ Nicéron:- "Mémoires," XVIII, article Racine.

²⁶⁴ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine," I, 261.

received a blow therefrom that not even the success of "Regulus" some eleven years later, could alleviate. His good name had been gambled away on the chance of a rapid success. All the bitterness and rancor of his opponents fell upon him, while the culprits of the sonnet were forgotten. No chance was lost by Boileau to attack him. Even today, in the minds of most students of the period, his name recalls a ridiculous play of some three months labor, set up to rival Racine's masterpiece and nothing more. By this one act he lost his cause.

The quarrel of the "Phèdres" made no change in Pradon's dramatic ideas. If he at times gave the sentiment of love a more prominent place than a strict adherence to the Cornelian manner demanded, that was a passing tendency of the time, a method which Quinault had introduced and which many of the lesser dramatists adopted. Pradon was still an admirer of Corneille. His diatribes against Boileau, his prefaces and epistles extol the greatness of the old master. True to the admiration of his youth, Pradon continued to write after the Cornelian manner. Not lacking in ability to construct a plot around the old mythical legends, his faults however, lay in his verse. His muse after a feeble flight often fell into the commonplace and the banal. His Corneillian lines stand unsupported by any brilliant verse. They soar only to fall in succeeding lines into inept expressions, lacking grace and devoid of artistic form. "En lisant ces tragédies, qui n'ont pas de plus grand défaut," says one of his critics, "que de'être communes, on comprend qu'elles devaient plaire à la foule et qu'on ne s'étonne pas qu'elles aient été représentées en provinces jusqu'à la révolution."²⁶⁵

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"Bibliothèque de Soleinne," II, 23.

His regard for the myths of ancient lore was concerned only in selecting such episodes as were best suited to his ideas, of softening the brutal and virile tone of the old heroes to suit the refined and elegant taste of the courtier. In "La Troade" he apologizes for his arrangement on the ground of the needs of the audience: "J'avoue que ce sujet m'a paru très beau, mais très difficile et très épineux, jamais la majesté du Cothurne n'a brillé avec tant d'éclat que dans ces deux ouvrages, mais aussi les caractères de leurs Héros sont si pleins de férocité qu'on n'eût pu voir sans horreur Ulysse précipiter, Astyanax et Pyrrhus immoler Polixène. Il fallait trouver un milieu et un juste tempérament pour adoucir cette action. Notre théâtre ne peut souffrir ce qui a fait autrefois la beauté de celui des anciens. Nos moeurs sont trop douces et trop éloignées de ces moeurs sauvages et barbares."²⁶⁶

His heroes are gallant; his heroines gentle, amiable, and full of that tenderness so much admired in the older salons: "Il me semble cependant qu'il n'est pas fort éloigné du vrai-semblable, qu'Ulysse qui était un des plus galans hommes de la Grèce, eût pris un peu de tendresse pour une Princesse aussi aimable que Polixène, puisqu'Achille qui estoit plus farouche que luy, avait eu ce mesme penchant qui luy coûta la vie."²⁶⁷ He is not, however, given over wholly to that "fadeur" so much admired of Quinault and the Précieuses. Something of the manly vigor of Corneille remains. For a protégé of the salons, the favorite of women, he has far less of the qualities of a "poète des dames" than history leads one to believe. At times he refuses to bend the subject he treats to the sentimental:- "J'avoue que le sujet en est fort triste et qu'il n'étoit pas sus-

²⁶⁶ Preface of "La Troade."

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

ceptible de ces tendresses qui plaisent tout."²⁶⁸ This remark would lead one to believe that "Statira" was criticized for a lack of just this quality of the sentimental which Saint-Évremond condemned in his age. The preface of "Statira" shows Pradon's indecision when confronted with his desire to present characters in the Corneillian manner and the desires of his audience for a more intimate sentiment of love:- "Ainsi quoyque Mr. de la Calprenède dans son Roman de Cassandre, ait fait revivre Statira, je n'ay pas cru devoir suivre son exemple, les règles du Poème Dramatique estant plus austères que celles du Roman," and further, "J'avoue que si j'avois meslé un peu plus de politique dans les sentimens de si grands Hommes, le Sujet s'en eut esté que mieux, mais quelquefois la tendresse nous emporte plus loin qu'il ne faut."²⁶⁹ He was not averse to choosing the same theme as that in which La Calprenède had succeeded. In spite of the remarks of Boileau in his "Héros du Roman" and his satires about novels of the Scudéry type, they were still read and enjoyed by those who made up the audiences at Pradon's plays, so that the dramatist could count upon public interest in his plot, if he but presented it well. His taste, like the public's, was for the galant and the romanesque, which even Robinet found in Racine:-

"L'auteur adroit
 Que l'on nomme Monsieur Racine,
 Lequel à la Hôtel prend racine,
 A ce sujet fort bien traité;
 Et l'on y peut en vérité
 Quantité de grands vers entendre
 Et quantité d'un style tendre."²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Preface of "La Troade."

²⁶⁹ Preface of "Statira."

²⁷⁰ Paul Mesnard:- "Oeuvres de Racine, " III, 4.

Although Pradon is supposed to represent the Scudéry style of "tendresse", Subligny accuses him of a lack of understanding of this sentiment. Speaking of Aricie in "Phèdre et Hippolyte", he says:- "Aricie déclare trop franchement à Hippolyte qu'elle l'aime, une simple Bourgeoise ne le diroit pas si nuement, et la plus grande coquette en feroit plus de façons, et tout ce que celle-ci dit de tendresse et d'empresse, seroit mieux dans la bouche d'Hippolyte que dans la sienne M. Pradon n'a pas le don de tendresse comme M. Racine. Il fait encore l'amour à la Provinciale mais nos Belles lui pourront apprendre à ne pas traiter cette passion si grossièrement." ²⁷¹ He has indeed the faults of all the lesser writers of the age but not in excess of them, and in many ways he is more restrained, "On peut lui reprocher que croyant peindre ses caractères d'après l'Histoire, il les a fait plus romanesque encore que ceux M. de la Calprenède a tiré de son imagination; ils respirent toute cette fade galanterie, si reprochée à M. Quinault, et à la plupart des Poètes qui l'ont précédé." ²⁷²

His admiration for Corneille never waned. In his earlier tragedies he struggled to meet the requirements of the Corneillian aesthetics while in his later ones he attempted to adapt his earlier manner to the changed conditions of the public taste. "Il n'y a que la Muse du grand Corneille, qui au jugement de tout le monde, porte et conserve partout des ornemens solides, et n'en déplaît à M.D**, il n'y a que l'impression des oeuvres de ce grand homme qui:

De Corneille vieilli, sçait consoler Paris.

Et le Cid, qui a quarante ans sur la tête, paroît, encore moins vieux que plusieurs pièces des plus nouvelles de notre temps." ²⁷³

²⁷¹ Subligny:- "Dissertation sur les deux Phèdres."

²⁷² Frères Parfaict:- "Hist. du théât. français," XII, 156-62.

²⁷³ Pradon:- "Nouvelles Remarques, etc."

Such was his feeling for Corneille seven years after "Phèdre". This attitude did not change, for he returns to the praise of the master in his *Epître en vers* preceding the tragedy of "Regulus." The verses are not lacking in grace:-

"Esprit du grand Corneille anime nostre veine,
 Toy, qui toujours seul le maistre de la Scène,
 Dont le sçavoir profond et les nobles écrits
 Touchent toujours les coeurs, enlevant les esprits,
 Tous ces traits immortels en te faisant revivre,
 Nous inspirent l'envie et l'ardeur de te suivre.
 La mort impitoyable éteignant son flambeau
 Tient Melpomène en pleurs aux pieds de son tombeau." 274

"Regulus", whose success was a surprise for the poet, owes its strength in a measure to the Corneillian manner of its conception. The poet decided to treat his subject after the older manner. With a better understanding of this method than of the more subtle and psychological conception of the emotions, he would have succeeded better in his earlier works had he confined himself to this manner. "J'avoue qu'il y a peu d'amour, mais je n'y en pouvois mettre davantage avec bienséance. Et j'ay fait cette réflexion dans les représentations de Regulus, que la grandeur d'âme frappe plus que la tendresse, et que le Spectateur est tombé plus vivement par une grande action qui l'enlève que par un fade amour qui languit, et que fatigue et l'Auditeur et l'acteur." 275

For Racine he had little regard, due to an inability to understand his greatness, an admiration for Corneille, and a dislike, if not hatred, for the rival who had been his undoing, the friend of

274 ¹Epître de Régulus.

275 Preface of "Regulus."

his arch-enemy Boileau. For him Racine was not worth an ounce of Corneille.

Cet Auteur qui rahime Alexandre, Pyrrhus
 Achille, Bajazet, Hippolyte, Titus ,
 Quand pour se dévoiler tous ces grands personnages
 Viennent en Céladons masqués dans ses Ouvrages:
 Mais pour connoistre à fonds ces chef d'oeuvres divers,
 Qu'on mette en un creuset Racine et tous ses Vers
 Pourquoi ses Partisans ont tant crié merveille,
 On n'en tiroit pas une ouce de Corneille
 Si Boileau de Racine embrasse l'interest,
 A défendre Boileau Racine est toujours prest,
 Ces Rimeurs faux-filés l'un l'autre se chatouillent,
 Et de leur fade encens tour à tour barbouillent." 276

His feeling for Corneille naturally made him sympathetic to all those writers, contemporaries of the Rouen dramatist, whose works were condemned by the Satirist:- "J'avoue, Monseigneur, que j'ay esté surpris que de tant d'honnêtes gens qui sont en vie et que M. D.** a attaquez dans ses Satires, pas un n'ait osé luy répondre, à la reserve de feu M. Desmarets qui luy répliqua fort vivement. ----- Ce n'est pas qu'il n'ait trouvé M. Desmarets en son chemin qui a fait voir une très grande partie de ses fautes, tant de jugement que de construction.-----M.D*** ne peut louer qu'il ne satirize en même temps. Contre M. de Brébeuf qu'il insulte encore en vingt endroits." 277

Continuing in his criticism of Boileau, he defends his contemporaries:- "Il tombe dans la répétition des noms des Auteurs qu'il a déjà nommés et poursuit incessamment un plus galant Homme que luy, qui a fait

276 "Le Triomphe de Pradon."

277 "Nouvelles Remarques etc. épître à M. le Duc de***"

des Ouvrages dont il est l'original et au génie duquel nous devons tous les Opéras que nous avons en France et toutes ces jolies et tendres chansonnetes que l'incomparable Monsieur de Lulli a si bien mises en air. En vérité le mérite de cet Auteur qui est si honnête homme est au-dessus de la Satire."²⁷⁸ -----"Jamais Quinault a tant répandu de sucre et de miel dans ses opéra que le grand Racine en a mis dans son Alexandre, nous faisant du plus grand Héros de l'Antiquité, un frélûquet amoureux."

This animosity toward the two great classicists put him among the authors who from pique, personal grievance, or different aesthetic views, saw in Boileau the proud dictator of literary taste, the champion of the ancient civilization to the discredit of the greatness of his own times. Believing in this greatness and mistaking for prejudice what in Boileau was an aesthetic theory, these lesser writers of the century saw in the writings of contemporaries an excellence of culture greater than that of previous ages or reigns. With this so-called modernist tendency the Satirist was in slight accord. Beginning early in the century this movement led, toward its close, to the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," attracting to the side of the moderns writers of varying ability bent upon praising their own age, denying the value of old models, content to see in writings of the day beauties far surpassing those of antiquity the observance of whose precepts Boileau had so constantly demanded. It was to this party that Pradon belonged.

²⁷⁸ "Nouvelles Remarques, etc., épître à M/ le Duc de***"

Chapter III.

Pradon and the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes."

From 1660 until 1678 France was at the height of her influence in the seventeenth century. In diplomacy and arms she reigned supreme in Europe. The court of Louis XIV was the center of all eyes; its intellectual brilliancy recalled the past splendors of Greece and Rome. Society, having emerged from the stormy turmoil of preceding reigns, settled down around the sovereign to a life of ease, of cultural refinement, and elegant self-admiration. Manners underwent the discipline of a fixed regimen of social convenience; the society of the "honnête homme" became standardized, wherein noble and bourgeois found a place commensurate with the degree of excellence which each maintained in conforming to the courtly requirements. Throughout the nation ran a thrill of delight, an awakening to a full realization of its greatness, accompanied by admiring gratitude to the sovereign by whose efforts French influence had reached such a commanding position. In 1680 the king became known as "Louis le grand;" his excellence in matters of taste as well as his pre-eminence in the political world were acknowledged, soon to be followed by a general acceptance of his divinely appointed mission as king, protector, and arbiter of French destinies. Around him gathered the intellectual and cultured society whose activities were carried on in court, in salons, in ruelles, and in academies. All the court rendered homage and praise to the sovereign. Throughout the reign of the "Roi Soleil," the throne was enveloped in

heavy incense of adulatory prose and verse. Racine and Boileau were not free from this tendency. The lesser writers gave themselves up to elaborate eulogies of Louis and his reign. He was endowed with all virtues; his court was declared the most enlightened and polished of the age, superior in natural graces to that of any preceding period; while in the realm of intellectual endeavor the age was likened to the great periods of classic history.

For such a society a literature aristocratic and mondain was necessary, a literature without a great amount of scientific knowledge, hostile to erudition, moderately curious of antiquity, given to a search for novelty,- in a word such a literature as best suited the "honnête homme" whose intellectual horizon was limited to the social requirements of the court.²⁷⁹ The "honnête homme" was ignorant of antiquity in its broad significance. Due to poor instruction in the humanistic significance of the ancient literature, and lacking a true historical comprehension of the masterpieces of Greek and Roman civilization, he sought by means of translations to gain that knowledge of antiquity without which he was unable to measure his wit and refinement with those of his class. His point of view in his study of this civilization was static. To the old masterpieces the "honnête homme" gave the same examination, applied the same standards as he would apply to every day life about him, bringing the subject into accord with his own conception of a genteel, aristocratic, and mondain civilization, gallant in tone, courteous, urbane, and before all well-mannered. The spirit of the Ancients became by this softening

²⁷⁹ H. Gillot: "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914, pp. 309-325.

process restricted, taking on a conventional quality, an almost hollow casing of elegant, rigid, external form, smooth in outline, polished and well wrought, but lacking vigor, force, and variety of treatment. Within this outer mould of classicism the "honnête homme" placed himself with all his passions, conflicting aims, irregularities of temperament, a varied, changing human being.

The literature of the "Siècle de Louis Quatorze" presents a curious dual character, that of an accepted external mould of classic form, taste, and development with an internal mass of struggling currents bent upon self-expression, on modernizing art, and seeking to give expression to the personal feelings and emotions. The admiration for the "bel esprit" so characteristic of the century is in itself a form of self-admiration. To be clever, interesting, and socially adept within the given confines of social rules necessitated little erudition but much facility of assimilation, a discernment sharp enough to distinguish a commonplace from wit, a cultural background whose insufficiency was masked by the cleverness of its application. There was needed a knowledge of ²⁸⁰ how to write elegantly and gallantly in an entertaining manner. Antiquity for the "honnête homme" was therefore but an incidental study in the course of life. Its essence sufficed for him in the world wherein he played his part. Mlle. de Scudéry in "Le Grand Cyrus" has described the needs of this society with great clarity:-- "L'air galant ne consiste pas précisément à avoir beaucoup d'esprit, beaucoup de jugement et beaucoup de savoir: c'est quelque chose de si particulier et de si difficile à acquérir quand on ne l'a pas qu'on ne sait où la prendre ni où le chercher.-----Ce je ne sais quoi nait de choses différentes. Je suis persuadée qu'il faut que

²⁸⁰ H. Gillot: "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914, p. 341.

la nature mette du moins dans l'esprit et dans la personne de ceux qui doivent avoir l'air galant, une certaine disposition à le recevoir; il faut de plus que le grand commerce du monde, et du monde de la cour, aide encore à le donner; et il faut aussi que la conversation des femmes le donne aux hommes, car je soutiens qu'il n'y en a jamais eu qui aient eu l'air galant qui aient fui l'entretien des personnages de mon sexe. Il y a un biais de dire les choses qui leur donne un nouveau prix, et il est constamment vrai que ceux qui ont un tour galant dans l'esprit peuvent souvent dire ce que les autres n'oseroient seulement penser: Mais, selon moi, l'air galant de la conversation consiste principalement à penser les choses d'une manière aisée et naturelle, à pencher plutôt vers la douceur et vers l'enjouement que vers le sérieux et le brusque, et à parler enfin facilement et en termes propres sans affectation." ²⁸¹

The influence of women in forming the society which Mlle. de Scudéry mentions is well known. The salons and ruelles were the factories from whence issued much of the hastily made light literature, the pastoral, madrigal, tragi-comedy, and pastoral novel of the day. To please this salon society and women in particular was the aim of the "beaux esprits." For this they needed no heavy armor of classical study, but an interesting personality, a polished background of superficial classical culture, and a lively interest in every novelty in vogue. Of the Ancients one was expected to admire the gay and pleasant qualities of the Greeks, ²⁸² the more solid, judicious Romans with their strict rules for art. From this tendency came the ad-

²⁸¹H. Gillot: "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914. p. 343.

²⁸²ibid, p. 345.

miration for Homer, Anacreon, Theocritus, Plutarch and for Ovid, whose gallantries were in accord with the spirit of society, for Virgil, whose Eclogues and Georgics gave classic background for the pastoral; for Lucretius, Persius, and Juvenal whose manners were those of an older, cultivated civilization. An "honnête" Antiquity was substituted for the true one. A new spirit modern in its treatment arose, having a decided preference for the literature of its own age so full of achievement in the arts of peace and war. This feeling was a national consciousness tending to assert the pre-eminence of French life and manners, now so exalted, placing them above past social and political orders. French society was, thus, on the way toward losing itself in a dazed condition of subservient admiration for Louis and all his age.

In literature this tendency to free art from the influence of classic models began early in France, but gained no great headway against Italian classical precept which, influencing the French stage, acquired an acceptance of its tradition from the beginning of the century. As the age progressed, with the new social consciousness which Louis' reign ushered in, the classic tradition was more and more relegated to a matter of form and background upon which to build literary effort in accordance with the taste of the times. The background thus became stereotyped and in the hands of the unskilled often false. Society, little versed in classic literature, was content to accept an insincere classicism, provided the subject matter was of interest to it. The defenders of this new spirit, resting their case on the excellent work of their contemporaries, were quite ready to acknowledge the greatness of their own literature in comparison to that of antiquity. This fact, they argued,

must be true in view of French supremacy in other fields.

The quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns rested therefore on a basis of opposing opinions and judgments, on a difference of cultural background, and upon a willingness to accept a ready made opinion of the age. The side of the Moderns was presented as early as 1670 by Des Marets de Saint Sorlien in his "La Comparaison de la Langue et de la Poésie françoise avec la Latine" and in his "Traité pour juger des Poètes Grecs et Latins."

Des Marets began his literary career by an adherence to the classic unities, but later, in his tragedies he abandoned them. He wrote novels inspired by the Ancients-Ariane (1632), Roxane (1638). In social circles he belonged to the party of Mlle. de Scudéry. In 1636 he wrote his tragi-comedy, "Les Visionnaires," later "Mirame" (1640), and "Europe" (1640). Then a pious inclination took hold of him and he began an attack upon the Jansenists--"Réponse à l'Insolente Apologie des Religieux de Port Royal et aux Lettres et Libelles des Jansénistes avec la Découverte de leur Arsenal sur le grand Chemin de Charenton," (1666), "Paix de l'Eglise" (1668). Des Marets asserted the greater value of French literature over that of antiquity and saw a danger to public morals in an adherence to classical mythology. For him the Ancients were full of errors of taste and judgment; they were not comparable to the great writers of his age. Furthermore the continual use of pagan fable tended to destroy morals a remedy for which he found in subjects chosen from Christian history, so full of ennobling motives and replete with great figures for literary composition.²⁸³ At his death his mantle fell upon Charles Perrault, the

²⁸³ H. Gillot:- "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914, p. 484.

adversary of Boileau. In his "Saint Paulin" (1686), he claims the advantage of introducing into French literature Christian subjects.

Perrault, a man of no school or tradition, of a worldly taste, a servant of the royal glory, read in the Académie, 1687, his "Siècle de Louis Le Grand," a eulogy of the greatness of the age. The "Parallèles des Anciens et des Modernes," 1688-1696, brought the war between the opposing factions into the open field. Boileau, the ardent defender of the classics and classical Antiquity, from his "Art Poétique" 1674, to his "Réflexions sur Longin" (1692-1694), fought this new spirit and the opinion of Perrault in particular. Racine, whose understanding of the spirit of the ancients was far above most of his contemporaries, was naturally drawn to the side of his friend and defender, especially since he saw arrayed among the opposing forces many of those who had looked with disfavor upon his own work, seeking to thwart him at every step by intrigue, cabal, and slander.

Among these was Boursault who by his taste, by his friendships, and his self-confessed ignorance of the classics would naturally be among the partisans of Perrault. He is in his literary opinions a typical man of his age, given to praise of all things French, and a disregard for the classic spirit:- "Notre Langue à cet avantage sur les autres, qu'elle est beaucoup plus sage et plus retenue. La Langue Latine surtout dit presque toutes choses par leur nom: au lieu que La Française se contente de faire entrevoir celles qui peuvent blesser la pudeur. Soit dans les ouvrages médités, soit dans l'entretien familier, elle veut qu'on évite les façons de parler vicieuse." Of the Ancients he holds to the opinion of Des Marets, that their literature contains not the supreme beauty of art, but a collection of uneven material much of which in stupidity exceeds the limit of

human patience:- "Vous ne pouvez disconvenir, Monseigneur, que l'on n'ait pardonné, que dis-je, pardonné? trouvé parfaitement beau dans Martial et dans Juvenal force jeux de mots qui y sont, qui ne valent pas mieux que ceux dont je parle: mais on respecte jusques aux sottises de la vénérable Antiquité. On trouve cent raisons pour colorer une obscénité Greque ou Latine, que le temps, qui souvent ne sçait ce qu'il fait, a voulu transmettre jusqu'à nous; et l'on ne veut pas accorder la moindre grace ni à son siècle, ni à sa patrie. Si de nos jours quelqu'un avoit trouvé la fade invention du Cheval de bois, où suivant toutes les apparences, il ne pouvoit y avoir plus de quarante hommes, pour surprendre une Ville aguerrie, qui depuis dix ans se défendoit contre l'armée formidable de tant de Rois ligués pour la détruire: de bonne fois lui pardonneroit-on cette liberté?" 284 He is an outspoken partisan of the moderns, seeking to destroy the position of his opponents by a flattery which will catch them unaware and make of them supporters of the side whose most illustrious exponents they would be: "Je ne dis cela pour prendre le parti des Modernes contre les Anciens: Le côté dont je me rangerois n'en seroit guères plus fort; et d'ailleurs l'ignorance où je suis me dérobe le plaisir de voir les beautés de l'Antiquité, jusques dans leur source; mais à en juger par les traductions qu'on en a faites, il me semble que les beautés de notre temps les valent bien; et que Racine et Despréaux qui soutiennent le parti des Anciens jusqu'à l'effusion d'encre, ont fait de plus belles choses qu'eux. Un de mes amis, aussi sçavant et aussi poli qu'on le puisse être, et qui sait les beautés du Grec comme celles du François, préfère Quinault à tous les Poètes Lyriques!"

Segrais, one of the arbiters of Parnassus, in his "Remarques sur le cinquième Livre de l'Enéide" says:- "Que dirait Montaigne s'il

284 H. Gillot: "La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes," Paris, 1914.
p. 399.

voit ce que Malherbe a ajouté de beautés à la poésie qu'il déclaroit mise en sa perfection par Ronsard et Du Belley? Il ne le jugeroit pas, sans doute, beaucoup inférieur aux anciens lyriques. Nous égalons toutes les autres nations dans l'art de la grande poésie et les Anciens sont contraints d'avouer qu'ils n'ont jamais mis en musique des paroles aussi jolies, aussi tendres, aussi naïves que toutes les chansons chantées par nos Dames depuis que les Astrés ont appris à la France la belle et fine galanterie, et que M. Voiture, Sarrasin, Pellisson, Benséade, Mlle. de Scudéry l'ont mis au degré de perfection où nous la voyons. L'exemple d'un Corneille prouve qu'au point où les Modernes ont porté la tragédie, les Grecs et les Latins pourroient étudier leurs ouvrages, comme l'auteur du Cid a étudié les leurs. L'Ecole des Maris, les autres comédies naïves et spirituelles du Molière, attestent que la France a son Menandre comme la Grèce. Desmarets a prouvé par sa comédie des Visionnaires, que la Comédie peut fleurir en France avec toutes ses grâces, en dépit des juges difficiles qui n'en croyoient pas capable le génie de notre langue. Les plus belles satires des Anciens n'ont plus de force et d'agrément que celles de Boileau, et sa versification l'emporte de beaucoup sur la leur."

Saint Évremond, the most astute and skillful of the partisans of Corneille, wrote to Madame Mazarin:- "Je veux que l'Esprit des Anciens nous en inspire; mais je ne veux pas que nous prenions la leur même. Je veux qu'ils nous apprennent à bien penser; mais je n'aime pas à me servir de leurs pensées."²⁸⁵ In his essay, "De la Tragédie ancienne et moderne," he espouses the cause of the modern writers against the precepts of the much vaunted Aristotle:- "La Poétique d'Aristote est un excellent Ouvrage: cependant il n'y a rien d'assez

parfait pour régler toutes les Nations et tous les Siècles. Descartes et Gassendi ont découvert des vérités qu'Aristote ne connoissait pas: Corneille a trouvé des beautés pour le Théâtre qui ne leur étoient pas connues: nos Philisophes ont remarqué des erreurs dans sa Physique: nos Poètes ont vu des défauts dans sa Poétique, pour le moins à notre égard."

Fontenelle, nephew of Corneille, bel esprit beloved of the women of the salons, friend of De Visé, Bénédict, Fléchier, Quinault, Charpentier, and Perrault, was a writer of the new style. His operas, "Psyché," "Bellérophon," his tragedies, "Aspar" and the comedy, "La Comète," his rhymed verses, neatly and gallantly turned, bespoke the master of a new style wherein antiquity and its models played but little part.

Newspapers live and grow upon novelty and the reigning taste. The "Mercure Galant" gave space to writers of the new style. Enemy of Boileau and Racine, De Visé opened his columns to the crowd of lesser writers whose madrigals, sonnets, and fugitive verse were of a nature to contribute to the popularity of his journal in the social circles of the day. The latest epigram, the most piquant quatrain, as well as current literary shop-talk, found its way into the "Mercure" whose circulation was thus increased. This collecting of literary scandal and novelty à la mode pleased the women of the salons who were the partisans of the modern spirit. Knowing neither Greek nor Latin, their knowledge of the Ancients was obtained secondhand. Some were touched by the religious tendency of Des Murets; others accepted with enthusiasm the idea of the greatness of their age, wishing to believe themselves superior to the women of former times. Boileau could not expect, after his "Satire contre les Femmes," to

gain many supporters among the ladies of the salons. On the contrary, they gave all their support to his opponent, Perrault.

Against this society, ignorant and hostile to the principles of the great classic writers, Boileau directed his satire. When the tide began to rise and oversweep his position he came out into open contest with Perrault. His epigrams show with what little regard he looked upon the leader of this new movement:-

Pour quelque rien discours, sottement avancé
 Contre Homère, Platon, Cicéron, ou Virgile,
 Caligula partant fut traité d'insensé,
 Néron de furieux, Adrien l'imbécile.
 Vous donc, qui, dans la même erreur,
 Avec plus d'ignorance, et non moins de fureur,
 Attaquez ces héros de la Grèce et de Rome,
 P***** fussiez-vous empereur,
 Comment voulez-vous qu'on vous nomme?" 286

D'où vient que Cicéron, Platon, Virgile, Homère,
 Et tous ces grands auteurs que l'univers révère,
 Traduits dans vos écrits nous paroissent si sots?
 P***, c'est qu'en prêtant à ces esprits sublimes
 Vos façons de parler, vos bassesses, vos rimes,
 Vous les faites tous des P***. 287

Again in his Epigramme XXVI addressed to Perrault in 1692 he says:

Le bruit court que Bacchus, Junon, Jupiter, Mars,
 Apollon, le dieu des beaux-arts,

286 Boileau:- "Epigramme XXIV à M. P.*** sur les livres qu'il a faits contre les Anciens," (1692)

287 Boileau:- "Epigramme XXV sur le même sujet." (1692)

Les Ris mêmes, les Jeux, les Grâces et leur mère,
 Et tous les dieux, enfants d'Homère,
 Résolus de venger leur père,
 Jettent déjà sur vous de dangereux regards.
 P***, craignez enfin quelque triste aventure
 Comment soutiendrez vous un choc si violent?
 Il est vrai, Visé vous assure
 Que vous avez pour vous Mercure,
 Mais c'est le Mercure Galant."

Boileau was no less severe on the mediocre writers of his day who came to array themselves on the side of Perrault, especially since they had spread the rumor that the satirist was lacking in a proper regard for the greatness of the king. One of the cardinal points in the system of the Moderns was an extreme adulation of the royal person. Boileau's Satire I brought upon him the dislike of Montausier for the following verses:-

Mais il faut être souple avec la pauvreté:
 C'est par là qu'un auteur que presse l'indigence
 Peut des astres malins corriger l'influence,
 Et que le sort burlesque, en ce siècle de fer,
 D'un pédant, quand il veut, sait faire un duc et pair."

To these verses Des Marets de Saint Sorlin at the request of Montausier wrote:- "Se peut-il rien ajouter à la hardiesse et à l'injustice de ce satirique? Sans respect du grand et sage roi sous lequel nous vivons, qui, portant la guerre au dehors, nous fait jouir d'une heureuse tranquillité au dedans, peut-on appeler le siècle d'un tel prince un siècle de fer, et condamner son choix dans les grandes dignités qu'il donne, puisque cela ne se fait point par un sort

burlesque, mais par la volonté expresse du roi? ²⁸⁸

In his Satire X, "Contre les Femmes," Boileau accuses the modern writers of ignorance as he had Perrault. Madame Des Houlières, the protectrice of many of these writers, is included in his general condemnation:--

"Au mauvais goût public la belle y fait la guerre;
 Plaint Pradon opprimé des sifflets du parterre;
 Rit des vains amateurs du Grec et du latin;
 Dans la balance met Aristote et Cotin;
 Puis, d'une main encore plus fine et plus habile,
 Pèse sans passion Chapelain et Virgile:"

It is to be expected that those who had been satirized by Boileau would not be found among his supporters in the dispute with Charles Perrault. Furthermore, their conception of literary values was of a different sort. Segrais, Chapelain, Boursault, Montausier, Madame Des Houlières, the Duc de Nevers, all those who had opposed Racine, were to be found in the ranks of the Modernes. They were delighted with the latest novelties, proud of their own age and its efforts, assiduous flatterers of the king, and jealous of their personal success in society. Pradon, the favorite of this circle, would naturally accept its ideas and follow his friends into the ranks of the Modernes. By training, personal taste in literature, a dislike for Boileau and through the influence of the salons which he frequented, he was a modern. In conformity to the spirit of his time Pradon joins the chorus of praise given by all writers to the greatness of the reigning house:-- "Je ne prétends point icy faire votre Éloge:

²⁸⁸
 A. Ch. Gidel:--"Oeuvres de Boileau," Paris, Garnier Frères, 1870,
 I, 60 note.

le plus Grand Monarque du monde l'a fait luy-mesme en vous confiant la conduite d'un jeune Prince qui est déjà l'admiration de toute l'Europe.²⁸⁹ The dedicatory epistle in verse of "Regulus" is given up almost entirely to praise of the Dauphine:-

"Que ton sort est heureux! qu'il te doit estre doux!
 Que le plus grand Monarque et le plus digne époux,
 L'un et l'autre à l'envie te chérisse, t'honore,
 (Eux devant qui tout tremble et que le monde adore.)

Pour Roy, que de plaisirs Monarque trop heureux!
 De faire triompher ton fils et tes neveux,
 Quand ils suivront, grand Roy, l'exemple que tu donnes,
 Je crains que l'univers n'ait trop peu de Couronnes,
 Princesse, c'est par eux que tu tiens dans tes mains
 Le destin de la France, et celui des humains;
 Ils auront la grandeur de l'ayeul et du père,
 Dont le brillant mérite et les charmes si doux,
 Font toujours un Amant de son illustre époux!"

In the preface to "Tamerlan" he says:- "Je ne ferai point ici l'Apologie de cette Pièce: il suffit pour lui servir de sauvegarde contre la Critique la plus envenimée, qu'elle ait eu l'honneur de plaire au plus grand Roi du monde et à la plus galante et plus spirituelle Cour de l'Europe. Après cela, je dois être plus que content, et me mettre fort peu en peine lorsqu'elle a été universellement approuvée de tous les honnêtes Gens de la malice et du chagrin de quelques Particuliers."²⁹⁰ Pradon makes allusion to Boileau's

²⁸⁹ Epître dédicatoire of "Pirame et Thisbé."

²⁹⁰ Preface of "Tamerlan."

lack of a proper regard for the sovereign in the line:-

"Va prodiguer l'encens qu'il épargne au Monarque."

His prefaces and critical remarks show to what extent he was willing to sacrifice classic tradition:- "De plaire, c'est la première Règle du Théâtre, et celle à qui l'on doit plutôt s'attacher, qu'à toutes les règles de la Poétique d'Aristote. Je ne repens donc point d'avoir traité un Sujet ou Théophile avoit réussi: on voit bien que je ne lui ai rien emprunté, que les noms de Pirame et Thisbé que le Galant Ovide nous a donnés à tous deux."²⁹¹

"Qu'on pourroit leur faire connoître qu'ils se souviennent aussi bien des Modernes que des Anciens et qu'ils possèdent avec autant d'avantage les beautés de Tristan, de Mairet, et de Routrou que celles d'Homère, de Sophocle, et d'Euripide."²⁹²

"Enfin si les Anciens nous l'ont dépeint comme il (Hippolyte) a esté dans Trézène, du moins il paroitra comme il a du esté à Paris: et n'en déplaise à toute l'Antiquité, ce jeune Héros auroit eu mauvaise grâce de venir tout hérissé des épines du Grec, dans une Cour aussi grande que la nostre."²⁹³

"(Votre Altesse) sçait puiser dans leurs sources les beautez d'Horace et d'Ovide. Mais quelques auteurs intéressés n'ont pas été de ce sentiment, ils se sont érigés en régents du Parnasse, ou plutôt en tyrans, et ils ont établi entre eux (en étouffant les ouvrages des autres ou en les empêchant de paroître) cette maxime des Femmes Savantes de Molière:

²⁹¹ Preface of "Pirame et Thisbé."

²⁹² Preface of "Tamerlan."

²⁹³ Epître dédicatoire of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

"Et nul n'aura l'esprit hors nous et nos amis."

En vérité, n'en déplaise à ces grands hommes, on me permettra de leur dire, en passant, que leur procédé et leur manière sont fort éloigné de ce sublime qu'ils tâchent d'attraper dans leurs ouvrages. Pour moi, j'ai toujours cru qu'on devoit avoir ce caractère dans ses moeurs avant que de le faire paroître dans ses écrits et que l'on devoit être bien moins avide de la qualité de bon auteur, que de celle d'honnête homme que l'on me verra toujours préférer à tout le Sublime de Longin."²⁹⁴

"Notre Théâtre ne peut souffrir ce qui a fait autrefois la beautez de celui des anciens. Nos moeurs sont trop douces et trop éloignées de ces moeurs sauvages et barbares."²⁹⁵

"Mais pour conduire Ulysse et Pyrrhus à la catastrophe et pour ADOUCIR leurs caractères, j'ai supposé qu'Ulysse avoit conçu un amour secret pour Polixène et Pyrrhus pour Andromaque."²⁹⁶

Of Boileau he says:-

"Chantre sans vigueur, sans art, sans génie, ignore l'harmonie, un mélancholique, un farouche hibou; faux imitateur d'Horace et de Lucile; paré de morceaux recousus et d'ornements usés."²⁹⁷

"Il tâche d'anoblir ce peu qui vient de luy,

Et d'un discours houppi, confus, et pédantesque

Rend Aristote triste et Virgile burlesque,

.....

Quand il fait sans respect par les jeux téméraires

De la Religion badiner les Mystères."²⁹⁸

He admires Des Marets' "Clovis," "dont la Poésie est si noble."

Of Boileau's writings he says:- "Examinons donc un peu ce Critique,

²⁹⁴ Preface of "Phèdre et Hippolyte,"

²⁹⁵ Preface of "La Troade."

²⁹⁶ ibid

²⁹⁷ "Le Triomphe de Pradon." p.6.

²⁹⁸ ibid

exterminateur du menu peuple du Parnasse, qui a tracé de si belles Règles aux Poètes. Ce Style badant, le fléau des petits Auteurs, ce fameux Despréaux qui a eu l'art d'imposer si longtemps avec le plus foible talent du monde quelque nouveauté dans ses manières, ses citations modernes, ses émistiches revez, quelques vers frapans, enfans d'une longue méditation, mal amenés souvent, et plus mal placés, ont d'abord surpris et abusé bien des gens. Il a joui quelque temps de l'approbation de la multitude; mais après un peu de réflexion on n'a plus crié au miracle, on a ouvert les yeux, on a connu qu'il étoit homme, et comme tel, capable de faire ses fautes.²⁹⁹

"Car quand son esprit est obligé à ne penser rien que de sublime malgré son Longin et son cher Terentianus, il n'en a point d'ailes pour voler. Il faut qu'il redescende aussitôt à la satire, et chercher quelque misérable Auteur à déchirer."³⁰⁰

"Mais nous qui n'avons pas envie d'abandonner la Religion du bon sens et de la raison, pour nous jeter dans l'Idolatrie de l'Antiquité; nous lui laisserons admirer les belles harangues de Mézence à son Cheval, et de Turnus à sa Pique. Nous souffrirons volontiers que Despréaux soit extasié des sublimes comparaisons d'Ajax, et de la mère de Lavinie en sabot fouetté par les petits enfans."³⁰¹

In his "Réponse à la Satire X du Sieur D***," Pradon defends the women of the salons against the slander of the satirists:-
 "Tous les gens de bon goût demeurent d'accord qu'il n'a point touché aux caractères des Femmes de la Cour dont les manières lui sont inconnues et qu'il n'a dépeint tout au plus que celles de la

²⁹⁹ "Le Triomphe de Pradon," p. 6.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*

³⁰¹ *ibid.* Cited by Gillot, p. 395, *op. cit.*

rue S. Denis ou de la Place-Maubert."³⁰²

"Implacable ennemi de tout le genre humain;
 Tu prétens copier (Singe de Juvenal)
 Il est vray que privé des dons de la nature
 Le Ciel ne te forme que pour leur faire injure;
 Toujours mélancholique, ou toujours furieux
 Tu n'a jamais senti les traits de deux beaux yeux."³⁰³

For Des Marets, the first seventeenth century champion of the Moderns, Pradon had a lasting admiration: "J'avoue, Monseigneur, que j'ay esté surpris que de tout d'honnêtes gens qui sont en leur vie et que M.D*** a attaquez dans ses Satires, pas un n'ait osé luy répondre, à la réserve du feu M. Desmaretz qui luy répliqua fort vivement."³⁰⁴

Pradon claims that Boileau profited by Des Marets' remarks:-
 "Ce n'est pas qu'il n'ait trouvé M. Desmaretz en son chemin, qui a fait voir une très grande partie de ses fautes, tant de jugement que de construction, et moy je ferai voir dans mes Remarques que M.D*** n'a pas été incorrigible, qu'il a très bien profité en plusieurs endroits des leçons que M. Desmaretz luy a faites, et qu'il a même dans la dernière édition de ses ouvrages mis mot pour mot des vers tout entiers que M. Desmaretz lui avoit donné libéralement pour mettre en la place des méchants qu'il avoit faits."³⁰⁵

The battle which Pradon carried on against Boileau was of a twofold nature. Chafing at the continual abuse he received from the

³⁰² "Réponse à la Satire X du Sieur D***".

³⁰³ ibid

³⁰⁴ Epître dédicatoire of "Nouvelles Remarques sur tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D***".

³⁰⁵ ibid

satirist and objecting to the severity of classic taste by which his own works and those of his friends were judged, he sought to justify himself and at the same time destroy the authority of the opposing leader by denying his ability, judgment, and taste, by criticising phrase and word usage in a manner often so meticulous that the flimsy pretext barely conceals the underlying jealousy, malice and wounded pride:- "J'ay pris vos pensées comme vous avez pris celles d'Horace; vous voyez que j'ay tâché par là de vous imiter³⁰⁶----- Pour l'Histoire de Longin----- M.D** n'est pas toujours si fier qu'il le paroît et grand qu'il trouve des gens qui luy tiennent tête et qui sont plus savants que luy, il va au devant du coup.

M. Dacier fort célèbre par la parfaite connaissance qu'il a des Auteurs Grecs et par ses belles et sçavantes traductions avoit écrit contre celle de Longin de M.D** : il le sçeut, il en fut fort allarmé, il fut trouver M. Dacier, conféra avec luy, et enfin par l'entremise de ses amis il fut arrêté entre eux que M. Dacier ne mettroit que la moitié des remarques qu'il avoit faites sur celles de notre Satirique et quelque adoucissement que l'honnêteté de M. Dacier ait aporté à la chose, il n'a pu se dispenser de mettre en écrivant sur la traduction de M. Despréaux que tantôt il obscurcit, tantôt il ne prend pas bien le sens ny les paroles de cet Auteur, et que le sens qu'il leur donne ne s'accorde pas bien avec celui de Longin; enfin il fait voir page 181 que M. Despréaux a pris un organe pour un orgue, cela est assez burlesque, M. Despreaux ayant pris le mot Grec ORGANUM pour un instrument, pour une flute, une lyre, au lieu de le prendre dans le sens de Longin pour un organe, comme nous disons pour une cause, pour un moyen. Ce sont les termes de M. Dacier qui ont fait voir en tant d'autres

³⁰⁶ Epître dédicatoire of "Nouvelles Remarques sur tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D***.

endroits comme M. Despréaux n'avoit pas entendu Longin qu'il s'étoit mêlé de traduire, et pour peu qu'on s'attache aux remarques de M. Dacier, on voit bien qu'il approfondit la matière avec beaucoup d'érudition, et que M. Despréaux ne paroît qu'un écolier au près de ce maître qui le redresse si souvent avec tant de force et de justesse."³⁰⁷

"Retranchez désormais ce titre illégitime,
 Vous que la Cour nomment les Messieurs du Sublime,
 Vous, que l'on ne devoit entendre qu'à genoux,
 Un Auteur plus sçavant, plus sublime que vous,
 Nous marquant les erreurs de votre prose fade,
 De ce superbe rang aujourd'hui vous dégrade,
 Et fait voir au public découvrant vos défauts,
 Longin et son sublime en proye à D**" ³⁰⁸

The "Lutrin he found irreligious and dangerous to the public morals from the flippant tone used to discuss holy subjects. This criticism is in accord with the earlier complaint against the classical, mythological tales condemned by Des Marets. Pradon was no admirer of Aristotle. His lack of sympathy with the great fables of antiquity, his preference for Horace, Ovid and Vergil, whose works contain much of the mannered prettiness so much beloved by the salons; his hostility to Boileau made him a disciple of the Moderns. His "théâtre" in the choice of subject matter shows a considerable leaning to Roman history: "Statira," "Tarquin," "Regulus," "Germanicus," and "Scipion" represent the Roman influence; "La Troade," although treated originally by Euripides,

³⁰⁷ "Nouvelles Remarques," etc.

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

occurs again in Seneca, as does "Phèdre" et Hippolyte"; while "Tamerlan" belongs to a more modern tradition. The circle in which he moved, his friends, and the personal dislike of Boileau all made for Pradon's inclusion in the party of the "Modernes", where his taste and literary ideas found favor.

Chapter IV.

Contemporary Opinions of Pradon.

If we accept the remarks of Boileau as the judgment of contemporary opinion of Pradon and his works, the impression is bad. He is accused of ignorance, literary ineptitude, ridiculous boastfulness, and in general, of unpleasant characteristics. It must be supposed that his associates held a very different opinion of the man and his work, for, in the polite salons of the seventeenth century, no *gaucherie* of person or manner would be tolerated. Social rules were fixed; a proper behavior and bearing were daily learned as part of an education. Without the necessary *savoir-vivre*, authors bent upon acquiring the protection of important social figures, were but wasting their efforts. Since the rewards of a literary career were scarcely sufficient for the needs of existence, writers were obliged to put their talents under the protection of the powerful. To acquire such favor, one needed first of all to know how to conduct one's self in society. For them the *métier* was of secondary importance. In the case of Pradon, then, it cannot be supposed that he was ignorant of the best social customs or that Madame de Bouillon, Madame Des Houlières, the Duc de Montausier, the Duc de Nevers, or those to whom he dedicated his tragedies would have allowed in their salons, or would have entered into a literary cabal, protected and associated their names with one whose manners, bearing, and intellect were so much under the common standard. To have favored anyone so unworthy of social esteem would have brought them the disdain of their associates which they would interpret as an attack on their taste and discernment. Such a criticism social leaders could not well stand.

The charge of mediocrity and literary ineptitude which was brought against Pradon by Boileau and continued in later years must be met upon another basis than the nature of his personal qualities. In justice to the man it must be said that the charge of mediocrity and lack of skill in his chosen profession is a charge which is easily made by one writer of another. The mere ex-cathedra utterance does not make for its acceptance especially if the accused has friends interested in his effort, whose position would scarcely permit them to acknowledge the justice of such criticism without denying the efficacy of their own judgment. In the circle of his powerful friends, whatever secret dissatisfaction was felt for his work, there was probably nothing but support and praise meted out to him in person. Had Madame de Bouillon and her associates held him in little esteem, they would scarcely have urged him to compete with the great Racine. It is to be presumed that he was the most promising of rivals, one who had the qualities which the précieuse society admired. His supporters, if not satisfied with his literary ability, were willing to jeopardise their own reputation to the extent of supporting his efforts in the face of adverse opinion. The dicta of Boileau meant less to them than it did to later comers. What Boileau said about his contemporaries was discounted by the "Moderns" as the utterance of a partisan who could see no excellence in the works of his contemporary, especially if they did not belong to the literary party to which he belonged. His condemnation of Pradon would cause only annoyance and pique among the supporters of "Phèdre and Hippolyte"; while, for the great mass of society, his efforts would be judged on the ability he had to please and entertain. The quarrel between poets was not in the great world of

society an absorbing topic which they found amusing, it is true, but not of great importance. The acclaim ~~which~~ ^{accorded} Chapelain, Segrais, Bénérade, Thomas Corneille, and many more whose names are no longer remembered show how shifting was literary judgment in that society. The "Dialogue des Héros du Roman" probably produced no decline in the desire for the Scudéry novels; the files of the "Mercure Galant" are filled with verses by many whose names appear in no flattering terms in the "Satires" and "Epîtres" of Boileau. Today much of the seventeenth century production has passed into a semi-oblivion. The "Pucelle" of Chapelain, "Le Grand Cyrus", the plays of Quinault are scarcely read. What remains of the century is the production of the great classics. That they have outlasted their own and succeeding times, makes them the greater when compared to many writers of their day, but that they were universally acclaimed in their own day is not to be believed. The history of their lives points otherwise. In the case of Boileau, the hostility of many men of his day for his brusque, cutting remarks was only held in check by his favorable reception at Court. What the king admired and what his supporters tolerated allowed of no direct attack by those whose opinions differed therefrom. The same attitude prevailed in the case of Racine. The petty jealousy of lesser men was kept in check by fear of royal displeasure. Once given a common cause, like the "Quarelle des Anciens et des Moderns," all the carping critics, those who had been roughly handled by the satirist, arrayed themselves against him. Although this famous quarrel had more than literary spite for its basis it offered a convenient outlet for pent up fury.

With the passing of the "siècle de Louis Quatorze" everything that was ephemeral in literature became lost in a maze of history.

The great works and the great names remain, standing out clearer and sharper with the passing years. What was thought and accomplished by the masters of Classicism has thus become the judgment of their age while the great mass of opposing opinions has escaped the attention of the casual reader. Yet even in the eighteenth century before Boileau's reputation was weakened biographers and historians were inclined toward a more sympathetic judgment of Pradon. Vigneul-Marville in the early years of the century devotes himself in his discussion of the poet to a recounting of the ridiculous story of Pradon and the mousquetaire,³⁰⁹ the authenticity of which may be doubted. In the "Jugement des Savans" Baillet points out clearly to what source posterity owes its opinion of him:- "Quoique la Satire n'ait pas toujours parlé favorablement des Tragédies de M. Pradon, nous pouvons dire qu'elles n'ont pas laissé d'avoir leurs admirateurs et que M. Despréaux même nous le fait assez connoître en voulant nous marquer le caractère des esprits auxquels cet Auteur semble s'être proportionné."³¹⁰ Content with this scanty praise he echoes the opinion which Boileau had passed upon the poet: "Au reste, si M. Pradon n'a point été du nombre de ces jaloux qui ne travaillent que pour enlever la palme à ceux que peuvent la leur disputer, et pour s'élever à un degré supérieur de gloire: on peut dire que c'est assez de l'humeur de ces écrivains infortunés qui cherchent de la consolation dans la disgrâce de ceux qu'ils voyent au-dessus ou à côté d'eux. Je crois que c'est dans ce sentiment qu'il nous avertit de ne nous pas allarmer de voir des fautes dans une Pièce dont les vers ne lui ont coûté que trois mois, puisqu'il en trouve

³⁰⁹Vigneul-Marville: "Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature," Paris 1724, T II, 89, 90.

³¹⁰Baillet: "Jugemens des Savans," Paris, 1725, p. 387.

bien dans celles qu'on a été deux ans à travailler et à polir."³¹¹
 Some thirty years after Pradon's death, Titou du Tillet, wrote of him: "Quoique les Pièces de Pradon paroissent assez médiocres elles n'ont pas laissé d'avoir eu dans leurs premières ~~représentations~~ ^{représentations} d'illustre partisans.....Despréaux, intime de Racine, a rudement traité le pauvre Pradon dans quelques endroits de ses Pièces, et a cherché à le rendre méprisable: cependant on ne laisse pas de trouver quelques morceaux dans les Pièces de Pradon, qui satisfont l'homme judicieux, et il ne se passe guères d'années qu'on ne donne sur notre théâtre sa Tragédie de Regulus; on y voit aussi représenter quelquefois sa tragédie de Tamerlan avec quelque succès."³¹² Opinion at that time was thus becoming more favorable to Pradon's work although unconcerned about the man himself, still accepting in part the judgment of the great satirist.

In the prefaces to his early plays, "Pirame" and "Tamerlan", the poet makes allusion to certain adverse criticism of his work. What that criticism was and from whence its source can be supposed but no statement from Boileau antedates the production of "Phèdre et Hippolyte." From 1677 Pradon becomes the butt of ridicule. Boileau loses no occasion to include him among the inept. Was his hatred then due to a dislike for the sort of work produced? If so, the earlier plays when judged by Racine's standards fall woefully short of excellence. Why did not the satirist condemn them? Was it not, as has been said before, the unfortunate affair of the "Phèdres" which caused Despréaux's wrath, making him see in the second rate rival of his friend a presumptuous upstart whose encroachment was a menace to his friend. With equal fear and scorn

³¹¹ Baillet:—"Jugemens des Savans," Paris, 1725, p. 387-389.

³¹² Titou du Tillet:—"Le Parnasse françois," Paris, 1732.

he could say:- "Et la scène française est en proie à Pradon." 313

The Satires and Epîtres which Boileau composed during this year show with what vigor he pursued the author of "Phèdre et Hippolyte":

"Je rencontre à la fois Perrin et Pelletier
Bonnecorse, Pradon, Colletet, Titreville;
Et pour un que je veux, j'en trouve plus de mille." 314

Here the poet is included among authors previously condemned by the satirist. The company does not flatter him.

"Quel est le crime de ce grand nombre de glaçants écrits pour en réchauffer les titres dans vos vers? Quel mal ont commis tant d'auteurs que vous nommez?....un autre (Pradon) rend la scène française le Théâtre de Brioché?" 315

"Que vous ont fait tant d'auteurs, pour remuer leur cendre?
Que vous ont fait Perrin, Barbier, Pradon, Hainaut.
Colletet, Pelletier, Titreville, Quinault,
Dont les noms en cent lieux, placés comme en leurs niches
Vont de vos vers malins remplir les herminettes?" 316

"Puisque vous le voulez, je vais changer de style
Je le déclare donc; Quinault est un Virgile;
Pradon comme un soleil en nos ans a paru." 317

"Hier, dit on, de vous on parla chez le roi,
Et d'attentat horrible on traite la satire
Et le roi, que dit-il? - Le roi se prit à rire. 318
Contre vos derniers vers on est fort en courroux;
Pradon a mis au jour un livre contre vous 319
Et chez le chapelier du coin de notre place
Autour d'un caudebec j'en ai lu la préface

313 Epître VIII, composed 1675-77.

314 Satire VII, "Sur le Genre satirique."

315 Esquisse en Prose de la Satire IX.

316 Satire IX - "A don Esprit."

317 *ibid.*

318 "Le Duc de Montausier ne se lassoit point de blâmer les satires de notre poète. Un jour le roy peu touché des censeurs que ce seigneur en faisoit, se prit à rire et luy tourna le dos" - Saint Marc, cited by Gidel:- *Oeuvres de Boileau*, Paris, 1872, Vol. I, 60, note.

319 Preface of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

L'autre jour sur un mot la cour vous condamna
 Le bruit court qu'avant hier on vous assassina; 320
 Un écrit scandaleux³²¹ sous votre nom se donne." 322

"Cependant laisse ici gronder quelques censeurs
 Qu'aigrissent de tes vers les charmantes douceurs
 Et qu'importe à nos vers que Ferrin³²³ les admire;
 Que l'auteur du Jonas s'empresse pour les lire; 324
 Qu'ils charment de Senlis le poète idiot, 325
 Ou le sec traducteur du françois d'Amyot; 326
 Pourvu qu'avec éclat leurs rimes dévitées
 Soient du peuple, des grands, des provinces goûtées,
 Pourvu qu'ils sachent plaire au plus puissant des rois,
 Qu'à Chantilly Condé les souffre quelquefois;
 Qu'Enghien en soit touché, que Colbert et Vivonne
 Que la Rochefoucauld, Marsillac et Pomponne,
 Et mille autres qu'ici je ne puis faire entrer,
 A leur traits délicats se laissent pénétrer?
 Et plutôt au ciel encor, pour couronner l'ouvrage
 Que Montaussier voulut leur donner son suffrage!
 C'est à de tels lecteurs que j'offre mes écrits:
 Mais pour un tas grossier de frivoles esprits,
 Admirateurs zèles de toute oeuvre insipide,
 Que, non loin de la place où Brioché préside,
 Sans chercher dans les vers ni cadence ni son,
 Il s'en aille admirer le savoir de Pradon." 327

"Imite mon exemple; et lorsqu'une cabale,
 Un flot de vains auteurs follement te ravale,
 Profite de leur haine et de leur mauvais sens
 Ris du bruit passager du leur cris impuissants 328
 Que peut contre tes vers une ignorance vaine?" 329

320 "L'Abbe Tallemant avoit fait courir le bruit, et Pradon avoit dit à la table du premier président de Rouen, Pellot, que Boileau avoit reçu des coups de bâton" - Saint Marc, cited by Gidel:- Oeuvres de Boileau.

321 Sonnet against the Duc de Nevers.

322 Epître VI, composed 1677.

323 Translator of the "Aeneid."

324 Coras.

325 Linière.

326 François Tallemant, abbé du Val-Chrétien.

327 A reference to the anecdote concerning Pradon's conversation with the Prince de Conti about his knowledge of geography.

328 Reference to Pradon's "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

329 Epître VII.

The above mentioned selections from the Satires and Epîtres while composed during the year 1677 did not all appear at the same time but were given to the public in succeeding years. Pradon might expect then to find in a new epistle from the pen of his enemy some unflattering reference to his work. The quarrel of the "Phèdres" passed, Boileau did not cease his attacks. In 1686 he addressed "A Messieurs Pradon et Bonnecorse, qui firent en même temps paroître contre moi chacun un volume d'injures," the following epigram:-³³⁰

Venez, Pradon et Bonnecorse,
Grands écrivains de même force,
De vos vers recevoir le prix;
Venez prendre dans mes écrits
La place que vos noms demandent:
Linière et Perrin vous attendent." 331

Again in 1698, the year of the poet's death, Boileau accused Pradon of ignorance. The quotation given below leads one to believe that Pradon's plays were in demand at the bookstalls:-

"Traiter tout noble mot de terme hasardeux,
Et dans tous vos discours, comme monstres hideux,
Huer la métaphore et la métonymie
Grands mots que Pradon croit des termes de chimie
.....
.....
En vain contre ce flot d'aversion publique
Vous tiendrez quelque temps ferme sur la boutique,
Vous irez à la fin, honteusement exclus
Trouver au magasin Pyrame et Regulus." 332

At the reconciliation of Boileau with Charles Perrault, the satirist was content to declare a truce in the war of Ancient against Modern, but to Pradon no such favor.

"Tout le trouble poétique
A Paris s'en va cesser;
Perrault l'auti-pindarique
Et Despréaux l'homérique
Consentent de s'embrasser
Quelque aigreur qui les anime

³³⁰ Pradon published in 1684 his "Nouvelles Remarques sur tous les Ouvrages de M.D**"; Bonnecorse published in 1686 "Le Lutigot."

³³¹ Epigramme XVII.

³³² Epître X "À mes Vers," written 1697-98, lines 51-54, 57-60.

Quand, malgré l'emportement,
Comme ceux, l'un l'autre on s'estime,
L'accord se fait aisément.
Mon embarras est comment
On pourra finir la guerre
De Pradon et du parterre." 333

The war between the two men went merrily on. Even in his declining years, Boileau lost no occasion to express his contempt for the poet. In a letter dated Auteuil 15 aout 1699 to Brossette, he writes:- "Mais est ce une promesse ou une menace que vous me faites quand vous me mandez qu'au premier jour vous m'enverrez le livre de M. Perrachon? DI MAGNI HORRIBLEM ET SACRUM LIBELLUM! Savez vous que si vous vous y jouez, je cours, sur-le-champ, chez Coignard ou chez Ribou et que la COTINOS, PERALTOS, PRADONOS, ET OMNIA COLLIGAM VENENA ATQUE HOC TE MUNERE REMUNERABO, de la même manière que Catulle prétendait récompenser son ami; en luy envoyant NETIOS, SUFFENOS, ET VARIOS?" 334

Another example of Boileau's dislike for Pradon is to be found in the Bolaeana:³³⁵ "Le Verrier s'avisa de lui aller lire une nouvelle Tragédie, lorsqu'il étoit dans son lit, n'attendant plus que l'heure de la mort. Ce grand homme eut la patience d'en écouter jusqu'à deux scènes, après quoi il lui dit: Quoi, Monsier, cherchez-vous à me hâter l'heure fatale? Voilà un Auteur devant qui les Boyers et les Pradons sont de vrais soleils. Hélas! J'ai moins de regret à quitter la vie, puisque notre siècle enchérit chaque jour sur les sottises." The authenticity of this anecdote is vouched for in the letter of Brossette to Jean Batiste Rousseau, Lyon 18 Avril, 1716:- "Deux jours avant que de mourir, il fit quelque chose

³³³ Epigramme XXIV.

³³⁴ Oeuvres complètes de Boileau, Paris, 1810. Imprimerie Mame Frères, T. III, 202, letter IV.

³³⁵ Bolaeana, Amsterdam et Paris chez Belin, an VII de la République, 441-42.

de pareil à M. Le Verrier. Ce dernier lui apporta la tragédie de Rhadamiste de Crebillon, et lui en lut quelque chose pour le divertir. Dès les premiers vers, la bile de M. Despréaux mourant se ranime, et il dit à M. Le Verrier que cela était au-dessous des Coras, des Cotins et des Pradons."³³⁶ A similar reference is found in the Mémoires of Louis Racine:- "M. LeVerrier crut l'amuser par la lecture d'une tragédie qui dans sa nouveauté faisait beaucoup de bruit. Après la lecture du premier acte, il dit à M. Le Verrier: Eh! mon ami, ne mourrai-je pas assez promptement? Les Pradons dont nous nous sommes moqués dans notre jeunesse étoient des soleils auprès de ceux-ci."³³⁷

From Racine came few remarks concerning Pradon and his work. The preface to "Phèdre" makes no mention of his rivals efforts, unless the closing sentence be considered a veiled criticism of his opponents: "Ce seroit peut-être un moyen réconciler la tragédie avec quantité de personnes, célèbres par leur piété et par leur doctrine, qui l'ont condamnée dans ces derniers temps, et qui en jugeroient sans doute plus favorablement si les auteurs songeoient autant à instruire leurs spectateurs qu'à les divertir, et s'ils suivoient en cela la véritable intention de la tragédie." Beside the epigram on Pradon's "Germanicus,"³³⁸ the following letter gives plainly his opinion of the poet's worth:-

A Paris ce 24 aout (1687)

Les Comédiens, qui vous font si peu de pitié, sont pourtant toujours sur le pàvé, et je crains comme vous, qu'ils ne soient obligés de s'aller établir auprès des vignes de feu Monsieur votre

³³⁶ P. Bonnefon:-Correspondance de J.B.Rousseau et de Brossette, I, 54, Société des Textes français modernes, Paris, 1910.

³³⁷ Louis Racine:- "Mémoires", édition Mesnard, Grands Ecrivains, Paris, 1885, T.I, 361.

³³⁸ See page 58.

père. Ce seroit un digne théâtre pour les oeuvres de M. Pradon."³³⁹
 The editor explains this reference in his note:- "Le pere de Boileau
 avait eu des vignes près du lieu ou l'on transportait les immondices
 de Paris." Boileau's reply is in the same vein:-

A Bourbon, 28 Août 1687

Vous avez raison de dire qu'ils auront là un merveilleux théâ-
 tre pour jouer les pièces de M. Pradon; et d'ailleurs ils y auront
 une commodité; c'est que quand le souffleur aura oublié d'apporter
 la copie de ses ouvrages, il en trouvera infailliblement une bonne
 partie dans les précieux dépôts qu'on apporte tous les matins en cet
 endroit." 340

Of Brossette, friend and associate of the great satirist an
 opinion in accordance with Boileau's can be expected. Jean Batiste
 Rousseau with whom he was in correspondence had, it will be remem-
 bered, directed against Pradon, an epigram for his remarks concern-
 ing Boileau. It is probably that from Brossette biographers have
 derived their statements regarding the ignorance of Pradon, for
 Brossette gives credit to the tale concerning Pradon and the Prince
 de Conti. In his reply to Boileau's letter of the 15 août 1699 quot-
 ed above he says:

à Lyon 24 sept. 1699

"Si je ne vous envoie pas la seconde lettre d'Ariste de M. Per-
 rachon, ne croyez pas, Monsieur, que je sois retenu par la menace
 que vous me faites de me renvoyer en échange Cotinos, Peraltos,
 Pradonos, etc. Ces beaux présens ne vous aquitteroient point envers

³³⁹ Oeuvres de Racine, édition Mesnard, Grands Ecrivains, T. VI,
 613, letter 77.

³⁴⁰ ibid, T. VI, 617.

moi; car le seul livre de M. Perrachon vaut le double de tout cela."³⁴¹
 In his "Mémoires sur Boileau," after commenting on Pradon's ignorance, he says:- "Nonobstant l'ignorance de Pradon, quelques personnes ne laisseront pas de dire que si les vers de la Phèdre de M. Racine étoient mieux tournez, la conduite de la Phèdre de Pradon étoit bien plus régulière."³⁴² It is to be noted that where he refers to M. Racine, Pradon is given no such complimentary title. Rousseau in agreement with his friend on this subject writes from Hérulé April 11th, 1733, to La Font de Saint-Yeune suggesting the same treatment as Boileau gave Pradon for the miserable rascal, author of "Le Temple du Goût;"- "Ainsi je me contenterai d'en user avec lui comme M. Despréaux en a usé les Cotins et les Pradons, c'est à dire de le placer dans mes ouvrages quand par hasard il se trouvera en mon chemin, persuadé que le nom seul des gens de cette espèce est la meilleure satire qui se puisse faire de leurs ouvrages et de leur personne."³⁴²

Bussy Rabutin took occasion in his correspondence with P. P. Brulart to give the quarrel of the sonnets in some detail, but expresses no opinion about our poet:- "Racine et Pradon ont fait chacun une comédie intitulée Phèdre et Hippolyte, et chacun a sa cabale, M. de Nevers qui est pour Pradon fit l'autre jour ce sonnet contre la comédie de Racine."³⁴³ Here follows the sonnets cited heretofore. Reference to Pradon's "Troade" occurs in a letter from Rougère to Bussy dated Paris Jan. 28 1679:- "Pradon a voulu par la Troade qu'il a fait nous récompenser de Phèdre; ses amis n'en disent mot et les autres s'en moquent."³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ A. Laverdet:- "Correspondance entre Boileau Despréaux et Brossette" Paris, 1858, p. 27.

³⁴² *ibid.*, appendice p. 566.

³⁴³ P. Bonnefon:- Correspondance de J.B. Rousseau et Brossette, Société des Textes français modernes, Paris 1910, t1 1146.

³⁴⁴ Lalanne,- Correspondance de Bussy-Rabutin, Paris, 1858, p. 205.

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*:- p. 292

The most violent diatribe against Pradon, more cutting in its irony than any criticism uttered by Boileau, is to be found in a long poem published in 1711 some thirteen years after the poet's death. In tone and critical opinion this poem follows the judgment given currency by Boileau but goes farther than he in its virulency, accusing Pradon of ignorance, stupid pride, poverty of thought, craven syncophancy. The opinion expressed throughout is that which has come down from Boileau's time and by much repetition has pervaded literary history:-

"Pradon dont l'ignorance a fatigué la terre!
 Ton galamathias, tes bouts rimez déçus
 Ont aujourd'hui le sort qu'eut autrefois Crassus.
 Tu prétendais sans doute une illustre victoire
 Mais la faible lumière est mal propre à la gloire.
 Elle cède aux assaute de nos Rimeurs guerriers,
 Et les chardons piquants sont tes plus doux Lauriers.
 Que fier de quelque vers que tes amis ont faits,
 Tu crois voir ton mérite au dessus des souhaits,
 Tu crois te voir déjà la Scène tributaire
 Et ton nom, révééré de l'Hidaspia à l'Ibère.

.....

 Tu voulus marcher seul méprisant les hazards,
 Mais comme tu n'as pas le bonheur des Césars,
 Par un retour cruel et fertile en misères
 Apollon sans pitié te destine aux Galères;
 Déjà de bouts rimez cent nombreux Bataillons,
 D'un Camp victorieux innovent les sillons,
 Il en vient d'Italie, on en voit de Carthage,
 Chacun pour t'acabler veut montrer son courage
 Leur Chef plein de fierté prepare tes malheurs,
 Ha! que ces vers piquants te coûteront de pleurs:
 On voit déjà Thisbé tremblante, désolée,
 Par le grand Tamerlan vainement consolée,
 Et tes autres Héros sans Raison couronnez,
 Rendre tous les lauriers qu'on leur avoit donnez,
 A la Cour d'Apollon la vie étoit heureuse,
 On y cherchoit par tout la faveur glorieuse,
 Les Favoris sans trouble adoroient sa grandeur;
 Quand ton chétif esprit courant à son malheur
 Guida tes faibles pas aux rentes fortunées
 Qu l'on n'arrive pas les premières années.

Pradon's complaint that his Phèdre suffered from the attempt of his rival to secure the best actresses for the competing play is alluded to in these lines:

against the works of Boileau he tried to reach his enemy, but the struggle was unequal. The satire was not a field in which he excelled. His criticism of certain phrases of style and usage, and manner of expression peculiar to Boileau are in the main futile, colored at times by partisan spirit and often petty. That he was well aware what a laughing stock he was becoming is clear from the opening remarks of his "Réponse à la Satire X:"-"Enfin la Satire X du Sieur D** attendue depuis si longtemps, vient de paroître. Il ne doit pas trouver étrange de voir son Nom dans mes Vers, puisqu'il a mis le mien tout au long dans les siens."³⁴⁷ The same idea is expressed in his "Nouvelles Remarques sur Tous les Ouvrages du Sieur D**":-"Enfin, Monsiegnur, me voilà dans les Satires du sieur D**, je m'y suis trouvé en trois endroits avec des rimes très riches, afin que l'on ne doute pas de mon nom."³⁴⁷

"Il attaque mes vers, et j'attaque les siens. Je ris à ses dépens comme il veut rire aux miens. Cela est fort naturel: c'est une Guerre fort innocent quand on n'attaque ny les moeurs ny la personne; je luy passeray, s'il le veut, que je suis un fort méchant Poète, pour veu qu'il me passe aussi qu'il fait quelque fois de méchants vers, et de grandes fautes de jugement; mais la différence qu'il y a entre nous deux, c'est que je luy marque et que je luy prouve les siennes."³⁴⁸

His retort to the well known line of Boileau: "Plaint Pradon opprimé des sifflets du Parterre" has undoubtedly some merit: "C'est ce même Parterre à y répondre pour moy, et je croy que si le Sieur

→³⁴⁶ Mlle. de la Roche-Guilien:-"La Pradonnade ou la Guerre des Sonnets sur les Rimes du Premier Livre de la Pharsale," Amsterdam chez F. Bernard - in douze, 1711, p. 229, (Bibl. Arsenal #17053)

³⁴⁷ Preface of the "Réponse à la Satire X."

³⁴⁸ Epître à M. le Duc de N.

Despréaux vouloit se mêler de venir siffler Thisbé, Tamerlan, ou Regulus qu'il y seroit sifflé luy-même."³⁴⁹ To the complaint that some verses of Tamerlan showed evidence of plagiarism, he replies:- "Quelques Particuliers ne s'abaisseroient point à crier quand on leur imite une syllable sur des choses qui ne font point de beauté, qui n'ont aucun brillant particulier, et dont tout le monde auroit été contraint de se servir nécessairement, dans des incidents tirés des entrailles d'un Sujet, comme des vingt-quatre Lettres de l'Alphabet, qui doivent être communes à tous ceux qui se mêlent d'écrire.. D'ailleurs s'ils faisoient réflexion sur plusieurs de leurs pièces, ils verroient qu'ils font eux-mêmes encore moins scrupuleux sur des imitations plus fortes, et on pourroit leur faire connoître qu'ils se souviennent aussi bien des Modernes que des Anciens."³⁵⁰ In view of the restricted vocabulary of the seventeenth century Pradon has some right on his side. As for the charge of plagiarism, a study of this tragedy in particular will show if his defense was calculated to deceive the sharp eye of the discerning.

The following specimens of Pradon's critical manner are drawn from his pamphlets against the satirist. Commenting on the line, "Que tu sais bien, Racine, à l'aide d'un acteur,"³⁵¹ he says:- "A l'aide d'un acteur n'est pas une belle expression. Il semble qu'on crie à l'aide comme la populace. Secour eut été plus noble et plus naturel; par malheur il ne pourroit entrer dans ce vers:" Of Epître I the lines beginning:-

³⁴⁹"Nouvelles Remarques sur tous les Ouvrages de M.D.**."

³⁵⁰⁻²Preface "Réponse à la Satire X;" Boileau Epître VII

³⁵⁰Preface of "Tamerlan."

Et comme tes exploits, étonnant les lecteurs,
Seront à peine crus sur la foi des auteurs,
Si quelque esprit malin les veut traiter de folles,
On dira quelque jour, pour les rendre croyables;
Boileau, qui dans ses vers pleins de sincérité,
Jadis à tout son siècle a dit la vérité
Qui mit à tout blâmer son étude et sa gloire
A pourtant de ce roi parlé comme l'histoire."

He finds fault with Boileau's attitude toward the king. In this, his attitude accords with that of the Modernes who continually complained at what they considered in their opponents a lack of appreciation for the greatness of Louis' reign:- "Il semble que Boileau fait un grand effort pour louer le roi et qu'il lui a fait grâce en ne la déchirant pas...son 180^e vers (On dira, etc.) est surtout fort insolent." The line in Satire X beginning:-

De s'entendre appeler "petit coeur" ou "mon bon,"

he finds trivial and vulgar:- "Voilà deux expressions usitées tout au plus à la place Maubert." He shows himself again a partisan of the Modernes in condemning as irreligious the Lutrin, Chant IV: "Je ne pourrai donc plus être vu que de Dieu!" "Où est le jugement de M.D., lui qui se pique de dévotion, de mettre au nom si saint, et si auguste dans une satire?" In the Lutrin, Chant V, Boileau makes a satirical allusion to the "Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus" of Mlle de Scudéry:-

"Le Veillard, accablé de l'horrible Artamène."

Pradon feels called upon to rush to the defense of such a popular idol:- "Cet horrible Artamène a été traduit dans toutes les langues, même en arabe; sa lecture fait des délices de la cour; il a fait gagner ceut mille écus à Courbe; quand les oeuvres de Boileau en auront fait autant à Barbin, on souffrira sa critique un peu plus tranquillement; mais il y a encor du chemin à faire jusque-là." Almost all the intellectual psychology of Pradon is contained in this remark.

From his friends Pradon received little outward expression of their support. The great personages whose protection he sought, were content to let him carry on alone his literary battle; the writers who held ideas in common with him, assailed on their part by Boileau and all the admirers of the ancients, were too busy defending their own causes or too fearful of adding to the stream of abuse from Parnassus, to attempt a justification. From La Bruyère whose discernment in literature was as acute as his judgment of men, one would expect nothing favorable to the poet, yet he has seen fit to include him in his "Caractères" and furthermore acknowledge him as a poet. "Quand on excelle dans son art et qu'on lui donne toute la perfection dont il est capable, l'on en sort en quelque manière, et l'on s'égale à ce qu'il y a de plus noble et de plus relevé." (Vignon) est un Peintre; (C) Colasse un musicien; et l'auteur de Pirame est un poète; mais Mignard est Mignard, Lulli est Lulli, et Corneille est Corneille. 353

The "Mercure Galant," official organ of the modernists, did not give much support to the poet. Both De Visé, the stormy petrel of seventeenth century journalism, and Thomas Corneille, were, by inclination and business necessity, led to favor all new writers. Their associates, their sympathy with the précieuse galantry of certain social groups, and their antagonism to the aesthetic principles of the ancients made of the "Mercure Galant" a herald of the new style and an organ of literary propaganda. In it one would expect to find a sympathetic attitude for Pradon, support of his critical contentions, and praise for his successes. But De Visé was too skillful a journalist to bring upon himself and his journal the condemna-

tion of the favored literary leaders by a quixotic lance-breaking for Pradon. Boileau and Racine were the admired of the court, the favorites of royal sanction whose literary skill, unexcelled in their time, was not to be denied, no matter what difference of literary judgment might arise. Their works bore marks of excellence which even the most partisan could not deny. Nothing was to be gained, therefore, as far as the success of the "Mercure" was concerned, by denying Boileau for the sake of Pradon. A more satisfactory impression would come from ignoring Pradon's weaknesses, confining the discussion to the merits of the new writer, and passing over the sarcasms of Boileau.

In his first treatment of the quarrel of the "Phèdres", De Visé adopted these tactics:- "Puisque vous souhaitez, Madame, que je vous mande, des nouvelles de tout ce qui a paru de nouveau au Théâtre depuis le premier de janvier, je vous parleray d'abord des deux Phèdres. Elles ont fait ici beaucoup de bruit, et j'ay peine à concevoir d'où vient qu'on s'est avisé d'en vouloir juger par comparaison de l'une à l'autre, puisqu'elles n'ont rien de commun que le nom des Personnages qu'on y fait entrer....Ainsi, Madame, je ne voy point qu'on ait eu aucune raison d'examiner laquelle des deux Pièces intéresse plus agréablement l'Auditeur puisqu'elles n'ont aucun raport ensemble du costé de la principale matière. Il est vray qu'il n'y a pas la mesme horreur dans le sujet de la Phèdre du Faubourg S. Germain, mais comme je vous ay déjà dit, ce n'est pas le véritable sujet que l'Auteur de cette dernière a traité; et puis qu'il n'est permis d'y changer ce qu'il y avoit de plus essential, il est d'autant plus responsable de tout ce qui a pu blesser les délicats!"

353 LaBruyère:—"Les Caractères," Du Mérite personnel, "édition Grands Ecrivains. T. I, partie 2, 158.

Some three months afterwards he wrote:- "Monsieur Racine est toujours Monsieur Racine, et ses Vers sont trop beaux pour ne pas donner à la lecture le mesme plaisir qu'il donnent à les entendre réciter au Théâtre. Pour Monsieur Pradon, il avoue qu'ayant esté obligé de faire sa pièce en trois mois, il n'a pas eu le temps d'en polir ses Vers avec tout le soin qu'il y auroit apporté sans cela. C'est une négligence forcée qu'apparément il n'aura pas dans le premier ouvrage qu'il fera paroître; mais il n'est pas assuré que cet Ouvrage, quelque achevé qu'il nous le donne, ait un succès aussi avantageux que l'a eu son Hippolyte."

The passage following this excuse of Pradon on the ground of hasty composition is curious. De Visé evidently wished to justify Pradon's tragedy before the public without directly praising its author. At the same time he was willing to give the impression that the success of the rival piece was due in no small measure to the public curiosity aroused by the war of the sonnets. The quotation is a good example of machiavellian journalism. A hasty reading gives an impression quite different from that gained by closer perusal. In either case, the writer has so barricaded himself behind his phrase that he is safe from attack on either side:- "Il y a des occurrences, qui selon qu'elles sont plus ou moins favorables, augmentent ou diminuent le prix des choses."- a generalization tending to lull the mind of the reader to an acceptance of what follows:- "et je tiens que le secret de faire réussir celles de cette nature, c'est d'en faire parler beaucoup, quand mesme on n'en feroit dire que du mal."- the reader will recall that Racine's tragedy was discussed as to subject matter at least a year before its performance. It is also true that the rivalry of the two Phédres added to their drawing power;

besides, the war of the Sonnets began with a condemning of Racine's play: "Le bruit qui s'en répand excite une curiosité qui attire de grandes Assemblées; et comme le Peuple se persuade que les Pièces qui sont suivies doivent estre bonnes, nous en avons veu quelquefois de très heureuses qui n'ont pas eu l'approbation des Connoisseurs." This remark looks upon its face to be a justification of Racine's Phèdre whose first performances were ill attended; but in April, when these lines appeared, the success of Pradon's play had passed. The public gave its favor to Racine. The point of departure in this "critique" depends upon who are the "Connoisseurs", a question which DeVisé alone can answer. "Ce que je vous dis, Madame," he continues, "est une chose générale, et mon dessein n'est pas de parler de celle de Monsieur Pradon. Quant à sa Préface.....je connois beaucoup de Gens à qui elle plaist; il y en a mesme qui la trouvent brillante jusqu'à éblouir, malgré tout ce qu'opposent certains Critiques difficiles à satisfaire." The praise is left handed and guarded, which he attempts, nevertheless, to strengthen later by a support drawn from the enemy camp; - "j'ay entendu dire à des Amis de Monsieur Racine, qu'il se seroit tenu très-redévable à Monsieur Pradon s'il avoit fait jouer en Italien l'Hippolyte qui nous a esté donné en nostre Langue par l'Hôtel de Bourgogne." His final remarks give to Pradon all the support which he could afford to give: - "Monsieur Pradon a eu ses raisons que je veux croire fort bonnes, et je le trouve louable d'avoir reconnu de si bonne foy dans sa Préface qu'il n'a point traité ce Sujet par un effet du hazard.....mais par un pure effet de son choix. On avoit dit le contraire avant que la Pièce parust et il a cru que ce déguisement démentoit la sincérité dont il fait profession." 354

Of the tragedies from "Phèdre et Hippolyte" to "Regulus," the "Mercure" gives but a passing mention. Critical opinion pro or con is lacking. The success of the latter play called forth a favorable article:- "On représente depuis un mois avec beaucoup de succès une Tragédie intitulée Regulus.....Ce que fit Regulus est si éclatant et part d'une si grande âme, qu'on ne peut l'entendre sans l'admirer. Vous pouvez juger par là qu'il doit y avoir de grandes beautés dans cette pièce."³⁵⁵ In the short obituary notice announcing the poet's death, the "Mercure" rests the achievement of the poet on the two works whose success was closest to Pradon's heart. His failures, the bad reputation he acquired, the many anecdotes of which he was the subject, are withheld. He is remembered simply by "plusieurs Pièces de Théâtre et entr'autres Pirame et Thisbé et Regulus, qui ont paru avec beaucoup de succès."³⁵⁶

Of a nature similar to the critique of De Visé est the "Dissertation sur les Deux Phèdres" which is attributed to Subligny, an "avocat de parlement" turned author with a comedy "le Désespoir extravagant," and a piece "La Folle Querelle", attacking "Andromaque," to his discredit. Known as an adversary of Racine, one would expect his dissertation to contain a justification of Pradon, but like De Visé he preferred to adopt an attitude seemingly impartial, wherein Racine is condemned in his aesthetic judgment and Pradon in his craftsmanship. The result is a conflicting train of thought in which the greater poet is stupidly misunderstood and the lesser one insufficiently penalized. The mask of impartiality served only to cover Subligny's audacity. His attacks on Racine center mainly around

³⁵⁵ Le Nouveau Mercure Galant, avril, 1677, p. 73-81.

³⁵⁶ Mercure Galant, jan. 1688, p. 341.

the unsuitability for public presentation of the incestuous Phèdre as a dramatic subject, in which he is echoing contemporary criticism. By insinuation he gives currency to the impression that the success of "Pirame and Thisbé" was for Racine alarming; that the ill success of "Tamerlan" was not due wholly to inept workmanship; and that the refusal of an actress to essay the more gracious role of Pradon's Phèdre was not due to a mere caprice. The dissertation, divided into two parts, deals first with the tragedy of Racine, then, in contrast, with that of Pradon.

To the latter play his objections are largely technical. Hippolyte has too little reserve; Aricie suffers likewise from over frankness; Phèdre is lacking in reserve, is easily deceived by Hippolyte's manifestations for Aricie; the structure of the play is weak and in the last two scenes confused, illogical and badly done. He blames Pradon for treating a subject too odious for the stage, excusing him on the ground of the poet's desire to treat the same subject as Racine:— "J'en dirois autant de M. Pradon si je n'étois persuadé, que l'envie qu'il avoit de traiter le même sujet que M. Racine avoit pris, l'attachait indispensablement à cette odieuse matière.....car tous les efforts que fait M. Pradon pour adoucir un si rude sujet, ne lui peuvent servir de rien, il falloit le traiter dans son affreuse vérité ou ne le point toucher du tout."³⁵⁷ He finds, however, that Pradon's hero is better drawn than Racine's:— "M. Pradon a, ce me semble, un peu mieux fondé la crédulité de ce Héros,"³⁵⁸ and in spite of its faults of composition and lack of

³⁵⁷ Mercure Galant, jan. 1698, p. 268.

³⁵⁸ Subligny:— "Dissertation sur les Tragédies de Phèdre et Hippolyte, Paris, 1677, in-12, p. 360 (collection: Recueil de Dissertations sur plusieurs Tragédies de Corneille et Racine, Paris, 1740, by Granet, III, 351-414.

noble ideas, "Elle est mieux intrigué que celle de M. Racine, elle suspend davantage les esprits, et excite un peu plus la curiosité; mais les incidens n'en sont point d'une belle invention, ni d'un heureux succès, ils ne donnent point les hautes espérances, ni les grandes idées dont il faut que la tragédie entretienne ses Auditeurs: Enfin, il y a des fautes de jugement qu'on ne peut pardonner." ³⁵⁹

The blame is apparent in his opinions but the total impression gained from his criticism is favorable to Pradon and less so, more partisan when treating of Racine. The recital of Hippolyte's death in the Pradon play "n'est pas supportable;" the verse is filled with "mots impropres, de constructions barbares et d'expressions rampantes;" the general versification has not "quarante vers supportables en tout ce poème;" however, "c'est toujours beaucoup pour M. Pradon d'avoir pu, au moins parmi le peuple soutenir quelque temps le parallèle avec M. Racine; et comme les efforts obscurs de ce jeune Acteur ont donné de l'éclat au travail de ce dernier on peut dire que la pièce de M. Racine a fait valoir celle de M. Pradon, quoiqu'il n'y ait aucune comparaison entre eux." Not satisfied with this insulting remark to Racine, he goes even farther in his desire to soften for Pradon the sting of adverse criticism by throwing the whole affair into the arena of a public quarrel:-

Du soin jaloux qui les occupe
 Le public seulement est devenu le dupe
 Au lieu de se détruire, ils se servent tous deux;
 Chaque pièce en effet se trouve redevable
 De son succès trop favorable
 A la haine de chacun d'eux
 Et tel peu sensible au mérite
 N'auroit point de Racine été voir l'Hippolyte
 Tel autre de Pradon eut méprisé le soin
 Qui veut de leur querelle être Juge et Témoin."

³⁵⁹ Subligny:- Dissertation sur les Tragédies de Phèdre et Hippolyte Paris, 1677 in *12*, p. 363 (collection: Recueil de Dissertations sur plusieurs Tragédies de Corneille et Racine, Paris, 1740, by Granet, T II 351-414.

Subligny like De Visé was too fearful of the remarks of Boileau to take up the fight openly in favor of Pradon. By insinuation and suggestion, he sought to discredit Racine. While attacking Pradon for the very real faults which his tragedy contained, the discussion about the two writers is so managed that the reputation of the greater poet suffers more than that of the other. Pradon, while condemned in certain features of his work, is not blamed for the real faults of his workmanship, his attempt to rival one who was superior to him, the carelessness of construction and the stupidity displayed in the character sketching of his "Phèdre et Hippolyte". Better would it have been had he chosen a subject suitable to his muse, or at least spent sufficient time upon it to make a work well thought out, and free from commonplace errors. The silence of contemporaries in the case of Pradon can only be explained on the ground that writers were afraid to express a favorable opinion in the face of such condemnation from Parnassus. Those who were not occupied in literary pursuits had no occasion to write in his defense. Both parties were content to let the poet attempt his own justification while they remained by their silence safe from royal displeasure and the fury of a lampoon. In this way, Boileau's opinions remained dominant throughout the latter part of Louis' reign. After his death and the passing of the "Siècle Louis Quatorze," the dicta of the satirist became for the succeeding age the correct judgment on his contemporaries. Biographers of the theatre, however, were always confronted with the success of Regulus and its ability to hold its position on the stage well into the new age. Voltaire complained ~~in 1764~~ ³⁶⁰ of the

Didot

360 Voltaire:- "Oeuvres," Paris, 1833, Frères, correspondance, année 1764, letter to D'Argental 24 mai 1764, TLXI, 435. See also "Discours prononcé avant la Représentation d'Eriphyle". T III, 3, and "Discourse sur la Tragédie," T. II. 361

favor given this play, yet the play held the attention of audiences. That its author should have been the laughing stock of his age as Boileau represented him and yet been able to produce a tragedy of sustaining qualities puzzled the critics. His age had left of the poet an unfavorable portrait but his tragedies "Pirame," "Tamerlan," and "Regulus" when read in an impartial spirit did not support Boileau's contention about his work. Eighteenth century critics began to study the cause of this animosity, arriving soon at a judgment less harsh toward Pradon, although careful in its regard for the opinion handed down by the satirist, lest they seemed to err in granting to Pradon too much. De Beauchamps, writing of the fact in 1735, says of him: "Sa querelle avec Racine au sujet de sa Phèdre lui attira de la part de Despréaux plusieurs traits de satire dont il ne peut se relever; on ne laisse pas de trouver de bonnes choses dans ses pièces, et l'on revoit encore avec plaisir celles de Tamerlan et de Regulus." ³⁶¹

In 1745 the reputation of the poet was emerging from the retreat into which Boileau had driven it. Michault in the article devoted to Pradon in Niceron's "Mémoires" went to the heart of the matter of this writer's disrepute, placing upon Boileau the blame for the bad impression of his works spread abroad and upon the poet himself for his foolish temerity in rivaling Racine:- "Nicolas Pradon seroit peut-être aujourd'hui un poète assez inconnu, s'il n'avoit eu la témérité d'entrer en concurrence avec le fameux Racine: aussi on peut dire que la réputation de ce dernier n'a pas peu servi à faire parler de son rival. Despréaux a aussi répandu un ridicule si frappant sur le caractère et les ouvrages de Pradon,

³⁶¹ De Beauchamps:- Recherches sur les Théâtres de France, Paris, 1735, p. 5 258.

qu'on n'oubliera jamais la manière outrageante dont ce redoutable critique l'a traité."³⁶² He does not hesitate to include the tale told by Brossette of Pradon's ignorance and is careful to draw his reader's attention to the fact that no apology of the poet is intended, either for his taste, talents or writings which he says are generalement "méprisés". His critical judgment tends toward a more accurate estimate of the poet's work, which shows that Boileau's opinions on contemporary men were being weighed with greater care:- "Mais je demanderois volontiers grâce pour quelques unes de ses pièces; et malgré le jugement du public que Despréaux a fort prévenu contre cet Auteur j'ose assurer le Théâtre s'est trouvé en proie à des Poètes qui lui sont beaucoup inférieurs, et qui ont ennuyé longtemps le Spectateur avec impunité. Cependant qu'on ne m'accuse pas de n'ériger en admirateur de Pradon; j'avoue que c'est un Écrivain fort médiocre.....Mais après tout, méritoit-il toute la honte et le mépris dont Despréaux l'a couvert dans ses Satires? non sans doute et Despréaux ne l'a cherché et ne l'a accablé de mille traits piquans, que pour venger Racine d'un concurrent importun."³⁶³

The Frères Parfaict who drew upon Nicéron for their information concerning the poet, follow the earlier historian in his attempted justification of Pradon's work. Of his "Pirame" they speak in no slighting terms:- "Quoique cette Pièce ait été très applaudie dans sa nouveauté et même restée au Théâtre pendant près de quarante ans, cependant on ne se tromperoit point, si l'on vouloit par la juger de son mérite."³⁶⁴ Their opinion of "Tamerlan", considering as they do the faults of his tragedy, is more favorable than that of

³⁶²Nicéron:- "Mémoires," T. XLIII.

³⁶³ibid.

³⁶⁴Frères Parfaict: * Hist. du Théâtre, T. XI, 348.

previous critics:- "En général, cette Tragédie est assez passable, cependant elle pêche par la conduite, et encore plus par les caractères.....La versification est foible, inégale; on y trouve des pensées mais souvent fausses, et mal exprimées."³⁶⁵ In their discussion of Pradon's "Phèdre," they have cited at length from the articles of De Visé in the "Mercure Galant," and the "Dissertation," of Subligny, allowing the reader to form his opinion from these two critics. The historians' judgment rests upon an acceptance of De Visé remarks for:- "Jamais M. De Visé n'a parlé plus juste qu'en faisant cette réflexion sur les deux Tragédies dont nous parlons....j'ai peine à concevoir d'où vient qu'on s'est avisé d'en vouloir juger par comparaison de l'une à l'autre, puisqu'elles n'ont rien de commun que le nom des personnages."³⁶⁶ The article of De Visé seems to them, however, rather insufficient:- "qui donne une idée très-louche des deux Pièces; il semble même pencher pour celle de M. Pradon." They recognize that "Entre les amis de M. Racine, M. Despréaux étoit celui, qui, par autorité sur le Parnasse paroissoit le plus à craindre à M. Pradon." For the remaining part of their article Subligny is the critic who has given for them an adequate idea of Pradon's "Phèdre."

"La Troade" malgré des défauts, is in their judgment, "une des plus passables de l'Auteur et le rôle d'Andromaque est assez beau."³⁶⁷ In "Statira" they find no merit except a certain improvement in versification over the preceding tragedies: "Il est vrai que la versification est un plus passable, que celle de ses autres Ouvrages."³⁶⁸ When they reach Regulus, they give the poet his due for having ac-

³⁶⁵ Frères Parfaict:- Hist. du Théâtre, T.XI, 430.

³⁶⁶ *ibid*, T.XII, 47-60.

³⁶⁷ *ibid*, T.XII, 138.

³⁶⁸ *ibid*, T.XII 156.

complished with a different subject a satisfactory piece of writing:-
 "Voici le triomphe de M. Pradon: le sujet en est simple, grand, noble et intéressant, mais en même temps très difficile à être assujetti aux règles du Théâtre, principalement à celle d'unité de lieu. Cet obstacle, qui seul avoit effrayé tous ceux qui ont tenté de traiter cet événement, et la manière dont notre Poète s'en est acquitté suffisent pour faire son éloge.....Nous le répétons, le sujet de cette Tragédie est parfaitement beau: un Poète plus habile....l'auroit sans doute mieux conduit que Pradon, mais il est toujours glorieux pour lui d'avoir trouvé les moyens de vaincre des difficultés qui paroissent insurmontable."³⁶⁹ The final judgment passed upon Pradon takes the same form as that of Nicéron:- "S'il s'étoit voulu contenter d'une place parmi les Poètes médiocres, il l'auroit obtenu sans peine et il l'auroit rempli dignement: mais son ambition n'a servi qu'à le rendre la fable du Parnasse. Il semble qu'il ne soit plus permis de le louer, depuis que M. Despréaux prenant le parti de Racine son ami, a répandu un ridicule si frappant sur le caractère et les Ouvrages de ce Poète que son nom servira à la postérité pour désigner un méchant Auteur..... Nous ne pouvons, en Historiens équitables, nous dispenser d'observer que cet Auteur n'étoit pas sans mérite qu'il avoit quelquefois du feu, et peignoit assez bien certains endroits et avec force."³⁷⁰

The Abbé de la Porte in his "Observateur littéraire" asks the question that has puzzled earlier historians:- "Pradon est-il aussi mauvais Poète que la satire veut le faire croire? A-t-il mérité toute la vigueur du jugement prononcé contre lui?"³⁷¹ The conclusions arrived at are much the same as in previous manuals, yet the Abbé has

³⁶⁹ Frères Parfaict:- Hist. du Théâtre, T. XIII, 69-85.

³⁷⁰ ibid.

³⁷¹ Abbé de la Porte: "Observateur littéraire," Amsterdam et Paris, 1760. p. 25.

looked beyond the mere quarrel of the Phèdre, with Boileau's attendant diatribes, to the society of the times, its interest in and influence on the poet. This side of the question is barely suggested: "On ne peut cependant sans injustice, lui refuser de l'esprit, de l'imagination, de la facilité, et la connaissance des Règles du Théâtre. La plupart de ses Tragédies seroient peut-être, plus estimées s'il eut venu dans un temps moins fécond en grands poètes; ou si, plus modeste, il n'eut pas voulu lutter avec Racine.....Boileau n'épargna rien pour l'humilier; et l'on peut reprocher à ce terrible adversaire d'avoir outré la satire, en représentant l'Auteur de Regulus comme un Poète constamment sifflé, bafoué de toutes parts, et tombé généralement dans le mépris. S'il eut des amis, il eut aussi ses partisans, j'ose même dire ses admirateurs. Aujourd'hui, ceux qui ne jugent point de ses ouvrages d'après les Vers de Despréaux, avouent que Pradon sçavoit conduire régulièrement une Tragédie, en ménager les incidens y placer des peintures vives, des traits heureux, des situations intéressantes, quelquefois neuves, des mouvemens fort et véhémans; que sa versification même en générale si vicieuse, ne doit pas être condamnée sans restriction. Concluez Monsieur, que ce Pradon avoit sçu se tenir dans son rang, s'il n'avoit pas eu la vanité ridicule de se comparer à Racine et surtout, s'il n'avoit pas été l'ennemi de Boileau son nom, moins décrié seroit cité avec moins de mépris. En un mot, Pradon seroit aujourd'hui un Poète passable, s'il eût été un Poète modeste."^{371*}

^{371*} Abbé de la Porte: "Observateur littéraire," Amsterdam et Paris, 1760, p. 90-91. Also La Porte et Chamfort: "Anecdotes dramatiques," Paris, 1775, III, 408.

Chapter V.

The Sources of the Tragedies.

(a) "Pirame et Thisbé".

The tragedy of "Pirame et Thisbé" was produced at the Théâtre de la Bourgogne in 1674. The characters of the play are:-

Amestris, Reine de Babylone
 Bélus, son fils
 Thisbé
 Pirame
 Arsace, Père de Pirame
 Licas, Confident d'Arsace
 Hircus, Capitaine des Gardes de Bélus
 Ismène, Confidente de Thisbé
 Barsine, Confidente d'Amestris
 Garde, suite de gardes

The scene is at Babylon, in the palace of Bélus.

The plot of the tragedy runs as follows:- Amestris, queen of Babylon, has upon the death of her husband, usurped the throne refusing to turn over the government to her son Bélus, the rightful successor to his father's dominion. The queen, however, does not wish to entrust the reins of government to him but prefers to hold the power herself, ruling by severity and terror. She has fallen in love with the young Pirame, son of one of her supporters, Arsace, a man of great ambition who wishes to see his own son reign with Amestris thereby bringing credit, honor, and influence to his family as well as stabilizing the rather uncertain claims of Amestris. Pirame, however, loves Thisbé, daughter of a family with which his

father has been embroiled. Arsace has caused the death of Thisbé's father. Thisbé herself has recently returned to the court at the queen's request. She loves Pirame but is fearful of the evil consequences which may fall upon her through this love of the son of Arsace, her father's murderer. Arsace will hear nothing from his son concerning his love for Thisbé, and, wholly absorbed in the advantages to accrue from an alliance with the queen, tries to force Pirame to abandon Thisbé and follow the course leading to political power and security. Pirame, unable to move his father from his political desires, turns to the queen for aid in bringing about the marriage. Amestris, however, no sooner learns of Pirame's love for another than she becomes jealous of her rival Thisbé and more intent upon consummating this marriage with Pirame which at first had not the spur of jealousy to urge it on. Arsace, whose hatred for the family of Thisbé is increased by her presence now so annoying to his plans, joins with the queen in plotting her ruin. Bélus, the son of Amestris, has learned of his mother's love for Pirame and, suspecting political motives behind this passion wherein he will be the loser, makes love to Thisbé. To injure his rival's suit he tells Thisbé of the queen's love for Pirame, hinting that perhaps Pirame would prefer a marriage of advantage to one of love. Pirame, in the meanwhile, frightened at the turn of events and fearing that his father's influence with the queen will bring about Thisbé's ruin, feigns acceptance of his father's demands, promising to support the queen. Amestris has informed Thisbé that her lover's life is in danger unless she marry Bélus and cease to be a rival of the sovereign. Thisbé, uncertain of Pirame's love, is greatly perplexed whether, to save him, she should marry the hated Bélus, or do away with herself. Pirame, in the meanwhile, has been drawn to the queen's party in an insurrec-

tion which Bélus caused with the hope of gaining the throne. Although he has not fought for the queen, Pirame is imprisoned by order of Bélus but escapes to find Thisbé, assures her again of his love, and urges her to flee with him. After some hesitation she decides to accompany him. She starts for the meeting place outside the city near the tomb of the king Ninus. Pirame is to follow later. Bélus, meanwhile, has become master of the situation. The fleeing Arsace is pursued and brought back a prisoner by the soldiers of Bélus, while Amestris, seeing that her son has gained the throne, lives now only to lament her unrequited love, jealous of Thisbé and hating Pirame for his lack of affection. Arsace brought back by the soldiers, relates the sad fate of the lovers. Fleeing to the woods he saw his own son who appeared to avoid him. He succeeded in overtaking him. Pirame was looking for Thisbé but no trace of her was visible. A bloody veil upon the ground similar to one she wore, made him conclude she had been devoured by a wandering lion. Despairing at his loss, Pirame stabbed himself with a dagger and lay upon the ground in the agony of death when Thisbé appeared from her hiding-place where she had indeed sought protection from a lion, saw her unfortunate lover, and had barely time to receive his last embraces. Mad with grief, she killed herself with the dagger which had brought death to her loved one. While Arsace is finishing his account, the bodies of the lovers are brought upon the stage. This sight so moves the evil hearts of Amestris and Arsace that they vow to follow the ill-fated pair and thus atone for their own evil deeds.

The legend of Pirame and Thisbé which Ovid had treated in his *Metamorphoses*³⁷² had been used by Théophile de Viau in his tragedy "Les Amours tragiques de Pirame et Thisbé" (1625) and again by Puget

³⁷² Book IV, I. 56.

de la Serre in the tragedy of "Pyrame" (1633). Pradon in the Preface to his tragedy claims to have borrowed nothing from Théophile:- "Je ne me repens donc point d'avoir traité un Sujet où Théophile avoit réussi: on voit bien que je ne lui ai rien emprunté que les noms de Pirame et Thisbé que le Galant Ovide nous a donnés à tous deux. J'y ai fait un Episode d'Amestris et de Bélus qui quoique fondés dans l'Histoire sont des caractères de mon invention, aussi bien que celui d'Arsace."³⁷³ The plot of his tragedy shows no trace of the influence of "Pyrame", tragedy of Puget de la Serre, but Pradon's contention that he owes nothing to Théophile de Viau is false. The sources of the tragedy are of a three-fold nature. The historical characters are to be found in Ovid, Plutarch, Herodotus, and Diodorus the Sicilian; the sentimental situations in Théophile; and the general romanesque tone in the current literary manner of Pradon's early influences and milieu.

Classical legend shows us Thisbé, a beautiful female of Babylon, between whom and a youth named Pyramus, a native of the same place, a strong attachment subsisted. Their parents being averse to their union, they adopted the expedient of receiving each other's addresses through the chink of a wall which separated their dwellings. In the sequel, they arranged a meeting at the tomb of Ninus under a wild mulberry tree; Thisbé, enveloped in a veil, arrived first at the appointed place; but, terrified at the appearance of a lioness, she fled precipitately and in her flight dropped her veil which, lying in the animal's path, was rent by it, and smeared with the blood that stained the jaws of the lioness from the recent destruction of some cattle. Pyramus, coming soon after to the appointed place, beheld the torn and bloody veil, and, concluding that Thisbé had been destroyed by some savage beast, slew himself in despair. Thisbé returning after a short inter-

³⁷³ Preface of "Pirame et Thisbé."

val to the spot where she had encountered the lioness, beheld the bleeding form of Pyramus, and threw herself upon the fatal sword, still warm, as it was with the blood of her lover.³⁷⁴

Such is the legend which Ovid has transmitted. It will be noticed that Pradon has taken, at least in their general outline, the chief figures, Pirame and Thisbé, but the hostility of the families is pushed to an open and deadly hatred wherein Thisbé's father has been a victim. Furthermore, Ovid does not suggest absolute refusal of consent to marry on the part of the parents but merely a neighborly dislike:-

Pyramus et Thisbe, inventum pulcherrimus alter,
Altera, quas Oriens habuit praelata puellis,
Contiguas ternvere domus, ubi dicitur altam
Coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem.
Notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit,
Tempore crevit amor; taedae quoque iure coissent,
Sed vetuere patres; quod non potuere vetare 375
Ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.

Pradon has thus enlarged on the incident of the family quarrel and placed his tragedy in a Babylonian setting. He does not say that the romance occurred during the reign of Semiramis, but in the city made famous by this queen. Pradon has kept the setting but substituted the characters of Amestris, Bélus and Arsace, as he says, from history. Amestris is indeed to be found in history. Herodotus says of her: "I was informed that Amestris also, the wife of Xerxes, when she had grown old, made return of her life to the god who is said to be beneath the earth by burying twice seven children of Persians who were men of renown."³⁷⁶ Amyot in his translation of Plutarch's "Lives" speaks of an Amestris:- "Amestris la mère du roy Xerxes enfouit en terre douze hommes vivans dont elle faisoit offrande à Pluton pour cuider allonger sa vie,"

³⁷⁴Anton:- Classical Dictionary, New York, 1841, p. 1332.

³⁷⁵Ovid: - Metamorphoses, IV, 155-63.

³⁷⁶Herodotus:- History, VII, 114.

and further in a note to the above:- "Amestris, femme de Xerxes, princesse d'un caractère atroce. Xerxes ayant conçu de l'amour pour la femme de son frère, Mésistes, Amestris fit couper à sa rivale les oreilles, le nez, les levres et la langue."³⁷⁷

The ferocity of Amestris is well established by the above quotations but the imposing figure of a great queen ruling by force of her will to the exclusion of her son is lacking. Such a character belongs to the Babylonian queen Semiramis who is described by Amyot after Plutarch in the following manner:- "Semiramis du pais de Syrie étoit serve et concubine d'un esclave du grand roy Ninus, lequel roy depuis qu'il l'eut une fois halenée, en fut si fort épris, et elle le maîtrisa et méprisa tant qu'elle oza bien luy requérir qu'il la laissast seoir tout un jour dedans son throsne avec le diadème royal autour de la teste, donner audience et despescher affaires comme luy. Ce que Ninus luy ayant ottroyé; et commande que chascun luy rendist obeissance comme à luy mesme et feist tout ce qu'elle ordonneroit, elle usa modestement de ses premières ordonnances envers les gardes du corps, et quand elle veit qu'ils ne luy contredissoient en rien, elle leur commanda de le prendre au corps et puis de le lier, et finalement de le tuer. Ce qui ayant esté entièrement exécuté, elle régna, et commanda en grande magnificence à toute l'Asie par un bien longtemps"³⁷⁸ Diodorus, the Sicilian gives considerable space to this queen of Babylon to whom he ascribes a miraculous birth. His account differs somewhat from Plutarch's, although he credits the Athenians with the legend that she was a strumpet. He represents her as a beautiful wife of a general attached to the army of Ninus whom Ninus persuaded to give his wife to him. After the king's death she carried on great war enterprises. By him she

³⁷⁷ Amyot:- "Oeuvres mêlées de Plutarque," Paris, 1803, XIV, 281.

³⁷⁸ ibid. "De l'Amour", V. ch. XXII, 245.

had a son Ninyas.

Before her Egyptian campaign she went to consult an oracle to find out how long she would live. The oracle replied that she would leave the world when her son Ninyas should not plot against her. Later she returned to Bactia. Being assaulted by a eunuch through the treacherous connivance of her son, remembering the oracle, she turned the government over to her son without punishing him.³⁷⁹ What Pradon has done is to model Amestris, whose existence in history both Herodotus and Plutarch attest, upon the character of Semiramis as given by Diodorus and Plutarch, assigning to her the governmental skill and political position of Semiramis and a temperament half of which is drawn from the historical Amestris and half from Semiramis. He was perfectly justified in assigning to Babylon a second queen who had ruled alone. Herodotus, in speaking of Semiramis, says:- "Of these rulers, the one who ruled first, named Semiramis, who lived five generations before the other, produced banks of earth in the plain which was a sight worth seeing.....The queen who lived after her time, named Nitocris, was wiser than she who had reigned before; and it was the son of this woman bearing the same name as his father, Labynetos, who ruled over the Assyrians against whom Cyrus was marching."³⁸⁰

The prototype of Bélus is to be found in Diodorus quoted above, although in the historian the name of Semiramis' son is Ninyas. Bélus was common to Babylonian history. Herodotus ascribes it to the founder of the dynasty into which Semiramis married.³⁸¹

The characters of the tragedy are thus drawn from Ovid, Herodotus, Plutarch and Diodorus. The Ovid legend was well known to seven-

³⁷⁹Diodorus the Sicilian:- History, I, ch. II.

³⁸⁰Herodotus:- History, I, 184.

³⁸¹ibid, I, 7.

teenth century society and Pradon acknowledges his indebtedness in his preface. Herodotus, Plutarch and Diodorus were known through translations made in the preceding century. Amyot translated seven books of Diodorus in 1554 and Plutarch's Lives in 1559. In 1574 he translated the moral works of Plutarch. Du Ryer had given a translation of Herodotus in 1645.

From Théophile Pradon says he borrowed nothing. The Abbé de la Porte mentions the fact that Pradon was accused of imitating Théophile but he limits this criticism to the copying of some verses from the early poet:- "On l'accuse aussi d'avoir trop imité Théophile et de s'être servi de quelques-uns de ses Vers, qu'il n'a fait, pour ainsi dire que copier."³⁸² Pradon has done more than copy occasional lines. He has made a rather clever inversion of Théophile's plot and drawn his sentimental incidents from this inverted model of the earlier tragedy. In Théophile's treatment the king is in love with Thisbé who does not return his affection because she loves Pirame. Narbal, the father of the boy, is angry with him because he loves Thisbé. She belongs to a family hostile to Narbal who has caused the banishment of Thisbé's father. The king, aided by Syllar, his confidant, decides to rid himself of his rival Pirame. From this menace and that of Pirame's father, the lovers are forced to flee and meet the fate described by Ovid. Here too, death is brought about by means of a dagger and not a sword as in Ovid.

Theophile makes a king love Thisbé with no success. (Act I sc.3)
Pradon has a queen love Pirame to no avail. (Act I sc. 1)

Father Narbal does not wish his son to love Thisbé. (Act I sc. 2)
With Pradon, Arsace dislikes his son's affection for Thisbé. (Act I sc 1)

Narbal has caused the exile of Thisbé's father, (Act I sc 2)
Arsace has killed Narbal, the father of Thisbé. (Act I sc.1)

The king decides to remove Pirame his rival. (Act I, sc.3)
The queen Amestris will remove Thisbé her rival. (Act. I sc.7)

³⁸² Abbé de La Porte:- Dictionnaire dramatique, Paris 1776, II, 497-8.

Syllar, the king's confident, is his aid and accomplice. (Act I sc 3)
 Arsace plays this role with Amestris, likewise her confidente Barsine. (Act I sc. 5)

This leaves Bélus as a new element whose love for Thisbé will be a foil to destroy the evil spirited queen and establish justice. The motive for Pradon's play may be found in Thisbé's speech, Act I sc. 1, in Théophile's tragedy:

"Que les discours mutins d'une haine ancienne
 Divisent la maison de Pyrame et la mienne."

and in Bersiane's statement:-

"L'Amour, l'ambition, l'orgueil et la cholère
 Sont toujours sur nos fronts d'une apparence claire."

In a few places Pradon has run close to the edge of Théophile's original:-

Théo: (A. IV.1) Pyrame:- Je doutois que l'on peust aimer si constamment,
 Et que tant d'amitié fust pour moy seulement
 Que des objets plus beaux.....

Thisbé:- N'achève point, Pyrame,
 Un si mauvais soupçon; tu blesserois mon âme

 Mon coeur, et que plaisir prens-tu de m'affliger?

Pyrame:- car j'ose m'assurer
 Que tu n'aimes que moy.

Pradon (A. IV,4) Pirame:- Ah, Dieux! si vous m'aimiez....

Thisbé:- Je ne vous aime pas,
 Ingrat? de mon amour pourriez vous estre en doute?

.....
 Quel plaisir prenez-vous à voir couler mes larmes?

Théo:-(A. III,1) Pyrame:- Dieux! tout mon sang se trouble; il est vray
 que le roy
 Ayme, à ce qu'on m'a dit, en mesme lieu que moy
 Hélas! je suis perdu, mon mal est sans remède.
 Contre mon roy quel Dieu puis-je trouver qui
 m'aide.

Pradon(A. III,8) Thisbé:- Qu'entens-je? Ah, Dieux! que vois-je? où
 suis-je? je frissone;
 Je tremble. Que d'horreurs! Pirame m'abandonne!
 Fièrre Amestris, hélas! tu me viens arracher
 Par l'éclat de ton trône un coeur qui m'est si cher

 pour le dégager
 La Reine, ouy la Reine, éclate en ce danger,
 Quel secours? De quel bras ce secours?"

Théophile in Act III, 1 has Pyrame suggest to Thisbé that they flee. After a debate which carries over to scene 4 they decide upon this course, Pradon in Act IV, 4 of his tragedy arranges a like scene;

The influence of Pradon's milieu is noticeable in his drawing of the character Amestris, the proud jealous queen, bent upon ruling, sweeping aside every obstacle to gain her end, and in Bélus, of a like temperament, both struggling for power and impeded by a passion which threatens to ruin them. Such were the heroes and heroines of Corneille. The political tone of the tragedy, the strife between love and duty, love and honor, is in the manner of the old master. This first tragedy shows Pradon's tendency to complicate the plot by antithetical situations and to give to the love element either too large a part in a political drama or too coldly intellectual a tone in sentimental situations. In the tragedy the influence of Quinault's school struggles with the Corneillian for the mastery. Further evidence of this confusion will be seen in his succeeding plays.

(b) Tamerlan.

The tragedy of "Tamerlan ou la Mort de Bajazet" was played at the Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne 1675. The characters are:

Tamerlan, Empereur des Tartares

Bajazet, Empereur des Turcs

Astérie, Fille de Bajazet

Andronic, Prins Grec, réfugié à la Cour de Tamerlan.

Léon, Confident d'Andronic

Tamur, Capitaine des Gardes de Tamerlan

Zaide, Confidente d'Astérie

Suite de Gardes

The Scene is in the camp of Tamerlan.

The plot of the tragedy runs as follows:- After having caused the death of the son and wife of Bajazet, his captive, Tamerlan falls in love with Astérie, daughter of Bajazet, like her father a prisoner. She, however, is the promised bride of Andronic, son of the Greek emperor of Constantinople, whose death brought such an upheaval in the Byzantine empire that Andronic was forced to flee to Tamerlan and ask aid to recover his throne from the grasp of his brother, aided by the now conquered Bajazet. The alliance with Tamerlan is loathsome to Bajazet who will hear nothing in favor of it. Tamerlan, hoping to influence the princess in his favor softens his harsh treatment of the royal prisoner. Astérie, however, loves Andronic and is herself beloved by him. To retain this love Andronic tries to save Bajazet. Meanwhile the Princess of Trébizonde, whom Tamerlan for political reasons had thought to marry, approaches his camp. Tamerlan decides to marry Andronic to her and reserve Astérie for himself. The knowledge of this arrangement causes Astérie to fear both infidelity from Andronic and dread lest his support of her father's cause be withdrawn. Tamerlan makes known to her his love. This causes the young lovers grave fears that he find out their love and wreak his vengeance on Bajazet. They debate whether each shall follow the path of duty or love - Andronic wishing to make known his love, refuse the high state destined for him, and marry Astérie, she wishing to marry Tamerlan to save both her father and her lover. Tamerlan discovers their love by Andronic's indifference to the favor his chief intends for him. Andronic declares openly his love, braving Tamerlan's anger. Astérie to save him promises to marry the hated conqueror. In the meanwhile Bajazet by bribing his fellow prisoners to dig for him an underground passage has been plotting to escape, but the attempt is discovered. Tamerlan enraged declares that Astérie must either marry him or Bajazet and Andronic must die. Bajazet,

in whose hands Astérie has put the decision of her fate, taunts his conqueror by his persistent refusal to acquiesce in the marriage and escapes the vengeance of Tamerlan only by taking poison. Moved by the greatness of the fallen monarch, Tamerlan renounces Astérie, bestows her upon Andronic and decides to marry the Princess of Trébizonde.

Turkish history had been used for tragic plots on various occasions before Pradon's play. Gabriel Bounyn wrote a tragedy in 1561, "La Soltane", the subject of which was the death of Mustapha strangled by order of his father, Soliman the great; Mairret's "Le Grand et dernier Solyman", 1639 was written upon the same subject following the model of the "Il Solimano", Venice, 1619, of Bonarelli della Rovere; Dalibray's "Le Soliman 1637 followed the above-mentioned Italian play. Desmares in 1643 wrote "Roxélane;" Magnon, "Le Grand Tamerlan et Bajazet," 1647; and Racine his "Bajazet," 1672, all drawn from Turkish history.

Pradon in his preface says of his Tamerlan that the subject matter is to be found in Calchondile's history and in the translation of an Arabian author:- "J'ai fait un honnête homme de Tamerlan contre l'opinion de certaines Gens qui vouloient qu'il fût tout à fait brutal et qu'il fit mourir jusques aux Gardes. J'ai tâché d'apporter un tempérément à sa férocité naturelle, et d'y mêler un caractère de grandeur et de générosité qui'est fondé dans l'Histoire, puisqu'il refusa l'Empire des Grecs, et qu'il a été un des plus grands Hommes du Monde:- Cela se peut voir dans Calchondile, et surtout dans une Traduction d'un Auteur Arabe, où la vie de Tamerlan et ses grandes actions sont écrites tout au long."³⁸³

The critics were not satisfied with this statement of sources and accused him apparently of borrowing from his contemporaries. Pradon

felt called upon to reply to their insinuations:- "Il seroit seulement à souhaiter que ces Messieurs tinssent le même langage qu'ils font tenir à leurs Héros; qu'en faisant admirer leurs Ouvrages ils fissent admirer, en même temps leur procédé, et que les sentimens de leur coeur fussent aussi généreux et aussi grands que ceux de leur esprit. Ils ne s'abaisseroient point à crier quand on leur imite une syllable sur des choses qui ne font point de beautés, qui n'ont aucun brillant particulier et dont tout le monde auroit été contraint de se servir nécessairement, dans des incidens tirés des entrailles d'un Sujet comme des vingt-quatre Lettres de l'Alphabet qui doivent être communes à tous ceux qui se mêlent d'écrire. D'ailleurs s'ils faisoient réflexion sur plusieurs de leurs Pièces, ils verroient, qu'ils font eux-mêmes encore moins scrupuleux sur ces imitations plus fortes, et on pourroit leur faire connoître qu'ils se souviennent aussi bien des Modernes que des Anciens, et qu'ils possèdent avec autant d'avantage les beautés de Tristan, de Mairet, et de Routrou que celle d'Homère, de Sophocle et d'Euripide."³⁸⁴

Pradon has indeed done more than to use stock incidents, the common property of dramatic writers. He has drawn his historical facts from the history of Calchondile and from Du Bec's translation of an Arab historian, supplementing these facts with sentimental elements borrowed from Magnon's "Le Grand Tamerlan et Bajazet" and placing his characters in situations copied from Racine's "Andromaque" and "Bajazet." The translation of an Arabian author which Pradon mentions in his preface was Du Bec's, as Herr Degenhart pointed out in his study of the Tamerlan story in European literature. ³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ ibid.

³⁸⁵ Degenhart:- "Tamerlan in den Literateuren des westlichen Europas"- Archiv für Studium der neueren Sprache und Literateuren, CXXIII, Heft 3, 4, p. 279-283.

Before 1675 the following historians had written about Tamerlan:
 Ahmed ibn Arabschah (born XIV or XV century, Damascus, died middle XV century at Cairo). Vattier in 1658 made a French translation:- "Hist. du grand Tamerlan traduite de l'arabe."

Cherif-ed-din-Ali whose work was not translated until 1722.

M. Ducas: Historia Byzantina.

Laonicus Calchondiles: History of Byzantium in ten volumes, 1298-1463, preserved in a single manuscript in Paris and first edited by I. Bulliard, Paris, 1649. A French translation by B. de Vigénère appeared at Paris, 1577 and 1632.³⁸⁶

Perondinus:- Magni Tamerlanis imperatoris vita, Florence, 1603.

Pedro Mexia:- Silva de vana lecion, Seville 1543.

Boisardus:- Vitae sultanorum Turcicorum, etc., edited by Théodore de Bry, Frankfort on Main, 1596.

Lonicerus: Chronicorum Turcicorum Frankfort on Main, 1578.

Jean Du Bec:- Histoire du Grand Tamerlan tiré des monuments antiques des Arabes 1587, second edition 1594. 387

Krolles:- General History of the Turks, London, 1603.

Beside Calchondile, the only French translations of Turkish history were those of Vatter and Du Bec. Degenhart gives an historian Alhazen as source of Du Bec's translation:- Du Becs Buch soll die Uebersetzung eines mir nicht auffindbaren arabischen Autors, Alhazen, sein; die ganzen Form und Anlage des Buches, seine Schilderung des Characters Tamerlans die Reden besonders ueber politische und religiöses sittliche Fragen lassen es jedoch als apokryph erscheinen."³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica, VIII, 628.

"L'Histoire de la Décadence de l'Empire Grec par Calchondile Athénien. De la Traduction de B. de Vigénère, Bourbonnais, Paris ~~France~~ chez La Veuve Mathieu Guillemot, 1632, f^o

³⁸⁷ Degenhart:- "Tamerlan in den Literateuren westlichen Europas, etc."

³⁸⁸ ibid.

Comparing then Pradon's Tamerlan with that of Vatter and Du Bec, Degenhart concludes that Du Bec was the source, for Vatter's Tamerlan does not conform to Pradon's figure.

Pradon's character of Tamerlan resembles Du Bec's description of this conqueror more than Calchondile's. In the latter historian the Sythian is proud, ferocious, hot-tempered, cruel and arrogant, while Du Bec represents a more civilized, more humane creature:-

"Ainsi nous partismes, après avoir le Prince (Tamerlan) assemble tous les gens de marque de son armée pour leur conférer son dessein, et recevoir avis d'eux ce que son humanité usoit constamment qui le faisoit aymer: car tant plus vous estiez esloignez de luy. C'estoit lors qu'il vous honoroit davantage."³⁸⁹ The defeat of Bajazet and the capture of his family is recorded in both histories. Calchondile says of this event: "En cette grosse déffaitte demeura aussi prisonnier Moysse et presque tous les Capitaines de Bajazet.....D'autre costé la femme de Bajazet vint ès mains et les autres enfants de Bajazet comment tous de la même fortune."³⁹⁰ Pradon has supposed Bajazet's wife and son killed by Tamerlan before the opening of the play, leaving but one child, Astérie to comfort the captive emperor. The source of this character will be seen later. Du Bec ^{has} Tamerlan dispose of the children by sending them to the Greek emperor:- "Bajazet s'estant retiré à cheval hors de la troupe.....tomba viv entre les mains d'Axalla..... l'Empereur ne le traîta point humainement; mais en fit faire peu de compte. Les deux fils de Bajazet furent envoyez à l'Empereur Grec pour les faire nourrir."³⁹¹

³⁸⁹Du Bec:- "Histoire de la Décadence de l'Empire grec, p. 221.

³⁹⁰Calchondile, XII, 71.

³⁹¹Du Bec, p. 243.

The character of Andronic is found in both Du Bec and Calchondile with the difference that in Du Bec he is one of the generals attending Tamerlan while Calchondile makes of him a son of the fallen Greek emperor whose successor had had Andronic imprisoned and his eyes put out: "Au regard des Grecs, ils se suivoient presque tous à la guerre quelque part qu'il (Bajazet) allast, hormis Emenuel fils de l'Empereur Jean; et Andronic, auquel les yeux avoient esté crevez avec du vinaigre bouillant, et étoit garde dans le palais de Constantinople; mais quelque temps après qu'il se vit aucunement amendé de la veu, il trouva moyen à l'aide de quelques-uns d'évader; et s'enfuir en la ville de Galathie.....d'où il se rétira puis après divers Bajazet a luy demander du secours pour rentrer en son héritage."³⁹² Du Bec speaks of him as attached to Tamerlan:- "De quoy l'Empereur fut averti, et après avoir conféré avecque Axalla et Andronicque, pour aviser où il devoit dresser la teste de son armée."³⁹³ Pradon in Act I scene 1 of his play has Andronic explain that Bajazet had supported his brother's party in the struggle for the throne of Byzantium after the Greek emperor's death, while Andronic besought Tamerlan's aid against Bajazet's forces. The difference between the treatment of this character by the historians arises from the fact that Du Bec does not assign any other role than that of general to Andronic while Calchondile makes him the son of the Greek emperor, taken refuge with Bajazet. The dramatist borrowing from both sources has kept Calchondile's historical figure in part but instead of being blind and dependent upon Bajazet's favor, he is modeled after Du Bec's character with the attributes of Axalla, the first general of Tamerlan, and is attached by bonds of interest to the conqueror's army. Besides, in Calchondile the Greeks are favorable

³⁹² Calchondile, II, 34.

³⁹³ Du Bec, p. 269.

to Bajazet:- "Bajazet se mist à ordonner ses affaires; et tout premièrement receut les Grecs à son amitié et alliance."³⁹⁴ Du Bec presents the Greeks as friendly to Tamerlan:- "Il prit grand plaisir à voir ces beaux peuples..... en ce temps là, ils estoient sous l'Empire de Trébisonde que les Empereurs Grecs tenoyent. Le Prince fut receu partout fort humainement et nous apportèrent tout le secours de vivres qu'il ne peut au besoin."³⁹⁵ From this incident of Tamerlan's journey to Trebizond Pradon has gathered his fictitious character of the queen of Trebizond who journeys to Tamerlan's camp to be married to him.

The incident of Bajazet's attempted escape by means of an underground passage dug for him by the Turkish prisoners and the discovery of this plot (Act II scene V) is described in Calchondile:- "Quelques capitaines de Bajazet s'estans accointez des Mineurs de Thémir, trouvèrent moyen de les gagner sous promesse d'une grosse somme de dénier, qu'ils leur devoient donner pour creuser une cave s'allast rendre en cet endroit où leur maistre estoit gardé et l'enlever secrètement. Mais comme ils eurent commença ceste besogne, la conduisans droit au Pavillon de Bajazet et finalement fussent venus à faire jour ils furent apperceus et saisis."³⁹⁶

The character of Bajazet is drawn from Calchondile and maintains throughout the tragedy the same haughty unbending attitude ascribed to him by the historian:- "Bajazet étoit d'un si fier et outrecuidé naturel et si présomptueux de sa suffisance, qu'il ne falloit pas d'avance de luy donner conseil car aussi bien ne l'eust il point receu."³⁹⁷ It is evident to what extent Pradon drew upon

394

Calchondile, II, c. 1, 34.

395

Du Bec, p. 213-216.

396

Calchondile, XIII, 73.

397

ibid.

these historical sources for the characters of his tragedy. The love of Tamerlan for Bajazet's daughter and her affection for Andronic were lacking in history. To develop this sentimental episode he was forced to turn elsewhere.

Magnon's tragedy of "Tamerlan et Bajazet" treats the subject as follows:- The play begins after the battle in which Bajazet lost his empire. Orcazie his wife and Roxalie his daughter are prisoners of Tamerlan. Thémir, son of Tamerlan, loves Roxalie and Tamerlan Orcazie. Bajazet, disguised as his own ambassador, comes to Tamerlan's camp to propose peace, asking at the same time the liberation of his wife and daughter. He is refused. There is a decisive battle in which Bajazet loses, is made a prisoner by his Grand Vizir, Sélim, who delivers him to Tamerlan asking Roxalie as reward for his treason. She loves Thémir and hates Sélim. The latter assassinates his rival and is himself killed by Tamerlan in revenge. Orcazie dies from poison given her by Tamerlan's wife, Indartize, and before dying sends a dagger to Bajazet with which he kills himself.

Using this play as basis for the motivation of his tragedy, Pradon has eliminated the double love element, Tamerlan with Orcazie and Thémir with Roxalie, bringing Tamerlan to the situation occupied by Thémir in the earlier play. As rival to his love the character of Andronic is drawn partly from Calchondile and partly from Du Bec. The plot is thus simplified to the struggle of rivals for one woman's love and the solution depending apparently upon Bajazet. The idea of Bajazet's death by poison possibly was suggested by Orcazie's death in Magnon's play. The softening of Tamerlan's character, to the extent of his sacrificing to his rival his loved one is suggested by Du Bec's gallant figure of the Sythian conqueror. Magnon had his Roxalie captive of Tamerlan as Pradon does with Astérie.

The situations which Pradon develops are strongly suggestive of Racine's tragedies. Evidently Pradon had these in mind when he arranged certain incidents and it was for this reason as well as his borrowings from Magnon's play, that critics accused him of copying. In "Andromaque", Act I, Pyrrhus promises to spare Andromaque's son if she will marry him; Tamerlan, in Pradon's work, will spare Astérie's father if she marry him. Andromaque, Act IV, tells her confidante she will marry Pyrrhus and kill herself afterward; Astérie promises Andronic she will pursue the same course. Racine's "Bajazet" offers a closer parallelism:-

Roxane loves Bajazet who is a prisoner in her power.

Bajazet loves Atalide and hates Roxane.

In Tamerlan:-

Tamerlan loves Astérie who is a prisoner in his power.

Astérie loves Andronic and hates Tamerlan.

Pradon appears to have used the same scheme only substituting for the female evil force a masculine character. Atalide wishes to keep Roxane in ignorance of her love for Bajazet; Andronic wishes to hide from Tamerlan his love for Astérie. Roxane gives to Bajazet the alternative of marrying her or death; Tamerlan declares Astérie must marry him or her father will die. Roxane tells Bajazet of her love for him and is coldly received by him; Tamerlan confesses to Astérie his love for her but she repulses him. The similarity of treatment in Pradon's tragedy is marked. He was probably not unwilling to prop us his own play with material taken from his rival's work.

(c) Phèdre et Hippolyte.

The tragedy of "Phèdre et Hippolyte" was produced at the theatre of ^{the} Hôtel Guénégaud, Jan. 3rd, 1677. The circumstances of its presen-

tation, the rivalry of the piece with Racine's "Phèdre", its temporary success with the public, the cabal of Pradon's admirers, and the war of the sonnets brought to its author the notoriety from which he suffered thereafter. The history of the quarrel of the "Phèdres" has been mentioned heretofore. There remains ~~but~~ to point out the numerous borrowings which Pradon made from earlier dramatists, borrowings which allowed him to complete his tragedy in the phenomenally short period of three months. The subject had been treated by Euripides in his "Hippolytus," by Seneca in this "Phaedra," by Garnier in his "Hippolyte" (1573), La Pinelière in his Hippolyte (1635), Quinault, in "Bellérophon" (1665), Bidar in "Hippolyte" (1675), and by Racine in "Phèdre" (1677).

The sources which Pradon gives in his preface are the Greek and Roman tragedies on the same subject and the Tableaux of Philostratus: "Ainsi j'avoue franchement que ce n'a point esté un effet au hazard qui m'a fait rencontrer avec M. Racine, mais un pur effet de mon choix; j'ay trouvé le sujet de Phèdre beau dans les Anciens, j'ay tiré mon épisode d'Aricie des Tableaux de Philostrate, et je n'ay point veu d'arrest de la Cour qui me défendit d'en faire une Pièce de Théâtre,.... Je n'ay point parlé icy de la conduite de cet Ouvrage; elle a esté généralement trop approuvé, quoy que je me fois un peu éloigné de celle d'Euripide et de Sénèque."³⁹⁸ The sources of the play are to be found rather in the "Phèdre" of Racine and in certain other works of this dramatist. It is true Pradon can claim Euripides and Seneca as first source for his background, for they originated the legend, but the similarities to Racine's version, the numerous borrowings from his situations, not to mention his verse, make it certain that Pradon had advance information how the rival play was constructed and profited

³⁹⁸ Preface of "Phèdre et Hippolyte."

thereby. He owed very little to Euripides; to Seneca he is somewhat more indebted. Garnier, Gilbert, and Quinault have all gone into the make up of this hasty and unworthy piece. With the changed conditions of Phèdre, all the greatness, the universality of the Greek and Roman prototype has disappeared. In place of a struggle in which the will of an enraged Venus urges the inflexible Hippolytus to destruction through the medium of Phèdre, as in Euripides, or the Phèdre moving on to her doom through the impelling force of an inner emotion greater than her will, as in Racine, the Phèdre of Pradon is not the incestuous creature we know but the affianced bride of Theseus, carried off by him, unmarried, and created for an intrigue of the palace, a heroine of the "drame de mœurs" which ends badly for her. One can only wish Pradon had not "éloigné de celle d'Euripide et de Sénèque," or that he had found the subject "plus beau dans les Anciens."

The characters include:-

Thésée, Roy d'Athènes.

Phèdre, Fille de Minos et de Pasiphaé, enlevée par
Thésée.

Hippolyte, Fils de Thésée et d'Antiopé Reyne des Amazones.

Aricie, Princesse de la Contrée d'Attique.

Idas, Gouverneur d'Hippolyte.

Arcas, Confident de Thésée.

Cléone, Confidente d'Aricie.

Magiste, Femme de la suite de Phèdre.

Gardes.

Scène: Trézène.

The plots develops as follows:-

Act I, s.1: Hippolyte wishes to leave Trézène to escape the dire manifestations of the gods and the tender glances of

Phèdre. He intends to seek his father. He has certain regret at departing.

s 2: Hippolyte makes known to Aricie his love for her. She is quite pleased but reproaches him for not accepting Phèdre's friendship.

s 3: Phèdre tells Aricie of her love for Hippolyte. She intends to circulate the report that Thésée is dead so that Hippolyte may marry her.

s 4: Aricie decided^s that Hippolyte must depart.

Act II, s 1: Aricie warns Hippolyte of Phèdre, telling him to depart.

s 2: Phèdre chides Hippolyte with lack of affection. He replies that he does love. She begs him to stay for her protection.

s 3: Aricie insists he must leave.

s 4: Announcement of the arrival of Thésée.

s 5: Phèdre flees to her room afraid to meet him.

s 6: Thésée arrives and orders Phèdre brought to him.

Act III, s 1: Phèdre has observed that Aricie loves Hippolyte from the urgent appeals she makes that Phèdre abandon her love for him.

s 2: Thésée has been informed by the Oracle at Délos that his son will be his rival. He has decided to marry him to Aricie and begs Phèdre to assist in the project.

s 4: Phèdre offers to Hippolyte the young Helen as a suitable wife for him. Aricie is destined for her brother. At this news Hippolyte tells his love for the rival. Phèdre is so enraged that she threatens the death of Aricie.

Act IV, s 1: Thésée has seen Hippolyte with Phèdre. Her actions and her looks were suspicious. Seeing a rival in his son he decided to banish him.

s 2: Phèdre intercedes for her lover. She gives Thésée to understand that his son has declared to her his love.

s 3 4: Aricie has been imprisoned in Phèdre's room. Hippolyte begs Phèdre upon his knees for the release of his Aricie and begs Phèdre to be faithful to his father.

s 5: Thésée surprises him in this position. Angered he banishes him from the kingdom, calling down upon him Neptune's vengeance.

Act V s 1: Phèdre asks pardon of Aricie.

s 3 Aricie denounces Phèdre to Thésée who, seeing his error, gives orders for his son's recall.

s 4 5 Idas brings the news of Hippolyte's death. Phèdre kills herself.

Pradon has not followed Euripides or Seneca in the role that he assigns to Phèdre in making her the "fille enlevée" by Thésée. With this chance the tragedy becomes no longer the struggle between passion and the will of the gods as in the Ancients, nor the interior struggle wherein the marital bonds hinder the course of love and jealousy as in Racine. Pradon introduces these elements of love and jealousy but they are established at the beginning of the play not motivated by the action. A great part of the plot comes from the fact that Aricie is both confidente of Phèdre and the "amante" of Hippolyte. This role is therefore different from the part of Oenone in Racine's play and from that of Aricie. In Euripides the latter character does not exist, although the nurse has a certain relation to the character of Racine's Oenone. Pradon in his preface says: "J'ay tiré mon episode d'Aricie des Tableaux de Philostrate." M. Deltour suggests that the character of Aricie does not come from Philostatus but more probably derived its conception from the report abroad about this character in Racine's play of which, as has been said before, Pradon must have had certain advance information.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁹ Deltour: "Les Ennemis de Racine."

M. Mesnard⁴⁰⁰ cites a passage of Philostratus from which he says Racine derived his character. Probably Pradon had in mind this passage when he wrote his preface: "On estime que ce lieu fut ainsi appelé d'une belle jeune demoiselle de la contrée d'Attique, nommée Aricie, de laquelle Hippolyte s'étant enamouré, l'amena en Italie, où il l'épousa." It is noteworthy that Pradon in his cast of characters refers to her as "Princesse de la Contrée d'Attique." Virgil mentions an Aricie in the "Aeneid," VII, 761-764:-

Ibatu et Hippolyti proles pulcherrima bello
Veribus, insignem quem mater Aricie misit."

The part she plays in the intrigue of Pradon's play suggests the character of Atalide in "Bajazet", where she is in love with Bajazet who is himself beloved by her mistress, Roxane. Atalide was the confidente in deed if not in name of Roxane. The following scenes are very suggestive of Pradon's play:-

Phèdre (Pradon) Act III, s 1	-----	Bajazet Act III, s 6.
" " " IV, s 4	-----	" " V, s 5.
" " " V, s 1	-----	" " V, s 6.

The character of Thésée in Pradon's version is too talkative. Neither Euripides nor Racine bring to the treatment of this person the lengthy recital of his adventurous wanderings, the glorification of his prowess, and the dull political maxims which Pradon puts into his mouth.

Phèdre is a cold character; her declaration of love is banale; she does not lead the discourse up to the point where psychologically she should reveal her heart. In this treatment there is nothing of the manner of Racine, nor of Euripides either. She reveals her love to Aricie in the style of a young girl of the court discussing some "affaire du

⁴⁰⁰ Paul Mesnard-"Oeuvres de Racine," édition Grands Ecrivains, III, 301.

coeur." She is too apparent, too spontaneous. The idea of Phèdre, mistress of Thésée, not the incestuous figure of Racine, was suggested to Pradon by Bidar's Phèdre or the same character in Gilbert's play, "Hippolyte ou le Garçon insensible" (1646) where Phèdre is the mistress of Theseus:-

Act I, s 2:

Phèdre: La Terre pour luy manquera de Maîtresse.

Pasithée: Il a pris des longtems le nom de vostre époux
N'êtes vous pas sa femme?

Phèdre: Ainsi le croit la Grèce.

Pasithée: Quoy, n'avez vous pas fait une sainte promesse?
N'avez vous pas donné vostre coeur, vostre foy,
Pris les Dieux à tesmoins d'estre Espouse du roy
Jusques sur les Autels, fait luire vostre flame?

Phèdre: Encor qu'il ait ma foy, je ne suis point sa femme.

Upon this basis is built the Phèdre of Pradon. Added to it were such conceptions of Racine's queen as Pradon was able to glean from hearsay, augmented by a likeness to the Roxane of "Bajazet." The theatrical tricks where a rival is shut up in the boudoir of her enemy, the false suggestions made to surprise secrets from others, were common. Racine made use of them in "Bazazet," Act III, scene 6, and in "Mithridate," Act III, scene 8, but he knew how to use them to advantage.

Hippolyte is in Pradon's play the principal character. Phèdre divides the interest of the piece with him but she remains always in a somewhat secondary role. Departing from Euripides and Seneca, where Hippolytus is only concerned with heroic exploits and the cult of Diana, Pradon has made him beloved by Phèdre and he himself in love with Aricie. He has not the horror of Racine's character at the sight of the incestuous Phèdre but merely a coldness for this mistress of

his father. Pradon's attempt to combine the conception of a young man, happy in the pleasures of the chase, untouched by the fires of love, as the older dramatists represented him, scarcely accords with the Hippolyte "amoureux" into which he develops. The result is unconvincing. The character is far from Euripides and the Greeks and equally far removed from Corneille.

Quinault's tragedy of "Bellérophon" (1665) in certain scenes shows a marked similarity to the motivation of Pradon's play. Stenobée is beloved by Proétus, king of Argos. She, however, loves Bellérophon who is loved by Stenobée's sister Philonoe. Stenobée, wishing to remove Bellérophon from the power of Argos, begs the king to send him away. (Act I, s.3) This recalls Aricie's attempt to take Hippolyte away from Phèdre's influence. Stenobée asks her confidante to find out with whom Bellérophon is in love. (Act I, s.4). Thésée desires Phèdre's assistance in discovering his son's love. Philonoe, sister and rival of Stenobée, declares her love to Bellérophon. (Act II, s.4) Aricie does the same with Hippolyte. Stenobée imprisons Bellérophon in a fortress to keep him from her rival Philonoe. (Act V) Phèdre imprisons Aricie in her room from jealousy of Hippolyte's love.

In Act I, s.1, Pradon mentions the supernatural element which under the guise of a serpent, glided over the altar on which Hippolyte was sacrificing. This incident occurs in Garnier's ⁴⁰¹ play of "Hippolyte". Its origin is probably the recital of Laocöon in Virgil's "Aeneid" (Book III, 200-293).

For the similarity of passages, see the following parallels between Racine's "Phèdre" and Pradon's:-

Racine: (Act I, s.1 6-8)

H.- J'ignore le destin d'une tête si chère;

J'ignore jusqu'aux lieux qui le peuvent cacher.

⁴⁰¹-Robert Garnier; "Œuvres complètes," édition Foerster, Heilbron, 1882-4

T.-Et dans quels lieux, Seigneur, l'allez vous donc chercher?

Pradon: (Act I, s.1, 68-70)

Idas.-Mais Seigneur, où Thésée a-t-il tourné ses pas.

En quels lieux, quels Pais?

H.-Nous l'ignorons, Idas.

Racine (509-510)

De tout ce que j'entends étonée et confuse

Je crains presque, je crains qu'un songe ne m'abuse.

Pradon:- Seigneur, je vous écoute et ne sçais que répondre,

Cet aveu surprenant ne sert qu'à me confondre.

Racine (Act I, s.3, 286-296)

J'adorais Hippolyte; et, le voyant sans cesse,

Même au pied des autels que je faisais fumer,

J'offrais tout à ce dieu que je n'osais nommer.

Je l'évitais partout. O comble de misère!

Mes yeux le retrouvoient dans les traits de son père

Contre moi-même enfin j'osai me révolter:

J'excitai mon courage à le persécuter.

Pour bannir l'ennemi dont j'étois idolâtre,

J'affectai les chagrins d'une injuste marâtre;

Je pressai son exil, et mes cris éternels

L'arrachèrent du sein et des bras paternels.

Pradon

Et Trézène est le fatal séjour

Où le Fils de Thésée alluma cet amour

On fust à notre abort rendre les Dieux propices,

Au Temple de Diane on fist des Sacrifices,

D'une pompeuse Feste Hippolytèment les soins,

Mes yeux, mes tristes yeux, en furent les témoins.

Escorté d'une illustre et superbe Jeunesse,

En luy je vis l'honneur et la fleur de la Grèce,
 L'air d'un jeune Héros, un front majestueux;
 La douceur de ses traits, et le feu de ses yeux,
 Cette fierté charmante, et ce grand caractère
 (Tel que porte le front de son auguste Père)
 Eblouirent mes yeux, et passant en mon coeur
 Je connus Hippolyte, et sentis mon vainqueur.
 Il offrit la Victime, et d'un désir profane
 J'enveois en secret le bonheur de Diane.

Racine(276-285) Je sentis tout mon corps et transir et brûler,
 Je reconnus Vénus et ses feux redoutables,
 D'un sang qu'elle poursuit tourments inévitables.
 Par des vœux assidus je crus les détourner;
 Je lui bâtis un temple, et pris soin de l'orner;
 De victimes moi-même à toute heure entourée,
 Je cherchois dans leurs blancs ma raison égarée
 D'un incurable amour remèdes impuissants!
 En vain sur les autels ma main brûloit l'encens:
 Quand ma bouche imploroit le nom de la Déesse,
 Pradon:- Il offrit la Victime, et d'un désir profane
 J'enviois en secret le bonheur de Diane,
 J'aurois voulu luy faire un larcin de ses vœux,
 Je conjurois Vénus de luy donner mes feux;
 Mais la Déesse enfin me punit de ce crime,
 Du Sacrifice hélas! Père fust la victime,
 Et sans plus respecter la sainteté de Lieu,
 Mon coeur n'y reconnut qu'Hippolyte pour Dieu.

Racine (584-594) On dit qu'un prompt départ vous éloigne de nous,
 Seigneur: À vos douleurs je viens joindre mes larmes
 Je vous viens pour un fils expliciter mes alarmes.
 Mon fils n'a plus de père; et le jour n'est pas loin
 Qui de ma mort encor doit le rendre témoin.
 Déjà mille ennemis attaquent son enfance.
 Vous seul pouvez contre eux embrasser sa défense.
 Mais un secret remords agite mes esprits.
 Je crains d'avoir fermé votre oreille à mes cris
 Je tremble que sur lui votre juste colère
 Ne poursuivre bientôt une odieuse mère.

Pradon*:-

On vient de nous donner de sensibles allarmes
 Seigneur, et qui pourroient nous conter bien des larmes
 Idas prépare tout, et pour un grand dessein,
 On dit que vous partez peut-estre dès demain.
 Quoy? Seigneur, croyez-vous que le Peuple tranquille
 Vous laisse après Thésée abandonner sa Ville?

Racine (Act III, s 5

933 - 939

945 - 946: Assez dans les forêts mon oisive jeunesse
 Sur de vils ennemis a montré mon adresse;
 Ne pourrai-je en fuyant un indigne repos
 D'un sang plus glorieux teindre mes javelots?
 Vous n'aviez pas encore atteint l'âge où je touche
 Déjà plus d'un tyran, plus d'un monstre farouche
 Avait de votre bras senti la pesanteur.

 Et moi, fils inconnu d'un si glorieux père
 Je suis même encore loin des traces de ma mère.

Pradon:-

A mon âge Thésée avoit purgé la terre
 De cent Monstres cruels qui lui faisaient la guerre
 Cependant jusqu'ici ma stérile valeur
 D'un vil sang répandu ne peut me faire honneur.
 Mon nom, à peine écrit sur l'écorce des Arbres,
 N'est point encor gravé sur l'atrain ou les marbres
 Et le nom d'Hippolyte et ses plus grands exploits
 Sont connus seulement aux échos de ces bois.

The whole tragedy is so full of passages which recall earlier tragedies on the same subject that it is difficult to decide just what is original in the work of Pradon. Space does not allow of quoting in full all the parallels. For those who care to turn to the works of Euripides, Seneca, Garnier, Gilbert, not to mention Racine, they will find many similarities of the sort shown above, where Pradon has apparently copied the thought and often the manner of expression of his predecessors. A comparison of the following scenes will justify this statement:-

- Pradon "Phèdre", Act II, s. 2----see Garnier's "Hippolyte" 1, 1259-1261.
 " " " IV, s. 6----modeled upon Racine's work, 1, 1168.
 " " " IV, s. 6 (last speech of Thésée)----see Seneca V, 942 - 955.
 " " " IV, s. 2----modeled on Racine, for the same treatment is not found in the other dramatists.
 " " " IV, s. 4, 5--see "Bajazet", Act V, s. 5, 6.
 " " " V, s. 3----see Racine's work, Act V, s. 5, lines 1419-1434.

The last scene in which the recital of Hippolyte's death is given is made up of numerous borrowings:-

Seneca-----	Act IV, lines	997-1003
		1005-1007
		1090-1091
		1032-1034
Garnier-----	Act V, lines	1965
		1991
		1999-2004
		2028-2033
Gilbert-----	Act V, s.4. (suggestive treatment)	
Racine-----	Act V, s.6.	1513-1527
		1541-1543
		1560-1562

(d) "La Troade.

This tragedy was presented for the first time at the Théâtre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Tuesday, Jan. 17th, 1679. The misfortune of Priam's family after his death and Troy's fall had been previously given upon the French stage by Sallebray "La Troade" 1640, and by Racine in "Andromaque" 1667. In ancient literature Euripides had twice treated the subject, in his "Hecuba" and again in "Andromacha." Seneca's "Trojan Women" combined the two earlier plays into a new one. It is upon the Roman play that Pradon in his Préface claims to have constructed "La Troade":- "La Troade est un ouvrage trop fameux chez les anciens, pour n'estre pas connue des modernes. Euripides la fait de deux manières, que Sénèque a rassemblées en une. J'ai suivi l'ordre de ce dernier qui a compris l'Hécuba et la Troade d'Euripide dans la sienne."⁴⁰² The author has followed, as he says, the play of Seneca

⁴⁰² Preface of "La Troade."

for the most part; yet he has not been loath to borrow when necessary from the earlier Greek tragedies of Euripides so that the three plays of antiquity can be regarded as the sources upon which he built a tragedy of love and hate, sacrificing the austere, proud characters of Euripides and Seneca for more gentle "amoureux" heroes to suit his age:—"J'avoue que ce sujet m'a paru très beau, mais très difficile et très épineux; jamais la majesté du Cothurne n'a brillé avec tant d'éclat que dans ces deux ouvrages, mais aussi les caractères de leurs Héros sont si pleins de férocité, qu'on n'eut pu voir sans horreur Ulysse précipiter Astyanax et Pyrrhus immoler Polixène. Il falloit trouver un milieu et un juste tempérament pour adoucir cette action. Nostre théâtre ne peut souffrir ce qui a fait autrefois la beauté de celui des anciens. Nos moeurs sont trop douces et trop éloignées de ces moeurs sauvages et barbares."

The "Hecuba" of Euripides opens with the phantom shade of Polydorus hovering over Agamemnon's tent. He had been, when living, sent by Priam to Polynestor with the gold of the royal treasury, but his host, Polydorus, to possess himself of this money traitorously slew him. The shade predicts the death of Polyxena. Hecuba in slave garb then appears, calling upon the gods to save her children. Polixena accompanies her. Hecuba after much persuasion tells her daughter that the Argive warriors have voted to take her life. To Polixena this is a happy escape from present misery. Enter Odessyus announcing he has been sent to lead away Polixena. He is reminded by Hecuba of former protection accorded him when he was recognized by Helen of Troy as he spied upon the city. The mother pleads with him for her daughter, offering herself instead, but he is unmoved from his purpose and carries away Polixena. A messenger announces her death at the hands of Pyrrhus. From here the plot is concerned with Hecuba's revenge for the murder of

Polydorus and has no bearing upon Pradon's play.

The "Andromacha" shows the former wife of Hector, now a prisoner of Pyrrhus, sitting upon the steps of Thetis' altar bewailing her captivity and the death of a son. Pyrrhus has gone away and Andromacha fears his return, for Hermione, daughter of Menelaus, and former love of Pyrrhus, is jealous of this love of Pyrrhus for her, seeking by her influence with him to destroy Andromacha and the child she has born Pyrrhus. She has sent to Peleus for aid. Herminone enters and a lively quarrel ensues between the women. Hermione vows to have her rival killed before Pyrrhus' return. Menelaus announces to the mother that the son is taken. She must leave the abode or see her son killed. No pleading of the grieved woman moves him. He is entirely on his daughter's side. Peleus arrives, orders the prisoners released. At first Menelaus objects but knowing the authority of Peleus abandons them and they go free. From here the story concerns itself with the death of Pyrrhus at the hands of Orestes.

Upon these two plays was built Seneca's tragedy of the "Trojan Women." At the opening of the play, Hecuba is seen recounting the fate of Troy. A messenger announces to her that the shade of Achilles has appeared to the Greeks demanding Polixena's death. Pyrrhus and Agamemnon are then seen debating the fate of Polixena. Pyrrhus claims her for himself, because the major part of the spoils should go to Achille's son. Agamemnon refuses to give her up to sacrifice. This angers Pyrrhus so that he accuses Agamemnon of a faint heart and threatens his life. The elder chieftain, tolerant of what he calls youth's bluster, decides to put the matter into the soothsayer Calchas' hands who will report the will of the gods. The oracle desires the death of Polixena, Achilles' bride, and also Astyanax, son of Hector and Andromacha. Hector's widow is next seen leading her son in the company of an old man

who advises her to hide her son from Grecian wrath. Following his advice she hides Astyanax in Hector's tomb. Ulysses arrives to ask that the son be delivered to the Greeks. Andromacha replies that she believes her son among the dead. Ulysses, angry at his ill-success, threatens her with torture if the boy is not delivered but she remains of firm attitude. He paints the death to be given her son, that of being cast from the top of a lonely tower standing by the sea as the last vestige of Trojan power. Although terrified she is still unmoved, Ulysses then orders Hector's tomb destroyed. Andromacha, fearful for her son shut up in this tomb, calls Astyanax from his hiding place, begs for his life, but the obdurate Ulysses leads him away. The next scene shows Helen, Polixena, and Hecuba discussing their fate. Helen is to marry Pyrrhus. Her fortune angers the sorely distressed Andromacha. Polixena alone is cheerful. Her mood causes Helen to divulge to her the approaching fate. Polixena receives the news calmly, but Hecuba faints. Helen declares that in the division of prisoners Andromacha has fallen to the lot of Pyrrhus, Hecuba to Ulysses. Meanwhile Polixena has been led away to death. A messenger announces that Astyanax, led to the tower by Ulysses, leaped of his own will to death; Polixena, led to the place of execution by Pyrrhus, killed herself with the sword which slow, unwilling Pyrrhus held ready to strike.

Such were the sources of Pradon's play. His characters include:-

Hécube, femme et veuve de Priam

Andromaque, veuve d'Hector

Polixène, fille d'Hécube et de Priam

Pyrrhus, fils d'Achille

Ulisse, prince d'Itaque

Lycus, confident de Pyrrhus

Thrasile, confident d'Ulisse

Hesione, Créise, femmes Trojennes.

Gardes.

Scene:- Greek camp near the ruins of Troy.

The plot develops as follows:- Hecuba lamenting Priam's death and Troy's fate, hopes her daughters may soften the hard heart of the Greeks. Polixène expresses her hatred for Pyrrhus and her undying affection for her lover, the dead Antéonor. Andromaque and Hécuba are to become prizes of Ulisse while Polixène goes to Pyrrhus. Andromaque makes known her disposition of Astyanax, hidden in his father's tomb. Pyrrhus informs her that Ulisse wishes to sacrifice this son for the safety of the Greeks. Pyrrhus loves Andromaque and is informed by his confident that Ulisse is in love with Polixène. (Act II) Ulisse knowing of Pyrrhus' love decides to humble the proud youth by holding her a hostage and, to acquire Polixène, he must secure Astyanax. By threatening the death of the boy he can compel Pyrrhus to deliver Polixène to him as reward for sparing Andromaque's son. Polixène begs Ulisse to save her from Pyrrhus and receives his promise to do so. When the knowledge of Astyanax's fate becomes known to Pyrrhus, he confronts Ulisse with the verdict of the oracle wishing the death of Polixène to appease Achilles. Ulisse argues against this and so fervently that he discloses to Pyrrhus his love for her. (Act III) Ulisse then tries to find out from Andromaque where her son is hidden. She declares he is dead. This only angers Ulisse who is about to order the destruction of Hector when she makes known her son's hiding place. Polixène and Adromaque both ask pity for the boy but Ulisse acknowledges he must possess him in order to save Polixène. Hécuba likewise implores Pyrrhus to save the boy. He shows her in what a situation he is placed, his father's shade demanding Polixène's

life. If Ulysse will not give up Astyanax, he must sacrifice his loved one. (Act IV). Hécube announces to Polixène the fate awaiting her. When Pyrrhus sees her distress he takes pity on her and decides to spare her but word comes that Ulysse has so inflamed the heart of the Greeks that they clamor for the death of the child. Pyrrhus is about to change his decision about Polixène, but decides to try a last time to influence Ulysse. (Act V) The Greeks have been so terrified by the appearance of Achilles' shade that they clamor for the death of Astyanax and Polixène. Ulysse and Pyrrhus plan to deceive them and save their victims but to no avail. Polixène and the boy are lead away to death; Hécube is left to hear from her servant the recital of Astyanax's death by leaping from the tower without waiting for Ulysse's fatal blow. Polixène kills herself for Pyrrhus was too weak and disheartened to strike.

While Pradon acknowledges he owes considerable to Seneca's version of the story, there are several obvious parallel situations to the Greek versions. Act I opens with Hecuba's lament as in "Troade":

s.2:- Polixène trying to learn her fate from her mother follows Seneca; Hécube's confidence in Ulysse is reminiscent of Euripides' "Hecuba."

s.3:- Andromaque learns of the disposition to be made of the captives. This scene is found in Seneca but there Helen imparts the information.

s.6:- Pyrrhus' love for Andromaque is shown in Euripides' "Andromacha" also in the Odessey IV, 7-9, but Ulysse's love for Polixène is a new element.

Act II s.2:- Polixène's appeal to Ulysse to save her family is new material but recalls Hecuba's plea to Odessyus in Euripides' play of the same name.

s.3:- The dispute between Ulysse and Pyrrhus comes from Seneca. Even there Pyrrhus accuses Ulysse of loving Polixène.

Act III, s.1:- Astyanax's place of concealment recalls Seneca.

s. 2,3:- Ulysse's discovery of the hiding place by threatening to destroy it is to be found in Seneca. Euripides in his "Andromacha" has Menelaus also seek and find the boy.

s. 5,4:- Hécube begs Pyrrhus to save her daughter. A similar scene occurs in Hecuba where Odessyus is brought by Hecuba to save Polixène.

s. 8:- Despair of Hécube is found in "Troades" and "Hecuba."

Act IV, s.4:- Pyrrhus comes to lead away Polixène. Same scene occurs in Seneca but there Polixène accompanies him to her death.

s.5:- The weakness of Pyrrhus before Polixène's distress is suggestive of the last part of "Troades."

Act V, s. 4:- The despair of Hécube recalls Euripides' play of the same name.

s. 6:- Hécuba's final lament is patterned after Seneca's.

The new element which Pradon has introduced into this subject is Ulysse's love for Polixène by which he evidently hoped to arouse interest and which satisfied his longing for antithetical situations. Anticipating the criticism which such a deviation from historical fact would arouse he attempts to justify his fiction by a long explanation in his preface:- "J'ai préféré le vrai-semblable au vrai dans ma catastrophe, sans m'écarter en cela de la conduite de Sénèque, qui fait précipiter le fils d'Hector de son propre mouvement. Si Sénèque a ménagé en cela la gloire d'Ulysse j'ai voulu ménager à mon tour malgré Euripide, celle de Pyrrhus en luy épargnant le crime de la mort de Polixène puisqu'elle se frappe elle-mesme de l'épée qui la pitié

fait tomber des mains de Pyrrhus. J'ai donné à cette Princesse un grand mépris de la vie et un grand désir de la mort, pour la conduire à cette action. Je lui ai donné mesme un amour épisodique pour un jeune Antéonor, que je suppose avoir esté tué par la main de Pyrrhus, et non pas cet Antéonor dont Virgile parle au second Livre de l'Enéide.Mais pour conduire Ulysse et Pyrrhus à la catastrophe, et pour adoucir leurs caractères; J'ai supposé qu'Ulysse avoit conçu un amour secret pour Polixène et Pyrrhus pour Andromaque; L'amour de Pyrrhus est véritable et connu, mais on m'a disputé celui d'Ulysse. Il me semble cependant qu'il n'est pas fort éloigné du vrai-semblable, qu'Ulysse qui étoit un des plus galans hommes de la Grèce, eut pris un peu de tendresse pour une Princesse aussi amiable que Polixène puisqu' Achille.....avoit eu ce même penchant. L'exemple mesme d'Agamemnon, que quelques auteurs disent avoir épousé Cassandre pouvoit autoriser ses desseins sur Polixène."⁴⁰³

The borrowing of lines from the older dramatists suggests the method of work which Pradon acknowledges: "J'avertiray seulement en passant que j'ay beaucoup emprunté de Sénèque, et même d'Euripide:- Leurs peintures m'ont paru si belles et vives qu'en ayant d'abord traduit quelques-unes, cela m'a engagé insensiblement à faire la pièce entière."

Act I, s.1 Hécube:-

Dieux! quiconque se fie à l'orgueil d'un Empire,
Aux pompes d'une Cour que la fortune attire
.....
Que de ces tristes lieux il approche, et qu'il voye
Les misères d'Hécube et les cendres de Troye."

Seneca: Troades, Hecuba, opening scene:

Quicumque regno fidit et magna potens
dominatur aula nec leves metuit deos
animunque rebus credulum laetis dedit,
me videat et te, Troia.

Hésione:-Si les yeux d'Andromaque, ou ceux de Polixène
Rallumoient chez les Grecs le feu des yeux d'Hélène.

Hic Hectoris coniugia despondet sibi,
hic optat Heleni coniugem, hic Antenoris

Hécube:- Hélas! que Priam mort est heureux aujourd'hui
Priam a veu tomber son Empire avec luy
Il jouit du repos que l'on trouve aux lieu sombres
Il est avec Hector chez les heureuses ombres.

Non est Priami miseranda mei
mors, Iliades. Felix Priamus
dicite cunctae, liber manes
vadit ad imos, nec feret umquam
victa Graium cervice iugum.

Act II s. 3:-

Achille seul prit Troye, et vous l'avez détruite
Illum vicit pater, vos desuistes.

Vous voulez donc, Seigneur, prendre soin de sa vie,
Vous qui fites périr la triste Iphigénie
Vous qui d'Agamemnon endureit le coeur
Et qui contre sa fille armâtes sa vigueur.

dubitatur et iam placita nunc subito improbas
Priamique natam Pelei nato ferum
mactare credis? at tuam natam parens
Helenae immolasti.

Ulisse:- Mais pourrez vous vous-mesme aux pieds de son tombeau
Sans pitié, sans horreur, répandre un sang si beau.

Agamemnon:-Quid caede dira nobiles clari ducis
aspergis umbras?

Je ne m'explique point, mais pour punir ce crime
Son ombre jouira de plus d'une victime
Et peut-être Pyrrhus luy prépare aujourd'hui
Une offrande plus ample et plus digne de luy

Quam si negas retinesque maiorem dabo
dignamque quam det Pyrrhus; et nimium diu
a caede nostre regia cessat manus
paremque poscit Priamus.

Act III, s. 2:-

Si le plaisir de craindre est sensible à vostre âme
Dans ce funestre jour vous l'auriez eu, Madame,
On avoit destiné vostre fils à la mort;
Mais de sa perte enfin rendez grâce au sort.

Alios parentes alloqui in luctu decet;
tibi gratulandum est, misera, quod nato caves,
quem mors manebat saeva praecipitem dabum
e turre, lapsis sola quae muris manet.

Act V, s. 4, Hécube: - Hélas! pourrais-je luy survivre?
 Pourquoi m'empeschez-vous de mourir, de la suivre:-

 Qui dois-je regretter de toute ma famille?
 Dois-je pleurer mon fils? dois-je pleurer ma fille?
 Mon pais, mon Hector, mes enfans, mon époux.

Quo meas lacrimas feram?
 Ubi hanc anilis expuam leti moram?
 Natam an nepotem, coniugem au patriam fleam?
 an omnia an me solo?

Alors le fils d'Hector d'un visage intrépide
 Montre au haut de la tour où mon maître le guide
 Une noble fierté qui brille dans ses yeux
 Luy fait lancer sur nous des regards furieux

incedit Ithacus parvulum dextra trahens
 nec gradu sequi puer
 ad alta pergit moenia ut summa stetit
 pro turre, vultur huc et huc acres tulit
 intrepidus amino

Et l'on voit d'un enfant la ferme contenance,
 Ebranler tout un camp par sa noble assurance,
 On l'admire, on le plaint

Moverat vulgum ac duces
 ipsumque Ulixem non flet e turba omnium
 qui fletur

Une fierté modeste, une noble pudeur,
 Une démarche libre, un air plein de grandeur,
 Et sur tout sa jeunesse où brilloient mille charmes
 Nous frappe, nous émeut et nous tire des larmes.

ipsa deiectos gerit
 vultus pudore, sed tamen fulgent genae
 magique solito splendet extremus decor

 stupet omne vulgus.....
 hos movet formae decus,
 hos mollis actas, hos vagae rerum vices.

(e) Statira.

The tragedy of Statira was presented the last of December, 1679,
 at the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The cast of characters in-
 cludes:-

Statira, Fille de Darius, veuve d'Alexandre

Roxane, Fille de Cohortan, satrape de Perse, veuve d'Alexandre

Léonatus, Prince du sang d'Alexandre et un de ses successeurs.
 Perdicas, un des premiers chefs de l'Armée d'Alexandre
 Cassander, fils d'Antipater, Gouverneur de la Macédoine
 Hesione, confidente de Roxane
 Cléone, " " Statira
 Peucestas, confident de Cassander
 Gardes et suite de gardes

Scene:- Babylon, within the palace of Cyrus.

The plot is as follows:- Statira, daughter of Darius, and widow of Alexander, loves Léonatus one of the successors of this hero, who has joined forces with Antipater and other chieftains to dispute the government of the empire and the possession of Babylon with Roxane, one of the widowed queen's of Alexander. Influenced by the advice of the treacherous Perdicas she has usurped the power pretending to hold it in trust for the son she had born Alexander. Statira is a captive in her power. Roxane loves Léonatus and hopes to unite her ambition and her love by marriage with him. Statira loves Léonatus and has no interest in the attentions which Perdicas manifests. He, hoping to force his marriage with Statira, decides to gain possession of Statira and Léonatus so that he can control Roxane, and bring Statira to his side. Léonatus seeks parley with Roxane, proposes that they settle the dispute over the kingdom which threatens to disrupt the empire and exacts the release of Statira. The jealous queen, urged by Perdicas and her supporters, refuses to give up Statira. Cassander, whose love has been spurned by Roxane, decides to change parties, promises Léonatus to effect the release of Statira and conduct her safely to his camp. Roxane, thinking she can use Cassander to do away with her rival suggests this to him, but he, unwilling to jeopardize his project and knowing that Roxane loves Léonatus, offers to kill him and

do away, thus, with the queen's rival. This she refuses. Meanwhile, although presuming to carry out the agreement made with Léonatus, he betrays him. Both Statira and Léonatus fall into the power of Perdiccas who imprisons his rival, telling Statira her lover, although alive, has turned from her and is willing, in order to save his life, to marry Roxane. Statira does not waver in her fidelity to Léonatus. Roxane informs Statira that she may see her lover but she must, to save him, tell him that she will marry Perdiccas. The meeting takes place under the supervision of the queen. Statira goes lamely through her part, which is so unconvincing to Léonatus that he refuses to believe her statements. The news that Antipater has arrived to increase the number of the attacking army disturbs the plotters. Though he is in love with Roxane, she does not feel secure. Perdiccas, thinking to arrange matters quickly, accuses Statira of causing the down-fall of the kingdom by her retention of Léonatus' love, and advises her to influence her lover toward acceptance of an alliance with the queen. This she promises to do, and in the ensuing interval tries to move her lover but he is more interested in his love for her. They plan to outwit Roxane. While thus engaged their conversation is overheard by the queen who is so enraged at the futility of all her efforts that she again decides that Statira must die unless she marries Perdiccas. The affection which the lovers show angers the queen still more, so that she declares that Léonatus and Statira must be killed. Perdiccas, fearful lest he lose Statira, claims her as his prisoner. The queen is willing to make a bargain for the possession of Léonatus. This is agreed and Perdiccas takes Statira but Roxane succeeds in gaining possession of her again through the efforts of Cassander and Peucestas. Perdiccas, believing his love dead at the queen's hands, starts a revolution, determined to kill Léonatus. Statira begs the

queen to save her lover whom she believes is dead, but Roxane, frightened at the turn of events, decides to flee to Antipater. Statira, thinking her lover dead, vows to kill herself rather than live on after him, a prey to Perdiccas' wishes. Meanwhile Léonatus escaping from his prison joins her but her oath is made and no persuasions will deter her. After her death, Perdiccas and Léonatus swear to pursue Cassander and Roxane to avenge Statira's untimely death.

The history of the quarrels of Alexander's successors is given in Plutarch's *Moral* writings, in Justin, and Quintus-Cursius. Cassandre has been the subject of La Calprenède's novel in ~~two~~^{five} volumes, "Cassandre", 1644-50, which was utilized by Magnon in his tragi-comedy "Le Mariage d'Oroondate et de Statira," 1647.⁴⁰⁴ Pradon acknowledges that the above mentioned historians furnished him with his background. He claims, however, to have treated the subject in a manner different from La Calprenède:- "La mort de Statira causée par la jalousie de Roxane, est assez marquée dans Plutarque pour faire le sujet d'une Tragédie; et le caractère de Roxane est trop connu par ses cruautés, pour pouvoir rien altérer de la vérité. Ainsi quoyque M. de la Calprenède dans son Roman de Cassandre ait fait revivre Statira, je n'ay pas cru devoir suivre son exemple; les règles du Poème Dramatique estant plus austères que celles du Roman qui permet beaucoup de fiction, quand l'autre s'attache le plus qu'il peut à la vérité."⁴⁰⁵

The background of his tragedy he found in Plutarch's work as translated by Amyot. The other two historians he mentions offered him nothing that was not already present in Plutarch. In spite of his statement about La Calprenède's novel, the evidences of its influences and the borrowings which he made from its sentimental situations

⁴⁰⁴ Paris, chez Toussaint Quinet, 1647, in-4.

⁴⁰⁵ Preface of "Statira."

are numerous. Magnon's tragi-comedy too gave him certain situations. Basing his story on Plutarch's account with borrowings from La Calprenède and Magnon, Pradon arranged his material in a manner quite suggestive of Racine's "Andromaque" and "Britannicus."

The only novelty in treatment according to Pradon lies in the character of Léonatus:- "L'amour de Léonatus et de Statira font l'Episode et le noeud de cette Pièce. Quelques-uns ont esté surpris que j'aye choisy Léonatus entre tous les successeurs d'Alexandre, pour Amant de Statira; mais j'ay eu des raisons assez fortes pour le faire. Léonatus étoit un Prince du sang d'Alexandre; fort illustre par ses exploits. Il avoit commandé en chief plusieurs fois les Armées d'Alexandre; il luy avoit sauvé la vie dans la Ville des Oxydraques, et ce fust luy qui fust envoyé après la Bataille d'Issus dans les Tentes des Princesses, pour les assurer de la vie de Darius qu'elles croyoient mort. C'est dans cette entreveue où j'ai fait naître leur tendresse, et cet endroit a paru assez beau. Il partagea l'Empire du Monde avec tous les Successeurs d'Alexandre; et quoy qu'il ne fasse pas une grande figure dans le Roman, il en fait une assez grande dans l'Histoire et il me doit suffire qu'il soit célèbre dans Quinte-Curse et dans Justin." ⁴⁰⁶

The argument for Léonatus would have greater weight if Pradon had conceived this character on new lines. The historians to whom he refers mention the numerous military expeditions of this chief and Plutarch gives at some length his conquests but Léonatus "amoureux" is not to be found in history. If Pradon flattered himself that his novelty of conception was original his critics might well have pointed out that this figure was conceived upon the lines of Oroondate in La Calprenède's novel of "Cassandre." The situ-

tions in which he is placed are found likewise in the novel. The dramatist has taken Oroondate and given to him the name of Léonatus found in Plutarch and in the novel, placed him in situations parallel to those of Oroondate, and tried to justify this thin attempt at originality by a reference to his prototype in history. From Amyot's translation of Plutarch's "De la Fortune d'Alexandre"⁴⁰⁷ he derived the following historical background:-

Roxane and Statira widows of Alexander.⁴⁰⁸

The quarrel between the chieftains over the division of the empire.⁴⁰⁹

Antipater's opposition to Perdiccas.⁴¹⁰

Léonatus comforts the family of Darius after the battle of Issus - referred to in his preface as basis for his love episode.⁴¹¹

Roxane plans to hold the empire as regent for her child, but in Plutarch the child is not yet born; Roxane's hatred for Statira and her retention of the rival queen with the aid of Perdiccas.⁴¹²

The borrowings from La Calprenède's "Cassandre" are more numerous. They serve to round out and embellish the meagre details which Plutarch furnished Pradon.⁴¹³

The jealousy of Roxane for Statira is found in Tome I, Livre II, 300

Roxane's love for Oroondate parallels Roxane's love for Léonatus, I, livre III, 386.

Statira held captive by Roxane and Perdiccas, Tome I, livre I, 16

⁴⁰⁷ Amyot:- "Oeuvres morales de Plutarque," Paris, Imprimerie Cussec, 1802.

⁴⁰⁸ ibid, XI, Traité I, 174; II, 193.

⁴⁰⁹ ibid, II, 403-4.

⁴¹⁰ ibid, II, 407.

⁴¹¹ ibid, VII, 47-51.

⁴¹² ibid, VII, 155-156.

⁴¹³ La Calprenède:- Cassandre, Paris, 1648, chez A. de Sommaville, A. Courbe, Toussaint Quinet, La Veufve Nicolas de Sucy.

The cruelty of Roxane:- "Roxane - Tu sçais que l'amour a effacé de mon âme tout ce qu'elle eut autrefois de bon et de raisonnable et tu n'ignorois point que ma jalousie arme bien plus puissamment ma main contre ma rivale, que mon ambition contre ma concuren-te à l'Empire; le souvenir de l'ingrat Oroondate allume mes ressentimens contre celle qui me l'osta, et son image ne revient jamais à ma mémoire sans embrazer ma colère contre l'orgueilleuse qui triomphe de moy dans l'âme de cet inhumain.....j'ayme mieux qu'elle périsse, et que le monde entier périsse avec elle que si je me voyais soumise à des déplaisirs si sensibles."- T. I, Livre II, 257, 269, 270, 275.

Oroondate's hatred of Roxane and his persecution at her hands, I, Livre IV, 523.

Character of Peucestas, the creature of Roxane, Livre III, 360.

The party opposed to Perdiccas, Part IV, Livre V, 410.

Perdiccas' power, his character:- "Je vous ay trompée, répliqua Perdiccas, comme j'aurois trompé toutes les puissances les plus souveraines et quoy que mon action n'ait pas besoin d'estre justifié, sçachez pour estre mieux satisfaite, qu'à l'interest de mon honneur, et à celui de ma mémoire d'Alexandre, j'ay joint celui de mon amour, qui estoit capable luy seul de renverser toutes mes résolutions: J'ayme, Madame, puisqu'il n'est plus temps de vous le désavouer, j'ayme le Reyne Statira, et pour cette amour au lieu d'attaquer sa vie j'eusse donné la mienne propre. - Part III, V. 134.

Perdiccas refuses to free Statira, VI, 581.

Cassander's love for Roxane and her scorn for him, T.III, Livre II, 313, 328.

Roxane's effort to marry Statira to Perdiccas, Part III, V, 150.

Roxane overhears the conversation between Statira and Léonatus, T. I, Livre II, 186.

"La suite de leurs discours fut empeschée par la Princesse Roxane, qui y prenant quelque interest, les vint malicieusement interrompre."

The capture of Oroondate recalls the capture of Léonatus and his detention by Perdiccas - IV, 692, 93, 706,07.

Perdiccas asks that the prisoner Statira be granted to him in return for which he will hand over Oroondate to Roxane - IV, 758-9.

Revolt of Cassander and Perdiccas, Part V, VI, 992.

Cléone is mentioned as confidante of Statira - VI, 917.

Sketch of the general Léonatus, Part IV, III, 525:-

"C'estoit Léonatus, de qui le courage alloit jusqu'à la témérité, et qui dans la cour d'Alexandre avoit tousjours passé pour un des plus vaillaux, et des plus étourdis."

From the citations given above it will be evident that Pradon was indebted considerably more to the novel than he has been willing to acknowledge. From Magnon's play, founded upon the novel, certain additional scenes appear to have been borrowed:-

Magnon

Act I, s.III, Roxane tells her love for Oroondate to her confidante - Pradon Act I s.III, a like situation occurs.

" " s. IV, Perdiccas announces he has captured Oroondate - see Pradon Act II, s. VII.

" " s. V, Seleucas demands release of Oroondate but Roxane refuses Pradon Act I, s.V, difference here being that Léonatus does the asking.

" " s.VI,VII, Cassander states his love to Roxane and is repulsed. Pradon, Act I, s. II.

" III, s.I, Oroondate after captivity welcomes the chance to converse with Statira. Pradon, Act IV, III.

" IV, s.VII, Cassander and Perdiccas take possession of the palace resolved to kill Oroondate. Pradon, Act V, s. 1.

Allusion has been made heretofore of the similarity to Racine's "Britannicus" and "Andromaque." The parallelism is one of idea rather

than similarity of scenes. The success of his rival's plays probably influenced Pradon to construct his plot along the general lines of these earlier plays, drawing his story from Plutarch and making the subject matter of his scenes conform to the romanesque adventures found in the novel "Cassandre."

Britannicus Act I:-

Nero gains possession of Junie whom he loves. She is the fiancée of Britannicus, the rightful heir to the throne.

Statira:-

Roxane gains possession of Statira, the rightful successor to the empire. Roxane loves Léonatus, who loves Statira.

Britannicus Act I:-

Narcisse "gouverneur" of Nero exhorts him to resistance.

Statira:-

Cassander exhorts Roxane to resist Léonatus and his allies.

Britannicus Act II:-

Narcisse is a traitor revealing the plot against Nero.

Statira:-

Cassander, a traitor, reveals the plot to Léonatus, then betrays him.

Nero forces Junie, in the interview he permits her to have with

Britannicus, to feign coldness.

Roxane forces Statira, in an interview with Léonatus, to feign coldness.

Britannicus and Junie meet and swear fidelity to each other. They are discovered by Nero.

Roxane discovers the lovers in a similar fashion.

Andromaque Act V:-

Oreste as ambassador, begs Pyrrhus for the release of the prisoner Astyanax.

Statira:-

Léonatus, as ambassador, begs Roxane for the release of Statira.

Pylade loves Hermione, fiancée of Pyrrhus but Pyrrhus loves Andromaque, his captive, and rejects Hermione's love.

Léonatus loves Statira and refuses Roxane's love.

Roxane " Léonatus " " Cassander's "

Pyrrhus will spare Astyanax' life if Andromaque marries him.

Roxane " " Statira's " " Léonatus will marry her.

Andromaque Act V:-

Hermione's jealousy is urged on by her confidente.

Roxane's jealousy is played upon by Perdiccas.

Hermione turns against Oreste when she learns of Pyrrhus' death.

Roxane becomes hostile to Perdiccas at the rumor of Léonatus' death.

(f) Regulus.

The tragedy of Regulus was performed for the first time on Sunday, January 4th, 1688. This subject had been treated previously upon the French stage contrary to Pradon's inference, by Jehan De Beaubrueil.⁴¹⁴ The difficulty of confining the matter to the rule of the unities had, however, deterred most writers from attempting this attractive historial episode. Pradon congratulates himself for his success in the difficult situation:- "J'ose dire que je me sçais un peu de gré d'avoir trouvé une route plusieurs Auteurs avoient vainement cherchée."⁴¹⁵ The figure of Regulus, prisoner of Carthage sent by the Phoenician republic to the Roman senate to obtain suitable peace terms or an exchange of prisoners in return for his liberty, his argument opposing the demands upon which even his life depended, his return to Carthage and death by torture is well known in Roman history.⁴¹⁶ Upon this theme, Pradon built his tragedy, changing the historical facts, as he says, to accomodate the unities of time and place:- "J'ay changé quelques circonstances à l'histoire, et j'ay mis la Scène dans le Camp des Romaines devant Cartage, et non pas dans Rome, pour conserver l'unité du temps et du lieu. Mais il eut esté bien fascheux de laisser dans un éternel oubly la plus grande action qui se soit faite dans l'ancienne Rome, faute d'un peu d'invention. J'ay donc renvoyé Regulus dans le camp des Romains, pour les porter à la guerre qu'il va payer de sa vie plutost qu'à la paix."⁴¹⁷ The char-

⁴¹⁴ Jehan de Beaubrueil:- "Regulus, tragédie," Limoges, 1583, Imprimerie de Hugues Barbou, in-8^o.

⁴¹⁵ Preface of "Regulus."

⁴¹⁶ Cicero:- "De finibus," II, 20; V. 27.

Valerius Maximus: Hist. IX, 2.

Seneca:- De Providentia, III.

Diodorus the Sicilian:- Historia fragmenta, liber XXIV.

Livy:- Periochae ex libro XVIII.

Polybius:- Hist. I, 31-36.

⁴¹⁷ Preface of "Regulus."

acters in the tragedy are:-

Regulus, Attilius Consul, Commandant l'armée des Romains devant Carthage.

Metellus, Proconsul de l'Afrique, père de Fulvie.

Fulvie, fille de Metellus, promise à Regulus.

Le jeune Attilius, fils de Regulus, amené dans le camp par son père.

Priscus, Chef des deux Légions envoyé à Regulus par le Sénat.

Mannius, Tribun militaire ennemy caché de Regulus, et son rival.

Lépide, Gouverneur du Jeune Attilius.

Faustine, Confidente de Fulvie.

Marcelle, autre Femme de la suite de Fulvie.

Place:- Roman camp before Carthage.

The action of the tragedy is as follows:- The great Roman leader, Regulus, is besieging Carthage. In his undertaking he is assisted by the faithful pro-consul Metellus and the newly arrived troops under Priscus's command. Since his wife's death Regulus has kept near him his young son Attilius who is early manifesting the great qualities of his father. Fulvie, the daughter of Metellus, has come to the camp to aid her father and be near her lover, for she is beloved by Regulus and loves him in return. The weakened forces of Carthage have been lately strengthened by the arrival of the Lacedaemonian captain Xantippus who has succeeded in corrupting the Tribune Mannius, attached to the army of Regulus. He is in love with Fulvia. Her coldness to his attentions and the knowledge of his rival's success make him break the none-too-loyal fidelity to his commander. Regulus upon a reconnoitering expedition is led by Mannius into an ambush, captured by the Carthaginians and sent back to his camp upon parole, to ask for the exchange of many prisoners in return for his liberty. If unsuccessful, death will be his

reward, for he is bound by oath to return to his enemies. His chieftains and soldiers oppose his return but Regulus, putting the needs of Rome above personal feelings and emotional yearnings, unmoved by the tears of his son or the laments of his beloved Fulvie and his soldiers, succeeds in escaping from his camp through the aid of Metellus and returns to Carthage. Metellus storms the city and captures its outer bastions but Regulus is killed by his captors in sight of his own soldiers.

The sources of this tragedy are few. The general historical facts about Regulus as related by the historians mentioned heretofore, have gone into the composition of Pradon's character: "J'ay tâché de conserver ce caractère de grandeur et de fermeté dans le plus austère Romain qui ait jamais paru, et l'on me flatte de l'avoir fait voir dans toute son étendue."⁴¹⁸ He claims that he has imitated no writer in his manner of composition:- "Je n'ay rien imité n'y emprunté de personne dans un sujet tout neuf, que les anciens et les modernes ont également respecté."⁴¹⁹

The character of the faithless tribune, Mannius, is found only in Florus, which Pradon acknowledges having used:- "Le caractère de Mannius est fondé dans l'histoire; et Florus, dans lequel j'ay pris mon sujet, nous apprend la révolte de ce Tribun qui fit soulever tout le Camp des Romains contre Regulus. Je luy ay donné un interest d'amour et de jalousie qui sert à mon action principale."⁴²⁰ Pradon has not only taken Mannius from the Roman historian but has utilized certain supplementary incidents as background for his plot. The history of Regulus is given by Florus in the first book of his "Epitome Rerum Romanorum," Tome I, liber II, ch. II:-

⁴¹⁸ Preface of "Regulus."

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*

Marco Attilio Regulo duce jam in Africam navigabat bellum. Nec deerant qui ipso Punice maris nomine ad terrore deficerent, augente insuper Tribuno Mannio metum; in quem, nisi paruisset securi districta Imperator metu mortis navigandi fecit audaciam, Mox ventis remisque properatum est; tantusque terror hostice adventus Poenis fecit, ut apertis poene portis Carthago caperetur. Prima belli praemium fuit civitas Clypea: prima enim a Punico littore quasi arx et specula procurrit. Et haec, et trecenta amplius castella vastata sunt. Nec cum hominibus, sed cum monstris quoque dimicatum est; quum quasi in vindictam Africae nata mirae magnitudinis serpens posita apud Baggadam costa vexaret. Sed omnium victor Regulus, quem terrorem nominis fui late circumtulisset; quemque magnam vim juventutis, ducesque ipsos aut cecidisset, aut haberet in vinculis classemque ingenti praeda onustam, et triumpho gravem, in urbem praemisisset; et eam ipsam belli caput Carthaginem urgebat obsidio, ipsisque portis in haerebat. Hic paululum circumacta fortuna est; tantum ut plura essent Romanae virtutis insignia: cujus fere magnitudo calamitatibus approbatur. Nam conversis ad externa auxilia hostibus; quum Xanthippum illis ducem Lacedaemon misisset, a vero militiae peritissimo vincimur. Tum foeda clade, Romanisque usu incognita, vivus in manus hostium venit fortissimus Imperator. Sed ille quidem par tantae calamitati fuit. Nam nec Punico carcere infractus est, nec legatione suscepta. Quippe diversa, quam hostes mandaverant, censuit; ne pax fieret, nec commutatio captivorum reciperetur. Sed nec illo voluntaria ad hostes suos reditu, nec ultimo sive carceris, sive crucis supplicio deformata majestas; imo his omnibus admirabilior, quid aliud quam victus de victoribus; atque etiam, quia Carthago non cesserat, de fortuna triumphavit? Populus autem Romanus multo acrior infestiorque pro

ultione Reguli, quam provictoria fuit. Metello igitur consule spirantibus altius Poenis, et reverso in Siciliam bello, apud Panormum insulam cogitarent." *

The incidents related by Florus are also to be found in his "Epitome de Tito Livio I, 18, but here Mannius is given the name of Nantio. From this it would appear that Pradon made use of the "Epitome Rerum Romanorum" which had already been translated into French by Nicolas Coeffeteaux in 1618, other editions of which appeared in 1621 and 1647. The legend concerning Regulus and the serpent which

* The war proceeded now on the sea under the leadership of Marcus Attilius Regulus. Nor were there lacking those who mutinied at the very name and dread of the Punic sea, especially the tribune Mammius urged on this mutiny but in him our leader put courage for the voyage by fear of death from the drawn sword. Soon by wind and oar the expedition moved along; our coming terrified the Phoenicians so much that scarcely we appeared at the ports when Carthage was seized by this fear. The city of Clypea was the first prey of war. Far beyond the Punic shore it jutted like a fortress and watchtower. This and three hundred other castles were laid waste. Not only with men but against monsters was it necessary to fight; where, as if born of African hatred, a serpent wonderful of size, was lodged there, harassing the coast of Baggadam. But Regulus was a conqueror of all things, for he had spread broadcast the terror of his name, the great strength of his youth, the leaders he had killed or put in chains; loading the fleet with booty, he in the flush of triumph, sent it on toward the city. He invested Carthage itself, the seat of war, and blockaded the ports. Then the wheel of fortune turns a little so that the greatest deeds of Roman bravery come forth whose magnitude was shown by the calamities. The enemy turned to external aid. Then Xanthippus, a Lacedaemonian leader was sent to them. We were confronted with a man most skillful in warfare. Then, fearful calamity, unknown occurrence for the Romans, our intrepid leader fell alive into the enemy's hands. But he was to be greatly pitied, for not broken in a Punic dungeon was he but raised to ambassador. Indeed, he enumerated the diverse things demanded by the enemy. There would be no peace unless an exchange of prisoners be made. But by his voluntary return to his enemies, by final imprisonment, torture on the cross, his majesty would not be impaired, on the contrary more admirable than all these, what other than he, a prisoner, since Carthage was unyielding, had triumphed over his conquerors and over fortune? The Roman people were more impelled and eager toward avenging Regulus than desirous of victory, Metellus then being consul, calling down divine wrath upon the Phoenicians, the war having returned into Sicily, he killed so many enemies among the Panori that no longer had they designs on that island.

is not found in other historians, is used by Pradon, Act I, s.1:-

Quand un Serpent affreux d'une énorme grandeur,
Et dont les sifflemens répandoient la terreur,
Parut, étincelant de fureur et de rage,
Et voulut contre nous défendre le *nivage*.

Xantippus to whom Mannius betrays Regulus has in Florus the position of opposing general. The plot of Mannius has been built by the dramatist upon the faithless and untrustworthy character which this tribune shows in Florus' account, where only by the severity of Regulus was he held to his duty. Assuming, then, Mannius' hostility to Regulus, Pradon puts him into the power of Xantippus, adding to this hostility the added spur of jealous love.

The tower of Clypea mentioned by Florus becomes with Pradon the tower in which Fulvie and the young Attilius were to await the outcome of the battle had they followed Regulus' advice.

The character of Fulvie is an invention of the author, for history records that the wife and children of Regulus were living at the time of his death. Nowhere is there any record that the consul Metellus had a daughter Fulvie. Pradon acknowledges the invention of this character:- "J'avoué que le caractère de Fulvie est entièrement de mon invention, et qu'elle fait l'épizode de ma Pièce, on l'y trouve amenée avec bienséance, et elle a des sentimens assez dignes d'une Romaine, pour ne pas faire rougir Regulus du dessein qu'il a de l'épouser après la prise de Cartage."⁴²¹

The introduction of a child upon the stage was a novelty for the times and caused some criticism:- "Quelques-uns ont trouvé à redire que j'ai mis un enfant sur la Scène, mais j'ay suivi mot à mot l'histoire, et ce qu'en dit le fameux Horace.

Fertur pudicæ coniugis osculum
Parvosque natos ut capitis minor
Ab se removisse et virilem
Torvus humi posuisse voltum. 422

⁴²¹ Preface of "Regulus."

⁴²² Horace - "Odes, Carmina III, V, De Milite Romano, 41-44.

Ces vers me doivent fort justifier de cette nouveauté qui a produit un si grand effet, et qui a fait dire des choses si touchantes à Regulus, qu'elles font toute la beauté du cinquième Acte."⁴²³

The only history Pradon followed is the Ode of Horace quoted in his Preface but where Horace represents Regulus standing before his wife and children, refusing to be moved by their entreaties, the dramatist took one of these children, enlarged the part played by the child in the life of Regulus, in order to produce the "choses si touchantes" which he admired.

The tragedy, in spite of the sentimental love episode which seems somewhat out of place in the Regulus legend, owed its popularity undoubtedly to its simplicity, to the noble figure of the conquered chief and the Corneillian lines upon which it was constructed.

(g) Scipion l'Africain.

This tragedy was presented for the first time Friday, the 22nd of February, 1697. Of the extant plays of Pradon this one is probably the worst from the point of construction and versification. Its author either did not see fit to write a preface for it or the one he did write has been lost, for none is affixed to the original edition of the play or to subsequent ones. The subject of Scipion l'Africain had been treated previously upon the French stage by Desmaretz in his tragi-comedy, "Scipion", 1639, by Puget de la Serre in his "Le Sac de Cartage" of 1643 and by Prade.

The cast of characters for Pradon's tragedy includes:-

Scipion, surnommé l'Africain, Consul et général de l'armée des Romains.

Annibal, le général de l'armée des Cartaginois.

Lucéjus, Prince des Celtibériens, Amant d'Ispérie nièce d'Annibal,

⁴²³ Preface of "Regulus."

Ispérie, Nièce d'Annibal, promise à Lucejus, prisonnière dans le camp de Scipion.

Erixène, Fille d'Hannon, ennemy d'Annibal, prisonnière dans le camp de Scipion.

Aurilcar, envoyé d'Annibal vers Scipion.

Sextus, Capitaine de l'Armée de Scipion.

Lévide, Confidante de Scipion

Celsus, Romain, amy de Lucéjus.

Ermilie, confidente d'Ispérie

Barce, confidente d'Erixène

Gardes

Scene:- Scipio's camp near Zama.

The argument is as follows: Scipio is encamped before Carthage, hoping soon to force the surrender of the city. The Carthaginians, torn by political strife, hard pressed for capable leaders to oppose the victorious Roman, have recalled from his Italian campaign, Hannibal, the sworn enemy of Rome. By two victories which his men have won on the plains of Zama, the first over Hannon, and the second over Hamilcar, Scipion has acquired the prisoners Erixène, daughter of Hannon, and Ispérie, niece of Hannibal, promised in marriage by her parents to the Celtiberian chieftain, ally of Carthage, Lucéjus. Scipion has become enamoured of Ispérie but she does not return the affection. She loves Lucéjus in spite of his two years' absence from her. Erixène, although a captive of the enemy of Carthage, has a fondness for Scipion and a hatred for Ispérie, born partly of jealousy and partly from hostility to the house of Barca unfriendly to her father's family. Her advances to Scipion are ignored. Scipion is torn by conflicting sentiments of glory which can only be satisfied by the destruction of Carthage and its leaders. This would destroy any sentiment which Ispérie

might have for him, possibly separate his loved one from him. The knowledge of his affection reaches the ear of Aurilcar who in turn informs Hannibal. He, wishing to make a last attempt to stay the impending overthrow of Carthage, begs Scipion for an interview. The forces of Carthage are weak; the soldiers have lost morale; the exhaustive Italian campaigns have so sapped their vitality that Hannibal cannot put entire trust in them. If he can come to some agreement with the Romans, peace will be brought to the hard pressed republic, life and treasure will be spared, and the reputation of each of the commanders will not suffer. These arguments he presents to Scipion at the meeting between the two in Scipion's tent. Finding the Roman inflexible on political questions, Hannibal decides to flatter his amorous desires by offering him the hand of his niece. Scipion, suspecting his secret betrayed and now used by his opponent as a last resource, still debates the proper course to follow. Meanwhile Lucéjus, hearing that Hannibal has promised Ispérie to his rival, comes secretly to Ispérie, assures himself of her fidelity, promises to attack the camp and carry her away or die in the attempt. In return she promises to kill herself rather than submit to a marriage with Scipion. During the conference between the two opposing leaders news arrives of Lucéjus's attack. Scipion imagines that Hannibal has asked for this parley to deceive the Romans and allow Lucéjus to catch the army off its guard. Angered at this he breaks off the negotiations and prepares to sacrifice his love to the glory of battle. A call to arms goes forth. Lucéjus is overcome and made prisoner. Scipion torn by pity for Ispérie's loss of her lover, love for her, and glory, conquers his conflicting emotions by ceding Ispérie to Lucéjus. In short, this is no tragedy at all but a poor tragi-comedy.

The sources of the play are well enough established in Amyot's

"Plutarch" to assume, in spite of the author's silence upon this point, that he found there the framework for his historical setting. A considerable amount of the sentimental machinery he owes to Desmarets' tragi-comedy of Scipion. What is not suggested by this play is to be found in the two "Bérénice" of Corneille and Racine.

Plutarch in his life of Scipion l'Africain, which Amyot has faithfully translated, represents the hero as a character of great beauty of body and magnanimous of soul:- "Car il n'avoit point seulement le cueur magnanime, et estoit excellent en toutes vertus, ains il estoit aussi d'une singulière beauté et belle proportion de tout le corps, ayant la face joyeuse, les quelles choses aident beaucoup à gagner la grâce de chascuns. Il apparoissoit aussi en ses façons de faire une majesté souveraine. La gloire doucques militaire estant jointe à tels dons de l'esprit et de nature, il estoit à doubter, s'il estoit plus agréable aux nations estrangères pour ses vertus civiles, qu'admirable pour ses vertus belliques."⁴²⁴ Such was the character that Pradon intended giving to his Scipion. The figure he produced falls far short of its prototype.

The character of Lucéjus has its historical source likewise in Plutarch as well as the love of this prince for Scipion's prisoner but the name of the woman is lacking and there is but slight suggestion of Scipion's interest in her:- "Mais il y eut une chose entre toutes qui luy augmenta grandement son los, et luy acquit grande bènevolence, laquelle chose a esté célébrée de tous autheurs comme un exemplaire de toute vertu. On luy amena une jeune dame prisonnière, qui surpassoit toutes les autres en beautés et bonne grâce, laquelle il fit garder diligèment et avec toute honnesteté; ayant sçeu un peu après, qu'elle

estoit fiancée à Lucéius, prince des Celtibériens, il fit appeler l'espoux d'icelle qui estoit fort jeune homme, et la luy rendit entière et inviolée. Certes, c'est chose digne d'estre rédigée par escript, et Scipion luy mesme est digne de recevoir le fruit de si grande humanité et continence par les escrits de tous Auteurs."⁴²⁵ It is interesting to note that Pradon has kept the name of Lucéjus, merely making him instead of a lukewarm ally of the Romans, as Plutarch represents him, a supporter of the Carthaginians. The setting is transferred from New Carthage in Spain, where Scipion then was, to the plains of Zama. This fact fixes Plutarch as the source of this incident and not Desmaret as will be shown later.

The numerous historical references scattered throughout the tragedy follow Plutarch's account. The reason for Hannibal's return from Italy and his meeting with Scipion are thus described by the biographer:- "Cette perte et desconfiture estant entendue à Cartage, effroya tellement les manans et habitans, que les uns furent d'avis de rappeler quant et quant Hannibal hors d'Italie:"⁴²⁶ and further:- "Les Carthaginois.... rappelèrent Hannibal hors d'Italie. Lequel estant hastivement retourné en Afrique, avant toutes choses il fut d'avis de parlementer avec P. Scipion touchant les affaires de la paix, soit qu'il redoubtast l'heureux succès du présent jeune homme, ou bien qu'il se déffiasst de pouvoir autrement secourir la chose publique de son pais, qui s'en alloit du tout en ruine. Parquoy on ordonna lieu pour parlementer ainsi qu'il avoit demandé; là où estans venus, ils tindrent ensemble long propos touchant de finir les discords. Finablement Scipion proposa à Hannibal de telles conditions, que par icelles il apparoissoit assez que le peuple Romain ne se faschoit pas de la guerre.....Parquoy toute espérance de pouvoir faire appointment ostée, le colloque fut rompu."⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Amyot:-Vie des Hommes Illustres de Plutarque," IX, par. VII.

⁴²⁶ ibid. ch. XXVII.

⁴²⁷ ibid. ch. XXX.

The battles in which Erixène and Ispérie were made captives are placed by Pradon at Zama. Plutarch mentions a battle between Hanno and the Romans taking place near Carthage:- "Hanno fils d'Amilcar ordonne pour garder le pais voisin vint audevant des Romains.....Hanno fut vaincu dès la première charge, et tué avec une partie de ses gens."⁴²⁸ The Hanno referred to here is a son of Hamilcar and not the enemy of Hannibal as in Pradon's conception. The dramatist has mistaken this Hanno for the one mentioned by Livy XXI, 3, XXIII, 12, the enemy of the Barcas. The battle wherein Hasdrubal was defeated is put at Utica by Plutarch and not, as Pradon does, on the plains of Zama.⁴²⁹ Pradon makes reference, Act II, scene V, to the fate of Syphax brought to ruin by his love of Sophonisba. Here again he has borrowed an episode from Plutarch.⁴³⁰ Likewise in the same scene Scipion fears that Lucejus by marrying Ispérie will thus be able to make a coalition with the kings, Mandonius and Indibilis:-

"Vous pouriez soulever vingt Rois nos ennemis,
Unir Mandonius avec Indibilis,
Et succitant à Rome une éternelle guerre."

These characters are to be found in Plutarch,⁴³¹ but in the biographer they were "deux petits roys d'Hespagne."

There is no basis in history for the "Scipion amoureux." This episode Pradon derived from the "Scipion" of Desmarets with the happy ending to the tragedy. Desmarets' tragi-comedy carries a double plot, As only the main story of Scipion's love concerns the tragedy of Pradon, an outline of this treatment in the earlier play will suffice. Scipio besieges Carthagen. In this city there is a Spanish princess, Olinde, promised in marriage to Lucidan Prince of the Celtiberians. Garamante,

⁴²⁸ Vie des Hommes illustres de Plutarque," IX, ch. XXIV.
⁴²⁹ ibid., ch. XXV.
⁴³⁰ ibid., ch. XXIV.
⁴³¹ ibid., ch. VIII.

a Numidian prince ally of Carthage and rejected suitor of Olinde, offers to deliver the city to Scipio for the reward of Olinde. Scipio accepts and becomes master of Carthage. During the capture of the city, Lucidan learning Garamante's treachery, encounters him and dangerously wounds him. Olinde, prisoner, is presented to Scipio who becomes enamored of her. Her constancy to Lucidan is firm. Scipio is torn by conflicting emotions of love for her and the needs of his ambition. He finally renounces Olinde, giving her to Lucidan upon whom he bestows liberty. From here the plot is concerned with Garamante and has no bearing upon Pradon's tragedy. From this outline it is evident that Pradon copied his "Scipion amoureux" and the final renunciation of the conqueror from Desmarets, but Plutarch has influenced him to the extent of keeping the original name Lucejus instead of Desmarets' Lucidan. In fact, Plutarch is the source for both works. What Pradon has not found in the biographer he has borrowed from Desmaret. The character of Erixene so useless in Pradon's play must have been his own invention, for her counterpart does not appear elsewhere.

In general tone the tragedy, if such it can be called, is reminiscent of Corneille's "Titus et Bérénice", Act II, where Titus is undecided whether to follow the path of love or duty as is Scipio. Racine's "Bérénice" shows a like conflict in the mind of Titus between love of Bérénice and duty to the state.

Chapter VI.

JUDGMENT ON PRADON'S PLAYS.

What then is the matter with these plays of Pradon? Are they the tedious attempt of an ignorant fool to write poetry in the dramatic style or just hopelessly dull compositions, lacking all the qualities that make for a tragedy of the classic type? Boileau and his followers have insisted that they were all of this, that their author was as dull as his plays were stupid, lacking in skill, poorly conceived, and miserably executed. Yet the plays were accepted for production by the comedians of both the Théâtre Guénégaud and the Théâtre de Bourgogne; they were attended by the polite society of the court; they were revived - "Tamerlan" during the life-time of the author, and "Regulus", after a long, continuous success, was presented in the succeeding century even as late as Voltaire's time. We are told that they passed into the general repertoire of provincial troupes. How comes it, then, that they held their ground if they were such as their detractors represented them? It cannot be thought that the audiences of the "grand siècle" who attended the theatre were content to sit through plays which had for them little interest. The fate of Pradon's unpublished tragedies shows plainly what followed an audience's displeasure. The latter half of the seventeenth century was not so poor in dramatic material that it had to content itself with unpopular works to keep alive a dramatic tradition. The quarrel of the "Phèdres" aside, Pradon, although favored by certain society leaders, could not rely upon such favor to attract an audience after a first performance, and even his "Phèdre et Hippolyte", bad as it is when compared to his rival's play, succeeded in confusing the public's judgment of its merit. Whatever Pradon

may have been in person, his plays are not so hopelessly dull, so far below the level of his age as we have been led to believe. True, they are not masterpieces, nor do they even approach in excellence the great tragedies of his age. With the exception of Corneille and Racine, was the latter half of the seventeenth century so rich in good tragic writers? Are the works of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, De Visé, Thomas Corneille, Fontenelle, Boyer, Quinault, Longpierre, Madame Des Houlières, the Abbe de Pure, Benserade, l'Abbé Genest, La Grange-Chancel—to mention the better known writers—are their works so high in literary value, so true, so lofty of conception that Pradon must take last place in the line of the century's dramatists? Who reads their works? Their names, with the exception of Thomas Corneille, repose placidly in manuals of literature; their works stand dust-covered upon library shelves, disturbed only by the curious, the inquisitive student, or the bibliophile. These were the men, however, who wrote for the stage of their day. Theirs were the plays the public witnessed. They were fellow-workers, although not all of them companions of Corneille and Racine. The last two gave us the masterpieces of the age; the others the shop-work of a period. These last ones added nothing to the world's aesthetic stock. Why then read them? Perhaps it is better that they rest in semi-repose. For us Corneille and Racine represent the "Siècle de Louis Quatorze."

The masterpieces of this period do represent their age, but, as has been said before, they show us the period at its best, its greatest moments in tragic writing. They overshadow and blot out the crowd of mediocre men who sought to gain the fame won by their more illustrious contemporaries. Their efforts, futile in our eyes, did not, however, appear to their age so ill-directed. Corneille at

one end of the century, Racine at the other, were but two amid a crowd of writers bidding for popular approval. Their combined works would not suffice for the needs of the theatre in their day. Others followed or ran counter to them. Scan the list of Quinault's works and compare their number with Racine's few tragedies, and Quinault went not unrewarded by the public. Who to-day, however, will prefer Quinault to Racine? Pradon's plays compared with some of Quinault's and with those of Bensérade will not appear so unfavorably as dramatic compositions. As a poet Pradon is of the worst. It is even doubtful whether he was a poet at all.

Arriving in Paris at a time of changing ideas in the conception of the dramatic appeal, he was caught between two styles, that of the Corneillian manner upon which his youthful experience rested and the subtle psychological and emotional "drame intime" of Racine. In the first manner he felt at home. He understood it as he did the unities, the royal settings, the politico-amorous, or the politico-necessitous struggles of Corneille's characters. On the other hand, the public was tiring of these romanesque figures. Life was no longer a strife between duty and love, enlivened by political philandering. Conditions in the body politic and social were fixed. The new order was accepted. Men and women, having learned to live in a narrow social milieu, were becoming acquainted with the subtle differences in their intimate relations between each other. An introspective, psychological study of the willful and emotional forces in human nature replaced the old external play of will against will, of emotion, be it of love or duty, acting independent of the dictation of personal security. A rough, man-made world acknowledged the advantages of feminine restraint, of subtle gradations in the emotional life, in short, the "honnête homme" became interested in himself, in his relations to his surroundings, and not in the surrounding itself.

Poetry and the novel had fostered this spirit. Quinault, had seen its advantages and had written his tragedies to suit the public taste. Racine came to make a new tragedy on the old forms. Corneille sought in vain to adapt his muse to changed conditions, only to fall into intricacy of plot and a coldness of manner almost glacial. His early success had been, like Racine's, won over conservative opposition. The younger man spent his career in an effort to win favor from a partially hostile public. But these men were poets.

Pradon, who was not even a poet of the second rate, must to succeed, adapt himself to this changed conception of the tragic muse. Never understanding Racine's manner, apparently a cold, Norman nature, lacking deep emotional fibres, he confused continually emotion and rhetoric. Succeed in the new manner he must to gain approval outside the circle of his friends. The admirers of the old Corneille liked and used him for their ends. They wanted not tragedies of the Corneillian manner but a near Corneille, plays which should give the old thrill and still work subtly upon the intricacies of the emotional fabric. Pradon to please them attempted an adaptation of the Corneillian manner to this new method of which he understood little but which he believed consisted in adding intricacy of situation to emotional effusiveness. Being apparently a man of a cold, "heady" type, he thought emotion was represented by its much speaking. The tirade of rhetoric must move its auditors as Corneille's had done. He forgot that the tirade moves only through the greatness of the sentiment expressed and the beauty of the expression. Of the latter he had little. In his plots so burdened with their emotional roles, his rhetoric chills and withers, or falls into a sentimentality which in a less stolid writer might have become "fadeur" or "douceur". Pradon could not write mere prettinesses. His Norman characteristics, his Corneillian taste for the heroic and the bombastic

with his lack of poetic skill inhibited. When he conceived characters like Amestris in "Pirame" or 'Regulus' along the lines marked by Corneille, he is convincing. The forces moving man to willful endeavor, such as duty, love of country, jealousy, pride, valor, a subtle "Politique," he controls with sufficient skill. Unfortunately he considered it necessary to introduce the amorous romance, to mingle the lofty, adventurous feelings of his heroes with a romanesque and sentimental gallantry which spoils the whole^a by its insincerity and graceless expression.

Understanding the emotion of the heart as an argument springing from the mind, he confuses his plots by senseless intricacies of situation which do duty for a psychology of love. His characters develop not from a clash of emotions but from a shock of circumstances largely external to their own selves. This is a favorite trick of dramatists unskilled in the secrets of the heart who believe that situations and not characters make a tragedy. The external quality of the emotions in his characters shows plainly when they are placed in conflicting situations. Their speech runs to rhetorical protests of amorous feelings or to a sentimental wailing. They argue and protest but their protestations of love show no fire, no heat of intense desire. Violent emotional crises do not occasion long logical disquisitions or sentimental analyses of wounded vanity. Where he should be short, almost abrupt and disconnected, Pradon is verbose and gallant. His manner recalls the novel à la Scudéry or the poetry of the salons in its studied courtliness. The deep-seated wounds of the heart are unknown to him. All emotional life is viewed from the detached mental position of a Norman lawyer in the drawing-room of a court duchess. External motives he knew how to grasp and transplant to the stage. When he tried to contrast them with the emotions of a great love, he falls flat to the level of a court gallant troubled occasionally by a badly managed

"affaire du coeur."

This inability struck Boileau and his followers. Their continual ridicule of Pradon's love-struck historical figures shows how quickly they sensed the falseness of conception, for they were schooled in Racine's manner and understood his conceptions. The public and especially those retainers of the older salons arrived only late in the century at a complete sympathy with Racine's aesthetics. What they desired was either a "fade" gallantry à la Quinault, a tragedy of "grands frissons" after the manner of Corneille, or an intricate plot of surprises enlivened by a sentimental, amorous gentility of manner, expressed in easy, flowing, inflated verse, mirroring and toying with the heart - fluttering escapades of the alleys of Versailles or the drawing-rooms of Paris. Corneille experienced this demand of the public and tried by accumulation of detail to please. "Pertharite" and "Suréna" failed on account of this cold, unconvincing manner. The "maze-plot" bored its audience who hoped to find some love scenes which would touch the heart. Quinault and Thomas Corneille were the most successful at combining all the elements pleasing to the "honnêtes gens." Then Thomas failed to live up to the level of his admirers' requirements and was dropped from their esteem. Quinault saved himself in opera librettos where he was free to give his amorous bent full sway. Pradon, swinging like a pendulum between the old and the new, introduced now a little more of the Corneillan manner, now a little less and more of his rival's style. His treatment of the purely emotional was, as has been said, wholly stereotyped and limited. It was, nevertheless, couched in a manner that his public could understand, offering a bit of all styles so that the "honnête homme" found in his plays just that familiarity of treatment which lifted him outside himself without plaguing him with the vaguely understandable and the unfamiliar.

This accounts for what popularity was accorded "Pirame et Thisbé", "Tamerlan", and "Regulus", the tragedies best received. They combine all the elements in more or less degree which delighted seventeenth century audiences of Pradon's day:- an historical figure of forceful character plotting or planning a glorious future, lead hither and thither by the conflicting claims of a carefully analyzed love sentiment which is either sacrificed to honor or softened to a pity for the victim of its vengeance. It is the emotional chord played in the treble clef, almost a seventeenth century bergerette.

Of course the poetry of the lines, which seems to us no poetry at all, sufficed the needs of the stage. Almost all woefully flat and uninspired, it carried the thought to its hearers in a manner unencumbered by subtle imagery or suggestion. Gallant and mannered, touched by occasional conceits and "préciosité," this verse carried the thought in an uninspired monotony of usually accepted phrases, stock inversions, and habitual rhymes, too often marred, even in its flatness, by a choppiness of wording which must have occasioned the actors difficulty if not annoyance. At times Pradon's muse soars on the wings of Corneille, then exhausting its strength in its flight, falls to the ground fluttering in a dismal uncertainty from pure inability to rise again. Only at rare moments are the lines sustained by any poetic beauty of originality or vigor. Far better would it have been had he confined himself to prose where his mania for intriguing plots and secondary episodes would not have suffered the limitations of his poetry. The prose drama was, however, yet to come. In ability to construct a tragedy, knitting one scene to another, maintaining the interest of an audience by suspense or sharply contrasted situations, he was no less able than many of his contemporaries. He was careful to observe the Aristotelian rules as Dacier had translated them. Given a theme borrowed from antiquity, he adapted the

characters to suit the courtly influence. Tamerlan, Hippolyte, Ulisse, Pyrrhus, Perdiceas, Léonatus, Scipion are softened in tone, made first of all "galants hommes," types of the general social milieu in which this author felt at home. As such they did not offend the "honnête homme." Perhaps they even elicited his sympathy and approval. Pradon is careful throughout his prefaces to point out this aim of making his characters conform to social requirements. To this he added a sentimental love presumably of the heart but springing really from the logical circumstances of the story. His characters debate their conduct, undecided whether to follow the dictates of their passion or the urge of their ambition. They love and fear that their love is not returned. Their faith in their mistresses is easily shaken, but doubt soon gives way to submission to the object of their love. Moved to loud protests at any interference with the course of their emotions, they become sentimentally downcast at any temporary check. Their ultimate triumph comes not from their own efforts but from outside influences, either that of death, or a softening of the heart at the sight of death, so that early cruelty of motive disappears before a sense of pity and compassion:

"Pirame et Thisbé" shows all the marks of Pradon's method. The later plays are but variants of the same type. For us the interest is not in a comparison of these plays with present day standards but in an attempt to judge them as the audiences of Pradon's day looked upon them. The critics were evidently busy at this first attempt of Pradon:- "J'ai fait une Episode d'Amestris et de Bélus qui quoy que fondés dans l' Histoire, sont des caractères de mon invention, aussi bien que celui d'Arsace. Quelques-uns ont voulu dire que cet Episode l'emportoit sur le Sujet principal, mais si l'on veut prendre la peine d'examiner leurs intérêts on verra qu'ils sont si bien mêlés avec ceux de Pirame et Thisbé, que toutes les démarches de ces trois personnes ne tendent qu'à rompre l'in-

telligence qui est entre ces deux Amans, pour l'interêt particulier de leur amour, et qu'enfin Pirame et Thisbé sont le terme et le point fondamental où aboutissent toutes les lignes de ma Pièce, comme à leur centre. Si Bélus conserve ses droits contre la violence d'Amestris, et si Amestris par sa politique et par son adresse le veut détourner du Gouvernement de l'Etat, Pirame est l'objet qu'elle regarde, et Thisbé celui de Bélus; et c'est par leurs différends qu'ils causent les cruels embarras de ces Amans malheureux, qui attachent et qui intéressent toujours le Spectateur jusqu'à la fin de la catastrophe. La critique même la plus sévère y a trouvé assez de conduite pour le Théâtre, et les âmes tendres y peuvent voir des sentimens de leur caractère."⁴³²

This criticism of contemporaries was true in regard to the relation of Amestris to the main story of Pirame and Thisbé's love. This queen so similar to the feminine roles of Corneille and suggestive of Roxane in "Bajazet", is the best drawn character of the play. The willful woman, bent upon preserving her power at all hazards, making her love a pendant to her political aspirations, could not fail to please the admirers of Corneille. Her vigor and force do not suffer, as do so many of Pradon's female roles, from the love episode attached to her character. She remains throughout the scheming, ambitious, jealous queen of proud Babylon:-

"C'est un amour caché qui parle en politique;

Je le sens, je l'avoue, et je doute en ce jour

Si mon ambition égale mon amour.

Vois donc et reconnois mon âme toute entière;

Cette Amestris toujours si superbe et si fière,

Au seul nom de Pirame a changé de couleur

Et pousse des soupirs qu'il arrache à mon coeur."⁴³³

⁴³² Preface of "Pirame et Thisbé."

⁴³³ Act I, sc. V.

In spite of her love she never seems to lose wholly the commanding position of a queen, overshadowing the lovers by the reality of her jealousy and her "politique":-

"Que vous connoissez mal le poids du Diadème!
 Pour estre à tout le monde, on n'est plus à soy-même;
 On se voit éblouy de son trop de splendeur,
 On se sent accablé sous sa propre grandeur;
 Et dans ce rang pompeux, le chagrin qui nous brave,
 Du Maître de la Terre, en sçait faire l'Esclave.
 Par combien de périls ay-je acheté ce rang?
 J'ay souvent cimenté le Trône de mon sang:
 Et nos Chefs sont témoins que plus d'une victoire
 A payé de ce sang tout l'éclat de ma gloire.
 Icy combien de fois d'un Peuple furieux
 M'a-t-il fallu calmer l'esprit séditieux,
 Désarmer par mes soins et la rage et l'envie,
 Renverser des complots formez contre ma vie,
 Apaiser de l'Etat les troubles intestins,
 Et changer contre moy les Arrests des Destins?
 Croyez qu'heureux sont ceux dont les justes desirs
 Dans leur tranquille vie ont borné leurs plaisirs." 434

 Quoy? tu veux régner seul? et ta fierté me brave?
 Pretens-tu de ta Mère avoir fait ton esclave?
 Etalant à mes yeux d'ambitieux projets,
 Déjà tu me confonds avecque tes sujets.
 Fay plus, car it te faut une double Victime." 435

434 Act III, sc. IV.

435 Act V, sc. II.

Unrequited love drives this queen to the destruction of her rival Thisbé. Yet her love for Pirame has so much of a political "arrière-pensée" that it seems to control her character and her actions. She thus stands out in sharper lines, a more real figure than the pale, indefinite Thisbé. She struggles against this Bélus whose ambition is counterpoised to hers. The conflict of aims in these two rather forceful characters throws the tragedy of the lovers into second place. Pradon was not aware that for his time this political, amorous episode of Amestris and Bélus had more interest on account of its double motive à la Corneille than the story of the lovers whose destinies were controlled by the royal opponents. The dynamics of the whole play lay in Amestris. She drew the interest of the onlookers. Pradon's mistake arose from a belief that by compounding his tragedy of a struggle for political power with a sentimental love episode in the manner of the new school, weaving one element into the other, he could obtain a balance pleasing to the public taste. Better instructed in these political roles than in the amorous ones, his best efforts went into the former, while the episode of the lovers fell into second place.

The figure of Bélus is presented in these lines:-

Voyez de mon destin le bizarre caprice.

Quoy que ne pour le Trône, elle usurpa mon rang.

Et tâcha de corrompre en moy son propre sang:

Du moins pour retarder ma haute destinée,

Elle a tenu longtemps ma valeur enchaînée:

.....
Ce Palais où j'estois noury loin des allarmes,

Où l'on me défendoit l'exercise des armes

Ce fut là cependant que tant d'exploits fameux

Me frappèrent l'oreille, et m'ouvrirent les yeux:

Ce fut là qu'à l'aspect du Trône de mon Père,

Je connus que j'estois l'Esclave de ma Mère;
 Qu'un généreux dépit élevant mes désirs,
 J'écarte loin de moy la foule des plaisirs:
 J'ai dissipé la nuit, et je vis la lumière,
 Mon âme à la grandeur se tourna toute entière. ⁴³⁶

This Bélus is a counterpart of the queen in somewhat lesser relief. As for Pirame, his indecision, lack of confidence in Thisbé, and general willingness to accept what fate has meted out to him must have found little favor with audiences. His abrupt parting with Thisbé (Act II, sc. 2) and his sudden appearance after his escape from Bélus's men to influence Thisbé to flee with him leaves much to the imagination and presumes upon Thisbé's good-nature. In fact the character of Thisbé is painted in such a colorless fashion that her simple, lachrymose quiescence tends to drive away pity rather than incite it as the author had intended. The recital of the death of the lovers is badly arranged. This is due to a lack of understanding of the source of pity. The recital is made by Pirame's father, Arsace, at great length. Rhetoric abounds but the lines fall coldly from his lips. A grief-stricken father could scarcely bring himself to speak at all of his son's death, or, if so, he would speak in short, disjointed phrases. Emotion would prevent speech. Pradon had no conception of this, otherwise he would have chosen a more fitting character to carry the recital of the boy's death.

"Quelques-uns ont dit que ce récit étoit trop pathétique dans la bouche d'un père, et que les grandes douleurs étoient muettes." ⁴³⁷

It was not a question of the recital being too "pathétique" but of the lack of sincerity in it. The justification Pradon gives is beside the

⁴³⁶ Act II, sc. II.

⁴³⁷ Preface of "Pirame et Thisbé."

point, for it was not the description of the death which moved to tears but the fate of the lovers:- "Je pourrois répondre que j'en ai des exemples et chez les Anciens et chez les Modernes; mais enfin quand même ce seroit une faute de jugement dans mon Ouvrage, je puis dire que je l'ai faite avec jugement et réflexion; et ce récit a tiré tant de larmes et a fait un si grand effet, qu s'il échappe à ma Plume une seconde Pièce de Théâtre je souhaite de tout mon coeur qu'elle soit remplie de fautes de cette nature."⁴³⁸ Whatever tears were shed by the audience were a tribute to the moving power of the sentimental lovers, Pirame and Thisbé. In spite of the novelty of the subject, for by novelty the century meant adaptation of a well known story to a new manner of treatment, not deviating too far from the historically accurate, and the curiosity attendant upon a new author's work, the play was well suited to draw public esteem. It gave a picture of a willful, evil queen conceived on the lines of Corneille's works, with a sufficiency of political maxims, a clearly marked "politique" in her method, a struggle for power over opposition. With these factors and interwoven into the political narrative was a story of the misfortune of two lovers whose fate was beyond their control, drawing from their fate the sympathy of the sentimentally inclined. The young couple debated their love and their situation; they were gentle and well-mannered, victims of the rough Bélus and his crafty mother. Their death at the hands of cruel fate moved even the wicked queen and the headstrong Arsace to pity and fear of their evil-doing. What plot could be more within the reach of the courtly, pleasure-loving, intriguing mind of the "honnête homme?"

"Tamerlan" continues the method of its predecessor in a way more involved and less suggestive of Corneille. The author launched

⁴³⁸ Preface of "Pirame et Thisbé."

forth into the new manner of the gallant and "honnête" character whose ferocity is but an external form covering a gentle and easily touched heart. The proud, fiery, resolute political role falls to Bajazet who maintains throughout the qualities with which he was first endowed. Unmoved by pity, fortune, favorable opportunity, he hates Tamerlan and dies with a curse upon his lips. He appealed to the audience by his fallen greatness and his resoluteness in adversity:-

"Croit-il par le retour d'une feinte clémence,
Que j'oublie un moment ma haine et ma vengeance?
S'il pense me fléchir, il se trompe, Seigneur,
Ses affronts sont gravez trop avant dans mon coeur." 439

* * * * *

Le Sort m'attache aux fers; et moy dans ce malheur,
Je veux perdre le jour, et tromper sa fureur. 440

* * * * *

Epouser Tamerlan, fais un plus noble effort.
Ouy, perdons-nous plutost, et courons à la mort;
Astérie, est ce ainsi qu'une servile crainte
Te peut faire subir une indigne contrainte,
Et dans quelque revers qui nous puisse accabler,
Le sang de Bajazet doit-il jamais trembler? 441

Tamerlan, an historical figure too, playing the opposing role to Bajazet, begins likewise with a ferocity of character ^{apt} ~~likely~~ to drive away public sympathy. This would not do, for, after all, his is the chief role, the "raison d'être" for the tragedy. Pradon acknowledges that he has made an honnête homme of the fierce Sythian. In fact, he does more. Tamerlan becomes the love-struck hero whose ferocity is not general to his character, but the vengeance of balked desire. Now fiercely headstrong, now politely amorous, he hovers between the his-

439 Act I, sc. II.
440 Act III, sc. 1.
441 Act III, sc. VI.

torical figure and the hero of unrequited love. At the end, moved by Bajazet's death, he makes a complete "volte face," becomes tender and "raisonable," hands over his beloved Astérie to his rival. Such a strange motivation was required by the choice of subject matter according to Pradon's method. The chief role, in order to gain sympathy, could not run counter to his love episode which was conceived on an equal footing with the historical episode. The sudden change of Tamerlan thus puts him among the misguided characters who realize by the effects of their handiwork what awful ruin they have wrought. They serve to impress an audience with the immorality of their deeds and by their confession, especially when they are the chief figures, they elicit a favorable interest which otherwise would be denied. This treatment little accords with our historical conception of Tamerlan but Pradon makes known in his preface with some justice, that history did represent a Tamerlan less brutal than Calchondile's. By choosing such a figure, endowing it with the qualities of an "honnête homme," he made it easier of acceptance by an audience who wished to see greatness of soul expressed by great deeds. Tamerlan's magnanimous act is not great by virtue of his great soul, but by dictates of sentimentality. A public might accept this in lieu of the other conception.

The supplementary love episode between Astérie and Andronic is linked with the Tamerlan-Bajazet episode in such a way that it seems to throw into bolder relief these two characters. The interest is held by this intertwining of love and duty, desire for revenge and desire for possession, these antithetical positions which appeared earlier in "Pirame." The same coldness of rhetorical phrase passes for emotional crises. Swiftly changing circumstances, impending ruin now to one, now to the other lover, takes the place of a deep, psychological analysis of the heart's yearnings. It is an episode of situations.

It requires little thought and gives a conventional idea of love in which the auditor can find what he wishes. The sympathy of the public would rise to Astérie whose fate was so beyond her control. She is better drawn than Thisbé, more actively dominant in the play. Her problem is again made intricate by the obligation to obey her father's wishes. She moves in a vicious circle from which there seems no escape had not Pradon brought a happy ending by Tamerlan's conversion. This would delight the women of his audience. Bajazet could afford to die. His character was fixed. History and the needs of the plot desired his death. While the public might admire his steadfastness, it would require his death as the logical course of events, but Astérie's death would excite too much pity, destroy any feeling for Tamerlan, the hero, and make a gloomy performance. The sentimental interest must be left. So Pradon understood the new manner of Racine. It is in Tamerlan that he deviates the most from Corneille and without understanding where he tended, he conceived the plot after the manner of a novel. Astérie and her lover Andronic are novelesque figures. Andronic, beset by equivocal situations, becomes a pendant to the feminine role, adding the necessary element to complete the love episode. His lack of decision rests on Astérie's counsel, for had he been decided and forceful, he would have solved the situation, outshone Tamerlan, and destroyed the plot. He is amorous and logical when confronted with a problem to solve, but rash and headstrong when a difficult position required coolness. He, too, is caught in a vicious circle, but without these situations of "quid pro quo" Pradon would have had no means of composing his tragedy.

Pradon's public saw doubtless in this tragedy the same pulling at the heart-strings of their sympathy as in "Pirame." Will the heroine escape the vengeance of the jealous lover? Will her true love be faithful to her when confronted by promises of an advantageous mar-

riage? How will the lovers escape their fate and gain freedom? The wheel of fortune turns continually now for, now against them throughout the five acts. Supplementary to this episode were Tamerlan's love and Bajazet's hatred. The former is the evil spirit softened by the effects of love; the latter, the proud monarch, beset by an evil fate, triumphing over it by death. All the characters, Bajazet aside, are "honnêtes gens." Their speech is "dans l'ordre," their actions and motives well within the limits of audiences' understanding. Sentimentality, gallantry, the beau geste, make up a large part of the discourse. Suspense is well kept up throughout the play. Astérie is a character of sufficient force to attract sympathy, Bajazet, pity, and Tamerlan admiration for greatness of soul. There is argument, occasional psychological dissection of the emotions, protests of love, forlorn hope, - all the qualities which the novel-reading "honnête femme" would enjoy and understand. What if the verses were flat and uninspired? The plot moved one. It was intricate, the characters were gallant, and sentiment abounded. The public accepted it in lieu of a better subject.

The tragedy of "Phèdre et Hippolyte" is so bad that one wonders how it could succeed for the short space of time it held the stage. The rapidity of composition is evident throughout the piece. Frequent borrowings from classic writers, imitations of earlier works on the same subject, and tactless parallels with Racine's manner, earlier plays, and rival tragedy, with verse of excessive mediocrity, make up one of Pradon's worst efforts only exceeded by his last, "Scipion l'Africain." The noble Greek and Roman figures are reduced to the level of court gallants, "précieuses", ladies of society, and a traveling philanderer returned to find his mistress playing tricks upon his fidelity. The action is needlessly complicated. Its solution depends upon a stage trick, like the imprisonment of the rival, Aricie,

in Phèdre's room. A gallant love episode is interwoven with another of jealous, unrequited affection. The struggle for mastery between the two make the situations in which the chaste and circumspect Hippolyte loses his life. Rhetorical passages abound. The most emotional speeches of the loves so full of gallant, polite phrases give no thrill of warm-blooded passion. Pradon becomes more entangled in the new manner than before. The precepts of Corneille disappear. The romanesque, the "fade" and the gallant absorb the subject. The plot shows the same effort at equivocal situations, surprises, changing circumstances, where hope gives way to dismay, dismay to anxiety, and a return of confidence, so marked in the earlier plays. Phèdre is ~~simply~~^{merely} a petted woman of society who falls in love with a young man from proximity. His coldness and the jealousy of a rival urge her on to deceit, dissimulation, violence and fraud to maintain her position before Theseus and still retain Hippolyte near her. It is a petty tragedy of everyday life. Aricie is the pure maiden whose whole interest lies in saving her lover from the wiles of the enchantress. Colorless and insipid she serves Pradon's purpose as opposing figure to Phèdre. What the latter woman lacks Aricie possesses. Thésée is a ridiculous old roué who in comedy would have been a delightful figure to plague but in tragedy he is out of place. Wandering over the face of the earth in search of adventure with man, woman, and beast, he returns to find his mistress faithless. He is enraged at her faithlessness, puts more value in her love than in affection for his son. A sort of old fool, he deserved the death which came to his son. Hippolyte is a lover of the solitary life, a hater of women and a gallant courtier. His shyness of feminine charms vanishes at the approach of Aricie. He becomes ardent, faithful, and stupid. His death was no loss.

The temporary success of this flat tragedy shows to what extent public taste would support the courtly mannered gallantry, insipid

rhetorical episodes of love and jealousy. Audiences were pleased to see an amorous Hippolyte who could sigh in genteel fashion for the "précieuse" Aricie. This plot of suspense held their attention. Objecting to the immorality of Raine's incestuous Phèdre, it is strange that the callousness, the real immorality of Pradon's courtesan amused them. She was both gracefully tender and jealously cruel, a cruelty of wounded pride, blind rage, and ineptitude. Her jealousy at unrequited love, her desire for the love-struck youth, they could understand as well as they did the gentle martyr Aricie who received their pity. The adventurous Thésée delighted the taste for adventure, love of freedom from restraint, with them a lost illusion, while Hippolyte appealed as the type of "honnête homme," handsome, valorous in the fight with enough shyness to make him interesting to the women of the salons, honorable, gallant, knowing how to speak in a gracious manner, faithful to his love. No wonder Racine despaired of success. Pradon had put into his play the general qualities of his contemporaries, arranging them into a love intrigue set to sustain attention by dint of intricacy and a mass of amorous verbiage which even the dullest could understand. It is not surprising the public went to see the tragedy.

In "La Troade" the influence of Corneille is at work again but only to a slight degree. Duty and obligation to his father's memory form the main part of the character of Pyrrhus, the proud conqueror, scion of an illustrious house. Love and power, jealousy of Pyrrhus, craftiness and moral instability make up Ulysse. Andromaque's mother-love, her fidelity to her husband's memory are transferred from the classic tragic-writers to Pradon's play. Corneille would have made a tragedy of conflicting wills, of ambitious rivalry for possession of the child in which Andromaque would have met a noble death. Not so Pradon. The public must have an episode of emotional love, an intricate and romanesque plot which presented the familiar legend in

a new light. Pyrrhus and Ulysse are endowed with the qualities of "honnêtes hommes." They are willful but gallantly so. The struggle of conflicting wills and ambitions in the political sphere is transferred to the emotional arena. The tragedy is a quarrel over the spoils of war, which, instead of political domain or a richness of booty, consists in the women they love. The conflict in each is between duty and covetousness of what the other holds in his possession. Nothing could have been easier than to effect an exchange of prisoners. That would have destroyed the intricacy of plot and incidentally the tragedy. This plot of crossed purposes served to keep up the interest in the final disposition of the Trojan women whose fate depended upon their lovers' ability to circumvent the religious obligations of the oracle and the clamorous vengeance of the patriotic Greeks.

Andromaque draws the admiration of the onlooker by her solicitude for her son, Astyanax, and her efforts to save him. This could not fail to excite pity for her. Polixène likewise maintains her nobility of character by her filial devotion and the support of her more unfortunate sister. These characters are the most convincing for the reason that their legendary traits remain unaltered. The dispute of their lovers only interests them as a means to self preservation, and affects in no way the tragic condition to which they are reduced. Andromaque, her son slaughtered and her sister sacrificed, remains a mournful and pitiable remnant of Troy's greatness. With the two Greek heroes, the case is somewhat different. Granted Pradon's contention that such headstrong, violent leaders might very well quarrel over the captive women, the impression produced upon us by the sight of these heroes engaged in conflict over mistresses so gallantly and so logically jars upon our sense of proportion. It

does not follow that the society of Louis' court found any great inconvenience in this picture. The legendary figures were preserved. The amorous episode which made up the novelty of Pradon's treatment was not illogical and added interest to a well known subject. The inability of Pyrrhus and Ulysse to make an exchange of prisoners would not be too severely blamed, for the dramatist had to be allowed some fiction. If Pradon, then, is granted the basis of his exposition, it is easy to explain the public's interest in his play, for the novelty of seeing the mythological heroes in love with their captives, the interest in the outcome, Andromaque's sympathetic figure, the noble end of Polixène and the manly conduct of Astyanax were absorbing sights upon the stage. The love episodes were not allowed to alter too much the well known characters. The intrigue, even though falsely sustained, held the attention from the interest in the characters. In this way the tragedy is far better than "Tamerlan" or "Phèdre et Hippolyte" and, on the side of construction, shows less of pure "galanterie;" the love episodes are in better balanced relation to the other features of the story; while the intricacy of plot, slightly more complicated than in the earlier plays, is better distributed.

The unpopularity of "Statira" is easily accounted for after a perusal of the involved "maze plot." The appeal of the subject depended upon the favor of La Calprenède's novel. The announcement of a tragedy on the same subject would awake public interest from a desire to see in what new manner Statira's trials were presented or from an interest in the other well known characters of the novel. As stated before, Pradon owed much to the romance, a considerable part of which went into the make up of his scenes. In spite of his statement in his preface that La Calprenède's material was not suitable for the stage, he was content to copy it, hoping, doubtless, to attract an audience by the choice of subject so familiar to the

general reader. His plot is most exasperating and wearisome, full of antitheses, surprises, ambiguous situations, used now with one set of characters now with others but always the same tricks of composition, until the reader is confused and bored with the senseless harping upon the same chord. This difficulty to get a definite hold on the story, to find one's way amid such involved exposition must have been more tedious to the onlooker than it is to the reader. It is no wonder that the play fell into disuse after a few performances. The figure of Léonatus which Pradon took from Plutarch offers no novelty. His attributes are those of Oroondate in the novel of "Cassandre". The other characters are transplanted from La Calprenède; incidents from this work are sewn together; the dénouement made to conform to stage usage requiring a slight alteration of the novel. Why Statira kills herself is vague, unconvincing, and illogical, and to be explained only upon the ground that the author decided there must be for a tragedy some tragic end so he sacrificed Statira to this purpose.

A certain Corneillan conception runs through the play but it is subordinated to the numerous love episodes which hang with such a blight upon the whole construction. Roxane the ambitious usurper, conceived on the model of Corneille's regal personages, might have been convincing had Pradon not altered her portrait by her varied love affairs. Perdiccas, too, the unscrupulous plotter, bid fair to maintain a character of force, well drawn and in proportion. He is, however, made largely ineffective by the same romanesque treatment. The author's attention was so bent upon following the lines laid down by the novel that he never saw how unsuitable this conception was for the stage. A simpler plot and a better arrangement of the episodes might have made a more convincing play. As it stands,

the numerous "politiques" run side by side through the story in an even tenor, not one standing out more prominently than another, so that the total impression is a play of three or four plots leading in opposite directions and lacking sufficient interest to sustain the attention. The result is confusion and boredom. The political struggles of Roxane and Perdicas against Léonatus and his allies are subordinated to the jealous loves of the queen and her advisor. The author thought he was combining with skill a love story with political manoeuvres. Racine had been successful in this type of tragedy. The stage of the day required this sort of plot. Pradon, however, fell into the romanesque, a manner not uncommon to the novel and tragedy of the period. His rhetorics, heroes, amorous women pass through situations of imprisonment as rivals, threatened executions, forced acceptance of unwilling mates, fears for the fidelity of loved ones, plotting, insurrections, threatened defeats, all this in rapidly changing scenes, filled with schemes of revenge, cold protests of love or detailed analyses of the lover's feelings until the audience becomes so confused that it loses interest in hero and heroine. The villainous Perdicas goes unpunished. He joins his rival Léonatus, after the heroine's death, vowing vengeance upon Roxane who likewise escapes a deserving fate by fleeing to the enemy's camp.

As a novelty this play had nothing to offer to the already well known tale. As a dramatic offering it failed to produce either pity or fear. It was flat, artificial, unconvincing in manner, with badly arranged incidents, while the morality of its teachings is open to question.

"Regulus", whose success in Pradon's lifetime and in later years is well known, deserved of all his plays the most acclaim. Simple in construction, free from many of the annoying mannerisms

crowding upon his early plays, it sustains interest by the noble figure of the hero. The author did well to follow the main lines of the Corneillian hero whose tragic end evolved from the internal conflict of duty with personal feelings, aims, and desires. The love episode is here entirely subordinated to the story of Regulus pursuing his duty to the end. The attention of the onlooker is thus not distracted by any inept passion or drawn away from the main issue by a confusion of plot calculated to please by its sentimentality. The conception of Regulus's love for Fulvie, while fiction of the usual Pradon sort, is acceptable because the main character dominates the scene and the love idea is secondary. His language is noble and free from bombast or the gallantry of the salons. The versification is better than usual. The scenes logically arranged without useless crowding one upon the other, serve sufficiently to present the milieu and sketch the subordinate incidents. The first three acts lead up to the great tragic crisis of the fourth in which Regulus makes his choice. Two subordinate motives run throughout the play, that of Fulvie and the jealousy of Mannius. They fill the first three acts, adding variety to a subject otherwise difficult to sustain at length upon the stage. By changing the milieu from Rome to the camp of Regulus, the unity of place was preserved without affecting to any harmful degree the historical fact.

Fulvie's love, likewise a fiction, fits well into the action without presuming too much upon it. The necessity for such an episode sprang from Pradon's manner of conceiving tragedy as an historical action mingled with a sentimental situation. In most of his tragedies this tended to falsify characters, complicate the plot, and make an ineffective picture. Such is not the case in Regulus. By keeping his weakness for such mannerisms in hand, he presented the Roman hero in

the heroic light of historical narrative. The love episode served to add to the figure an added interest in the manner of Regulus' renunciation of Fulvie. The effect is not displeasing and certainly added to the enjoyment of the audience whose sympathy went out to Fulvie while admiring the hero's greatness of soul. The boy Atillius was used to the same advantage. Regulus called upon to renounce family ties and the woman he loves enters not into lone debates over the proper course to follow. He moves straight to the fate awaiting him, brushing aside the ties binding him to a worldly life in a manner worthy of admiration. This is the Corneillan hero. It is a pity that Pradon did not follow his master's model sooner, leaving aside the sentimental and the amorous. He held too much to the popular taste, thinking to catch it by a mixture of the two systems. In Regulus he shows what he might have accomplished if he had followed his own inclinations, not the dictates of a temporary success.

As said before Regulus moves through the piece with a nobility and constancy all of a piece. Solicitous for Fulvie, he does not fall into the inept in seeking to protect her:-

On va bientôt donner un assaut à Carthage,
 Le tumulte, les cris, et l'horreur des combats,
 Ce mélange confus d'âmes et de Soldats,
 Ce terrible appareil vous rendroit trop timide,
 Souffrez malgré l'amour que la gloire vous guide,
 Madame, au nom des Dieux partez avec mon Fils. ⁴⁴²

Aux noms des Dieux, partez, éloignez-vous de nous
 Le fort de Clypea sera plus seur pour vous:
 Retournez-y, Madame, et par l'ordre d'un père,
 Par les vœux d'un Romain à qui vous êtes chère
 Vos jours sont exposez dans un camp. ⁴⁴³

⁴⁴²Act II, sc. II

⁴⁴³ibid.

In the hour of the great decision he is firm while at the same time touched with a human spirit which increases the proportion of his figure as a great and worthy Roman:-

Il falloit servir Rome, et je la sers, Madame,
 Elle a dû l'emporter sur vous et sur ma flame:
 Ne me regardez plus comme amant, comme époux,
 Un malheureux esclave est indigne de vous;
 Aujourd'huy cependant envisagez ma gloire
 Esclave, je remporte une grande victoire,
 Et je mourray content en songeant que mes fers
 Pourront après Carthage enchaîner l'Univers.
 Mais, Madame, vos pleurs ébranlent ma constance,
 Je tâchois d'éviter vos yeux, vostre présence,
 Je sens que ma vertu dans le trouble où je suis
 Pourroit:-sortons:mais Dieux! l'on m'amène mon fils:
 Voilà le dernier trait que me gardoit Lépide.⁴⁴⁴

After the pleading of his son, overcome with emotion Regulus can dismiss him with a few short phrases:-

Mon fils, rassurez-vous,soyez digne de moy,
 Faites-moy voir un coeur incapable d'efroy,
 Sans vous acoutumer à répandre des larmes
 Dissipez devant moy ces indignes allarmes.
 Respectez Metellus, Puissent les destinées
 Vous accorder,mon fils,de plus longues années
 Où s'il les doit finir par quelque coup du sort,
 Qu'il prenne pour modèle et ma vie et ma mort.⁴⁴⁵

His farewell to Fulvie shows the same lofty tone:-

Il est temps de marquer la grandeur de vostre âme:
 Armez-vous de vertu, sans plaindre Regulus,

⁴⁴⁴ Act V, sc.V
⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Montrez-vous aujourd'huy fille de Metellus,
 Imitiez sa constance, et si je perds la vie,
 Songez qu'il me regarde avec des yeux d'envie.⁴⁴⁶

The character of Fulvie is conceived in a more worthy manner than most of Pradon's feminine rôles. With the exception of Amestris in "Pirame," none of them have great force of character. This Roman woman, daughter of Metellus, presents a truly Roman steadfastness of purpose and lofty ideals:- "Elle a des sentimens assez dignes d'une Romaine pour ne pas faire rougir Regulus du dessein qu'il a de l'épouser après la prise de Carthage." Thus the author sketches her in his preface. In execution he has succeeded in giving to her the desired qualities. She is calm in the face of danger, refusing to withdraw from the field of battle when her father and lover, whom she has come to watch over, order her away:-

Seigneur, si vous m'aimez, épargnez-moy des larmes,

 Ce n'est point par des voeux qu'il faut vous secourir,
 Je dois près de vous vivre, ou près de vous mourir.⁴⁴⁷

Suspicious of Mannius, she has also a hatred of his craven fear and scorns his attentions like a true Roman matron:-

Lasche, pour te punir d'une telle insolence
 Les plus sanglans mépris serviront ma vengeance.
 Quand tu vois Regulus des Dieux abandonné,
 Aux fers des Africains ce Héros enchaîné;
 Perfide, tu prétens en tirer avantage,
 Quand pour luy la fortune a changé de visage,
 Sa disgrâce affermit mes sermens et ma foy,
 Et redouble aujourd'huy l'horreur que j'ay pour toy.⁴⁴⁸

446 Act V, sc. V.

447 Act II, sc. IV.

448 Act III, sc. V.

When confronted with the decision of Regulus to return to captivity and death leaving behind him love and renown, she meets the situation with the fortitude of a true daughter of her country:-

Ne croyez pas, Seigneur, que pour vous attendrir,
 Je pousse devant vous quelque indigne soupir;
 Je connois Vostre coeur, vostre vertu farouche,
 Je sçay que les soupirs, les pleurs, rien ne vous touche,
 Je viens vous applaudir de vostre grand dessein,
 Vous estes, il est vray, véritable Romain,
 Je seray comme vous véritable Romaine:
 Partez, Seigneur, allez où la gloire vous mène,
 Vous aurez à mes yeux un coeur prest à percer,
 Et j'auray comme vous du sang prest à verser.⁴⁴⁹

The characters of Metellus and Mannius are more or less conventional stock figures, the one presenting the whole-hearted, fervent, staunch Pro-Consul, supporting his chief and Rome with all the ardor of his stern, military nature. It is doubtful whether a true Roman would have agreed to the arguments of his daughter for remaining in camp contrary to her father's wishes, but such fidelity to historical fact must not be expected of seventeenth century dramatists. Mannius, a different sort of creature from Metellus, has the qualities of the cowardly traitor, weak-willed, ambitious, jealous to the point of selling his honor to gain his ends. His activity in the play serves to bring about the betrayal of Regulus. As a motive for this deed he is assigned the role of rival in love to the great Roman. His effrontery before the victim of his treachery is well expressed, showing him obliged to receive in silence the scorn of Regulus, lest he lose even the protection which the magnanimous Roman accords him by unwillingness to reveal the plot:-

Regulus.

Mannius, soyez un peu moins fier,
 Il seroit dangereux de vous justifier;
 C'est vous----quoqu'il en soit, allez, je vous pardonne,
 A vos propres remords mon coeur vous abandonne,

Mannius

Moy, Seigneur? je pourrais

Regulus

Ne me répondez plus,

Allez, et qu'on me laisse avec Metellus. ⁴⁵⁰

The tragedy could not fail to please. Its simplicity compared with the author's previous involved plays was doubtless a surprise to his public. The figure of Regulus, touching and noble, carried the sympathy and admiration by its manliness, the firmness with which Regulus pursues his own aim, recalling, as it did, the great heroes of Corneille, who likewise sacrificed love and family ties for honor or duty. The verbose, rhetorical phrases have disappeared. The emotional scenes are more convincing. Stress of feeling and tense situations are not given in long tirades. Short, abrupt sentences leave room for the play of the imagination. The lines assigned to Regulus are replete with political maxims à la Corneille. As a pendant to the illustrious deeds of Regulus, is the moving love scene wherein Fulvie plays a role similar to the hero's in renunciation. This episode delighted those who were wont to see a moving passion expressed through the mouth of a great historical figure. The subordination of this secondary plot made Regulus stand out in clearer fashion, adding to the audience's admiration a feeling of sympathy and delight which flattered the love of the romanesque.

The villainous Mannius drew their hate. Far nobler was it that he should be conquered by the scorn of his victim than that a conventional death at the hands of his rival be accorded him. The plot develops without intricacy but straight to the expected conclusion. Pity for the hero and heroine went hand in hand with admiration for Regulus's sacrifice. The versification is better than Pradon's usual style. It is not surprising, then, that the tragedy held the stage far into the succeeding century. In construction, character drawing and freedom from the baneful influence of a "fade" gallantry, it was quite above many contemporary plays whose authors were not called upon to win the public's approval against the ridicule and slander of powerful enemies.

Scipion l'Africain might well be called the tragedy of the "confidants," for the stage is given over to their expository remarks, their careless news carrying, and their gratuitous advice. Not even "Phèdre et Hippolyte" is as bad a tragedy as this foolish tragi-comedy. The versification is, of all Pradon's poor specimens, the worst. It shows evidence of hasty composition. Probably old age was lessening what small ability he possessed as a poet and story teller. Otherwise the appearance of this play after Regulus is hard to account for. As in the early play the author chose a well known political figure, in fact two, Scipion and Hannibal. Instead of conceiving his plot along the simple Corneillian lines followed by his Regulus, he seems to have learned no lesson from his former success. An insipid love story reduces the powerful Scipion to the rank of a foolish swain; while Hannibal offers to reward his opponent by a woman's favor. Scipion, master of the world, cannot even master his own heart, calls upon his confident to help him keep a steady courage ever before his eyes. Hannibal, come to decide the fate of two nations in a conference, ends his debate in the absorbing topic of the loves of a headstrong, undisciplined mercenary and his

sister. Ispérie floats through the tragedy, pale, insipid and as inactive as Thisbé in Pradon's first play.

The presence of Erixène is inexplicable. She does nothing. Her *raison d'être* is hard to find unless it be to fill a counter role to Ispérie. She appears to have some admiration for Scipion but even that feeling is not sufficiently expressed. One cannot blame his disregard of her. The most unimportant confident speaks more to the point than she. Lucéjus, the undisciplined prince of the Celtiberians, gains admittance to Scipion's camp in one of those devious and ill explained ways so beloved of novelists, shows his amorous feelings by the usual display of Pradon's cold rhetoric wherein he is at first doubtful of Ispérie's love, then fully reassured, dashes off to lead an attack at the very moment that his commander holds parley with the enemy. This lack of military discipline must have amused the cavaliers in the audience. The romantic situation of Lucéjus could not justify this breach of military etiquette. He is made a prisoner. Scipion, confronted with the alternative of sacrificing his rival and losing Ispérie's love or sacrifice his own feelings for her ^{love} comes magnanimous, as Tamerlan before him, presents her to Lucéjus, returning to his temporarily interrupted glory.

The only important scene, that of the interview between the rival chieftains, is so marred by the pernicious sentimentalizing of Scipion and the mediocre strategy of Hannibal that the great historical personages present a poor figure. This inconsistency must have displeased the public of the times who hoped to see in this encounter of the two great nobles of Roman history a manifestation of the lofty ambition the proud unbending qualities of the conquerors, inspiring verses replete with political maxims, grandiose phrases and moving sentiments. Instead of that their interest was called to support a semi-poli-

tical debate in which the destiny of Rome and Carthage was bartered for a Roman's love in unconvincing fashion:-

Hannibal

Vous serez plus pour elle [Rome] en accordant la paix,
La victoire toujours ne suit pas nos souhaits
De plus, considérez qu'en l'état où nous sommes,
Je me vois à la tête encor de cent mille hommes,
Que je fais avancer et camper à vos yeux
Nous combatrons, le reste est en la main des Dieux
Elle sçaura régler vostre sort et le nostre,
Mais songez que la paix est encor en la nostre,
J'ay négligé, Seigneur, de nous parler d'abord
D'un bien qui pourroit cimenter un accord;
Jusqu'icy vous n'avez aucun noeud qui vous lie;
Si ma Niece, Seigneur, si l'heureuse Ispérie
A ce suprême honneur méritoit d'aspirer
Mais le coeur d'un Romain ne sçait pas soupirer,
Et le vostre trop fier et trop inexorable.....

Scipion

Je respecte Ispérie, elle est toute adorable,
Elle pourroit fléchir le plus superbe coeur
Mais pour la mériter il faut être vainqueur,
Et ce seroit pour moy le comble de la gloire
Que l'hymen d'Ispérie après une victoire
Je ne m'en défens point j'adore ses vertus,
Cependant vous l'avez promise à Lucéjus,
Et vostre foy, Seigneur.....

Hannibal

Cette promesse est vain
Ce bien est rompu par sa nouvelle chaîne. ⁴⁵¹

With Ispérie Scipion is tender and overbearing, now playing the role of gentle knight, again that of proud conqueror with somewhat the tone of a pleading lover:-

Scipion

Ma présence vous gêne
Et je seray toujours l'objet de vostre haine;
Je la mérite peu cependant.

Madame, vous croyez la haine légitime
La prise de Zama vous a coûté des pleurs,
Du Prince vostre Amant j'ay causé les malheurs
Et vous vous en plaignez du moins sans vous contraindre
C'est d'autres malheurs dont on n'ose se plaindre.

Ouy, pour vous Rome a d'autres desseins,
 Et puisqu'il est enfin ennemy des Romains
 Cet Amant, qu'il combat contre la République
 Tout s'oppose à ses voeux, raison, et politique
 Pourrait-elle souffrir qu'il devint vostre époux?
 Et d'ailleurs cet hymen est il digne de vous?

Et fut-il Roy, Madame,
 Il ne mérite point une si belle flame?
 Que vous connoissez peu le prix de vostre coeur?
 Vous ignorez encor jusqu'à quel point d'honneur -
 Non, à vostre mérite il n'est rien qui réponde
 Il est trop au dessus de tous les Roys du monde,
 Et pour mieux contenir l'honneur de vostre choix,
 Il faut un des vainqueurs, un des maistres des Rois
 En un mot, un Romain.

The same tricks of composition as appeared in the earlier plays occur in Pradon's last tragedy. The amorous and sentimental are more in evidence, spoiling the chief characters. It seems as if Pradon had let this favorite method have full rein. In his earlier works he had kept it somewhat in bounds, without allowing it to deface the plot by its persistent, falsifying tendency. In "Scipion l'Africain", the subject, great in possibilities, was completely spoiled, reduced to the level, as in "Phèdre et Hippolyte", of a romantic novel on classical themes. Characters are distorted, history made to do duty to romance, and tragedy banished to the tragi-comic. Unable to dispose of his Ispérie in a manner satisfactory to audiences or to extricate his vacillating Scipion from the "impasse" into which he has placed him, Pradon found recourse in the gallant renunciation of his hero. Ispérie is saved. The lovers gain their freedom and Scipion follows his destiny. The only tragic note is the poor figure made by the hero. Pradon's mistake was in presuming that the tragedy of a broken heart in whatever setting he chose was sufficient to move an audience. Firmly believing in this, he never before courageously pushed this idea to the extreme of his last play and made it the dominant factor. However, much his public relished amorous scenes and heroes, they were not ready to abandon all

other pleasurable elements in tragedy for this method. The play's ill success is witness to this fact.

The versification in all these tragedies is very poor. Pradon was no poet. His lines are flat, colorless, lacking in originality, without the fire of poetic inspiration. At times they are so halting and disjointed that they seem to break into pieces and fall at the end of the phrase into an ill-assorted jumble. The end rhymes are composed of the most ordinary, commonplace poetical rhyme-words. The verse is in the style called "rime pauvre." The following examples show the lack of vocabulary and of poetic skill which was Pradon's besetting fault. These rhymes are constantly used:-

secrète-----inquiète.	avantage-----ombrage.
gloire-----victoire.	raisons-----maisons.
bien-----sien.	larmes-----charmes.
reine-----souveraine.	malheureux-----ambitieux.
haine-----reine.	craintes-----atteintes.
visage-----présage.	flame-----Pirame.
perdus-----entendus.	Dieux-----adioux.
divers-----univers.	mutuelles-----fidelles.
secret-----regret.	jour-----cour.
teste-----conquête.	enfin-----destin.
haine-----chaîne.	disposer-----épouser.
aime-----vous-même.	courroux-----de vous.
frère-----père.	résolue-----absolu.
madame-----votre âme.	légitime-----victime.
touche-----bouche.	aujourd'huy----pour luy.
chère-----mère.	fois-----voix.
politique----publique.	suite-----fuite.

These and many other commonplace combinations are used again and again, producing that monotony of prosaic verse which was increased by

the rhetorical manner of composition. Pradon was not averse to repeating within thirty or even twenty lines the same end rhymes, violating thereby one of the canons of classic good taste. Frequent barbarisms of this sort are to be found:-

certaine-----Polixène.	encor-----Anténor.
fils-----pris.	ennemis-----mon fils.
accord-----fort.	paix-----sujets.
exploits-----fois.	vaincus-----Fabius.
efforts-----alors.	traitez-----traitez.
défaits-----succès.	nostre-----vostre.
pas-----pas.	saisie-----Aricie.
Trézène-----haine.	

Halting, limping verses abound, as for example:-

--Madame, vous n'avez pour moy que trop de charmes.
 --Donnez-la-moy, Seigneur, puisqu'il m'a sçeu trahir.
 --Quoy, Seigneur, je verrois Pirame estre mon Roy?
 --Ses afronts sont gravez trop avant dans mon coeur.
 --Que vous succomberiez vous-même sous vos coups.
 --Je vous ay toujours veu pour moy le coeur d'un Fils.
 --Vous nous faites encor gémir sous vostre chaîne.
 --Madame, elle a de quoy rendre une âme charmée.
 --Peut-estre que sans vous j'aurois pu l'épouser.
 --Je m'en éloigne bien plus de Phèdre que de vous.
 --Ouy, Seigneur, tous les jours mes yeux en sont témoins.
 --Vous me voyez, mon Fils, une insigne victoire
 Ajoute un nouveau lustre à l'éclat de ma gloire.
 --Non pas comme l'ont cru mille Peuples divers.
 Qui me font aujourd'huy revenir des Enfers.
 --Aprenez donc, mon Fils, que sortant de Trézène,
 Je suspendis l'amour pour faire agir la haine.

Pallas me fist quitter Phèdre pour le punir,
Et differer l'Hymen qui nous alloit unir.

The imitation of Corneille's manner is apparent in most of the versification. The following examples chosen at random from the most successful of Pradon's plays illustrate the poet's manner:-

"Pirame et Thisbé":-

Hé bien, foible Amestris, t'y voilà résolue!
Ta flame est en ce jour ta maîtresse absolue!

Vous m'en avez donnez l'exemple, il faut le suivre;
Quand on brave la mort, on est digne de vivre.

Je vois que je seray, si je veux vous en croire,
De ces Héros de nom qui dérobent leur gloire.
Se couvrent de Lauriers qu'ils n'ont jamais cueillis.
Mais enfin les grands coeurs de leur sort étant maîtres,
Veulent se devoir tout, et rien à leurs Ancestres.

Coutez paisiblement les fruits de sa victoire;
Sans courir ses périls, jouissez de sa gloire.

Pour estre à tout le monde, on n'est plus à soy-même;

Croyez qu'heureux sont ceux dont les justes désirs
Dans leur tranquille vie ont borné leurs plaisirs.

Aprenez à parler, ou plutost à vous taire;

Quand on n'est point aimée, a-t-on l'air si content?

Je me trompe, Madame, et commence à comprendre
Que Pirame à vos yeux aura pu se défendre;

Madame, vous n'avez pour moy que trop de charmes,
 Mais je trouve un Perfide indigne de vos larmes.
 Madame, vous l'aimez, vostre coeur s'est trahy,
 Je vous aime, et je suis malheureux et hay:

Je veux mourir, Bélus, et veux mourir en Reine;

Le Nature a ses droits, et le Trône a les siens.

Arreste, c'en est trop, Destin impitoyable!

Voilà le dernier coup dont ta fureur m'accable;

Bélus, je suis trahie, et ce funestre jour

N'éclaire qu'à ma honte un trop indigne amour.

 "Tamerlan:-"

Sa pitié politique, et sa fatale envie,

Veulent malgré la mort m'enchaîner à la vie,

Madame, à vos discours et vos yeux irritez,

Je connois la fierté du sang dont vous sortez,

Et je ne voy que trop l'orgueilleux caractère

D'un frère impétueux et d'un barbare Père.

Quand je fais tout pour luy, s'il n'en fait pas de même,

Je pouray le haïr autant que je vous aime.

Vous parlez en Captif, et j'écoute en Vainqueur;

Cette vaste grandeur, cette extrême puissance,

N'est point, si tu le veux, un droit de ma naissance;

Et quel orgueil enfin que tu fasse paroître,

Bajazet est Esclave, et Tamerlan est Maître.

"La Troade:"-

Cependant quand les Grecs vous possèdent, Seigneur,
 Déjà du fils d'Hector ils semblent avoir peur,
 Et lorsque de son sang on exige l'offrande,
 C'est le camp tout entier, Seigneur, qui le demande,
 C'est le repos des Grecs, et le vostre et le mien.

J'approuve ce dessein, il faut vous satisfaire,
 Il faut fléchir les Grecs et l'ombre de mon père,
 Courrons les attendrir d'un spectacle nouveau,
 On verra Polixène aux pieds de son tombeau;

"Regulus" -

Ainsi, libres, Seigneur, de ce soin domestique
 Avec tranquillité servons la République,
 Sans qu'aucun interest partage nostre ardeur,
 Que Rome toute entière occupe nostre coeur.
 Il est temps de finir cette grande entreprise,
 Il faut qu'à cet assaut la gloire nous conduise,

Quand de nous dans un camp on peut se défier,
 Une grande action sçait nous justifier:
 Sur vous d'aucun soupçon je n'ay plus l'âme atteinte,
 D'ailleurs la défiance est l'effet de la crainte,
 Je ne puis un moment douter de vostre foy,
 Et crois que tout Romain est Romain comme moy.

Je crains peu du destin le caprice funeste,
 Je feray mon devoir, les Dieux feront le reste,
 Madame, et je rougis de tarder si long-temps

A remplir un devoir à ma gloire important;
 Cartage sera prise, ou bien mes funeraillles
 Se feront aujourd'hui sur ses propres murailles;
 Plaise aux Dieux que ma mort en cause le débris!

Vous me voyez captif, mais ce qui me console,
 J'ay remply mon devoir, et si je suis vaincu,
 C'est la faute du sort et non de ma vertu.

Il faut tranquillement obéir à son sort,
 Voir d'un visage égal et la vie et la mort,
 Et l'on doit préférer le trépas à la vie,
 Aussi-tost qu'il devient utile à la partie.

Mais quoy? consolez-vous, généreuse Fulvie,
 Avant que d'estre à vous, je suis à ma patrie:
 J'ay donné la parole, et je dois la tenir,
 Regardez d'un oeil ferme un illustre avenir.

"Scipion" -

La fortune est volage, il ne faut qu'un caprice,
 Un seul jour, un instant nous mène au precipice,

Mais j'aime mieux encor pour la cause commune
 Suivre icy la raison que l'aveugle fortune;

Les Mamertins vaincus, les Sagontins défaits,
 L'Italie embrasez après tant de succès,
 Nos Consuls terrassez, Rome presque assiégée,
 Tout cela veut que Rome à la fin soit vangée.

Conclusion.

In how far, then, were Boileau's critical remarks about Pradon justified? Was he the stupid, ill-informed person represented by his critics, an author whose works were so badly conceived, so lacking in dramatic and poetic skill that the public would have none of them? Such was the report transmitted by Boileau to succeeding ages. The preceding pages, it is hoped, have in a measure softened the harshness of the satirist's denunciations, given praise where possible and blame for the all too numerous errors of judgment and taste which Boileau had pointed out. To judge Pradon in the light of present day criticism would be of little value to the history of French letters in which he plays a very slight and mediocre role. On the other hand, he has appeared worthy of study as a type of the lesser writer of his age who persistently and against a considerable opposition from all sides had tenaciously held to his trade, producing one play after another with little difference in manner one from the other, and reaping slight benefit and less renown for his trouble. As a type of the seventeenth century writer for the stage he presents an interesting problem. In spite of the very unflattering portrait Boileau left of him, his plays were produced, some with a sufficient success judging by their ability to hold the stage for a considerable number of performances. In those days numerous performances of a single tragedy covering a sequence of many days were extremely rare. Pradon's plays, at least some of them, did have a favorable reception. This curious fact in the light of the author's reputation, led to the study of the tragedies themselves and particularly to the man Pradon behind the disdain of Boileau, the aversion of critics. To fix him in his milieu and then to study his relation to contemporary society as a

basis for a new judgment upon the man and his work has been the aim of this study. Interest in this endeavor was increased by the finding occasionally of some bit of favorable comment upon this strangely vague poet in the critical writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The obscurity surrounding his early life and in fact most of his career has made it necessary to build the figure, as it were, from a skeleton of uncertain data, to clothe it with the garments of its particular social world, and by means of Pradon's written remarks give it a being and a character independent of the critics. A study of the man and his works from the viewpoint of his times was desirable; an evaluation resting not upon any preconceived notions, biased judgment, or hostility but upon the author himself in connection with the age for which he wrote.

With this aim in view it is hoped that Pradon stands a clearer and more personal figure than heretofore. To excuse the man and condemn his works is illogical. To interpret both in the light of his time seems fairer and possibly nearer the truth. That he was no great literary person is self-evident, but to deny him all literary instinct, to brand him stupid and a fool is as bad as over-praise. Such an attitude, the traditional one in his case, has made the study of his life more difficult. Biographers, paying him scanty attention, had mistaken the date of his birth, assigned to him a name not his, advanced the date of his Parisian activities, and upon the faith of Boileau disregarded in many instances his slight success without asking themselves the reasons for the favor accorded him or looking beyond the condemnation of his enemies.

Pradon was no poet in the true sense of the word. This was his greatest fault. Boileau was quite justified in scoffing at his flat, uninspired rhymes, his mannered, stilted verses often false in senti-

ment and construction. Compared with the great poets of his age he is inadequate, a lay figure of little worth. A Norman by birth, of an honorable and cultured family whose devotion to poetry is attested, he became early engaged either by inclination for a literary career or from a desire to follow the lead of many of his compatriots in the writing of tragic verse. Coming to Paris with the first product of his dramatic ability, following the footsteps of Corneille in manner and method, he attached himself to the salon society of Corneille's admirers. He became their mouthpiece, continuing throughout his life to harken to the dictates of their taste. A lover of good society, of the ease and comfort of its protection, he went from one powerful protector to another, seeking gifts and favors, in fact any reward suitable for maintaining himself among the polite and well-born. The vicarious career of a dramatist forced him, as it did others, to adopt this method of procedure. For such assistance he was willing to sacrifice himself, to blacken his name by a stupid rivalry with the great Racine. Boileau made him pay for this effrontery and Pradon felt only too well the effects of his mistake. Undaunted by the ridicule, to which he replied in part although none too skillfully, - he was not clever or witty enough to be an able critic - he continued in his chosen field. His literary creed was that of the popular writer - to please by whatever ~~manner~~ ^{manner} ~~was~~ ^{was} most effective. An admirer of Corneille, he adopted his mannerisms; he changed them when they were somewhat out of fashion for the more sentimental "douceur" of a new style lately come into being. He compromised with his old principles trying to effect a combination without understanding just where he was bent or what incongruities would result. He knew and recognized only what the public liked. With his ear to the ground he listened for the new and significant note, trying to capture it and enlarge upon it to

please his audiences. He is commonplace because he represents the common popular taste of the times - not the best, most enlightened, or cultured but the taste of a great mass of the society called honnêtes gens, made up of carefree nobles, intriguing women, pushing bourgeois, truculent cavaliers, sober lawyers, and minor statesmen, affected poets, mannered, sentimental novelists, witty and frivolous social favorites, in short, all the society of the court and the city for whom Molière wrote his ballets, Quinault his operas, and Fontenelle his verses. Pradon was not the only writer of occasion. The history of the stage of this period is full of just such characters, but they remain merely names. Their works lie forlorn and forgotten. When the great quarrel between the old and the new school broke out Pradon like all the writers of the moment whose living and social existence depended upon present favor joined force with the popular party, sided with the Moderns, and voted with the crowd. When menaced in their opinions, all this body of lesser lights banded together for self-protection. Once the danger was removed, they drew apart, each seeking his own advantage, jealous of his rival, petty, malicious, envious and desirous of royal favor. Pradon appears strangely aloof from many of these faults. He attacked only to defend himself. Envy and jealousy do not control his utterances but rather a frankness in statement of likes and preferences which makes it easier to get at his literary views.

Such was the man Pradon as he moved through this oligarchy of social cast over which presided the "Roi Soleil." Like all aristocratic bodies this society, too, had its higher and lower strata, its gradations in excellence. The greater and the lesser minds, the more cultured and the less well informed had each their circle of influence. In the more refined the numbers were smaller, leaving apart the

crowd of honnêtes gens whose tastes and pleasures were not quite those of a La Rochefoucauld, of a Madame de Sevigné, a Racine, or a Boileau. For this inferior circle Pradon wrote. It was in just such tragedies as he conceived, not always successfully, that this larger society is reflected with all its shortcomings in taste and literary ideas. The great classic writers represent for us the best of their age, the refinement, the elegance of the élite, but even in this restricted court life the less endowed members are lost to view if our gaze is constantly fixed upon the great figures of the period. Underlying this excellent taste was the great body of those of average culture, typically conventional, who perhaps represent a view of the "Siècle de Louis Quatorze" apt to be overlooked. An attempt to understand this side of the picture can be the only justification for a study of Pradon.

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