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D'ALLAINVAL
L'ÉCOLE
DES BOURGEOIS

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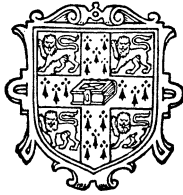
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N O T E

D'ALLAINVAL (Léonor-Jean-Christine Soulas) was born at Chartres, probably in 1700. Very little is known about his career. Like so many other bohemians of the century, he called himself an *abbé*, flaunted the *petit collet* and the ecclesiastical habit yet had no real connection with the Church. Living from hand to mouth, dissipated, often spending the night in sedan-chairs, D'Allainval haunted those *bonnes maisons* where rich financiers used to offer poor devils of authors a meal in exchange for their conversation. Indeed, he was struck down by apoplexy whilst dining at the house of a *fermier-général*. Transported to the Hôtel-Dieu he died there on 2 May, 1753.

D'Allainval's first play, *La Fausse Comtesse* (1726) was not a success. And *L'École des Bourgeois*, first produced two years later, did not appeal to the public until 1787. Thereafter, it remained on the repertoire of the Comédie Française until well into the Third Empire. Recently, in 1932, it was again performed at the same theatre and had an honourable reception. Another play, *Le Mari curieux*, was presented at the Comédie Française in the 'thirties of the eighteenth century but soon withdrawn. D'Allainval was best known in his lifetime for his *Embarras des Richesses* which enjoyed a long run at the Théâtre Italien.

The plot of *L'École des Bourgeois* is merely adequate; its dénouement is slightly artificial. The charm of this comedy lies in the verve of its dialogue and in the sureness of its characterization. Moncade is a typical Regency *marquis*. Insolent, cynical and unscrupulous, he remains, nevertheless, irresistible because of his unfailing good humour. *L'École des Bourgeois* announces that change in the public attitude towards the bourgeoisie which was soon to be reflected in the theatre of Des-touches and, more heavily, in the *dramas*. In his duel with the bourgeois, no doubt Moncade has the last

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NOTE

word. Yet, after the curtain has fallen, one is left with the impression that the old phrase, *noblesse oblige*, has ceased to have much meaning.

D'Allainval also wrote "pot-boilers" in prose for the *libraires*: *Ana, ou Bigarrures calotines* (1730-1732); *Anecdotes du Règne de Pierre le Grand* (1745) and, under the pseudonym Georges Wink, a *Lettre à mylord xxx sur Baron et la demoiselle Le Couvreur* which was republished in 1870.

F. C. G.

August, 1937