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DIDEROT
PARADOXE SUR LE
COMÉDIEN

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-63856-3 - Diderot: Paradoxe Sur Le Comédien

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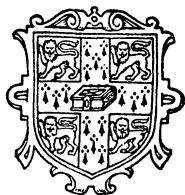
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NOTE

THE *Paradoxe sur le Comédien*, like the majority of the more important writings of DENIS DIDEROT (1713–1784), was not published till after his death, the date of publication being 1830. It was written in 1773 and revised about 1778, but a first sketch of it had appeared in Grimm's *Correspondance* in 1770 under the title of *Observations sur une brochure intitulée Garrick ou les acteurs anglais*, and this serves as a starting-point for the discussion¹.

Diderot was prolific in ideas, and he expounded them with warmth and brilliance, seeing, or permitting himself to see, only one side of the question. Thus in this onslaught on the sensibility which distinguished his own character—"si Nature a pétri une âme sensible, c'est la mienne"—he forgets that an actor must feel a part before he can interpret it; that the emotions which study and reflection enable him to imitate on the stage must be his own emotions; and that if Dumesnil trusted too much to nature, Clairon trusted too much to art.

A. TILLEY

July, 1922

¹ On the strength of a manuscript with corrections, all in the writing of J.-A. Naigeon, Diderot's admirer and disciple, M. Ernest Dupuy, in his edition of the *Paradoxe* (1902), contended that Naigeon was the real author, but M. Bédier (*Études critiques*, 1903, pp. 83 ff.) has conclusively proved, after careful examination of the manuscript, that whoever was the author of the *Paradoxe* it could not have been Naigeon.