THE ADAPTATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE

BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUCIS:

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE INFLUENCE OF
THE CLASSICAL TRADITION ON FRENCH TRAGEDY.

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Introduction

A hundred and fifty years ago, one of the most celebrated names in the French literary world was that of Jean-François Ducis. His plays were read by everyone of culture, performed in the best theatres, and the author claimed as a direct and worthy descendant of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. To-day, his plays are half forgotten, and himself little more than a name. The fact that after enjoying brilliant success for more than half a century, plays should fall into such complete obscurity rouses the curiosity of the student to know why it should be so: and the fact that most of the tragedies are adaptations of Shakespeare gives them a greatly added interest, at least for the English reader. Why should Ducis have made Shakespeare his model? Why should he have tried to adapt him, and how did he do it? Sheer curiosity to know what he made of the English poet first impels one to read the plays, and in the reading, a host of other problems suggest themselves and deepen the interest a hundredfold.

The first feeling that rises is one of profound astonishment. What could have made anyone thus deform and alter a writer whom he admired enough to make him his model? From the plays, one turns to the letters and the life-story to find what manner of man Ducis was: and his character stands out vividly at once. He was a poet, romantic and independent, fascinated by all that was striking and dramatic; as a man, pure and upright, a strange mixture of gentleness and rugged independence.

This abundantly explains why Shakespeare became his delight and his inspiration; but it only deepens the mystery as to why he should so have deformed him, altering plot, characters, tone and style. Some other influence must have been as strong, or stronger than his romantic admiration for Shakespeare: the influence was that of the age in which he lived, and the dramatic tradition he had inherited from his predecessors.
And so the question becomes a wider one than the work of one man.

The conception of tragedy that dominated the work of writers in England and in France; the particular tastes and ideas of the audiences for which Ducis wrote, and which he must perforce please; these were the things that from outside influenced Ducis, and modified his own tastes and ideas. A study of them at once concentrates the attention on the particular set of rules and conventions known as the Classical Tradition; and it becomes evident that it was this tradition which set a great gulf between English and French tragedy, and forced Ducis to adapt Shakespeare as he did before he could present him to a French public. Most of the changes he made were out of respect for an authority which Shakespeare neglected entirely. Nevertheless, at the time when Ducis wrote, this Tradition was tottering to its fall, - the proof of it was that he dared to adapt Shakespeare at all for a French audience. New ideas more in keeping with Ducis's own literary tastes were beginning to find favour, and the most outstanding character of Ducis's work is that it was a desperate effort to reconcile two opposites - French and English tragedy, old authority and new inspiration. In this lay the secret of its success in a transition age: and in this the reason of its failure in an age which no longer seeks to reconcile two ideals so different, but accepts both, and renders to each the homage it deserves.

To understand the adaptations of Ducis, therefore, the first thing essential is to realise clearly the nature of this French tradition that by its steadily increasing influence separated so widely French from English tragedy, its rise in the 17th century, and its gradual dissolution in the 18th. The first two chapters are therefore concerned with the history and influence of the Classical Tradition, and the position in which it stood when Ducis was writing; the remaining chapters are a study of the particular example of its influence afforded by the works of Ducis. Each adaptation is analysed separately, and an attempt is made
to trace the conflicting influences of the traditional French system of classical tragedy and the romantic drama of Shakespeare. It is not without general interest because of its bearing upon the difficult question of the Classical Tradition in Tragedy; and it has the particular interest of the study of a very charming personality, that despite the inferiority of his literary work inspires in the modern reader the same respect and sympathy as in the men of his own day.

Plan:
1. What the Graeco-Roman Tradition is.
2. The history of its establishment in France and rejection in England.
4. Was its effect on English and French poetry good or bad?
1. The first tragedy in Europe to come to perfection was the Greek. When its last great men passed, there was no one left to hold aloft the torch, and it burned low for centuries, until younger nations lifted it high again - Italy, France, Spain and England. Each one created something that was new and essentially her own. Some openly claimed their descent from their Greek forerunners, and proudly adopted their standards; others refused to claim the heritage, and owned allegiance to no standard. Yet consciously or unconsciously all had inherited something; and it is question here of two of these peoples, France and England, their attitude to those who had gone before, and the effect of this attitude on what they themselves produced.

Over all Greek tragedy broods a strange mystery and awe: a consequence of the deep religious significance that it held for the Greeks. At first it was the Gods, divine in power, but often so human in their spite and jealousy, who intervened in the doings of men, and drove them whither they would not. Later, when scepticism had worked havoc among the old beliefs, it was Fate, the dark and inscrutable power that through long years tracked men down amid seeming prosperity, and exacted punishment for sin. It was the belief in this watchful, compelling, invisible force that gave to the heroes of Greek tragedy their character, and to the plays their spirit and tone.

The French with their clearness and logic love theories and formulae and clear, reasonable rules. Hence it was rather to the theorist Aristotle than to the craftsmen Eschylus and Sophocles and Euripides that they went in search of guidance for the construction of their own tragedy. They gradually built up a system which became the framework of their drama, and which is generally known as the classical tradition. In reality, it is by no means a faithful reconstruction of the first great tragedy; yet it held sway for centuries, and had the profoundest influence not only in France but in all the civilised countries of
Europe. Upon this framework were built the masterpieces of Corneille and Racine.

What was this formula, this secret of successful tragedy which the French theorists found in Aristotle, or for which they found confirmation and justification there?

First there was the famous question of the Unities of Action, Time and Place, about which so much has been written. The Unity of Action: a play must have only one plot, a straightforward story with a beginning, a middle and an end, and no side-plots, no duplication—nothing to distract the attention from the main issue. The Unity of Time: the action must occupy only twenty-four hours, a single "revolution of the sun". The Unity of Place: the action must all take place in one spot—no change of scene was possible.

Most of the French theorists took for granted that this was exactly what Aristotle had said, and if by chance the Greek dramatists departed from it, it was a mistake due to the barbarous state of the world at that time. It has since been pointed out again and again that Unity of Action is the only one upon which Aristotle insists:

"The plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action, and that a whole, the structural unison of the parts being such that if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed or disturbed" (Poet. VIII); tragedy must not be an epic structure, that is "one with a multiplicity of plots; as if for instance you were to make a tragedy out of the entire story of the Iliad" (Poet. XVIII).

As regards the Unity of Time, all Aristotle says is: "Tragedy endeavours as far as possible to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit" (Poet. V). Even a rigid French classic like La Harpe admits that this is far from the "rigorisme pedantesque" of many writers and critics. Of the Unity of Place, Aristotle says absolutely nothing.
It is a curious fact that it was in the name of "la vraisemblance" that French writers defended the lesser unities - for how could the same stage represent one moment Athens and the next some place a hundred miles away; or a man appear one moment as a youth, and the next as an old man? -- and it was in the name of "la vraisemblance" that they were attacked - for is it likely that people would congregate in successive groups in the same antechamber all through a day and night to discuss their destinies, or pass through a whole series of adventures, murders, recognitions etc. in such a short space of time?

A corollary of the Unity of Action was that nothing episodic must be allowed, - every scene, nay, every speech must materially advance the plot, or it had no business to be there.

The characters must all be of noble birth, and the action must be one of considerable magnitude and importance. Aristotle had said that tragedy is the "imitation of an action that is serious" (Poet. VI.) and of "events terrible and pitiful" (Poet. IX); and indeed as Professor Butcher says "the narrow and trivial life of obscure persons cannot give scope for a great and significant action, one of tragic consequence.

The principal characters of Greek tragedy were always royal or noble; yet moral worth is what Aristotle specifically demands, and French critics were quite unjustified in taking μήμησις σπουδαίως to refer to people of high rank (as for example did the Abbé d'Aubignac and Dacier) -- Further, only mythological characters or those of ancient history were held to be sufficiently dignified for tragedy. No speech or action could be permitted that was not fitting for princes; and the standard of what was fitting for princes was decided by the etiquette of the French court.

The plot was the most important thing and must always rank before other considerations such as the development of character or the writing of poetry for its own sake. Aristotle says, "Dramatic action
unusual words, metaphor, and even lengthened or shortened forms of words. The French carried this still further, and rejected all words that had any commonplace associations, admitting only about a third of the language to the vocabulary of poetic diction.

It is characteristic of French taste to seek a moral purpose and a moral lesson in their tragedies. La Harpe says they found their justification for this in a mis-translation of the famous passage in Aristotle on the object of tragedy—"through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." (Poet. VI) Corneille himself explains this as meaning that tragedy by pity and fear purges and destroys our passions - which is not what Aristotle says. That Aristotle does say is admittedly obscure.

Finally, a rule which French writers adopted, though Aristotle does not give it, is that only verse is fit to express the dignity of tragedy, and never prose.

Such then were the main rules which made up the Graeco-Roman tradition as the French critics and dramatists understood it: the Unities, the condemnation of everything that did not advance the plot, the nobility of plot, characters, speech and behaviour, the supreme importance of the plot, the use of recognitions, the condemnation of the artificial and spectacular, the use of poetic diction, and the insistence on a moral lesson.

The French first made acquaintance with classical drama in the Latin plays of Seneca. This was unfortunate, as the principles of Greek drama had already decayed and become an artificial convention which exemplified all the faults that in the end were to kill French classical tragedy. However, the rediscovery of Greek texts at the Renaissance, led them back to Seneca's models. It is not the place here to discuss the relation of Aristotle's "Poetics" to the drama for
which he seeks the formulae and theories; but it is significant that it is to the theorist, and not to the dramatists that post-Renaissance writers chiefly turned.

All the civilized countries in Europe felt this influence of the Renaissance, Italy first, then France, England and Spain. The four countries fell into two groups, and we have Italian and French drama as opposed to Spanish and English; regular drama as opposed to irregular. That is to say that in the first two countries, the Graeco-Roman tradition quickly established itself as the supreme and inviolable authority on drama; while in the others it was rejected, and the greatest plays produced apart from its influence. This is best shown by a brief survey of 16th and 17th century literature in the two countries that concern us here, France and England; when it will be seen how the same influence was received on opposite sides of the Channel.

Through the Middle Ages, the history of the beginnings of the drama was alike in both countries. The first plays were the miracle and mystery plays designed by the Church to teach the ignorant the truths of religion. Then followed moralities and farces, and the original amateur actors gave place to professionals. In both countries was developing a vigorous, rather coarse, popular drama. Then came the refining influence of the Renaissance. Men made acquaintance with Aristotle and Longinus and alongside the popular drama appeared a scholastic one written by students and admirers of the Ancients. In both countries were there the two influences at work, the popular and the learned; and at this point the histories diverge and must be followed separately.

The history of French drama becomes the history of the establishment of the Graeco-Roman tradition. The first reaction against the primitive farces, moralities etc., were the "classical" plays of Jodelle (1532-73) Garnier (1534-90), and Jean de la Taille (1573).
These were cold, artificial and declamatory imitations of the plays of Seneca. They pleased at first by their novelty, but people soon tired of them, and there appeared the champion of the 'tragédie libre', Alexandre Hardy (1570-1631). He was not ignorant of the new classical ideals, and he had a very French conception of the Unity of Action; that is he takes the moment of crisis, and works out a single problem-action to a logical conclusion. While not indulging in Shakespeare's license, he refuses to be bound by the unities of Time and Place. His plays are full of action and vitality; and also of violence and bloodshed. He is suggestive of Marlowe; a craftsman whose work is still full of faults and weaknesses, but who seems to mark out a possible path to more perfect achievement.

The two models existed: the frigid plays of Jodelle and Garnier, the rough and vigorous ones of Hardy. As Lytton Strachey puts it: "Instead of making the vital drama of Hardy artistic, Corneille made the literary drama of Jodelle alive". Jean de Mairét led the reaction against Hardy, wrote learned prefaces in defence of the unities, and a regular tragedy "Sophonisbe" (1629). A last stand had been made by the irregulars in "Tyr et Sidon" (1628) by Jean de Schelandre, who spent some time in London, and may have known Shakespeare. More interesting than the play itself, is its preface by Pierre Ogier, full of good sense: "Les Grèzes ont travaillé pour la Grèce et ont réussi---- nous les imiterons bien mieux si nous donnons quelque chose au génie de notre temps et au goût de notre langue." But this preface passed almost unnoticed: Corneille appeared, and despite his leanings towards a broader conception of the drama, (as shown in 'Le Cid' 1636) he was forced by the pressure of the Académie Française and the jealous classics Mairét and Scudiery to espouse the cause of Jodelle and Garnier; and the classical tradition was triumphantly established in France, to be carried on by Racine, whose genius it suited better.

To return to England in Renaissance days: Sir Philip Sydney (1554-86)
and Ben Jonson (1573-1637), took up and defended the cause of the Ancients. Jonson wrote a classical tragedy 'Sejanus', but it met with poor success. Marlowe and Shakespeare and with them a host of lesser lights were producing irregular dramas welcomed by the people, and Jonson had to modify his ideas to obtain a hearing. There was no real struggle as there had been in France; the Graeco-Roman tradition was accepted by scholars and critics such as Sidney, Jonson and later on Dryden, but in actual practice in the 16th and early 17th century it had never a chance of success, as Jonson found when he sought to turn his theories to practical account.

One is tempted to ask - "Was the classical tradition then without any influence in England?" Its influence on the drama was very slight. The best tragedy of England developed, as we have seen, in the 16th and early 17th centuries, outside the limits of the classical tradition. The prestige of Shakespeare in England, as well as the preference of the English public for irregular drama, caused later 17th century dramatists to follow Shakespeare. But it is curious to note that while the masterpieces of French tragedy continued to appear until the very end of the 17th century, and if we count Voltaire, on until 1760, there is no tragedy of the very highest order in England after Shakespeare, during the 17th and 18th centuries.

In this period of comparative poverty as far as tragedy was concerned, the French classical theories began to establish themselves in England. They had very little practical effect on English drama, but they had a very great effect on English criticism and non-dramatic poetry. Though it will carry us very much further chronologically, it seems best to follow up here this brief survey of the classical tradition in England; because it is in the work of the 17th and 18th century critics that one can best study the effect of the French classical ideas on the English mind.
18th century Writers enthusiastically adopted the classical standard, and were influenced by it in all their criticism of earlier English drama. Yet they never became entirely enslaved to it as so often happened in France, for the national tendency towards freedom of imagination, and above all the instinctive admiration for England's own great non-classical poets - Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton (who was not classical in the 18th century sense) - persisted and tempered their thought.

Even in the latter half of the 17th century in the midst of the free, licentious Restoration Comedy, we find Dryden (1631-1700), while he subscribes in general to classical rules, examining plays on their own merits and not entirely on their relation to the Laws of Tragedy. He deplores some of Shakespeare's more serious lapses, yet is full of admiration and understanding of him.

Of the later Neo-Classics, Addison, Pope and Dr. Johnson are the greatest. Saintsbury's judgment of Addison (1672-1719) as a critic is that he "represents the classical attitude tempered not merely by good sense almost in quintessence but by a large share of tolerance and positive good taste, by freedom from the more utterly ridiculous pseudo-Aristotelianisms and by a wish to extend a 'concordat' to everything good even if it be not faultless." His kindly tolerant 'Spectator' essays are what make his name remembered to-day; his stiff classical tragedy of 'Cato', though it won great applause at the time in France and England, has not maintained its reputation.

Pope (1688-1744) had all the artificiality and rather superficial brilliance of the Neo-classic tradition, yet he could write: "To judge Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another." (Preface to Shakespeare.)

Dr. Johnson (1709-1784), the last great prophet of the Neo-classic tradition, was nevertheless iconoclastic about Five Acts and the
Unity of Time; and without realising it, he sounds the death knell of the
system he professes to uphold. (Rambler' paper on Tragi-Comedy): "It
ought to be the first endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature
from custom, or that which is established because it is right from that
which is right only because it is established; that he may neither
violate essential principles by a desire of novelty nor debar himself
from the attainment of beauties within his view by a needless fear
of breaking rules which no literary dictator had authority to enact"

How does it come about that the same ideas which almost at once
became the supreme authority in France took so much longer to establish
themselves in England, and even then found only partial acceptance?

There is first of all the question of the influence of outside
circumstances - the audience and the political and social life of the
day. English drama reached its full maturity earlier than French, at the
moment when the classical tradition was making its first bid for power
in England; the French theatre produced its greatest masterpieces half
a century later, when the classical tradition had already established
itself. But the ready acceptance of the disciplinary influence of the
tradition in France is due first of all to the fact that it answered
the needs of the type of audience for whom plays were being written.

In France, the drama very early began to have an aristocratic
tendency, while in England it remained essentially popular. Early in the
17th century in France, the tide began to flow in the direction of royal
supremacy; and as the power of the King increased, the nobles began to
count less and less as political influences, and more and more as social
ornaments at the court. The people sank back into the shadow, and lost all
significance; light was focussed entirely on the court where later was
to appear the "Roi-Soleil" himself. The first exuberance of the
Renaissance was long since over in France, quenched in the blood and
misery of the Wars of Religion; and out of this ruin was being formed
the new society where order and discipline and uniformity were to reign. Richelieu and Mazarin were organising an obedient, submissive state; the Catholic Church, having stifled her protestant rival, or satisfied her by concessions, was steadily increasing her power over men's minds and consciences. In this general reconstruction it seemed only natural to men that there should be a supreme authority for literature too, and Richelieu and the Académie Française made it their business to establish literary orthodoxy along with political obedience.

Thus the classical tradition fitted naturally into the life of the times, and helped to provide uniformity of method and construction, as the social life of the court of Louis XIV, was later to ensure uniformity of spirit and conception. Corneille and above all Racine appeared later, at the time which best fitted them, when this work of reconstruction was complete and the brilliant court life of Louis XIV which formed the setting of their plays, was all that counted in France.

In England, on the other hand, the classical tradition made its appearance at the worst possible moment for its success. Instead of coinciding with a growing desire for restraint, uniformity and reason, it came at a time when imagination was in revolt against all restrictions and originality, not uniformity, was the watchword. The Renaissance had reached England much later than France and when Shakespeare began to write, she was still rejoicing in her new-found liberty. Men had thrown off the restraint of the Church and her morality, and were obeying unashamed the dictates of the senses. After the austerity and primitive roughness of life in the Middle Ages, men were welcoming with delight and astonishment the new beauty and richness in their surroundings. 'Cloud-capped towers' and 'gorgeous palaces' were taking the place of medieval fortresses; brightly coloured silks and satins that of 'sad-coloured' woollen garments. It was 'merry England' then, and everywhere were masques and festivities and banquets, Christmas and
May-day celebrations where men abandoned themselves to the joy of living and of exercising unrestrained their passions.

Fortunately for the poetry of England, all this extravagance came not from inherent immorality but rather from the reaction of the imagination against the austerity and poverty of the Middle Ages. Men revelled in all that was beautiful, and if they had not yet learned to control their imagination and their senses, they at least created much that was fair and pure. In Elizabethan poetry is some of the loveliest of our language, and Shakespeare remains one of the greatest poets of the world and of all time.

Alongside of this, the brutality and barbarism of the Middle Ages still persisted, and a people that rejoiced in such sports as bull and bear baiting, thought nothing of using their daggers freely. Hence the passion and bloodshed that fill the plays of Shakespeare had their counterpart in real life, and seemed to the audiences that watched them right and natural. There was no such distinct cleavage between nobles and commoners as in France, and nobles as well as townsfolk enjoyed the vigorous action and coarse jests of the stage. In such a society, tumultuous and unbridled even in its poetry, no austere literary discipline could hope for acceptance. It was distasteful to the dramatists themselves (with a few exceptions) and above all to the audiences.

The plays of Corneille and Racine, stately and measured, were the natural products of life such as that of Versailles, where men never forgot their rank and dignity, where the life of princes was spent in public with no relaxation of etiquette, and where the King was served by the nobles of his court. There was no place there for the people; no place even for the triviality that forms part of all ordinary life; and if the plays seem to us artificial, it is partly because the life they show us behind the thin veil of Greek and Roman disguise, was
equally artificial, for all its splendour and majesty.

Such plays with their measured rhetoric and stiff grandeur would have been incomprehensible to an English audience of Shakespeare's day. The only plays that would satisfy an Elizabethan audience were plays as full of vigour and extravagance, exhilaration and poetry as life itself was in the new day that had dawned for men.

However, it is possible to go still further back, and find, behind the particular social and intellectual life of Elizabeth's or Louis XIV's court, the general tastes and temper of the nation that both preceded and survived these periods. Here we find further explanation for the treatment of the classical tradition on the two sides of the channel: it triumphed in France because for the most part it coincided with the tastes and temper of the national genius; and it fell in England because it ran counter to these.

It is impossible to analyse the mind of a man as you would analyse a chemical substance - how much more, then, the mind of a nation! Yet there are certain dominant characteristics that appear throughout the whole life and literature of a people giving to them their continuity, and enabling one to form a general impression of the qualities and temper of the nation. Thus the literature of France makes it abundantly clear that the chief qualities in the French mind are logic, clarity, brilliance, symmetry: that is, everything is dominated by reason. Imagination and sentiment are not lacking certainly, but they are subordinated to reason: the imagination is logical and brilliant rather than fanciful, dealing with the relation between concrete objects or with intellectual abstractions, rather than with conceptions and images that delight by their beauty, but cannot be subjected to purely intellectual examination - compare for example Victor Hugo's "Waterloo" with Shelley's "Witch of Atlas".

The Frenchman likes to see clearly where he is going, and to find
In all forms of literature an ordered logic that satisfies his intellectual faculty, even while it moves his feelings. His reasoning power he applies not only to abstract questions, but to the practical conduct of daily life; his life is directed by his practical common sense more than by sentiment, and clear logical reasoning on the conduct of life, maxims, or moral reflections never fail to interest him, especially if they are couched in clear, concise, brilliant language. It is the genius rather of prose than of poetry, of all that is ordered and logical and intellectual.

In their search among ancient writers for guidance in the formation of their new drama, French writers brought all these qualities to bear. In the mystic and imaginative beauty of Greek tragedy, they found much that they could not understand and that displeased them, but in Aristotle they recognized a kindred spirit. Here was something clear and practical, definite rules and formulae that appealed to them at once.

The Unity of Action pleased them because it insisted on a logical ordered plot, with a beginning, a middle and an end, and short enough to be grasped as a whole; and the other two Unities they added to assist further in making drama clear and intellectually satisfying. Aristotle's condemnation of all that was 'wonderful' and contrary to reason coincided with their own attitude. His stress on the plot appealed to them because they felt that there lay the opportunity for the exercise of intellectual ingenuity in the construction of something intricate and unexpected, but always logical and rational.

The beauty of tragedy as Aristotle defined it was such as appealed to them: massive and regular and dignified, never violent or irrational; hence they accepted his theory of poetic diction, that is, of the use of language that maintained a certain level of dignity. Their love of moral beauty responded to Aristotle's lofty conception of the tragic hero; and they added the tradition that he must be of noble birth for
the same reason that they admitted only noble words, and to satisfy the
court audiences who wished to ignore the existence of the "canaille"
in drama as they did in real life. Their love of moral reflections -
a love enforced by the strict supervision of the Church which insisted
on an exciting moral lesson in drama if its existence was to be sanctioned
found its justification in the rather obscure passage concerning the
"purging of pity and terror" mentioned above.

Thus all the rules for the writing of tragedy, which French
dramatists found in Aristotle corresponded to the most essential
characteristics of the national genius, and found ready acceptance for
that reason.

In England it was very different. Her literature is governed
rather by imagination than by reason, and what is irrational does not
revert if it pleases the imagination - hence Puck and Ariel and the
Witches. The pleasure the English mind finds in tragedy is neither the
purely intellectual one of following a well-arranged mechanism of plot,
nor yet that of being edified by a nobly conceived and expressed moral
lesson: but rather the imaginative and philosophical pleasure of
watching a reconstruction of life. The Englishman delights to study a
character in all its aspects, occupied rather with what a man is like
than with the peculiar situation in which he is placed. Curiosity plays
a large part in a Frenchman's enjoyment: how will this story end?
How will the author unravel the tangle? Consequently, he will tolerate
no stoppage by the way. The pleasure of the Englishman is less feverish:
he is not anxious to see what happens so much as to enjoy the imitation
of life in all its complexity, and to enter into the manifold personality
of each actor.

English tragedy has inherited something of the awe of Greek tragedy
before the mystery of the forces that seem to hurry men on into
misfortune and crime, and leave them questioning and unsatisfied before
the problems of life. These strange forces are personified in the
witches of "Macbeth"; Hamlet is tortured by his doubts, and the fate
of such women as Cordelia, Desdemona, and Ophelia leaves the mind full of
horror and questioning. In French tragedy the element of reason is
stronger than any mystery, and the concern is rather what happens, than
why it happens. French tragedy has lost the mysterious horror that
dominated Greek tragedy, and that English tragedy has partly kept.

Hence to the Englishman, the classical rules can only be restriction.
He is at least as much interested in the development of character as in
the plot, and the strict conception of a swiftly-moving story with
nothing irrelevant, confined to twenty-four hours and to one place, is
intolerable because it makes a realistic presentation of life impossible.
It leaves no time for the study of a character in all its aspects, or for
the evolution of character. The necessity that only noble characters
be shown and only dignified actions be considered in dignified language
irritates him because it is artificial; even if the principal personage
are of noble birth, they must come in contact every day with soldiers
and serents, and discuss ordinary household matters. There can be no
set style in English tragedy, because the characters are of all sorts
and their style must suit them. Trivialities and absurdities have their
place in all life. To the Englishman, the dramatist's business is to
represent life, not to comment on it, and he finds the moral lesson
irrelevant, unless it is there because it is part of the reality, as in
Polonius' address to his son. The use of the purely spectacular does
not shock him if it artistically beautiful or appeals to his imagination
or is in its place in the reconstruction of some early barbarous age.

It can be seen then that the classical tradition is entirely in
accordance with the French conception of tragedy; while it could only
impose harmful restrictions on the English dramatist, to whom tragedy
is something so different. Sufficient has been said concerning the
English drama as a representation of life and a study of character; but a word or two more is necessary on the French conception of tragedy which was the outcome of the national qualities of mind, and of the influence of the classical tradition.

Since to the Frenchman tragedy must have a logical plot, confined to twenty-four hours, it was necessary to depict only the moment of crisis in a story, and the events that had prepared this critical situation must be related in the exposition of the opening Act. It was impossible to have very much action, partly because much of it necessarily fell outside the twenty-four hour, and single place limit, and partly because it was often violent and undignified.

The example of Greek tragedy, and the French delight in argument as an exercise of logic, led to the conception of tragedy as the crisis in a struggle between two passions, or two conflicting duties, or more often between passion and duty. Thus Chimène, torn between her duty to her father and her love for Rodrigue, remains logical even in her distress, and though the fire and beauty of the verse cover its almost lawyer-like arguments, they can still be traced in their rigorous logic.

The fact that only the moment of crisis can be shown, has a decisive influence on the presentation of character. French drama must seize and crystallise character as it is in the moment of crisis when only its most essential qualities are brought into play. Hence the characters are almost abstract, easy to analyse, dominated by one idea or sentiment; while a master-hand can give them individual life even in the small scope that is allowed, in less skilled hands, they tend to become mere abstract types of jealousy or ambition or devotion.

Here is Voltaire's definition of French tragedy: 'Resserrer un événement illustre et intéressant dans l'espace de deux ou trois heures, ne faire paraître les personnages que quand ils doivent venir, ne laisser jamais le théâtre vide; former une intrigue aussi vraisemblable
The question that naturally arises concerning the classical tradition is "Was its influence a good or a bad one on English and French poetry?" As has been already noted, its influence on English drama was small: England's greatest dramatist was untouched by the tradition, and we have no great tragedies written under its sway. On poetry in general, the influence was on the whole good. The freedom of the Elizabethan school degenerated into ungoverned license, with men such as Cleveland and Suckling, and some restraining influence was necessary. It is generally recognised that the English genius is rather that of poetry than prose, and the French rather that of prose than poetry; and this outside influence with its rhetorical, balanced, prose-like verse, compounded rather of reason than imagination, was too foreign to the nation's genius to have more than a temporary restraining and tranquilising effect. After all, as Saintsbury points out, obedience to an orthodoxy demands a certain amount of self-abnegation, and such a disciplinary training is never without value.

With French poetry, the case is very different. The influence of the classical tradition cannot be said to be entirely harmful, since under it could be produced such tragedies as those of Corneille and Racine; but on the whole it was bad, since it became a convention that hindered the natural development of the drama, and by its restrictions spoiled tragedy that might have been great, though not of the greatest. Ducis
is a case in point.

The reason that insured the triumph of the classical tradition in France was the very one that made its decay and downfall inevitable. The Frenchman's intellectual, rather mechanical conception of drama had its own danger: that of the freer English tragedy was that its freedom should develop into license and incoherence; in France it was the century that was to be feared, that it should become lifeless and abstract in its frigid intellectual correctness. The classical tradition, instead of combating these tendencies, encouraged them. Its rules coincided so completely with the national tastes that it seemed to confirm them as infallible, and hid the danger that lay in exaggeration of them. Later when men began to feel that tragedy was doomed to perish unless it could somehow be endowed with new life, these rules formed a barrier to all experiment, and it was in an attempt to reconcile novelty with tradition that the 18th century dramatists made shipwreck.

Again, the classical tradition was harmful, because all the great 17th century tragedy lay within it, and men were unable to conceive a great drama that should disobey these rules, and yet be great. Later when they discovered such drama in the work of Shakespeare, it seemed to them that since it broke the rules that their own great dramatists had followed, it simply could not be great, or that they must be guilty of sacrilege towards Corneille and Racine if they dared to find it great.

It is idle to compare the merits of two systems as different as the French and English: each has its own beauties and its own weaknesses. A landscape on a moonlight night is full of eerie shadows, of mysterious movement, of dimly-seen distances. Let a brilliant searchlight fall on a corner of it: all the rest drops away into unheeded blackness, and in the circle of intense radiance, everything stands out vivid and distinct, with clean-cut shadows, seeming flat
and without relief. Something like that is the difference between the English drama of imagination and the French drama of reason. The English is no doubt a wider and a loftier conception that at its best has all the majesty and awe, the beauty and the ugliness and the mystery of life; French is narrower, but within its narrow limit can attain almost to perfection - at its best it has a grace and beauty of symmetry, a purity of flawless style and a high idealism of life and character that cannot but uplift the soul with the vision of what is lovely and of good report.
CHAPTER II. The Decay and Dissolution of the Classical Tradition in France.

Plan.

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1. How Corneille and Racine had dominated the tradition.
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Chapter II. The Decay and Breaking up of the Classical Tradition in France.

Part I. Decay in the 1st half of the 18th century: Voltaire.

The period from the establishment of the classical tradition in France at the time of the 'Cid' quarrel (1636) until the end of the century is dominated by the two great names of Corneille and Racine. These men brought to perfection the French type of drama: clear, logical, intellectual, concentrated within narrow limits; where the life and thought of its characters seem to be gathered into one supreme hour, and set full in the dazzling light of French genius.

They were, moreover, and especially Racine, the highest expression of the life of their century. There was much that was bad in that life: heartless oppression of the poor, extravagance and artificiality; but it had its own greatness, the dignity of a man who is always master of himself, serene alike in good or bad fortune, and unfailing in courtesy and restraint. With the passing of Louis XIV, the glory of the age passed away, and in the later corrupt society the same lofty spirit could not exist.

The excellence of Corneille and Racine enhanced the beauties of the tradition they had followed, and hid its dangers: it was only after the death of Racine in 1699, when writers without his genius were left to carry on the tradition, that men realised how bad 'classical' plays could be, when only the system remained without the moving spirit of genius.

Broadly speaking, the danger is twofold. First there is the obvious tendency of French tragedy to lose its truth and vitality, and become a series of rhetorical arguments and moral tirades, intended to make up for the lack of passion and depth of psychology. The importance French writers assign to reason and eloquence and
moral teaching, blinded them to the fact that these things alone will not make a tragedy; and that moreover they frequently violate the rule that nothing should be admitted which does not advance the story.

Secondly, there is the tendency to degenerate into melodrama, and this danger is heightened by two of the recommendations of Aristotle. Jules Lemaître (Impressions de Théâtre) defines tragedy as depending upon the interplay of character and passions: melodrama upon "des combinaisons extraordinaires d'événements fortuits." Aristotle had declared that greater stress must be laid upon the plot than the characters, and recommended the use of mistaken identities and recognitions. He added certainly that the dénouement must come as the natural result of what happens in the play itself, and not by the intervention of a 'Deus ex Machina': but writers who had not the genius to create characters of sufficient life and reality to make a plot were tempted to fall back upon the easier method of creating a plot that depended on outward circumstances, and where the characters were little more than puppets. They failed to see the weakness of this, because they were following the instructions of Aristotle, and considered themselves upon safe ground. From the day that the plot became thus artificial, French tragedy began to degenerate into melodrama.

Corneille and Racine by the force of their genius avoided both the danger of writing melodrama, and that of writing frigid and lifeless plays. They were saved from the snare of melodrama by a realisation of the fact that the plot should depend upon the behaviour of the characters, which in turn is determined by their temperament or passions, and not upon outside events over which the characters have no control. Also they refused the use of mistaken identities because they felt that these things are fortuitous events, and so rare in real life that they fail to arouse a real sympathetic response in
Corneille and Racine had no need of "fortuitous events" to make a plot since they had a knowledge of life and a creative genius sufficient to make characters that were alive, capable of capturing and holding the interest of the audience, and of working out their own destiny.

The later plays of Corneille, after "Pertharite" in 1652, are cold and lifeless; but his best plays and all those of Racine have avoided this greatest danger of French tragedy. It is difficult to say exactly how: one is tempted to say simply - "Because they had genius." There could not be very much action, for the French conception of tragedy will not admit it; but the plays never languish, for when there is no external action, there is always the movement of the struggle between two personalities, or between two passions in the soul of one man or woman. Love is never insipid gallantry, but a real passion, noble and idealised in Corneille, fierce and compelling in Racine.

Their style is eloquent and sometimes rhetorical, and the "rôlé de raisonneur" with its moralising is found in both Corneille and Racine, (e.g. Sévère and Bérrhus); but both are true poets with the imagination and sense of the beauty of sound and imagery that save them from the writing of declamatory verse or mere rhymed prose.

They obeyed the unities, and could not altogether avoid the artificiality that results; but they chose plots that would not bring them into too open conflict with probability, and so great is the illusion of life and reality in the plays that one is too deeply interested to be struck by artificiality in details.

Corneille and Racine are the highest expression of French dramatic genius, and therefore wherever the classical tradition is in accordance with what is most essential in that genius, as in its conception of a concentrated, well-ordered, swiftly-moving plot, it finds its true justification in the work of the 17th century writers; wherever it is
artificial and a mere convention, their art has reconciled it to reality, and hidden its evils.

Thus when Racine died in 1699, the system he had adopted was regarded by all as the perfect one for tragedy. But the very glory of the achievement of Corneille and Racine left their successors in a difficult position. The only courses possible to them were imitation or innovation. Imitation was the easier in a way, but who could hope to equal the two great classics? And innovation was dangerous, for it risked transgressing all the most essential rules of good tragedy.

It is a curious fact that in France as in England the 18th century was rather that of criticism than of actual dramatic achievement. For the most part, critics realized at least some of the faults of the existing system, and frequently gave good counsel as to how to correct them; but there were no men of sufficient genius to put into practice with real success the policy they advocated. In spite of their rather timid efforts, they remained slaves of the classical tradition, and in their unskilled hands it rapidly decayed into a convention.

During the first half of the 18th century we can trace this decay but such was its authority that as yet no one dared to violate its rules, and any attempt at reform was made within its limits. It was only in the latter half of the century that the tradition began really to break up, and dramatists to write tragedies that violated its hitherto sacred rules. Even then, the authority of the ruined tradition persisted, and hampered the free expression of writers' personality, as in the case of Ducis.

It was no easy thing to write a good classical tragedy according to 18th century ideas: La Harpe (1793-1803) the critic and dramatists points this out: "Il faut qu'il (l'auteur dramatique) aille toujours au fait, quoiqu'il n'en ait qu'un seul à traiter pendant cinq actes, qu'il soutienne la curiosité quoiqu'il eût à l'occuper que d'un seul
The necessity of satisfying this breathless curiosity, and the difficulty of finding something new under the sun to satisfy it, led dramatists to write plots more and more melodramatic. Then it became increasingly difficult to subject these complications to the three unities: and there grew up a set of recognised conventions for facilitating this. They had their counterpart in good classical tragedy, but they were greatly overworked in 18th century drama - confidants, narratives, letters, dreams, oracles, and above all, unknown identities and recognitions. It became a sort of mechanical game of skill to make as clever a puzzle as possible out of these various pieces.

Love had played a very important part in the dramas of Corneille and Racine, and it had come to be considered a necessary factor, whether the subject lent itself to a romance or not. Thus we find Crébillon making of Electra "une amoureuse" - even to that would the convention lead. And the love 18th century dramatists painted was neither the idealised passion of Corneille nor the overmastering one of Racine, but an insipid court gallantry full of empty compliment. That a representation of love may be real and convincing, the characters must be alive; 18th century characters were tending more and more to conform to certain types, and to have their individuality swamped in the rush of extraordinary adventures that bore them along. Hence their love too lost all individuality, and became a mere convention.

The characters were so noble and refined that they were artificial and lifeless: much as a child sent out to play in his best clothes is incapable of being natural and active, and is paralysed by the fear of his own finery. When it was not the necessity of conforming to this standard type of dignity that destroyed all individuality, it was, as
already suggested, the succession of marvellous adventures that prevented any possibility of making character decide destiny, and made men mere straws upon the tide of circumstance.

Tragic writers who were not real poets succumbed to the particular temptations of French verse, and wrote rhetoric and stilted rhymed prose rather than poetry. There grew up a Poetic Diction that was a mere jargon of the "technical terms" of drama - every lover made almost the same speeches about the "flame", the "Feux" that devoured him kindled by the "beaux yeux" of his lady.

In "Le Cercle" of Poinsinet, a witty satire on the "salons" of Paris one of the characters thus excellently defines contemporary tragedy: "Un tintamarre d'incidents impossibles; les reconnaissances que l'on devine; des princesses qui se passionnent si vertueusement pour des héros que l'on poignarde quand on n'en sait plus que faire; un assemblage de maximes que tout le monde sait et que personne ne croit; des injures & contre les grands et par-ci par-la quelques imprecations."

The framework upon which Corneille and Racine had built their tragedy remained, but it was only a framework, and there was no master-builder to complete the edifice and people it with living beings. Even the framework was decayed, men felt that something must be done to renew it, or it would perish.

Various efforts were made to find something new that would atone for the lack of real poetic genius, but in the earlier half of the century, the innovators still imitated the masters and obeyed the rules - the time was not yet for a complete departure from the earlier forms. The unities and "l'élegance" still reigned supreme.

There was a host of successors of Racine, but only two names have remained really famous: Crébillon and Voltaire. Crébillon's particular contribution to tragedy was horror: it was by startling his audiences that he hoped to give them the novelty they craved. He was a great reader
of novels, the new 'genre' that was finding so much favour in men's eyes, and he turned to their fantastic and sensational adventures in search of plots. Yet he never disobeys the rules: Lanson calls his art "des sujets horribles, adroitement affadis". Crebillon himself conceives tragedy as "une action funeste qui doit être présentée aux spectateurs sous des images intéressantes, qui doit les conduire à la pitié par la terreur; mais avec des mouvements et des traits qui ne blessent ni leur délicatesse ni les bien-ùances." His method of preserving the 'bienséances' was the incognito: thus it is horrible that a man should love his daughter-in-law, and kill his son for love of her; but it is perfectly 'convenable' when he does not know the identity either of his son or his son's wife. Such is the story of 'Rhadamiste et Zenobie'. Crebillon is said to have declared "Corneille a pris le ciel, Racine la terre; il ne me restait plus que l'enfer; je m'y suis jeté à corps perdu." It is significant that in almost his first tragedy, he chose the subject of 'Atéée et Thyeste', one of the most horrible of all antiquity. Yet even in that atmosphere of horror, the usual gallantry appears, and one finds such verses as

"Et je vais, s'il le faut, aux dépens de ma foi,
Prouver à vos beaux yeux ce qu'ils peuvent sur moi."

Crebillon's plays are too melodramatic in their horror, and too artificial because of their obedience to a convention; but at least they show that he had realised and tried to remedy the dullness and lack of action: and the horror that at first disgusted his audiences and later pleased them, was to become a part of the new tragedy that took the place of the older classical system.

It is extraordinary that one man's influence could so completely dominate a century as did Voltaire's. In thought and literature, he reigned supreme, and it was his tragedies that largely determined the line to be followed by the new tragedy when the hour should come for
drama to free itself at last from the classical convention.

Voltaire was not a tragic writer of real genius: though his contemporaries placed him with Corneille and Racine, posterity has assigned to him a much lower place. But he was the best dramatist of his century: a consummately clever man, with a great command of language and a sense of stage effect that was never at fault. His diagnosis of the weaknesses of contemporary drama was very accurate, and he recommended salutary changes, yet in execution he was strangely conservative, and his plays are an odd mixture of the stilted artificiality that was characteristic of 18th century drama, and violent melodrama. He unites in his own work the two tendencies that are visible in the tragedy of his day.

Voltaire was born in 1694, and while he was still a young man, his restless, mocking temper brought him into trouble, and he was forced to take refuge in England in 1727. He spent three years there, and had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of English tragedy, notably that of Shakespeare. Judged by Voltaire's rules, Shakespeare was a barbarian, and so Voltaire considered him; but he had too keen a dramatic sense not to be struck by the beauties of this drama so different from that of his own country.

When he returned to France in 1730, he brought with him a warm if not unqualified admiration for barbaric genius he had 'discovered'. He introduced Shakespeare to the French public, and bitterly was he to regret it when he found his new protege being made the patron of a drama that rivalled the glory of his own. For the moment, however, he was proud of his find, and hoped to renew French drama by utilising the ideas inspired by the sight of Shakespeare's plays in English theatres.

Voltaire recognised the great weakness of contemporary French tragedy: namely, its artificiality and lifelessness. He realised that there was too little action and movement, too many narratives and long
speeches; and on the other hand that too great a respect for the proprieties had turned love into insipid gallantry. Further he rebelled against the tyranny of Greek and Roman mythology and history as the source of subject matter, and considered that the whole world might be the province of tragedy.

In Shakespeare's tragedy, he found the energy and movement lacking in French drama; and love that was something deeper and fiercer than a mere court gallantry. He found plays where love did not appear at all, and plays where the story and characters were neither Greek nor Roman: all of which delighted him and gave him inspiration for his own attack on the restrictions of convention.

Yet, Voltaire, revolutionary as he was, never dreamed of complete rebellion against the classical tradition. He accepted without question the two ruling canons of the unities and elegance: the unities with all the artificiality they necessarily entailed; elegance, which meant only noble characters and only brilliant polished verse. Verse he conceived to be an essential of tragedy - a tragedy in prose was a crime.

It is obvious that no one holding at the same time such revolutionary and such conservative ideas could fully succeed in execution. Voltaire gave to French drama greater energy and movement his supreme authority in France as literary dictator ensured acceptance for his plays without love, and with Eastern or old French settings and characters. Thus he freed dramatists from the necessity of inserting a love affair in a classical subject where it was utterly out of place; and of the obligation to seek their subjects in the history and mythology that were by now almost exhausted. But his observance of the unities and what Jules Lemaître calls "une certaine grossiereté et vulgarnetté de conception dramatique" led him to find the novelty
and movement he sought in "coup de théâtre", and melodramatic, impossible situations. Voltaire himself realised the violence he had done to classical drama in introducing the sanguinary and spectacular, for at the end of his life he said "Hélas! J'ai moi-même améné la décadence en introduisant l'appareil et le spectacle. Les pantomimes l'émportent aujourd'hui sur la raison et la poésie." Finally, Voltaire's example further consecrated the use of polished and eloquent verse, which at its best was brilliant and rhetorical, at its worst bombastic, insipid and unnatural; but which was never the highest poetry. Voltaire made tragedy the vehicle of many of his philosophical and political ideas and thus strengthened the tendency to use tragedy as an occasion for moral lessons. Compare such lines as

"Je pense en citoyen; j'agis en empereur -
Je hais le fanatique et le persécuteur."

(Les Guêbres)

"Nos prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple pense,
Notre crédulité fait toute leur science."

(OEdipe)

or "Qu'eusse-je été sans lui? Rien que le fils d'un roi!

(OEdipe)

Traces of Shakespeare's influence can be seen in 'Brutus' and 'La Mort de César', 'Semiramis' and 'Zaire'. But Voltaire makes Brutus unknown to himself, the son of Caesar, and the whole aspect of the play is changed: its interest depends no longer on the study of character and its effects in action, but on a recognition scene. 'Semiramis' suggests 'Hamlet': the ghost is there, but has no real 'raison d'être' and becomes a mere spectacular device, while the role of Hamlet has been effaced, and again in its place are unnecessary complications, misunderstandings and recognitions. 'Zaire' is Voltaire's masterpiece.
The idea doubtless came from 'Othello', and it is interesting to compare Voltaire's treatment of the play with that of Ducis, to be considered later on. Instead of following closely the play of Shakespeare, Voltaire borrows simply the central idea, that of a European woman loved by a man of a different and fierier race, and who under an impulse of mistaken jealousy kills his bride, only to find out his mistake when it is too late. The setting, characters, and events are all quite different, and the interest of the play centres not in a study of jealousy, but in the much more French theme of the struggle in the soul of Zaire the heroine between her love and her religion. "D'une souche anglaise est sortie une plante bien française." Zaire is captive of the Sultan Orosmane, and is betrothed to him; on the eve of their marriage she finds a long-lost father and brother among other captives of Orosmane, who expound to her the Christian religion she has almost forgotten in her long captivity, and conjure her not to marry an infidel. Zaire hesitates, torn between her love and her religion, and Orosmane detects the new constraint in her manner. His suspicions are aroused and he follows Zaire to a secret meeting with her brother Nerestan; he stabs her, and a moment later is undeceived by Nerestan's cry "Ah, ma sœur!" Like Othello, he slays himself. The play is not comparable in intrinsic worth with that of Shakespeare: the situation and events are most improbable, the action is precipitated to bring it within the 24 hours limit, and the verse is often stilted and artificial. Yet the play still pleases and interests, because Voltaire has arranged the dramatic effects so cleverly; because the characters, if too romantic, are 'sympathiques'; because the animation and brilliance of the style cover a multitude of faults; and above all because the situation of Zaire, torn between her religion and her love is one that never loses its interest, and still arises daily under new names - "le problème des mariages mixtes les droits du père, du frère, du nom, de la race" (Brunetière- Époques du
theatre français.) Zaire shows the best that can be made of Voltaire's hybrid drama-melodrama subjected to the rules of classical tragedy; and it remained the model of excellence for 18th century poets.

That was how Voltaire understood the imitation of Shakespeare: ideas might be sought in his plays, but they were to be pruned and refined so as to fit into the French classical tragedy, and Shakespeare must not be considered otherwise than as a barbarian with occasional flashes of genius, but always infinitely inferior to Corneille, Racine - and, of course Voltaire.

Consequently, Voltaire's indignation was great when he found that the barbarian he had patronised was winning as much admiration as himself, and was becoming the model for a school of tragedy that violated the rules dear to him. In 1776 Le Tourneur published a complete translation of Shakespeare, and this met with universal favour from Louis XVI downward. It was the occasion of a furious outburst of antagonism on the part of Voltaire. From Ferney, he wrote a letter which d'Alembert read to the Académie Française. In it he instanced everything in Shakespeare's work that was indecent, violent, precious or absurd, and called him 'Gilles de la Foire'; doing his best to cover with ridicule both the dramatist and his translator.

But it was too late. The classical tradition was doomed, and the new semi-irregular drama was finding favour. As a century and a half before the irregulars had given way before the victorious classical tradition, that tradition was now to yield in its turn. It gives place to a new order of tragedy which goes back to the point where it had first diverged from English tragedy, but which shows the traces of its long submission to the Graeco-Roman tradition.

Part II. The 2nd half of the century: dissolution.

As the first half of the 18th century had been marked by the decay of the classical tradition into a mere convention, the second
The reason of its breaking up was simply its own unfitness to continue. It had become a creed outworn, and the obedience men gave to it was one of habit not belief.

In the second half of the 18th century, there were forces at work that were breaking up the political and religious life of the nation, and it was natural that the literary despotism should suffer too. It has been noted how the spirit of discipline and obedience to King and Church that dominated in the 17th century had helped to establish the supremacy of the classical tradition. Now this spirit of obedience and discipline had been replaced by one of independence and revolt. All doctrines and beliefs and traditions were being subjected to the examination of the reason, and man claimed the right to think as they pleased. The classical convention too came under this scrutiny, and was refused the obedience that it could not justify.

Again, new ideas were being introduced into France in all spheres of thought. The influence of England was very great: a hitherto unknown interest in her literature and her history was arising. Voltaire with his miraculous influence had done more than anyone to arouse this interest in England. His 'discovery' of Shakespeare had done much to give direction to his classical theories, and now Shakespeare was widely known. Garrick visited France, and helped by his acting to popularise Shakespeare. Macpherson's 'Ossian' (1760) and Young's 'Night Thoughts' (1742-45) brought into fashion the sombre and sentimental, and it was natural that dramatists should seek to utilise these new ideas that so fascinated them for the renewal of old forms of tragedy; but it was a case of putting new wine into old bottles, and it is still true that the bottles break and the wine is spilled.

The latter half of the 18th century, the period of Ducis, is a curious and wholly characteristic time, the uneasy pause before the
storm of conflict between new ideas and old, when all existing traditions were to be tried by fire. On the eve of an outbreak of primitive violence, all was ruled by the 'bienfaiseance', in spite of the dissolute life of the court. The restraint, courtesy and refinement which had been sincere at the court of Louis XIV had become a mere convention at that of Louis XV. Society was polite and refined to insipidity, and in tragedy banned all representation of violence or immorality or even triviality that could shock "good taste". Yet beneath all this a new spirit was stirring, the spirit that was to inspire the Revolution and the Romantic Revival. The ideas most characteristic of romantic literature were spreading rapidly: the passion for liberty and independence, egotism, sensibility, the adoration of nature and rustic life, the love of all that was sinister and horrible.

Writers like Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot were encouraging in men's minds the desire for freedom and independence that sprang from a consideration of the tyranny that oppressed men in France, and the liberty that their neighbours enjoyed across the Channel. Their writings were full of burning personal opinions very far from the calm, majestic impersonality of the preceding century.

One of the most curious developments was that of 'sensibility'. Society was enervated on the one hand by its own purely intellectual activity, and on the other by excessive refinement: the reaction was towards sentiment. But sentiment was rare in a society so artificial and corrupt, and men satisfied themselves instead with the idea of sentiment; thus arose sensibility, which Lanson defines as "la réflexion de l'intelligence sur les émotions: moins le sentiment que la conscience et surtout la notion du sentiment. Une âme sensible est celle qui comprend les occasions où elle doit sentir, et qui produit avec le plus de vivacité possible toutes les actions extérieures qui répondent à ces occasions de sentir." Hence the floods of tears shed so readily
by men and women alike. Madame Riccoboni wrote to Garrick: "In our
brilliant capital where airs and fashions reign, to wax tender, to be
moved, to be sorrowful is the 'bon ton' of the moment. Goodness,
sensibility, tender humanity have become the universal craze." Men sought
eagerly for ideas that could move them to tears and sensibility:
La Harpe in disgust calls them: "des gens blâmes qui ne pouvant plus être
émus de rien, veulent pourtant qu'un parvienne à les émouvoir."
Rousseau had popularised the idea that man is born good and
ruined by society, so that the most virtuous man will be the one who
has led a simple rustic life far from the corruptions of civilisation.
Here was something new that might move one to sensibility. The queen
Marie Antoinette and her ladies played at being milkmaids in the
grounds of Versailles; gentlemen filled their parks with 'rustic cottages'
and lovers' tombs, and the formal French gardens were replaced by
imitations of wild nature.

Another fruitful source of emotion to these courtiers accustomed
to the sunshine and elegance of Versailles was the representation of
the sombre and horrible. Crebillon had already made this popular and
even Shakespeare furnished the horror that was supposed to rouse tragic
terror and pity. Delille, in a transport writes to Shakespeare:

"La Nature pour toi n'est qu'un vaste cercueil,
Que parcourant l'effroi, la douleur et le deuil."

All these tastes and ideas influenced the development of tragedy
and comedy, and largely determined the nature of the innovations writers
assayed.

The three Unities were the last rules to suffer violation at
the hands of dramatists in quest of novelty; occasionally a tragedy
would be written which did not conform to these rules, but it met with
rather doubtful success. The 'nobility' of tragedy and its restriction
to ancient history and mythology for subject matter were the traditions
most attacked. Hitherto there had been a sharp line of separation between tragedy and comedy: humour, middle class characters and incidents and prose were the province of comedy alone: for tragedy, unrelieved seriousness, high-born characters, and verse. Now men began to wonder if novelty could not be sought in some 'genre' that would be intermediate between these two: and the two new kindred 'genres' arise - "la tragédie bourgeoise", and "la comédie larmoyante". The latter, instead of seeking to move men to laughter as comedy always had, appealed to their sensibility, and caused them to weep all through the play, and welcome with tears even the happy, but always touching dénouement; it borrows from tragedy all its 'pathétique', and no longer makes fun of man's weaknesses and misfortunes. The "tragédie bourgeoise" was written in prose, and as its name implies, dealt with the life of middle-class people; it no longer aimed at majestic dignity and idealised truth, but at the every-day truth of ordinary life.

Nivelle de la Chaussee (1692-1754) was one of the first to write 'comédies larmoyantes' - ('La Fausse Antipathie, Le Préjugé à la Mode' etc.) Diderot in the Encyclopedia wrote an elaborate explanation and justification of the new drama, and wrote as examples of it 'Le Fils Naturel' (1757) and 'Le Père de Famille' (1758), neither of them of much literary value. Sedaine followed with the 'tragédie bourgeoise' of 'Le Philosophe sans le Savoir' - shorter, simpler, and more alive than the plays of Diderot. Even Beaumarchais, the creator of one of the gayest of all comedies, "Le Barbier de Séville" (1772) began by writing lugubrious comedies with nothing to relieve the gloom (Eugène 1767 - Les Deux Amis 1770.)

The idea in its first form was a right one. There are many intermediate stages between black, gloomy tragedy and farcical comedy: Petit de Julleville gives the following list as an example of how many shades of difference there are in classical plays between austere
tragedy and farce: "Athalie, Britannicus, Le Cid, Bérénice, Nicomède, Don Sanche d'Aragon, Don Juan, le Misanthrope, Tartuffe, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Monsieur de Pourceaugnac."

Before these attempts at reform, both tragedy and comedy had gone to extremes in their different directions. We have seen how in the search for majesty and dignity tragedy had become lifeless and stilted; and comedy in plays such as those of Régnari, Le Sage and Dancourt had become cynical in its mockery of all that was worthy of respect - it showed only "amoureuses déleurees, vieilles sans pudeur, chevaliers escrocs, oncles imbéciles, valets fripons, soubrettes perverses - enfin l'on avait envie de revoir des honnêtes gens sur la scène" (Petit de Julleville.) Hence the instinct of Diderot and his confrères was quite sound, when they sought to put more seriousness into comedy, and more life into tragedy: but as happened so frequently in the 18th century, they were much happier in their conception than in their execution. In the first place genius was lacking: there was no man as able even as Voltaire to put the reforms into practice. Those who wrote, exaggerated the new simplicity of tragedy, and made it trivial: the new seriousness of comedy and made it sentimental. Again, instead of realising that there can be no hard and fast lines in the intervening space between tragedy and comedy any more than there can be between the shades of the rainbow, they sought to create a series of new, fixed genres. For example, Diderot says that "Le Fils Naturel" is mid-way between tragedy and comedy; "Le Pere de Famille" is between "Le Fils Naturel" and comedy; and another play which he contemplated but never wrote, was to come half-way between "Le Fils Naturel" and tragedy. Such exaggerated precision could only mean artificiality.

Finally, the dramatists of the second half of the 18th century were curiously hampered by the prejudices of their time: the sensibility; the rage for all that was simple, rustic and of nature, and at the same
time the utter artificiality of this would-be simplicity that dressed shepherds and shepherdesses like princes and princesses; the cant of the time that ruined good style, its catch-words in the language of love, freedom and sensibility and rustic life; and last but not least the respect for the classical tradition that still clung to men's minds, and made them timoously obedient to its outworn rules, or else in a burst of violence destined to cover their own fears made them rush to extremes, much as their peasant compatriots were to do in real life a few years later.

Ducis is an excellent example of how these conflicting influences worked havoc in tragedy. A man with a real poetic gift, a romantic nature and a character of real nobility; capable of writing good plays, though not perhaps plays of the very highest order, he was enslaved and misled by the prejudices of his century. In a study of his plays we can trace them all at work: and since instead of writing independent tragedy he adapted the great English dramatist, his plays have the additional interest of showing us the two systems in actual conflict.
CHAPTER III. Jean-François Ducis.

Plan

1. His life and character.
2. His work.
Chapter III  Jean-François Ducis.

Anyone who had read only the plays of Ducis would never suspect the charm and originality of the man. A study of his life and letters reveals a personality so rich, so attractive and so poetical that one goes back to the plays with new sympathy that helps one to a fairer judgment concerning them. But the bad taste of the 18th century has so spoiled the work of Ducis that it is almost necessary to know something of the man and his character to be able to appreciate his plays at their true value.

Ducis was born at Versailles on the 23rd of August 1753. His father belonged to Savoie, his mother was French, and he seems to have inherited much from both of them - he says himself that he was "lion par son père et berger par sa mère" and indeed this mixture of gentleness and rugged independence is what is most characteristic of his temper and talent. Concerning the latter, he says in one of his letters "Il y a dans mon clavecin poetique des jeux de flute et de tonnerre. Comment cela va-t-il ensemble? je n'en suis trop riche, mais cela est ainsi." Ducis has a deep affection and admiration for both his parents of whom he speaks in the highest terms. When he was eighty years old he said in speaking of some detail of conduct, "Mon père qui était un homme rare et digne du temps des Patriarches, le pratiquait ainsi; et c'est lui qui par son sang et ses exemples, a transmis à mon âme ses principaux traits et ses maîtresses formes. Aussi je remercie Dieu de m'avoir donné un tel père. Il n'y a pas de jour où je ne pense à lui; et, quand je ne suis pas trop mécontent de moi-même, il m'arrive quelquesfois de lui dire: 'Es-tu content mon père?' Il semble alors qu'un signe de sa tête venerable me réponde et me serve de prix." In his dedication of "King Lear" to his Mother, Ducis says: "Combien d'autres bienfaits personnels ai-je reçus de votre âme généreuse, depuis que vous m'avez recueilli dans vos bras!"
quel ami secourut jamais son ami par plus d'effets avec moins de paroles! Ah! si j'emporte une idée consolante dans la tombe (ou puissé-je descendre avant vous!) ce sera celle de vous avoir payé ce tribut solennel de ma reconnaissance. Non: désormais, quel que soit le sort de mes travaux, ni le succès, ni les disgrâces qui les attendent n'altérерont dans mon âme le bonheur de sentir et d'éprouver tous les jours avec les mêmes délices, que vous êtes ma Mère."

The parents of Ducis had a modest business in linen and pottery; but were able to give to their son a good education first in the country and later at Versailles. He began his career as secretary to the Maréchal de Belle-Isle with whom he travelled in France; and later served in the same capacity with the Comte de Montazel who took him to Germany. On his return, he was given an appointment in the 'bureaux de la Guerre', at which, however, he never seems to have worked. In January 1768, his first tragedy 'Améline' was presented at the Comédie Française and was a complete failure. A year later, in 1769, he produced his version of 'Hamlet' and its success decided the direction of his efforts in future. The other adaptations followed, "Romeo et Juliette" 1772, Lear 1783, Macbeth 1784, Jean-Sans-Terre 1791, Othello 1792. "An imitation of Greek models "Œdipe chez Admet" in which he fuses the "Œdipus at Colonus" of Sophocles and the "Alcestes" of Euripides was so successful that on the death of Voltaire he was almost unanimously appointed to succeed him in the Académie Française. It is curious that he of all men should be chosen to succeed the great writer from whom he differed in every way, and for whom he had so generous an admiration. Voltaire had treated him with scorn, but his enthusiasm remains ardent, and he began his 'discours de réception' with the words "Messieurs, il est des grands hommes à qui l'on succède et que personne ne remplace!"
domestic sorrow. Ducis had lost his wife, and now lost his two
daughters. Only his mother was left to him. He shared in the general
unrest that preceded and accompanied the Revolution, for a time he was
a fiery Republican, though he later became as fiery a royalist and
"bourbonien". But in his religious faith and Catholic orthodoxy he
never wavered. In 1795 he published 'Abufar' his only original play;
and then retired from public life and from the stage.

Napoleon made repeated efforts to attach Ducis to himself, and
offered him a place on the Senate, the Légion d'Honneur, and his
patronage for the tragedies; but Ducis proudly and fearlessly refused
all these advances saying "Il vaut mieux porter des haillons que des
chaînes." The story is told of how he snubbed the conqueror of Arcole
and Lodi, fresh from his victories. At a brilliant gathering, Bonaparte
sought out Ducis, and began by complimenting him warmly on his work.
Ducis received these compliments coldly and in silence. Somewhat
surprised, Bonaparte went on to speak of the necessity of assembling
all the great men of France, and asked Ducis to join them; the same
coldness and silence on the part of the poet. Bonaparte insisted more
and more urgently, and then Ducis turned and took him by the arm:
"Général, aimez-vous la chasse? Eh bien, si vous aimez la chasse, avez-
vous chassé quelquefois aux canards sauvages? C'est une chasse difficile
une proie qu'on n'attrape guère, et qui flaire de loin le fusil du
chasseur. Eh bien, je suis un de ces oiseaux, je me suis fait canard
sauvage." Then without another word, Ducis turned and hastened away to
the other end of the room, leaving the future emperor greatly astonished.
From this time onwards until his death on the 30th March 1816, Ducis
lived in retirement at Versailles, taking no part in political or
literary life, and writing only the letters that are the most charming
of his works. Only once did he emerge from this retirement to be
received by Louis XVIII, and accept from him the croix de la Légion d'Honneur that he had refused ten years before at the hands of Napoleon.

His life, then, was of the simplest, without stirring events; but gladdened by literary success, and dignified by sorrow and loneliness and its own brave independence. This same simplicity that marks his character and his letters and ought to have marked his plays has been lost in the artificiality and pomposity of the tradition that even in its ruin enforced its authority and it is only here and there that the gold shines through the tinsel that covers it.

The character of Ducis is a strange mixture of naive gentleness, rugged independence. What was mere pose with most of his contemporaries was perfectly sincere with him. All men affected to love solitude and freedom and rustic life, and to be moved to tender tears; Ducis loved these things in earnest, and his tears were genuine. His hermit's life at Versailles at the very gates of the court he refused to enter, testified to his sincerity, and some of the most charming of his letters are those where he speaks of his solitary life and the joys of the country. "Je suis auprès de mes consolateurs, de vieux livres, une belle vue et de douces promenades. J'ai soin de mes deux santes: je tâche de les faire marcher ensemble, et de n'avoir mal ni à l'âme ni au corps."

"Je ne puis vous dire combien je me trouve heureux depuis que j'ai secoué le monde. Je suis devenu avaré; mon trésor est la solitude. Je couche dessus avec un bâton ferre dont je donnerais un grand coup à quiconque voudrait m'en arracher. Mon cher ami, le monde ira comme il plaera à Dieu; je me suis fait ermite."

"Oui, mon ami, j'ai épousé le désert comme le Doge de Venise épousa la mer Adriatique: j'ai jeté mon anneau dans les forêts."

"Je continue auprès de mon feu des lectures douces et des heures paisibles qui vont à petits pas comme mon poils et mes affections..."
innocentes et pastorales. Mon cher ami, je lis la vie des 'Pères du
Désert'; j'habite avec Saint Pacôme, fondateur du monastère de Tabenne.
En vérité c'est un charme que de se transporter sur cette terre des
anges; on ne voudrait plus en sortir."

"Jeai fait une lieue ce matin dans des plaines de bruyères et
quelquesfois entre des buissons qui sont couverts de fleurs et qui
chantent. Pourquoi ne sommes nous pas ensemble? C'est ce que je me dis
toutes les fois que j'ai douceur et surabondance de mélancolie."

(A Lemercier -written in Sologne.)

"Bon Dieu! Comme je ferais la capitale si j'avais la centième
partie de la gloire de M.de Voltaire avec ses quatre-vingt-quatre ans!
Comme je me tiendrai sur mon pré auprès de mon ruisseau, car j'aurais
un ruisseau alors! Cette soif insatiable de gloire au bord du tombeau,
cette inquiétude fleurâtre, cette complexion voltairienne, je ne
comprends rien de tout cela."

His affection, once given, was true and deep. His life-long devotion
to his father and mother has already been noticed, and he writes of his
brother in the same strain. "Puisses mon "Othello", puisse le recueil
de mes faibles Ouvrages, s'ils doivent me survivre et sauver notre nom
de l'oubli en rachetant leurs imperfections par quelques qualités qui
les distinguent, apprendre à mes Lecteurs quand nous aurons disparu,
que dans l'un des hommes les plus véritablement estimables que j'ai
connus, la nature m'avait accordé le plus généreux des Frères et le
plus fidèle des Amis." Thomas was his greatest friend in the earlier
part of his life; and a scene is related where only the absolute
sincerity of the friends saved them from utter ridicule. Ducis met with
a carriage accident when on the way to join his friend, and Thomas, himself
dying of consumption, hastened to Lyon to nurse him. The friends later
celebrated their joy at reunion by public tears and embraces at a
meeting of the Académie de Lyon. Other friends were Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Lemerrier, Campeenon and Fiorian, on the occasion of whose death Ducis writes: "O Fioriani! De quel coup m'a frappé ta perte imprévue! Que de regrets elle m'a laissés! Songer à t'aller voir prendre mon jour d'avance, me mettre en route, approcher, découvrir le village, te surprendre, te sentir tout à coup dans mes bras, me nommant avec transport et tenant encore dans ta main la plume chaste et sensible qui n'a jamais rien écrit que pour faire aimer les moeurs et la vertu: tout ce bonheur n'est donc plus pour moi!"

Ducis was generous and enthusiastic in his admiration. Voltaire had treated him with utter contempt, yet he bore no rancour and continued to admire. He began thus his speech to the French Academy, where he succeeded Voltaire: "Il est des grands hommes à qui l'on succède et que personne ne remplace. Leurs titres sont un héritage qui peut appartenir à tout le monde; leurs talents qui ont étonné l'univers ne sont qu'à eux. C'est à la suite des siècles seule à remplir le vide immense qu'ils ont laissé. Ainsi pensa autrefois un peuple guerrier qui, mené longtemps à la victoire par un général fameux, après la mort de ce héros laissait toujours sa place vide au milieu des batailles comme si son ombre l'occupait encore, et que personne n'eût été digne d'y commander après lui. Si à la mort de M.de Voltaire, Messieurs, vous eussiez imité cet exemple, avec quel respect la postérité n'eût-elle pas vu le siège où ce grand homme s'était assis dans vos assemblées, demeurant vide à jamais et sans être rempli! Cette distinction, unique jusqu'à présent, eût été peut-être le seul hommage digne d'un homme unique aussi par ses talents et son génie." His adoration of Shakespeare was a passion with him, and he speaks of him with almost religious awe-

"Je suis bien épris de croire que cet affranchissement des règles, cette indépendance même poussée à l'excès diminuent en rien la gloire de Shakespeare, c'est à dire, du plus vigoureux et du plus étonnant
poète tragique qui ait peut-être jamais existé; génie singulièrement second, original, extraordinaire, que la nature semble avoir créé exprès, tantôt pour la peindre avec tous ses charmes, tantôt pour la faire gémiir sous les attentats ou les remords du crime." Despite this gentleness, he has a fierce pride and independence that somehow seem in no wise incongruous. Ducis refused to be bound by any of the ordinary ties of social life and obligation: his solitude and independence were to him a necessity. He says "Je suis catholique, poète, républicain et solitaire : voilà les éléments qui me composent et qui ne peuvent s'arranger avec les hommes en société et avec les places .... Il y a dans mon âme naturellement douce quelque chose d'indompté qui brise avec fureur, et à leur seule idée, les charmes misérables de nos institutions humaines". The most outstanding example of this independence was his refusal of all favour from Napoleon. The prospect was such as might flatter the vanity of any writer, and Ducis was by no means exempt from this commonest of all failings in a poet: moreover, a refusal was dangerous, for one did not offend Napoleon with impunity; yet Ducis stood firm, and his sturdy refusal was without diplomacy to temper its bluntness. He rejoiced in his own pride, and wrote when he was old: "Ma fière naturelle est assez satisfaite de quelques 'non' bien fermes que j'ai prononcés dans ma vie. Mais j'entends qu'on se plaint, qu'on gémît, qu'on m'accuse; on me voudrait autre que je ne suis. Qu'on s'en prenne au potier qui a façonné ainsi mon argile."

Ducis was a poet, though scarcely anywhere in his plays do we find any poetry. It is an irony very characteristic of the 18th century that it is in his prose letters that we must look for the poetry of Ducis. In verse, the classical conventions of eloquence and elegance and poetic diction have made impossible the simplicity and "natural" that should be typical of his poetry. He himself speaks of the 'jeux de clavecin et de tonnerre' in his work: in his plays the 'clavecin' notes are false.
and tinkling as a rule, and the best passages are dramatic ones, where sometimes he can rise to great heights of eloquence and majesty. But these passages are open to the indictment pronounced on all 18th century plays that they are good rhetoric, and not good poetry. It is to the letters then that we must look, to find the true poetry of Ducis, with the freshness and beauty of flowers. Writing to the actor Talma in 1809: "Vous êtes dans la force de votre âge, de votre talent et de votre gloire. Je ne suis plus qu'une ruine couverte d'un peu de mousse et de quelques petites fleurs qui me consolent et me déguisent les outrages du temps. Je vous assure que mon âme, outrefois si vive d'impressions, actuellement s'y dérobe par faiblesse, et ne peut supporter ce qui l'émeut trop et ce qui l'agite. Il faut que je me mette en mesure avec mes moyens, et que je m'éloigne pas de moi la douce Muse qui s'y proportionne. Je conserve loin du vent, cette petite lampe de religieuse qui m'éclaire encore."

À Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: "Je ne sais plus trop quand je reviendrai à Paris. Je dois me tenir comme une petite fleur timide sous une cloche de verre que je sied toujours prêt à casser."

À Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: "Au moment où je vous écris, je suis seul dans ma chambre: la pluie tombe, les vents sifflent, le ciel est sombre, mais je suis calme dans mon âme comme un urs qui philosophe dans le creux de sa montagne. Et vous mon ami, vous regardez le berceau de votre petit enfant, et sa mère et ses grands-âges et vos deux aînés Paul et Virginie: votre cœur s'attendrit et jouit. La Providence est visiblement sur les berceaux."

"Que voulez-vous, mon ami? il n'y a point de fruit qui n'ait son ver, point de fleur qui n'ait sa cheville, point de plaisir qui n'ait sa douleur: notre bonheur n'est qu'un malheur plus ou moins consolé."

And notably the passages already quoted "J'ai fait une liée ce matin dans des plaines de bruyères et quelquefois entre des buissons..."
who are covered with flowers and who are singing." — "Oui, mon ami, j'ai épousé le désert comme le Doge de Venise épousait la mer Adriatique : j'ai jeté mon anneau dans les forêts."

Sainte-Beuve says of Ducis that he reaches his true stature only in old age, and compares him to an ancient, rugged oak, in whose bark bees have hidden their store of sweetness for the winter. Villamain who saw Ducis in his old age writes of him: "Je ne l'ai vu que très âgé. Sa figure, singulièrement grave et majestueuse, avait un caractère naïf et inspiré; on aurait cru voir je ne dirai pas un descendant d'Ossian; (cette généalogie est trop douteuse) mais d'Homère lui-même. On sentait au premier aspect que ce n'était pas un homme du temps, un homme tel que vous en verrez beaucoup même parmi les poètes. Il n'avait rien du monde; il ne s'inquiétait pas de toutes les petites affaires, de toutes les petites ambitions de la vie; sauvage et doux, poète au plus haut degré, n'ayant besoin de rien pour être poète, il a chanté les plaisirs de la campagne, enfermé dans sa modeste retraite à Versailles; c'était là qu'il rêvait dans sa poésie inculque cette nature pittoresque, négligée, qui lui plait, et qui lui ressemble. —

Un autre trait distinctif, un autre caractère de cet homme, c'était quelquechose de fier, de libre, d'indomptable. Jamais il ne porta, ne subit aucun juge, pas même celui de son siècle, car dans son siècle il fut constamment très-religieux .... Ses tragédies sont empreintes des libres maximes et des expressions abstraites, communes à la littérature du temps; mais son étude, son goût, sa préférence solitaire était la lecture de la Bible et d'Homère. Voilà comment il résistait au XVIIIe siècle, comment il était un esprit original, au milieu de son temps. Les théories ordinaires de l'élégance ne lui arrivaient pas."

Surely there is something very attractive in this old man, awaiting calmly and alone the end of his long life; and in the quiet
faith that triumphs over his loneliness: "Les moeurs ne s'apprennent pas, c'est la famille qui les inspire. Je suis, mon cher ami, comme un pauvre hibou, tout seul, 'sicut Nycticorax in domicilio'. Je songe douloureusement au passé, au présent, et doucement à l'avenir."

'S Work

Ducis's literary work consists of adaptations of six of Shakespeare's tragedies: "Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Macbeth, King John, Othello," an adaptation and combination of the "Œdipus at Colonus" of Sophocles and the "Alcestes" of Euripides, which he entitles "Œdipe chez Admete;" a later tragedy 'Œdipe à Colonne' where Ducis restricts his play to the one Greek legend and avoids the fusion of two quite different stories as in Œdipe chez Admete; one original tragedy "Abufar", of which the scene is laid in the desert, amid the virtues and simplicities of patriarchal life; and a number of "Épitres" in verse.

It is very difficult to judge fairly the plays of Ducis. As adaptations, they are certainly bad: Ducis had not clearly enough understood the models he was imitating, and did not realise that it was quite impossible to fit Sophocles, Euripides or Shakespeare into a system that was so foreign to their genius, and yet preserve the beauty and value of their plays. The fault lay as much in this inartistic conception of Greek and English plays pruned and twisted to make French tragedies, as in the actual execution of the idea. Whatever the individual talent of the adapter, one may be sure before reading the plays, that they will be mere travesties of Shakespeare, since they start from a principle so false as that which insists that Shakespeare's chief fault is that he does not obey the classical tradition, and that he will be improved by being made to obey it. Voltaire had shown in "Zaire" that Shakespeare might furnish the inspiration for a good French play, provided that you
were prepared to recast it entirely, and make no attempt to reproduce
the English tragedy as it stood; but Ducis's romantic genius was much
nearer to Shakespeare's than Voltaire's, and just because he appreciated
so much better the beauties of the English poet's work, he was resolved
not to sacrifice them altogether. Had his admiration of Shakespeare been
the only influence in his work, he might have written faithful
reproductions of the English tragedies that would have had at least as
much value as a good copy of a famous picture; but the tyranny of the
tradition in which he had been nurtured stifled his talent and made his
appreciation of Shakespeare's greatness rather a stumbling-block than an
aid. His adaptations fail as adaptations because they are always full of
apology to the Classical Tradition, and are as much occupied in appeasing
its outraged dignity as in reproducing Shakespeare.

As French tragedies, considered without reference to their English
models, Ducis's plays are not much more successful. As the preoccupation
of the Classical Tradition had spoilt the adaptations, the preoccupation
of a foreign and barbarous genius spoils the French tragedies. The genius
of the national tragedy was a rigorous logic of plot and character: an
action that moved steadily and swiftly onward, and depended on the inter-
play of character and passion that made each scene the natural outcome
of what went before. Ducis fails to achieve this clearness and logic
because he introduces continually scenes and events that are fortuitous
or independent of the characters or even irrelevant — a thunderstorm
on a heath, an unexpected attack by unknown enemies, a woman walking in her
sleep on a night of confusion and tragedy when sleep would be impossible,
long wandering speeches of a mad King, long descriptions of the appearance
of spectres or witches. The inspiration of such scenes is evident, and
often they have dramatic or sentimental or poetic value; but they have no
place in the clear, rational tragedy of Corneille or Racine, and according
to its principles are defects. The plays are as much melodramas as
tragedies, and therefore come under one of the two chief indictments against 18th century French tragedy. Nor have they escaped the other, that of coldness and artificiality: in an effort to reconcile his plays with the tradition whose authority he is violating Ducis employs the classical conventions of tedious narrative, feeling so refined as to be insipid, and verse so elegant that it is stilted and lifeless.

In reality, it is not fair to judge Ducis's plays either as adaptations or as classical French tragedies. The faults that marred them were all those of the transition period in which Ducis lived, and the only just estimate of his work is one which takes fully into consideration the conditions under which he worked, and the ideal which he set himself, which was neither entirely to reproduce Shakespeare nor to imitate Corneille and Racine.

The dramatic author more than any other is the slave of his public. Ducis realised that clearly, and felt the restriction that it places on the freedom of the writer - "Un poète tragique est donc obligé de se conformer au caractère de la nation devant laquelle il fait représenter ses ouvrages. C'est une vérité incontestable, puisque son principal but est de lui plaire." (Avertissement d'Othello). A late 18th century audience was by no means an easy one to satisfy. It was a decadent civilisation, worn out by intellectual activity and moral corruption, and it demanded something new and piquant to stimulate its interest. The classical models had been so often imitated, and badly imitated, that it was absolutely essential to find something new under the sun. That might not have been difficult had the poet been left free, but despite its exacting demand for novelty, the 18th century public insisted that the novelty should be so disguised as to make it seem no novelty at all. There must be excitement and action, pity and terror in abundance, but it must remain dignified, restrained, elegant and proper. It was almost a contradiction in terms, and the demand sounds rather
ike the fantastic tasks set to philosophers of poets by Eastern kings in old fairy tales. Yet nothing less would satisfy the public, and its authors were bound to produce tragedies that would look just like classical ones, with the same exalted moral atmosphere and dignified elegance, and which nevertheless would enclose all the attractions of romantic melodrama. Such plays could not possibly be artistic because they were built upon an inartistic conception of compromise between two irreconcilable elements.

Ducis had no choice but to write these hybrid tragedies, classical in appearance, romantic in reality, and judged as such they are good. They obey the chief classical canons: their language is always eloquent and dignified, their characters noble, and above all they have the idealised truth and moral beauty that are the greatest glory of classical tragedy. Yet they present much that is new and interesting: an entirely new conception of the sympathy between nature and the soul of man, the fascination of the supernatural and the horrible, that indefinable charm that we call "romance", and an echo of the great thoughts that were filling men's minds, liberty and justice, the glory and the sacredness of humanity. Once the falseness of the conception that Ducis was forced to adopt has been recognised, the real worth of his plays becomes apparent: they have both moral beauty and romantic interest.

To Ducis, the writing of tragedy was his God-given mission in the world. Once one has realised the moral grandeur of Ducis's own soul, and of his attitude towards tragedy, his work is invested with a dignity that lifts it above the artificiality and weakness of its literary conception; and though such a definite moral purpose cannot give it literary or artistic value, and indeed may lessen these; it does give it moral beauty that impels admiration. Writing to Paré, the "ministre de l'intérieur" under the Convention, who offered him the post of director of the National Library, Ducis says, "S'il m'est donné d'être un peu
utile à mon pays, ce ne peut être qu'en mettant en action sur la scène quelques-unes de ces grandes vérités morales qui peuvent rendre les hommes meilleurs, vérités que la réflexion saisit bien dans un livre, mais que le théâtre rend vivantes, en parlant à l'âme et aux yeux. Parдонnez-moi, donc, citoyen ministre, de refuser une place qui m'ôterait le seul moyen que Dieu m'ait donné pour servir mes semblables." Through all the plays of Ducis breathes a passionate love and admiration for whatever is good and beautiful, and as passionate a hatred of what is evil and unjust; a deep sense of the sacredness of the human soul, of filial and parental love, of sacrifice and devotion. They reflect very clearly the purity and uprightness of the poet, his reverence for all that is lovely and of good report: and they awaken in readers or spectators a like reverence.

The romantic beauty of the plays is somewhat spoiled by the stilted, pseudo-classical language that robs them of simplicity; yet if we can accustom ourselves to the artificiality of the language, we can seize something of the freshness of the thought and feeling. It is a vexed question what "romantic" and "classical" really mean, and probably everyone who thinks it over will find his own particular definitions; but in the general sense in which it is used here to distinguish between the ideal of the 17th century and that of the 19th, it is fairly clear. What the 17th century ideal was has already been discussed: the 19th century one does not immediately concern this study, except in so far as we find it prepared in the work of Ducis. It may be well to consider what exactly were the ideas which Ducis offered as new to the 18th century public, and which foreshadowed the later Romantic Revival.

Most noticeable of all perhaps was the new interest in Nature. Ducis himself loved the outside world, as his letters plainly show, and some of his most charming writing is description or imagery drawn from the beauties of wood and meadow. One of the conceptions of Shakespeare
that seems to have struck Ducis most is that of the mysterious sympathy between the soul of man and the forces of nature - the love of Romeo and Juliet is crowned on a summer night, the despair of Lear is echoed by wind and rain and thunder, tempest and black darkness condemn the foul deed of Macbeth. Such a conception was utterly foreign to classical drama, but Ducis welcomed it gladly. His Lear, like Shakespeare's, wanders through the storm, and finds in its fury the counterpart of the pitiless cruelty that has driven him out; "Macbeth" opens in wild desolate moorland very different from the palace halls of classical tragedy; and the tempest shrieks a warning to the ill-fated Desdemona, who shudders as she hears it. French tragedy had been essentially of the interior, but Ducis throws open the door to the wind-swept moorland.

A corollary to this new-found interest in Nature is the passion for rustic simplicity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau had taught men to believe in the purity and virtue of all simple, country life, Marie-Antoinette and her ladies played at being shepherdesses, and gentlemen adorned their parks with "rustic cots". There is no trace of this in Shakespeare's tragedies, for it is after all little more than a pretty fancy, and the tragedies were too real and terrible for such pretence, which was more in keeping with the charming world of phantasy where "As You Like It" happened. But Ducis makes constant reference to the happiness of country life and its security -

"Je vis libre et caché, mon âme est calme et pure:
Connais-tu quelque sort plus doux dans la nature?"

(Macbeth Act II. Sc 5.)

Two other curious characteristics of the new romantic literature that have already been discussed in connexion with the 18th century, are the fascination of the sinister and horrible, and the growth of sensibility. We find both in Ducis, and indeed some of his plays depend largely on these for their appeal. At least to a modern mind, Ducis has not been
altogether successful in his use of them, and is frequently so exaggerated
as to be ridiculous. Sometimes he can use the sinister with real dramatic
effect, as in the storm in "Lear", or the sombre character he makes of
the elder Montagu; but sometimes his effort to arouse pity and terror
"overleaps itself", and becomes melodramatic or ludicrous, as in the fate
he ascribes to Lady Macbeth, or the tale of Montague's sufferings.
Similarly, he has a wonderful power of tragic effect, but sometimes
indulges in such a luxury of tears and pathos, that it irritates
intensely the less emotional reader of to-day. This is noticeable
especially in "Lear" and "King John", where the real tragedy of the old
mad King, or the little prince begging for his sight, is followed by
scenes where the emotion is laboured and artificial.

In connexion with the fascination of the eerie and horrible, it is
worth while to note Ducis's treatment of the supernatural. Evidently
that had delighted him in Shakespeare, for he keeps it whenever possible.
But here he comes into conflict with the Classical Tradition and the
rational French mind, which no longer believes the superstitions of
Shakespeare's day. The spectres in "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" were not so
difficult, for the dreams in Racine had prepared the way, and Voltaire
the Dictator had used them and declared them lawful. But it is noticeable
that in Ducis they are always subjective, and are never seen by more
than one character, nor by the audience. The witches in "Macbeth" were
more difficult; Ducis either did not understand their role of subtle
temptresses, and therefore misses their real significance, or he dared
not entrust to them a part of such importance, and he makes their
appearance a variant to be accepted or rejected by the producer. The
variant itself, while quite different from anything in Shakespeare, has
captured perfectly the uncanny horror of the evil things and is worthy
of a better fate than to be merely a possible additional adornment
with no real part in the play.
The curious morbid, introspective tendency of Romantic literature was not characteristic of Ducis, who was too frank, naïf and wholesome for such brooding; but he loved solitude, meditation and melancholy, and he has given us a glimpse of later romantic heroes in his moody Hamlet (who is an imitation of Shakespeare's) and the stormy Montague, nursing his hatred and vengeance in solitude (and who is entirely a creation of Ducis.) Incidentally, Shakespeare's romantic young Romeo becomes very classical, and much more like Rodrigue.

Ducis lived in one of the most stirring times of all French history, and he could not but reflect something of the enthusiasms that were stirring his fellow men. His plays are full of a passion for liberty and justice, fiery revolt against oppression, admiration of those who devote themselves to the cause of liberty, and reverence for the dignity of the human soul.

"Règne, mais en tremblant, muet, pâle, immobile,

Rampant sous ces cachots pour chercher un asile,

Séchant, mourant enfin de l'éternel effroi

Que réserve le ciel aux tyrans tels que toi.

(Jean. Acte III. Sc 13)

Grands dieux! en ce moment Lear verse des larmes.

Défendez votre cause en protégeant nos âmes!

Nos jeunes coeurs sont purs; nos bras vous sont soumis:

Daignez les employer contre vos ennemis!

C'est vous, c'est un vieillard, la beauté, qu'on opprime

Le fer est préparé: livrez-nous la victime:

Et, s'il nous faut mourir, que nos pères jaloux

Gravant sur nos tombeaux: Ils sont dignes de nous.

(Lear. Acte III. Sc 1)

Vous êtes donc encore sensible à la pitié?

Ne suis-je pas un homme?

Ah! jamais sur la terre
Next to their high moral tone and romantic interest, the most outstanding quality of the plays is their vigour and intensity. There are passages of tedious narrative, of overdrawn emotion or melodrama and long dull conversations, but whenever some deep feeling inspires Ducis, his verse becomes swift and vigorous. The reader even is borne along by their fiery eloquence, and when they are pronounced by a good actor they must be intensely dramatic. Even in the fine passages, there are faults of style, but the general impression of energy and verve is so good that they pass unnoticed. It is rather curious, considering the kindliness of Ducis's own nature, that it should be in passages of invective that his style is at its best. The description of Macbeth's prowess in battle is an example of narrative where energy and eloquence are united to a simplicity and directness of language that makes the passage an excellent piece of writing. The same verve can be seen in the handling of the plot, at least in the earlier plays, where the story sweeps on to its conclusion with a vigour and animation that cover a multitude of improbabilities and weaknesses.

"Abufar, ou la Famille Arabe", Ducis's only original play is in the same style as the later adaptations, and open to the same criticism and commendation. The story and setting are characteristic of Ducis: the scene is amid the strange peace of the desert, and the characters the virtuous Arab tent-dwellers, living far from civilization and governed by their Patriarch, the father of the family. Civilization is represented by a Persian captive, who is so charmed by the simple desert life that he marries one of Abufar's daughters, and voluntarily remains with the family. Ducis has created no such sombre tragedy and picture of evil as
Shakespeare does: Farhan, Abufar's son, leaves his home in shame and misery because he is guilty of a passion for his sister Saléma, against which he struggles in vain - this was horrible enough to excite the necessary pity and terror; but the reader is reassured on finding that Saléma is only an adopted daughter, and the "tragedy" ends in happiness and peace and a double betrothal. The story is melodramatic and impossible depending on the concealed identity of Saléma, the play is full of artificial and sententious verse; but it has something of the naïve beauty of Ducis's own character - Abufar himself suggests the poet at once - and it has caught something of the weird fascination and romance that the desert undoubtedly holds (witness the vogue of the Sheik in cinemas and novels to-day.)

The "Epitres" are unequal: there are charming passages in them, where all Ducis's best qualities are displayed, but in many cases they are little better than conventional rhymed prose, not half so beautiful as his simpler prose letters.

Ducis, as far as one can gather, did not know English, and had to depend on translators for his knowledge of Shakespeare. It was, of course, impossible that anyone who had not an intimate knowledge of English should fully understand its great poet: but in 1776, between Ducis's first and second group of plays appeared an excellent translation of Shakespeare by Lefourneur. It is a most sane and helpful work, containing a life of Shakespeare, discussion and criticism of Shakespeare drawn from English prefaces, and a fair statement of his claim to recognition in France, erring neither on the side of blind extravagant admiration nor of patronising superiority. Ducis had thus before him a sane view of the Shakespeare problem, to balance Voltaire's bitter attacks. The translation itself is in prose, and in simple, elegant French. Lefourneur has made it as literal as possible, and has only changed metaphors and images.
where they would either be incomprehensible in French or produce an entirely different impression from the one they make in English. Where he changes thus, he very often gives a literal translation of the phrase in a foot note. Passages that are too crude to be acceptable in a French translation, he usually omits in the course of the plays but translates separately at the end. The majesty and poetry of the original is inevitably lost, and there are occasional misunderstandings: but in general, it offers a faithful rendering in pleasant simple style, that must have been of immense delight and service to Ducis.

The following may be quoted as a specimen, not necessarily of Letourneur's best work, but of a passage so well known as to be in the minds of all: Hamlet "Être ou ne pas Être? C'est là la question . . . S'il est plus noble à l'âme de souffrir les traits poignants de l'injuste fortune, ou se révoltant contre cette multitude de maux, de s'opposer au torrent et les finir? Mourir - Dormir - rien de plus, et par ce sommeil dire: Nous mettons un terme aux angoisses du cœur et à cette foule de plaies et de douleurs, l'héritage naturel de cette masse de chair . . . ce point où tout est consommé devrait être désiré avec ferveur. Mourir - Dormir - Dormir? . . . rêver, peut-être; oui, voilà le grand obstacle. - Car de savoir quels songes peuvent survenir dans ce sommeil de la mort après que nous nous sommes dépouillés de cette enveloppe mortelle, c'est de quoi nous forcer à faire une pause. . . Qui voudrait porter tous ces fardeaux et suer et gémir sous le poids d'une laborieuse vie, si ce n'est que la crainte de quelque avenir après la mort - cette contrée ignorée dont nul voyageur ne revient - plonge la volonté dans une affreuse perplexité, et nous fait préférer de supporter les maux que nous sentons plutôt que de fuir vers d'autres maux que nous ne connaissions pas? Ainsi la conscience fait de nous tous des poltrons; ainsi tout le feu de la résolution la plus déterminée se décole et s'éteint devant la pâle lueur de cette pensée. Les projets enfantés avec le plus d'énergie et
Two passages of interest to note in passing are one where Letourneur quotes an opinion that Shakespeare can only be appreciated and enjoyed by those who are accustomed, not to "la mollesse des sophas" and to "des salles de palais", but to the keen wind on moor and hillside, and the beauties of stream and forest; and one where he remarks that the English word 'romantic' means something more than the French words considered equivalent, 'romanesque' and 'pittoresque'. 'Romanesque' has a depreciatory idea, and 'pittoresque' applies merely to the actual appearance of a landscape, while a 'romantic' scene is one which suggests images, or ideas that give it greater interest and value than its mere beauty. He suggests the new word 'romantique' as an equivalent.

It was natural and inevitable that Ducis should admire Shakespeare, he was attracted by the depth and power of his tragic genius, by the majesty of his style, by his study of the human soul, by his use of outdoor Nature, and by the dramatic effect of such scenes as the sleepwalking scene in 'Macbeth', the death of Desdemona and Juliet, and the unhappy plight of the old mad King driven out by his daughters. He himself could appreciate the irregular beauties of Shakespeare, and even such sombre pictures as the character of Iago: but he knew they would never be accepted on a French stage. The French public might welcome Letourneur's literal and full translation of Shakespeare as a novelty, and admire its barbaric beauty, but it was another matter to present his plays as French dramas. They would shock both the Classical Tradition and the 'Bienséances', which were the literary censors of the day: and despite the innovations that dramatists were beginning to risk, Shakespeare was far too revolutionary to please unless great concessions were made both to the all-powerful Tradition, and to good taste.
Exactly how Ducis dealt with the plays, and altered them to suit French taste will be shown in the separate analyses: but it may be well to note the general principles that he followed in all his adaptations. In order to satisfy French taste, Ducis changed 1. The Plot - 2. The Characters - 3. The Moral Tone - 4. The Style.

The Plot  Shakespeare's plots were always impossible for French drama: they violated the Unity of Action by containing scenes and episodes that had no direct bearing on the main action, whatever light they might throw on the characters; they violated the Unities of Time and Place; and they shocked good taste by being violent and spectacular or by giving an important part to some subordinate character unworthy of tragedy. Invariably Ducis had to prune them of unnecessary episodes, precipitate them considerably to bring them within twenty-four hours, and alter or cut out such scenes and characters as were too undignified for tragedy. Thus all Shakespeare's stories have to be altered more or less: sometimes, notably in 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Othello', so many of the incidents have to be rejected that there is not enough left to make a play, and Ducis has to add a plot of his own. His plots are always simpler than Shakespeare's, in the sense that they never contain the duplicate or subordinate plots, and hosts of different characters so typical of the English poet; and they are frequently made to conform to certain conventional French situations (the overwhelming influence of the great classics Corneille and Racine is continually evident in the work of Ducis, who reproduces the situations of 'Le Cid', 'Polyeucte', 'Britannicus', etc.) Yet, while the plots are simpler in general outline, they are often complicated by concealed identities, (as in "Romeo and Juliette." for example) or additional excitements and horrors (such as the night attack in "Macbeth" or the story of Montaigu in "Romeo et Juliette." )
One method that Ducis uses rather ingeniously for the simplification of Shakespeare's loose plots, is the inter-relation of characters that belong to different families in Shakespeare. Thus Ophelia becomes the daughter of Claudius; Tybault is Juliet's brother; Gloucester and Kent are fused into one, and the son Edgar becomes the hero; Cassio becomes the son of the Duke of Venice. The result is often somewhat unfortunate, from an English point of view: the natural effect and probability of the story suffer badly, and there is a sort of neat symmetry of outline that is irritating; but judged by French standards, there is only gain. The number of characters is reduced, all are more closely bound together, the main action has greater compactness, the situation is made more poignant or dramatic, and in some cases closer to the standard ones that were the pattern for tragedy ("Le Cid" in "Hamlet" and "Romeo et Juliette", "Polyeucte" in "Othello"). In each case it is a clever stroke of Ducis, and shows quick appreciation of French dramatic effect.

The simplification already discussed was largely to preserve the Unity of Action; the Unity of Time is always strictly observed, and the story precipitated to the point of absurdity sometimes to achieve it. The Unity of Place is not strictly observed, though there is much less license than in Shakespeare; Ducis permits himself two, or even three scenes.

**The Characters.** Shakespeare has always a very long list of characters, and there are always soldiers, servants, fools, etc., who would be quite impossible on a French stage. Many of these disappear naturally in the course of the simplification of the plot; others disappear to satisfy the demand of the Classical Tradition for a small and select cast; and some are transformed into confidants, captains of the guard, or officers (e.g. Juliet's nurse, Desdemona's maid, Voltimand in 'Hamlet').
Lucas allowed himself greater freedom in this respect than his classical predecessors, and we twice have a virtuous peasant ("Macbeth" and "Othello"); soldiers and people appear, only as a silent crowd, certainly, but still they do appear.

A certain simplification and reduction to type is characteristic of all classical personages, and is inevitable. There is no time for the slow development of character, and anything which is destined simply to illustrate character and not advance the plot is irrelevant. The particular danger of these simplified personages was that they should become lifeless and abstract, unless the author had great skill in psychology. Ducis had not, and on the whole his characters are very conventional and lifeless: black villains like Claudius, Cornwall, Lady Macbeth and John; gallant young heroes like Romeo, Edgar, and even Othello; classical heroines like Ophelia and Juliet, or romantic ones like Desdemona, Constance and Cordelia; and colourless confidants attached to most of these. They are not absolutely without individuality: Claudius is brazen and John cowardly; Romeo is more thoughtful and deliberate than the impetuous Edgar; and Juliet in particular has a dignity and serenity that make her stand out in one's memory: but there is a strong family likeness in each group, and one has the feeling that if Desdemona and Cordelia, for example, were exchanged, or even Romeo and Edgar, one would not be much the wiser. Some characters are not conventional at all: Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, for example; but they are much more abstract and therefore less life-like than Shakespeare's.

The change in the Moral Tone of the plays means a corresponding change in the characters. There is a curious difference in the moral outlook of Shakespeare and Ducis that is partly due to their conception of drama, and partly to their own character. To Shakespeare a tragedy
is a presentation of life, and just because it is a tragedy, of one of the darker aspects of life. He never shrinks from portraying the evil that is in the world, and he never tries to make it less black and ugly: life is full of mean and repulsive things as well as noble ones, and Shakespeare shows us evil in its meaner forms as well as its less repulsive. Beside it, he sets the beautiful and true: and his moral greatness is that even though evil seems to triumph over good, and the plays end in death and desolation, we never feel that evil is the true victor. Our sympathies lie always with the good, and rather a thousand times would we be Desdemona or Cordelia, Othello or Duncan than their tormentors, even should no earthly punishment reach them. Shakespeare teaches us to cleave to that which is good, and to pursue it at all cost, by showing us the ugliness of evil in all its forms; and the lesson is awe-inspiring and profound.

French tragedy, on the other hand, teaches its lessons by holding up the great and noble and generous. Our souls are uplifted by the idealised men and women that never falter in their devotion to honour and duty, and we learn to love good by gazing on its beauty. This is not absolutely unvarying: there are Nero, and Phèdre, and Athalie; but it is certain that the atmosphere of French tragedy is one of idealised moral beauty. Ducis himself was wholehearted in his allegiance to what is noble and true, and to the Christian faith. Shakespeare shows us the ruin of noble souls through some vice or weakness; Ducis preferred to show us the final triumph of good over evil, and of the higher over the lower in the human soul - the gospel of possible recovery for the most polluted. Hence his dramas are less sombre than Shakespeare's even when they end in death and disaster: and though his characters may perish, their death is often a voluntary expiation of their own or others' wrongdoing, and is swallowed up in the victory of devotion or repentance over self. The two most noteworthy cases are Gertrude and Macbeth. Instead of being a weak
morally worthless woman who perishes miserably, Ducis's Gertrude is a noble woman who has been guilty of one great crime, but who spends the rest of her life in seeking to expiate it, and dies by her own hand as the only way to satisfy divine justice. She is "sympathique" all through, and her death gives her back her lost virtue. Macbeth is exactly similar: instead of sinking steadily into the depths of degradation and cruelty, he gives way to the urging of a bad woman and commits murder, but remorse follows at once, and real repentance (which Shakespeare's Macbeth never felt) and he voluntarily gives up the crown to Malcolm offering himself a sacrifice to divine justice. Thus in both cases, though the play ends in death, it is death crowned with the glory of sacrifice, and it is that glory which remains with us. "Lear" ends happily in the marriage of Cordelia and Edgar; the horror of "Othello" is lightened because the tragedy comes from imprudence and misunderstanding more than from wilful malevolence; the real tragedy of "John" is the blinding of the little prince, and death comes as a release. Only "Romeo and Juliet" ends in utter blackness, and that is because of the implacable hatred of Montague, the one sinister figure Ducis has created. There is not the reconciliation that closes Shakespeare's play, and Montague dies with unsoftened hatred: but over Romeo and Juliette is the glory of sacrifice since Juliette has given her life to try and purchase peace and safety for her father and her lover.

Ducis says himself that his object in writing tragedy was to set before men "quelques-unes de ces grandes vérités morales qui peuvent rendre les hommes meillures, vérités que la réflexion saisit bien dans un livre, mais que le théâtre rend vivantes, en parlant à l'âme et aux yeux;" hence the moral lesson on which the Classical Tradition insisted, was to him the very essence of tragedy. In nearly every 'Avertissement' he states clearly what his lesson is to be, and one of the most curious facts in Ducis's adaptations is that the virtue which seems above all others to
appeal to him is filial and paternal affection. In all six adaptations it is one of the great driving forces, and even love is subordinated to it. Ducis lays very little stress on love: Hamlet and Ophelia, Romeo and Juliet, Cordelia and Edgar, Othello and Desdemona - in each case their love is spoken largely in the terms of stilted gallantry of the 18th century. So sentimental about most things, Ducis never is about love, and his treatment of it is always restrained. He is roused to much greater feeling by the devotion of parents and children - the devotion of Hamlet to his father, and Ophelia to Claudius, of Romeo and Juliet to Montague and Capulet, of Cordelia to Lear, of Desdemona to her father; and the adoration of Gertrude for Hamlet, Lear for his daughters, Constance for Arthur and Lady Macbeth for her baby son.

**The Style**

Shakespeare has no one style: his characters speak as befits them, and the style changes from the most majestic verse to the most familiar prose. There is no poetic diction, and all words come alike to Shakespeare; he uses the very simplest of household terms as readily as some strange word that he coins for himself. His plays are full of poetry that has been written for the sheer joy of writing it, as the reader welcomes it for the sheer joy of reading or hearing it. Though Ducis could not appreciate this beauty as an English reader can, he was captivated by it, and reproduces long passages of his great model; but it was impossible to reproduce the styles. The Classical Tradition demanded that the high standard of elegance and courtliness should never falter for a moment. There were no low-class characters, so there was no excuse for familiar language, and prose was inconceivable. Only "noble" words might be used, and any reference to a commonplace article must be veiled by fine words. Eloquence and dignity must be sustained, and any flight into the realm of poetry for its own sake was forbidden. To all these rules Ducis must conform, and it is this convention that explains his rather extraordinary style. As with his plays, it is only
fair to judge his style with reference to the ideal he was forced to respect. Judged by 18th century standards it was excellent: always elegant and eloquent, full of the words and phrases that were the accepted signs of good classical language, and yet holding enough of audacity and novelty to give piquancy. What a modern reader would condemn, an 18th century one commended.

It is obvious how completely the effect of Shakespeare's plays is transformed. Their style is reduced to a uniform pattern of verse and language that is not only unlike Shakespeare because of its unvarying uniformity, but is unlike anything in Shakespeare. This change of style is naturally, the same for all the plays.

The result is in the whole very unfortunate. Classical style at its best is unsurpassed for clearness, dignity and eloquence; but by the 18th century elegance was decaying into artificiality, and eloquence into melodrama. Ducis has all the faults of his age: the simplest statements are turned into absurd periphrases - "Je n'ai pas d'enfants" becomes "L'hymen ne m'a jamais fait de si chers présents" - and whole speeches continue in the same strain; other passages exaggerate impressiveness or pathos and become melodramatic and sentimental; and others are dull and sententious. Whenever anyone is faced with some overwhelming grief or shock, he cries either "Où suis-je?" or "Qu'entends-je?" and every principal character addresses his or her confidant as "cher comte, cher Oswald, chère Hermance" etc. The movement of the verse is sometimes jerky, sometimes monotonous and the language often a jargon of the technical terms of drama - "feux, flamme, chaines, ardeur mutuelle, mortel, trepas, funeste, déplorable, bourreau, barbare," etc. The fault is far more that of the system than the writer; for Ducis shows in his letters what simple, poetic French he could write. But he dare not introduce that into his dramas, and he was forced to paraphrase Shakespeare to fit 18th
century taste. Fortunately, his talent was not altogether stifled: in the passages where he is closely imitating his English model, that influence predominates, and the verse is infinitely less artificial - some of these paraphrases are very fine, though in some cases, their would-be elegance spoils their beauty. Ducis's own talent was at its best in invective, or denunciation, or spirited narrative; and in such passages, monotony, jerkiness and artificiality are lost in the splendid vigour and swing of the lines. Next to this rapid, vigorous verse in poetic value come a few scenes where, in the intensity of feeling, elegance is forgotten, and short simple phrases achieve far more striking dramatic effect than fine speeches - (the most notable are the replies of the old Breton Kermadeuc as he faces the blustering cruelty of King John -

"Crois-moi, vieillard dur et faraud

Les supplices bientôt pourront t'ouvrir la bouche.

Je sais souffrir.

Peut-être. Et le tourment plus fort.

Un Breton brave tout, la douleur, et la mort."

At the end of each analysis extracts are given at some length, and where they follow Shakespeare can be compared with the English passages they imitate, so as to give a good idea of Ducis's style, and its difference from anything in Shakespeare.

Ducis's plays, then, are a mixture of the old Classical system and the new Romantic one; and it is interesting to trace the two influences at work in his plays. The Classical Tradition is represented by certain conventions which Ducis observes more or less strictly.

Choice of subject (Shakespeare's tragedies always concern themselves with actions of considerable magnitude, so that the main outline can stand, if the details are changed.)
The rejection of all that is irrelevant to the plot, despite its intrinsic value, and the necessity for a swiftly-moving, well-constructed plot. (Partly observed, but not entirely, for Ducis occasionally sacrifices these to romantic interest.)

Tragedy a moment of crisis in a struggle between conflicting passions or duties. (Ducis introduces this element of struggle into all the plays, whether it is in Shakespeare or not, save in "Le Roi Jean", which failed.)

Choice of characters (Ducis keeps only those that are noble.)

Poetic Diction (Faithfully observed on the whole, though there is slightly more license than in earlier plays.)

The Moral Lesson. (This is present in all Ducis's plays)

The Unities (Action and Time observed: Place not strictly observed.)

The use of uniform Alexandrine verse. (Ducis departs from this only in the "Romance du Saule" in "Othello").

Spectacular effect and violent action to be avoided. (Spectacular events are restricted to narrative, save in the case of the storm in "Lear", and a few other instances.)

The use of certain expedients: concealed identity and recognition scenes, letters, dreams, confidants, narratives. (Ducis makes considerable use of all these.)

The Romantic tendency of the plays is illustrated by

- A slightly less rigorous obedience to the conventions mentioned above.
- The importance attached to Nature and its sympathy with the soul of man.
- The part played by sensibility.
- The fascination of the supernatural and the sinister.
- The admission of "fortuitous events", scenes such as the sleep-walking one, or the storm and deaths upon the stage (Othello).
- The spirit of revolution and the passion for freedom.
The adaptations of Ducis fall naturally into three groups: "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet" - (1769 and 1772); "King Lear" and "Macbeth" - (1783 and 1784); "King John" and "Othello" - (1791 and 1792). The first two are still very much under the influence of the Classical Tradition, and look as much back as forward. They have more carefully constructed plots, more classical characters, and less sensibility and melodrama. "Hamlet" especially is very classical, and from the point of view of French tragedy is the best of the plays.

"Lear" and "Macbeth" are the two romantic plays, and are more melodramatic than classical. In them, Ducis risks his greatest audacities, a mad King, a storm on a heath, witches and spectres, a somnambulist, and unlimited sensibility. They have much less value of logic and construction; but greater romantic interest. They were both triumphs for Ducis.

"King John" and "Othello" are inferior. They have too much sensibility, and are incoherent, ill-constructed, and not very interesting. There are however, some fine passages in both, and some traces of the merits of Ducis's work, moral beauty, romantic interest and vigorous handling of situations and verse.

Despite his success in his own day, the plays of Ducis are never acted now, and rarely read. This is inevitable, for despite considerable beauty and merit, they are marred by serious faults, and never attain the highest standard. They are completely eclipsed by the great works that precede and follow them, in the 17th and 19th centuries, and their service in the transition from the classical to the romantic ideal is often forgotten. Yet that is their real contribution to the progress of literature. The transition was a difficult one, and Ducis stands just midway between the two extremes, trying to be faithful both to old authority, and new inspiration. It was a difficult position, and he strove
nobly to fill it. The fact that he was caught between two conflicting ideals ruined his chance of making the most of his great talents: but he gave of his very best to his own generation, and they welcomed gladly and with reverence all that he had to offer. To us his plays remain the life-work of a very noble and beautiful soul, whose imprint they bear: and a courageous pioneer effort in the progress of literature from one great ideal to another.
CHAPTER IV. Hamlet.

Plan.

1. Alteration and simplification of situation and incidents: the reasons for the changes.
2. The characters.
4. Changes of spirit, tone and style: extracts
Chapter IV.

Hamlet.

The first impression that one has on reading Ducis's "Hamlet" after Shakespeare's, is how enormously the French writer has simplified the play in every way. Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' remains more or less of a problem play in spite of all the explanations and interpretations that have been written: we may have our own idea of what Hamlet really is, but others are just as convinced that some other explanation is the true one, and after all there is nothing to prove absolutely that one or other is wholly right or wrong. Hamlet's character and his action, or rather reluctance to act, remain an enigma, and one suspects that Hamlet himself felt it so, since he cries

"I do not know
Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do."
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't." (IV - 4)

This difficulty disappears entirely in the French play. Hamlet remains moody and melancholy, reluctant to commit the action to which he is called; but he knows perfectly well why, and says so clearly: and we at the end of the play feel we have understood and followed all his thoughts and feelings. The play is quite clear and straightforward.

Again, as is necessarily the case in all Ducis' adaptations of Shakespeare, the plot and incidents of the play have been greatly simplified. More than half the incidents in the English play have been left out of the French, either because they are irrelevant, or because they would shock the bienseánces, or because they would not fit into the limits of the unities. Similarly all the characters who were not strictly necessary have disappeared. To compensate for all that the play has lost, Ducis was obliged to expand certain aspects of
what was left, and this explains his chief alteration of the plot.

Ducis has taken the central idea of Shakespeare's play and has presented it in a simplified and conventionalized form. He has seized on the elements in the play that were most akin to those of a French drama, and has developed these at the expense of the others, which were the essentially English ones. The result is a clear logical play centring round a crisis and a struggle, the struggle in Hamlet's soul between his own inclinations and the knowledge of his duty which finally triumphs: while Shakespeare's play is rather the tragedy of unjustified delay in obedience to an unmistakable command, and the havoc it wrought in one man's soul and many men's lives. The true interest of Shakespeare's play is in the study of what Hamlet is: in Ducis's as in most classical plays, the interest lies in the question "What will Hamlet do in this difficult situation where he finds himself?"

As an adaptation of the English play Ducis's "Hamlet" strikes one as poor and cold and artificial, a mere travesty. Yet judged in itself and apart from its model, it has considerable merit. It has a compact well-constructed plot, and real dramatic interest well sustained: it fulfils all the requirements of a French 18th century drama - a logical plot, interesting situations, a struggle in the soul of the hero that culminates in tragic action, obedience to the classical tradition. It does not altogether avoid the dangers of 18th century drama in France: it is somewhat artificial and bombastic, but it is less tedious and has less moralising than some of the plays. Moreover, it has escaped the danger of melodrama that has spoilt 'Macbeth' and 'Romeo et Juliette'; in "Hamlet", the horror is inherent in the situation, and is not piled on from outside, except perhaps in the incident of the urn.

The situation of Hamlet, faced with the duty of taking vengeance on his father's murderers, one of whom is his own mother, is exactly that of Orestes - the parallel between the two cases has been very
fully worked out by Gilbert Murray in "The Classical Tradition in Poetry" - and it is therefore in every sense of the word a classical one. Doubtless this is what made Ducis select this as his first adaptation. The two plays, Shakespeare's and Ducis's, show therefore the very different use that the two dramatists made of the same situation; but Ducis's version has less individuality than his 'Macbeth'. He is younger and perhaps more timid: certainly the play has no such clear reflection of contemporary thought as 'Macbeth' has, and is not particularly typical of the 2nd half of the 18th century, except perhaps in the matters of the urn and the spectre. It is interesting to note how classical models influenced Ducis: one is struck by the suggestion of 'Mérope' in the situation of Gertrude torn between Claudius and her son; of 'Le Cid' in that of Hamlet torn between his duty and his love for Ophelia; of Britannicus in the discussions between Claudius and Polonius concerning their coming revolt which is based mainly on the support of the army. Again and again one seems to catch an echo of the earlier plays.

The plot of Shakespeare's play is a very complicated one, and Ducis found it impossible to keep anything but the barest outline of it even that he had to change considerably in order to compensate for what he had left out. As with 'Macbeth', the first consideration in rearranging the plot was obedience to the Unities. Shakespeare's play occupies many months, presents many different places in and around Elsinore, and has many incidents that violate the Unity of Action as French critics understood it. Ducis limits the action to twenty four hours, to a single place "à Elsineur, dans le palais des rois de Danemark" and leaves out all incidents that are not necessary for the advancement of the plot.

The play was an easier one to enclose within the limits of the Unities than Macbeth: for it was not difficult to seize the moment of
crisis in Hamlet's struggle and hesitation, and to make events move swiftly once the decision for action has been taken. The single scene in the palace is easy to keep, and presents no such incongruities as in Macbeth. As the interest centres round the action and not the character of Hamlet, the sacrificing of certain incidents does not influence it at all.

As in 'Macbeth', Ducis has kept only the principal characters which correspond more or less with the Shakespearian ones: Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia, Polonius, Norceste (who corresponds to Horatio) Voltemand (become Captain of the Guards) and the Ghost; while Elvire is added as confidant for Gertrude. As 'figurants' there are "Grands de l'Etat, soldats, peuple." Thus the minor characters of Shakespeare have disappeared, the courtiers, the players, the clowns etc., and notably Laertes who plays an important part in Shakespeare's version. To Ducis, the main issue lay between Hamlet on the one side, and on the other Gertrude, Claudius, and Ophelia; Laertes was not necessary, and therefore there was no place for him.

The incidents Ducis has left out are: the outdoor appearance of the ghost, because it interfered with the Unities, and is moreover unnecessary; the incidents between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, because, while they throw light on Hamlet's character they violate the unities of time and action and are not necessary for the plot; all the incidents where Laertes appears, because, as indicated above, Laertes himself was not necessary; Polonius' interference and death, because they are irrelevant, and because Polonius' character has been changed; Ophelia's madness and death, because there is no time for them, because they would violate the 'bienéseances' and because they could only come after the death of Claudius which terminates the main action, and therefore the play; the feigned madness of Hamlet, because there is not time for it in a single day, and because it
in a single day, and because it is not necessary; the revolt of Fortinbras, because it has nothing whatever to do with the main action (though the probability of war is mentioned in passing by Claudius); and lastly, the churchyard scene because there is no burial of Ophelia, and moreover because it would violate the Unity of place, and offend greatly the good taste of a French audience.

Thus there are left only the main incidents of the play, and it remains to show how these have been altered to provide a sufficiently logical plot.

The main changes that Ducis has made are in the character and situation of Gertrude and Claudius; and in the identity of Ophelia. Gertrude is at once guiltier in what she has done, and far purer morally. As her conversations with her confidant show us, she has been guilty of a secret love for Claudius that dates from before her marriage with the elder Hamlet; during many years she has stifled it, but the reappearance of Claudius brings it to life once more, and urged on by Claudius, she herself presents a bowl of poison to her husband. Thus it is she and not Claudius who has actually comitted the murder. But there her guilt ends. Remorse follows almost before she has left the room after giving Hamlet the poison. She hastens back, but too late to prevent the death of the King. Thereafter she is possessed only by repentance, and a desire to atone for what she has done. She has no wish to gain anything for herself from the crime; her love for Claudius has turned to loathing, and she refuses with horror his offer of marriage. She wishes no power for herself, and seeks only to place her son on the throne that is his by right. Thus, in spite of her crime, she becomes wholly "sympathique", and is entirely on Hamlet's side in the struggle between him and his cousin (not uncle as in the English play). Like Ducis's Macbeth, she is one who, after giving way for a moment before
temptation, seeks only to expiate what has been done. The difference from Shakespeare's weak, morally worthless Gertrude is striking.

Instead of being triumphantly established upon the throne, as in Shakespeare, Claudius is still only a courtier, and is therefore plotting to usurp the place that rightfully belongs to Hamlet. While Hamlet hesitates, Claudius is preparing rebellion, and trying in vain to win Gertrude to his side; and his attack on the palace provides the opportunity for Hamlet to kill him, not in cold blood, but in the heat of a struggle.

Finally, Ophelia is the daughter, not of Polonius, but of Claudius. The doubt that hangs over Hamlet's love for her in Shakespeare's play disappears in Ducis's: Hamlet does love her, and this love is one of the obstacles to his vengeance.

The most striking change of all is that in the character of Gertrude. In Shakespeare's play, the shock of finding the mother he had reverenced so shallow and worthless counts for very much in the moral shipwreck of Hamlet, but Gertrude has not a very important active rôle in the play. She has what Gilbert Murray calls "a soft animal nature like a sheep in the sun" and is too shallow to be greatly moved by anything that happens. In Ducis's play, her part is as important as that of Claudius and Hamlet, and she stands between the two, distrusted by both. Her repentance and desire to purify herself by suffering make her 'sympathique' and she is a devoted mother who puts her son's rights before everything. The shadow of incest that hangs over Shakespeare's Gertrude is not there, nor that of callousness and selfishness.

Why has Ducis thus altered the Queen's character? Probably in the first instance to help to expand the plot. Gertrude's repudiation of Claudius after the murder makes necessary his plotting for the crown, which plays an important part, and will be considered separately later.
Had Gertrude been married to Claudius, the interest of her struggle to establish her son's rights would be lost, and the plot weakened thereby.

But beside this change in Gertrude's rôle which corresponds to the changed structure of the play, there is the change in her character and the moral reason for it. Here it is more difficult to guess exactly what were the ideas that influenced Ducis, but his character gives some clue. He was himself so upright and straightforward, with the naïveté of a child, that he seems to have been revolted and puzzled by the subtle evil and meanness of some of Shakespeare's characters and again and again he has simplified or ennobled them. Iago he has cut out altogether Lady Macbeth he has simplified to an abstract representation of villainy, Macbeth and Gertrude he has purified and ennobled making of each, as he says himself "une âme née pour la vertu, mais qui malheureusement dégradée et comme détruite par le crime cherche encore avec tant de douleur à se recomposer parmi ses ruines." The similarity of his treatment of Macbeth and Gertrude is striking. The conception is less subtle, and of less art than Shakespeare's but reflects the generous faith in human nature that made Ducis himself so attractive. Dr. Morrison of Glasgow says that we never find in Shakespeare the unconquerable hopefulness and belief in the possibility of restoration even for the most degraded, that so characterise the teaching of Christ; it would seem as if Ducis, himself so ardent a Christian and Catholic had clung to this hope of recovery for a soul degraded, to what he calls "la dignité de l'âme humaine." To compensate for Gertrude's repentance Claudius has, like Lady Macbeth, been made responsible for all the evil; but like Lady Macbeth, he is almost a cinema villain, without remorse or complexity, as tho' conceived by the uncompromising mind of a child.

The tradition of French drama has probably something to do with this ennobling of character. The idealised atmosphere of Corneille and Racine is very different from the startling reality and truthfulness
of Shakespeare, and tragic heroes and heroines, as Aristotle had prescribed, must remain noble in spite of the sin that has brought tragedy upon them. Meanness is not to be tolerated. Again, the 'bienséances' must never be forgotten; the callousness and above all the immorality, or rather unmorality of Shakespeare's Gertrude would have shocked a French audience.

Ducis's reverence for his own mother has been noted before, and it is just possible that he shrank before the portrayal of a mother so unworthy, and who so utterly failed her son.

Finally, it is just possible that Ducis was influenced by the memory of Voltaire's "Mérope", and preferred to place Gertrude in a somewhat analogous position between her accomplice and her son, rather than to leave her as the unrepentant bride of her husband's murderer.

The transforming of Ophelia into the daughter, not of Polonius but of Claudius is a very French touch. It was necessary to make some change, for in Shakespeare's play, Hamlet's love for Ophelia has nothing whatever to do with the main plot, which centres round his fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the ghost's command (though in Shakespeare, Laertes' part links Hamlet's dealings with the family of Polonius to the main action). Ducis would certainly desire to keep the love-interest, but that it might become part of the plot, Ophelia must be connected with the main actors, and her love must have a direct influence on Hamlet's action. To make her the daughter of Claudius was an ingenious and happy solution of the difficulty; for it not only connected the love interest with the plot, but it provided an additional and very excellent reason for Hamlet's hesitation to obey the Ghost's commands. Ducis with his clear, logical French mind must have been very puzzled by Hamlet's inexplicable behaviour: but
his Hamlet was not inexplicable, and the love between Ophelia and Hamlet made the situation of the latter a hundred fold more poignant and dramatic. It gave an opportunity for scenes between the lovers that would doubtless be awaited with breathless interest by the French audiences, to whom such scenes were usually the most interesting (cf., for example the eagerness of the audiences to see Pauline and Sever together in Polyeucte).

The analogy with 'Le Cid' is obvious, and must have struck Ducis himself. It would give him confidence in his change to find that he was thereby creating a situation so acceptedly "classical".

A lover of Shakespeare's "Hamlet" certainly will not look on Ophelia's transformation with favour: it gives an impression of artificiality and improbability, a sort of jigsaw puzzle effect, where all the pieces fit, that is irritating after the much more natural situation in Shakespeare's play. But from a French point of view, the change was a necessary and skilfully-made one. The looseness of Shakespeare's plot disappears, and it is replaced by a well-knit and logical one, such as alone was possible in a good French drama; and the vagueness and contradictory nature of Hamlet's feelings towards Ophelia and towards his duty have been replaced by the clear explanation and development which French drama demands.

Clanculus It has already been remarked that Claudius, in the French play, is not King, and can only become King by a successful rebellion against Hamlet the rightful heir. The play opens with a discussion between Claudius and Polonius on the progress of his plans and his chances of success; he attempts to associate Gertrude with him, but she indignantly refuses, and orders him to prepare for the coronation of her son. He appears to acquiesce, but continues secretly his corruption of the army and the people, and in the last act makes an attack on the
palace and bursts into the room where Hamlet is, only to fall beneath the avenging sword of his former victim's son.

It is noticeable that Claudius is the cousin and not the brother of the older Hamlet. The change is probably due to a respect for the 'bienséances'. The murder becomes less horrible than that of a brother would be, and above all it lessens the guilt of Gertrude in her love for Claudius.

This change in relationship made it still more improbable to one used to French ideas of succession, that Claudius should have been able to take the place of the King's son in the succession. It would only have been possible to make Claudius King after a successful rebellion: this, however, would have spoiled the unity if the play: for Hamlet would have been contending not only against his father's murderer, but against the usurper of his own rights, and his action would have been one of self interest as well as one of filial devotion. The quarrel would have become a political one as well, and there would have been a double interest.

At the same time, it would not be possible to make Claudius accept meekly Hamlet's right to the throne and his own position as subject. He would thus have gained nothing from the murder, and a man who can deliberately urge a woman on to murder for him is not one to lose the fruits of the crime without a struggle. It settles both difficulties to make Claudius plan revolt throughout the play: for it satisfies probability, and adds to the blackness of his guilt, while it does not interfere with the disinterestedness of Hamlet's action, since the latter scarcely knows of his cousin's plots; nor does it interfere with the unity of action since it is the logical outcome of the first crime of Claudius.

Moreover, it helps to fill out the rather bare outline to which Ducis has reduced the plot, and gives dramatic interest. After all
if Claudius had not been plotting, it is difficult to see what he
could have been doing, and it was necessary that he should appear
sometimes. Hamlet's vengeance, and Claudius' plot are like two mines
about to explode, and one wonders with interest which will go off first,
and what will be the effect of the first explosion on the second mine.
Claudius' is the first to blow up, but its effect is entirely neutralised
by the prompt action of Hamlet. One feels that once Claudius is dead,
it will not be difficult for Hamlet to establish himself as King.

Further, it makes possible the dramatic situation of Gertrude
between Claudius and Hamlet, and the conservation of Gertrude's loyalty
to the memory of her husband and the rights of her son. Claudius could
never have become king without the alliance of Gertrude, unless he had
slain her along with her son, and as Gertrude must be alive, and opposed
to Claudius, it was impossible that the latter should be on the throne.

The conclusion, as already shown, is quite different from
Shakespeare's. This was inevitable, since Laertes has disappeared, and
there is no question of Hamlet's wrongs to the house of Polonius.
Ducis employs the only logical ending to what has gone before: the
death of Claudius in his vain attempt to kill and supplant Hamlet. The
latter refuses to kill his mother, as the ghost has demanded, and
declares that her repentance will expiate her crime: but Gertrude says
that only her death will satisfy justice, and kills herself. Thus,
extactly like Macbeth, she assures our final sympathy and belief in her
expiation, by a voluntary sacrifice. Our sense of justice is satisfied
while Hamlet is saved the unspeakable horror of slaying his own mother.
Hamlet lives on; and Ducis is right to leave it so, for his death
would have no meaning, and the solitary figure left to reign alone amid
the ruins of his own happiness, is far more tragic than he would have
been had he sought and by opposing, end them.
The play ends with his words

"Prive de tous les miens dans ce palais funeste,
Mes malheurs sont combles, mais ma vertu me reste;
Mais je suis homme et roi: reserve pour souffrir,
Je saurai vivre encore; je fais plus que mourir."

There is only one unsatisfactory thing in the conclusion: we are given no indication of what happens to Ophelia. The last time we see her is when she has guessed Hamlet's intention of vengeance against her father, though she will not believe in his crime; she says

"Tu cours venger ton père; et moi sauver le mien.
Je ne le quitte plus; de tes desseins instruite,
Je vais l'en informer, m'attacher à sa suite,
Jusqu'au dernier soupir lui prêter mon appui,
Et s'il meurt, l'embrasser, et périr près de lui.
Non, je ne croirai point qu'Hamlet impitoyable
Nourrisse avec plaisir un transport si coupable.
Le temps, l'amour, le ciel vont bientôt t'éclairer;
Mais si de ton erreur rien ne te peut tirer,
Je n'entends plus alors, à te perdre enhardie,
Que l'intérêt du sang qui m'a donné la vie."

Ophelia is not present in the last scene, and is not mentioned again. We are left to suppose that she will carry out her threat when she learns of her father's death. It does not seem likely that she will in the end relent, as we hope in the case of Chimène; but we are given no hint one way or the other.

Ducis was evidently struck by the dramatic value of Hamlet's muse to assure himself of Claudius' guilt: but the play within a play was not possible. It would violate the rule that all the characters must be noble; and would probably have struck a French audience as
ridiculous. Ducis replaces it by a narrative: Norceste (Horatio) has just returned from England which is mourning the death of the King, and Norceste relates the supposed murder of the English king in the hope of surprising Claudius into a guilty start. But Claudius is much too hardened, and Gertrude is the only one to be affected. The expedient is feeble and has none of the dramatic interest of the play.

Ducis makes one curious addition to the play, very typical of the contemporary taste for everything funereal. Hamlet is bidden by the ghost to fetch the urn containing his father's ashes from the tomb, that it may spur him on to the vengeance he is delaying. He sends Norceste for it, and once it is brought, he appears to carry it about with him for the rest of the play. It is the one occasion in "Hamlet" where Ducis, in an effort to be tragic becomes melodramatic and ridiculous: in the rest of the play he has avoided the fault that has spoiled "Macbeth". The scene where Hamlet asks his mother to swear her innocence over the ashes of the husband she has murdered, is truly dramatic; and yet there is something ridiculous in the idea of carrying the urn about, and when one considers what it is, the stage direction "Hamlet place l'urne sur une table qui est à côté du fauteuil" in its matter-of-fact tone becomes entirely ludicrous. No doubt it was Hamlet's apostrophe to the skull in Shakespeare that inspired Ducis: but a skull was not a possible object to introduce into 18th century French drama—the ladies in the audience would have fainted. Ducis has compromised with the mère classical urn, but as usual, the compromise is not a success. When Hamlet is alone with it, he addresses it, and the ashes apparently move and groan, for he cries, starting up:

"Mais de mon père, ô ciel! je sens frémir la cendre
Mes transports jusqu'à lui se sont-ils fait entendre?
O poudre des tombeaux! qui vous vient agiter?
Est-ce pour m'affirmer ou pour m'epouvanter?
Cendre plaintive et chère, oui, j'entends ton murmure."
Surely none but a late 18th century audience could appreciate such lines.

The change in Gertrude's character has already been fully discussed. She is one of the most interesting in the play, and this conception of a guilty soul struggling to redeem itself is peculiarly characteristic of Ducis. The similarity between Gertrude and Macbeth has been pointed out. There is something very attractive about the conception, and in spite of her guilt, Gertrude wins our strong sympathy. Claudius is a villain without depth or interest, though he has an almost admirable constancy and hardihood in his wrong doing, being unshaken by Hamlet's artifice, or Gertrude's announcement of her intention to crown her son that day. He has no individuality, and is merely a selfish plotter. He seems to have no real love for Gertrude, though she has sinned for him, and speaks of her with cold scorn:

"Son coeur faible et crédule est facile à tromper."

He wishes to marry her, but only to assure his own position. The only thing that can be said in his defence is that the elder Hamlet seems to have treated him with injustice and suspicion. If we are to accept his own testimony, his great services in the wars were unrewarded and unrecognized, his daughter was forbidden to marry, and the King, jealous and suspicious, was plotting treachery against him. Thus Claudius would have struck in self-defence. But one is suspicious of Claudius' reasoning, and Gertrude's only reply to it is

"Arrêtez, il était mon époux
Il est juste qu'au moins, nous lui laissions sa gloire.
Et quel reproche encore feriez-vous à sa mémoire?"

Hamlet is the character most closely copied from Shakespeare. He remains moody and melancholy, his apathy alternating with wild outbursts. There is no feigned madness in the play, but the shadow of madness seems
to hang over him. Yet he is greatly simplified. This is inevitable, for there is never time nor opportunity in French drama for the countless touches that go to make up a complex character; but besides the simplification of the character to a type expressing a dominant idea (in this case filial affection) Hamlet is explained. The contradictions of the English Hamlet are gone, and his hesitation is clearly explained—he is held back first by his doubts as to whether the ghost is genuine or is only tempting him to crime (cf. Shakespeare's Hamlet "The spirit that I have seen Maybe the devil."); secondly by his sincere love for Ophelia and unwillingness to slay her father; thirdly by his love for his mother, for the ghost has ordered her punishment too (the command of the ghost in Shakespeare

"Taint not thy mind; nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught"
is infinitely truer and more dramatic: the Devil's way gives Hamlet an additional reason for delay):

"La pitié m'attendrât, le meurtre m'épouvante.
Immoler Claudio, punir c'est inhume.
C'est plonger à sa fille un poignard dans le sein;
C'est la tuer moi-même; ainsi mon cher Horace,
À tout ce qui m'aima mon bras sera funeste.
Je verrai donc ma main embrasser mon genou,
Suspendant par ses pleurs mes parricides coups,
Me dire "Cher Hamlet, daigne encore me connaître
Épargne au moins, mon fils, le sang qui t'a fait naître,
Le sein qui t'a conçu, les flancs qui t'ont porté"
Et je pourrais d'un bras par la rage agité...
Tu m'a séduit ô ciel, non, jamais ta justice
Ne m'aurait commandé cet affreux sacrifice
Ou change de victime, ou cherche une autre main."
Sur un vil criminel je cours venger mon père,
Mais je n'attente point sur les jours de ma mère."

(Act II Scene 5.)

Hamlet seems to have been apathetic and peculiar all his life, and
never to have given proof of his personal courage:

"Un roi mourant, triste, morne, abattu,
Faible, et dont rien encor n'a proué la vertu,
Qui, loin des champs de Mars, dans ce palais tranquille,
A cache jusq'ici sa jeunesse inutile,
Sans connaître ou chercher d'exploits plus glorieux
Que d'honorer en paix ou sa mère ou ses dieux."

(Act I. Scene 1.)

He has not the English Hamlet's constancy before the ghost, but is driven
to a frenzy of fear and horror at its appearance. He is almost rough
with Ophélie in efforts to master his love for her, and when he accuses
his mother: but except for these outbursts, he keeps his "nobility" to
the end, and there is none of the moral deterioration that manifests
itself in Shakespeare's Hamlet as the play advances. He broods alone
over the great issues of life and death, and in the French play, the
famous "To be or not to be" is copied.

Shakespeare's Ophelia is a timid, gentle girl, rather to be shielded
and caressed than relied upon: had she been stronger, she might have
strengthened and saved Hamlet, but she was incapable of understanding him
and was crushed like a flower in a storm. Ophélie, on the other hand, is
suggestive of Chimene and Pauline. She has not much individuality, but
like the typical French heroine, is courageous and determined.

The elder Hamlet - and this formed a very legitimate grievance of
Claudius against him - appears to have made an unjust and ridiculous
decree that no one was to marry Ophélie, presumably so that Claudius's
family should end with her. Hamlet and Ophélie love one another, and have
kept this love a secret. Ophélie thinks that this is what is causing Hamlet's gloom and misery, and confesses the truth to Gertrude. The latter, overjoyed at the prospect of removing the cause of her son's distress, gives immediate consent to the marriage, and Ophélie hurries to tell Hamlet the good news. To her astonishment and distress, he receives the news in cold silence, and then tells her the marriage can never be. In vain she tries to find out the secret despair that is prompting his wild words about the hollowness and deception of all life. Later, she suspects the truth, after witnessing a furious outburst of hostility towards Claudius, and forces Hamlet to tell the truth. She refuses to believe his accusation, and when her pleading has no effect on him, she defies him and her own love for him in a tirade worthy of Chimiène. Thereafter she appears no more, and Hamlet steels his heart against all thought of her.

Such is the episode of Hamlet's love for Ophélie, as tragic as that in Shakespeare, but quite different; and where Ophélie plays the part of a typical Cornelian heroine, her sense of duty and family devotion triumphing over her love, and making her as determined and defiant as Hamlet himself. Having created a situation so similar to that in 'Le Cid', Ducis was inevitably influenced by the character of the French heroine; and moreover, a gentle shrinking girl such as Shakespeare's Ophelia, could have no place in French tragedy. Ophélie is worthy of Hamlet's love and had circumstances been different, could have given him all the support he needed in a difficult task. She guesses that he has some terrible secret, and offers her help to bear his burden with a courage and devotion of which Shakespeare's Ophelia was incapable:

"Pour te sauver, Hamlet, s'il ne faut que perir, viens me moir expirer et t'apprendre à souffrir."

(Act IV Scene 2.)
The minor characters of *Noroceste* (Horatio) Polonius and Elvire are merely confidants for Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude. Noroceste keeps most of the traits of Horatio, that "antique Roman": his steadfast friendship for Hamlet, and his firmness and courage. It is his watchfulness that Claudius chiefly fears as an obstacle to his plots; and Gertrude confides in him her fears and perplexity about Hamlet. (Incidentally, she never seems to suspect that his distress may be caused by a discovery of the truth about herself.) As Claudius had feared, it is Noroceste who discovers his plot, warns Hamlet of it, and leads the counter attack.

Hamlet takes no part in the mêlée, but the sight of Claudius spurs him to his delayed vengeance.

**Polonius** is quite changed. He is no longer a garrulous old man, but a conventional confidant. He is the counsellor of evil to Claudius, and encourages him in his plots - their conversations recall those of Nérón and Narcisse. But beyond this zeal for revolt, which is possibly only a form of self interest, Polonius has nothing distinctive, and his rôle is merely to converse with Claudius. With Shakespeare's Polonius, he has nothing in common but the name.

**Elvire** is added by Ducis as a confidant for Gertrude, and is there simply that Gertrude may relate to her - and the audience - the story of her crime. Individuality she has none.

Voltimand, the captain of the guards scarcely appears, and the rest "Gardes, grands de l'État, soldats, peuple" have not a spoken part.

Ducis was less afraid to introduce the Ghost than he was to show the Witches in "Macbeth" for Voltaire had already authorised the use of spectres to add to tragic pity and terror. The wonderfully effective scene with the soldiers on guard outside the palace has to be abandoned because of the unities of time and place, and the rule that only noble characters shall have a part. It is replaced by a narrative of the ghost's first two appearances to Hamlet in a night vision, that brings
the apparition into line with the classical "songe". The ghost later appears to Hamlet in his mother's presence, as in Shakespeare. But while Shakespeare evidently regarded the apparition as objective, since others than Hamlet saw it, Ducis evidently considers it as subjective, since it appeared to Hamlet alone; and while it cannot have been altogether a hallucination of Hamlet's disordered mind, since it revealed the truth to him, its appearance is always attended by an outburst of frenzy that seems like madness. After its appearance at night, Voltimand says of Hamlet:

"Le prin de furieux
De ses cris effrayants fait retentir ces lieux.
Jamais dans ses transports il ne fut plus terrible;
Dans quel trouble mortel l'ai-je vu cette nuit!
Mes bras l'ont arrêté fuyant dans les ténèbres,
Tremblant, pâle, égaré, poussant des cris funèbres."

(Act II. Sc. 4)

Again, after Hamlet has seen the Ghost the second time in his mother's presence, he cries:

"En bien! ma mère ... ah dieux! ... mon coeur, peut-être
D'un transport renaissant ne serait plus le maître
Fuyez, sortez, vous dis-je: ou plutôt je vous fuis
Je crains tout de moi-même en l'état où je suis."

(Act V. Sc. 6.)

Thus Ducis has followed Shakespeare fairly closely in his use of the Ghost, and has understood its rôle in the play thus avoiding his own error with the Witches in 'Macbeth', and Voltaire's in 'Semiramis',—the error of introducing merely to produce stage effect an apparition that has no 'raison d'être' and that therefore strikes the spectators as melodramatic and out of place. Only, about Ducis's apparition there is a suggestion of subjectivity and hallucination that there is not in
Shakespeare. The audience is evidently not intended to see it, and it never speaks.

The following is a summary of the plot as rearranged by Ducis.

**Act I** Claudius reveals to Polonius his plots to dethrone Hamlet by turning against him the army and the people: and declares his intention of marrying Gertrude to strengthen his own position. Gertrude, however, repulses him with horror, telling him that she means to spend the rest of her life expiating her crime by serving her son's interest. She orders Claudius to prepare for Hamlet's coronation, and Claudius appears ready to acquiesce. Elvire then announces to Gertrude the unexpected return of Horatio, Hamlet's friend.

**Act II.** Gertrude relates to Elvire the story of her murder of her husband at Claudius' instigation. On Horatio's arrival she implores him to try and find the secret of Hamlet's gloom and despair. Horatio meets Hamlet fleeing in frenzy from the apparition of his father, and the prince tells him the guilt of Claudius and Gertrude as revealed to him by the spectre, and the command he has received to punish them both. They agree to tell Claudius the story of the recent poisoning of the King of England, in the hope that it will move him to guilty terror, and thus confirm the ghost's story. Hamlet asks Horatio to bring him the urn containing his father's ashes, as the ghost has ordered it.

**Act III.** Claudius tells Polonius that his acquiescence in the Queen's intention to crown Hamlet that day is only feigned, and that he is preparing his own coup d'état by wholesale bribery and corruption. Hamlet and Horatio relate the story of the King of England to Claudius and Gertrude, but Claudius remains unmoved, while Gertrude gives way to confusion and fear. After Hamlet's departure, Claudius calms Gertrude's alarm, and Polonius announces that everything is ready for the coronation, but that rumours of all sorts concerning Hamlet's health are rife among the people. Claudius goes to address them, and Ophelia comes to confess
to Gertrude the secret of her love for Hamlet. It has been kept secret because the elder Hamlet had forbidden her to marry, and Ophélie thinks that hopeless love is causing Hamlet's gloom. Overjoyed at such an easy way of restoring Hamlet to happiness, Gertrude gives immediate consent to the marriage, and seeks Claudius to acquaint him of it.

Acte IV. Hamlet soliloquizes on the horror of his task, and broods over the thought of suicide. Ophélie comes to tell him of Gertrude's consent to their marriage, but is amazed and distressed by Hamlet's coldness and indifference. She implores him to tell her his secret, but he refuses, declaring it is too dreadful to share, and that despite his unchanged love for her, they can never marry. He talks of death as his only hope, and Ophélie tries in vain to rouse him. Gertrude's entreaties have no power to move him either, and while he is talking to her, his father's ghost appears again, reproaching him for delay, and urging him to action by looks and gestures. Gertrude, without suspecting the truth, thinks Hamlet is the victim of hallucination. The arrival of Claudius rouses Hamlet to an outburst of furious invective, that awakens suspicions of the truth in the minds of both Claudius and Ophélie. Polonius reports to Claudius the success of his plans, and Claudius goes to the Council to make his bid for power, declaring that once Hamlet is dethroned it will be easy to change his prison for a tomb.

Acte V. Norceste brings Hamlet the urn and warns him of Claudius's plots. Ophélie makes a last effort to move Hamlet, and tells him how she suspects him of some design against her father. Hamlet admits the truth, and refuses to be moved by Ophélie's prayers or protestations of her father's innocence. In despair, she defies Hamlet, saying she will warn her father, do all she can to save him, and if he dies, die with him. Hamlet, having conquered his love, swears upon the urn to avenge his father. When Gertrude comes, he accuses her of her crime, and tells of the spectre's appearances. When Gertrude protests innocence, he demands
that she swear it upon the urn. She cannot, and faints. Hamlet is overjoyed to find that at least she is repentant, and can therefore hope for pardon. Elvire rushes in to warn them that Claudius is attacking the palace, and Hamlet welcomes this opportunity of vengeance. The spectre appears to him again and orders him, apparently, to slay both Claudius and Gertrude, and Hamlet is driven to frenzy by the horror of the command. Claudius rushes in followed by soldiers, and Hamlet, springing upon him kills him. He tells the rebels that that one vengeance suffices. Gertrude declares that one more sacrifice is necessary to satisfy justice, and kills herself. Hamlet, left alone amid the ruin of his happiness, cries:

"Privé de tous les miens dans ce palais funeste,
Mes malheurs sont combles, mais ma vertu me reste;
Mais je suis homme et roi : réserve pour souffrir
Je saurai vivre encore; je fais plus que mourir."

Shakespeare never deliberately set out to prove something or preach some truth, but to show us life. Nevertheless, we can usually pick out some central idea or passion which determines the tragedy. It is more difficult in the case of "Hamlet" to put into a sentence the human weakness that is responsible for the tragedy. It seems to be inaction in the face of a clearly expressed and justified command, that morally degrades Hamlet, and works havoc in his life, and the lives of those about him. It certainly is no lack of filial affection, for Hamlet adores his father: nor yet is it his filial devotion that causes the tragic happening - the death of the guilty Claudius would have been infinitely less tragic than the misery that was wrought by Hamlet's delay in killing him.

Ducis, on the other hand, states clearly in his 'Epitre Dedicatoire' the moral truth he wants to teach. The moral nature of French drama has
already been noted, and Ducis in particular with his love of honour and virtue, delighted in using as the theme of his tragedies some ennobling thought. Thus he says of "Hamlet": "Mon but avait été de peindre la tendresse d'un fils pour son père." This necessarily changes the spirit of the whole play, and it becomes the story of a son who obeyed his dead father's command at all costs. The hesitation does not last long enough to become inaction, but is only that of a man who weighs the evidence, and counts the cost, before the decisive action. The tragedy is not that Hamlet did not act when he should; but that the evil of others should place him in such a terrible situation, and wreck his happiness. He can say truly at the end "Ma vertu me reste"; whereas Shakespeare's Hamlet has stained his soul before, in a final effort, he fulfills his duty.

As in "Macbeth", Ducis has obeyed the classical tradition, and at the same time the dictates of his own soul, by ennobling his hero, changing the atmosphere of his play to one of idealised duty and sacrifice, and deliberately enforcing a moral truth. The emphasis is thrown rather on the nobility of virtue than on the ugliness of evil, and the reader's mind is ennobled by the contemplation of what is pure and of good report. The evil of Claudius and Gertrude has ruined Hamlet's happiness, but not his virtue, which rises at the end to triumph over wrong and suffering. The last note sounded is the victory of right and justice.

The change is great from the desolation and death that end Shakespeare's "Hamlet", and the horror of great darkness that it leaves in the mind: yet surely out of that horror is born a yearning for purity and right that may come not only from a contemplation of the beauty of good, but from a realisation of the exceeding subtlety and destructiveness of evil. Hamlet was noble and pure, yet because he was not true to himself and to right, he made shipwreck; and from his ruin comes to us
the knowledge that duty left undone robs life of all its savour, and
that not only action can be crime, but "inaction under a ringing moral
challenge." The lesson is deeper and more searching than Ducis's, the
more so that it is spoken to us in a parable of which we have ourselves
to seek out the interpretation.

Besides this deeper change of spirit, there is the change that is
necessarily made in the atmosphere of a Shakespearean play that is
made obedient to the classical tradition. An Englishman would no doubt
say that it becomes stilted, conventional and artificial; a Frenchman
that it is made clear, orderly and elegant. No doubt both are true. The
"haphazard" feeling of the English play, where one scene does not
necessarily give you any clue as to what may be the next, is replaced
by an orderly marshalling and progression of scenes that suggests a
legal argument. The raggedness of the English plot and its host of
characters coming and going, is transformed into the unified action and
small group of main characters that one usually finds in a French drama.
Familiar speech disappears and over all is flung the cloak of stately
elegance and rhetoric. Instead of an action that wanders from place to
place, and lingers on over months, the attention is concentrated on the
moment of crisis, and one has the impression of the quick succession
of hesitations, decisions and events that precede the crisis. The action
is limited, and for the most part we hear only of what the actors have
done or are planning; this seems much more natural in 'Hamlet' than
in 'Macbeth', since there is nothing for Hamlet to do during the day
when he hesitates before finally "sweeping on to his revenge".

The conventions that one expects to meet in a classical drama
do not all appear: the story of Hamlet fitted so naturally into the
Unities that Ducis did not have to resort to the two principal
expedients of the latter, and the concealed identity, of which there
is no trace at all. The confidants are there; and the dream, for the
first two appearances of the ghost to Hamlet were at night, and once again we catch an echo of Athalie's dream, that seems to have inspired all later classical writers. The poignard just appears, since Hamlet uses one to kill Claudius. The love interest so typical of French classical drama, is present; but it is quite justified, and is not unduly stressed.

Thus it will be seen that while the French version of Hamlet naturally wears the garb of a French classical tragedy, it has not been defamed to force it into the tradition, and Ducis has made only a legitimate use of what are known as the classical conventions.

It has already been noted that "Hamlet" is much less typical of the late 18th century than "Macbeth". In other words it is more classical and less romantic. In "Macbeth" there are evidences of most of the romantic tendencies - sensibility, enthusiasm for liberty and rustic life, use of the sinister and melodramatic. These give the play a character very different from the plays of the earlier half of the century. But "Hamlet" does not have these new tendencies; no doubt firstly because it was written fifteen years earlier, in 1769, when Ducis himself was still timid and inexperienced, and because it was his first attempt to present Shakespeare to a French audience, - an attempt fraught, therefore, with uncertainty and risk. Secondly the play lent itself much less to being made a vehicle for popular ideas; the plot was too classical, and since there was been need to transform it, there was less opportunity to insert new ideas.

The "bienéances", those guardians of good taste, rule supreme in the play, but as all the incidents that might shock them, such as Hamlet's feigned madness, his treatment of Ophelia, the latter's madness and death, and the incest of Gertrude, have been altered or eliminated for other reasons already discussed, their rule is not a tyranny. The replacing
of the skull by an urn is probably the most noteworthy concession to them.

Of sensibility there is practically none—there seems to be neither time nor opportunity for it. The emotion shown by the characters is sincere and well justified, even if it is couched in somewhat declamatory style, as when Ophélie cries:

"Qu'entends-je, ciel! n'importez il faut me satisfaire
Parle, acheve, éclaircis cet horrible mystère."

(A Act IV, Sc.2)

There is no mention made at all of rustic life: nor of liberty and the rights of the people, as in Macbeth, except in Ophélie's speech to Hamlet, who talks of death:

"Mais pour oser mourir, ta vie est-elle à toi?
Ta grandeur, ton devoir la livre à ta patrie;
Entends à tes côtés le Danseur qui te crie:
J'ai remis dans tes mains mon sort, ma liberté!
Entre ton peuple et toi n'est-il plus de traité?
C'est à toi que le raible a confié sa défense,
Puisir les oppresseurs, soutenir l'innocence,
Protéger les sujets contre leurs ennemis,
Voici les droits sacrés que le ciel t'a remis,
De leurs maîtres cachés prêtres, détruis les causes;
C'est à tes devoirs: meurs après si tu l'as.

(A Act IV, Sc.2)

The element of horror and melodrama that frequently make "Macbeth" ridiculous are lacking in "Hamlet", except in the one case of the urn. The play is much more restrained, and Ducis has not had recourse to stage effects to produce pity and terror: the situation is sufficient for that. The spectre, though it is a novelty in French drama, had been introduced by Voltaire: and the use made of it by Ducis is restrained and not
There is not very much that one can say about the style of "Hamlet". As in "Macbeth", the verses are monotonously regular, or else jerky, full of bombastic periphrasis and pompous stupidity. Yet sometimes the warmth of feeling lifts them above this level, and they become, if not good poetry, at least good rhetoric; and sometimes the greatness and simplicity of the thoughts that inspire the verse - death and love and the hereafter - rise above the preoccupations of elegance and eloquence, and as the verse grows simpler, it comes nearer to poetry. It is noticeable that when Ducis is closely imitating Shakespeare, he succeeds in writing simpler, better verse, though even there, the inevitable classical 'tags' appear with the commonplace effect that they inevitably produce, at least to an English mind - "profanes, mortels, main funante, les autels des dieux".

The exposition in the first Act, and first scene of the second is tedious. The speeches are too long: and Gertrude's remorse is too emotional and declamatory. After Hamlet appears, the play moves more quickly, and the verse becomes more "alive" and more dramatic. Ophélie's tirade of despair and defiance in the face of Hamlet's implacable purpose is full of fire and eloquence; and the scenes between Hamlet and his mother are dramatic. Yet everywhere one comes across ridiculous periphrases or awkward inversion, or verses of solemn stupidity. "The Almighty" of Shakespeare's Hamlet has been replaced by "les dieux"; and everywhere one finds "hymen, hyménés, flamme, feux, ardeur mutuelle, chaînes, autels, ombre" - all the conventional expressions of French tragedy.

The following are some of the worst examples of bombast and periphrasis:
"Le roi, dans ces moments, à mes seuls soins remis, 
Empruntait le secours de ces puissants breuvages, 
Dont un art bienfaisant montra les avantages."

(Gertrude - Acte II. Sc 1)

"Ce qui me plaît, Elvire, dans mon trouble funeste, 
C'est de sentir au moins combien je me déteste."

(Gertrude - Acte II. Sc 1.)

(Norcombe on finding Hamlet so gloomy and despairing:)

"Est-ce là le tableau, la déplorable image 
Qu'Hamlet devait m'offrir sur ce triste rivage?"

(Acte. II. Sc 5.)

Claudius is spreading the rumour about Hamlet:

"Qu'un poison préparé par ce fils criminel
Fut versé de ses mains dans le flanc paternel."

(Acte III. Sc 1.)

Occasionally, one finds one of the "vers-maximes" that are so famous in French tragedy, and since they are simple, they are much more effective:

"Ahi! l'espoir ne meurt pas dans le coeur d'une mère!"

(Acte I.Sc 5.)

"Seul bien des criminels, le repentir nous reste."

(Acte I. Sc 2.)

"Va, le coeur des mortels n'est point fait pour le crime."

(Acte II. Sc 1.)

The following is an extract from Ophélie's fine speech to Hamlet:

Hamlet: "Ma gloire est d'être fils."

Ophélie: "Et la mienne à mon tour,
Est au devoir du sang d'immoler mon amour.
Je n'examine point si mon père est coupable;"
De complots, d'attentats, je le crois incapable:
Mais eût-il sous mes yeux sacrifié son roi,
Criminel pour tout autre, il ne l'est pas pour moi,
Il est mon père enfin: je prendrai sa défense,
Sur quel droit, cependant, fondes-tu ta vengeance?
Je vois quel trouble horrible a séduit ta raison:
Tu n'as devant les yeux que meurtre, trahison;
Ton cœur avec plaisir, pour venger la nature
D'un crime imaginaire a conçu l'imposture"

"Va, tigre impitoyable,
Conserve si tu peux ta fureur implacable!
Mon devoir désormais m'est dicté par le tien:
Tu cours venger ton père; et moi sauvé le mien.
Je ne le quitte plus; de tes desseins instruite,
Je vais l'en informer, m'attacher à sa suite,
Jusqu'au dernier soupir lui prêter mon appui,
Et s'il meurt, l'embrasser et périr près de lui"

(Acte V. Sc 2.)

The following are the passages most closely imitated from
Shakespeare, which it is interesting to compare with the original:

"I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part
And each particular hair to stand on end.
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood."

(Act I. Sc 5.)

"O mon fils, m'a-t-il dit, ne m'interroge pas;
Ces leçons du cercueil, ces secrets du trépas,
Aux profanes mortels doivent être invisibles.
Que du ciel sur les rois les arrêts sont terribles!
Ahi s'il me permettait cet horrible entretien,
La pâleur de mon front passerait sur le tien."  

(Acte II. Sc 5.)

"To be or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action."

(Act III. Sc 1.)

"Je ne sais que résoudre ... immobile et trouble ...
C'est rester trop longtemps de mon doute accable;
C'est trop souffrir la vic et le poids qui me tue.
Eh! qu'offre donc la mort à mon âme abattue?
Un asyle assuré, le plus doux des chemins
Qui conduit au repos les malheureux humains.
Mourons. Que craindre encore, quand on a cessé d'être?
La mort ... c'est le sommeil ... c'est un réveil peut-être.
Peut-être ... ah! c'est ce mot qui glace épouvanté
L'homme au bord du cercueil par le doute arrêté,
Devant ce vaste abysme il se jette en arrière,
Ressaisit l'existence, et s'attache à la terre.
Dans nos troubles pressants qui peut nous avertir
Des secrets de ce monde où tout va s'engloutir?
Sans l'effroi qu'il inspire et la terreur sacrée
Qui défend son passage, et siege à son entree.
Combien de malheureux iraient dans le tombeau,
De leurs longues douleurs déposer le fardeau!
Ah! que ce port souvent est vu d'un œil d'envie
Par le faible agité sur les flots de la vie!
Mais il craint dans ses maux, au-delà du trepas,
Des maux plus grands encore, et qu'il ne connait pas
Redoutable avenir, tu glaces mon courage!
Va, laisse à ma douleur achever son ouvrage."

(Acte IV. Sc 1.)

Of all the adaptations, "Hamlet" is the most classical; and regarded as a French classical tragedy, it is therefore the best. The plot lent itself more readily to enclosure within the limits of the Unities, and required very little alteration. The situation was a typically classical one, and as there were no romantic scenes in Shakespeare that Ducis was resolved to keep whether they fitted into his play or not, the plot has the careful construction demanded by French tragedy, and depends on the play of character rather than on external events. It has less romantic novelty than the adaptations which follow, but it is one of the most satisfying and attractive to read.
CHAPTER V. Rome and Juliet.

Plan

1. "Antigone, Romeo and Juliet", and "Le Cid".
2. The incidents Ducis cannot keep, and the reasons why they are impossible;
   the incidents Ducis does keep, and the reasons why they are suitable;
   what he adds to supplement these episodes.
4. The characters.
6. Classical and Romantic: "Le Cid" and "Romeo et Juliette"
There is an interesting chapter on "Les Trois Systèmes" at the end of Faguet's book "Drame Ancien, Drame Moderne", where, after discussing the three types of tragedy, Greek, English and French, he chooses an example of each to analyse. His choice falls on "Antigone, Romeo and Juliet" and "Le Cid", because the subject is identical in the three cases: the story of lovers who are separated by their duty to their family.

Faguet studies the different treatment of the theme by the three authors: in the case of the French play, the interest centres round the struggle in the lovers' soul between the rival claims of love and duty: in the Greek, there is no struggle, for both go steadfast and unswerving towards duty and death: nor is there any struggle in Shakespeare, for the claims of love are not for an instant disputed, and nothing weighs against them.

Paul Stapher, in "Shakespeare et les Tragiques Grecs" makes the same "rapprochement". He says that "Romeo and Juliet" is the type of romantic tragedy, where love is the central interest; to make of it a classical tragedy, greater stress would have to be placed on the rivalry between the two families - as in the case of "Antigone" and "Le Cid". This is interesting to note, for it is exactly what Ducis has done in adapting "Romeo and Juliet" for the French stage. The thing that most strikes one on reading the French version is the greatly increased importance of Montague and Capulet, and the way in which the love of Roméo and Juliette has been made subordinate to this family feud.

Therefore a comparative study of Shakespeare and Ducis shows us how a Frenchman changes the emphasis in the play in order to make a drama: for as it is, there is no drama as a French writer understands the word. A drama is a crisis and a struggle: in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet there is no struggle, but only an utter abandonment of love. Yet, although Ducis has made the play conform to certain standards which
we call "classical", he has not made a true classical play of it: to understand that, it is sufficient to compare "Le Cid", the purely classical version of the story, with Ducis's adaptation. Ducis himself had the soul of a Romantic, and by 1772, the date of the play, Romantic ideas were beginning to find acceptance in France; hence, after simplifying Shakespeare's play so as to bring it within the limits of French drama, he proceeds to add his own contribution: a very complicated concealed identity story, and an element of horror that is only rivalled by the tale of Atreus and Thyestes. Gone are the simplicity and restraint of Corneille, and in their place are complications and horrors. Ducis has at the same time made Shakespeare even more romantic than he is, and less: less romantic because love is no longer the one great theme of the play, more, because he adds a powerful dose of the particular kind of romance that characterised the theatre in France in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, melodramatic horrors and complications.

It has been shown in an earlier chapter what were the two paths followed by French writers of tragedy after the death of Racine: that of imitation, which led to artificiality and coldness, or at best, forced emotion; and that of innovation, which too often led to involved melodrama. In 'Hamlet', Ducis has followed the first path, and the faults as well as the merits are those of true classical plays; he looks back rather than forward. In Romeo and Juliet, and indeed in all his other adaptations, he has followed the path of innovation, and the tragedies are more romantic than classical. Their great fault is melodrama, a fault greatly heightened by the fact that Ducis seems to have been utterly without a saving sense of humour.

In 'Romeo and Juliet', Shakespeare puts before us Verona in the 14th century: feuds, insults, duels, balls, masquerades, and the fragrant air of an Italian night. One seems to catch a glimpse of Shakespeare's own
England in those later Renaissance days when in the first flush of her new-found liberty, "merry England" cast aside restraint, and revelled in the joy of living. Balls and masquerades, sudden fierce outbursts of passionate love and hate - intrigues and duels, - even the battles of wit, which were the effervescence of newly awakened intelligence and imagination: all these were characteristic of England in Shakespeare's day, when with the new Italian learning, she seemed to inherit something of the fierce intensity of life in Italy. Many of the scenes have no justification except that they complete the picture and fill in the details of it. Yet, despite the care and artistry that Shakespeare has expended on this picture of life in Verona and the bitter feuds that rent the city, it is only a background for the love of Romeo and Juliet - "c'est dans une atmosphère de fureurs héritières que va passer, jeune et frais, l'amour d'un jour de deux enfants." But if this love was only of a day upon earth, in its short course it did what nothing else had been able to do: it broke down the barriers of hatred between the rival houses and achieved a reconciliation more utter and complete than any edict of the Prince could have made it. No doubt the love of Romeo and Juliet was too passionate and blind to all but its own rapture, and it was the impatience and impetuosity of the lovers that hastened the final tragedy: but they paid dearly for their own weakness, and at least their death atoned for what was past, and killed all bitterness.

In Ducis, the background has less detail and less importance, except inasmuch as it in some measure explains and justifies the violence that would have been out of place in the dignified atmosphere of an ordinary classical play. It is still Verona, stormy and passionate but only sketched in, and not carefully finished.

Ducis has been obliged to alter the story of 'Romeo and Juliet'
much more completely than in the other play already studied. This results partly from the change of emphasis in his version, and partly because nearly every scene in Shakespeare's play is impossible in the French adaptation for one reason or another.

In the "Avertissement", where, as usual, Ducis clearly explains what was to him the central idea of the play, he says: "J'avais à peindre les effets des haines heréditaires et c'est sur cet objet seulement que j'ai voulu et dû fixer l'attention du spectateur." Hence it was necessary to withdraw a great many of the scenes in Shakespeare's play that had no direct bearing on this question of the family feud; and to add others that would bring the "haines hereditaires" into greater prominence.

Again, on reading through Shakespeare's play, one realises that scene after scene, with some of the very incidents upon which Shakespeare's plot depends, must inevitably be sacrificed to one or other of the classical principles. All the scenes where servants play an important part - and they are numerous - must go, because they would violate the nobility of tragedy; all the scenes which concern the private lives of the characters, and have no bearing on the question of the Montague and Capulet feud, are irrelevant, and therefore cannot be kept; most of the incidents, such as the marriage of Romeo and Juliet, the exile of Romeo, the sleep of Juliet, must be altered or withdrawn because they cannot be made to fit into the Unities. Hence, it will be seen that there is very little left of Shakespeare's play, when Ducis has pruned away all that is unsuitable for his purpose.

The first brawl, with which Shakespeare's play opens, cannot be kept because it begins between the servants of the two houses, and because it is not suitable for Ducis's altered plot. The incident of Romeo's love for Rosaline is impossible because it is utterly unnecessary and irrelevant, and would, moreover, probably have shocked a French audience as an exhibition of inconstancy on the part of Romeo. The ball is
impossible because there is no time for it, and because it is unnecessary as Roméo already knows and loves Juliette. The balcony scenes, that are among the best liked of Shakespeare's scenes, are impossible to Ducis because of the unities of place and time and because Roméo can see Juliette when he will, and the stolen visits are unnecessary. All the scenes with Friar Lawrence must be sacrificed because he is unsuitable for the tragic stage, and because he is unnecessary for the story as Ducis has remade it. The scenes with the nurse are obviously out of the question; as are those between Romeo and his friends, since they are mere fusillades of puns and quips scarcely fit for the comic stage in France, and do not advance the story at all. There is no time for Romeo's exile; nor for Juliet's sleep and awakening, and moreover no French tragic heroine would resort to such a ruse in order to escape with her lover - that again is only fit for comedy. Though she remains true to Roméo through all, Juliette cannot sacrifice honour or duty to her love.

It will be seen, then, that all that remains for Ducis is the quarrel where Roméo kills Juliet's kinsman, and the scene between the lovers after it; the proposed marriage of Juliet and Paris, and the final scene of death and reconciliation in the burial ground. It is thus evident at a glance which were the possible "classical" scenes in Shakespeare, and which were too English or too romantic for transference to a French stage.

The quarrel and death of Tybalt, where Roméo, because of the family feud, was forced to attack his lady's kinsman is a parallel of the duel in Le Cid, though there is this difference, that Roméo acted in the heat of a sudden attack, while Rodrigue had to go deliberately to his vengeance. That scene could be retained without difficulty, but the final one was less suitable for the French stage. Yet it was evidently the one which had captured Ducis's imagination as the sleepwalking one did in Macbeth, and he was resolved to keep it at all costs. He had to
sacrifice the unity of Place, and change the scene from "le palais de Capulet" to "la sépulture des Capulets et des Montaignus": the pathos of Juliet's awakening only a few minutes too late was no longer possible, but Ducis ventured to show the double suicide of the lovers.

The proposal of Capulet to marry his daughter to Paris, and the scene of renunciation between the lovers is one that was sure to attract a French writer, and it is significant that Ducis introduces this scene between Roméo and Juliette, while Shakespeare neglects it altogether, and sends Romeo into exile before the marriage is proposed to Juliet. It would seem to be purely for the pleasure of writing this scene that Ducis introduced Paris, for immediately after his offer, the lukewarm suitor goes over to Montaigu's side, and the lovers' renunciation becomes unnecessary. Instead of the proposed marriage being the cause of the dénouement, as in Shakespeare, it has no real raison-d'être, and Ducis has been betrayed by the tempting scène-à-faire into the introduction of something that is irrelevant, or at least unnecessary to the main plot, and therefore, according to French ideas, a fault. It is Montaigu's rising that brings about the dénouement, and at the same time cancels the proposed marriage.

Around these three incidents, them, Ducis fashions his play. Having stripped away so much, he must add and develop considerably. He develops the story of the long feud between the elder Montague and Capulet; and adds the exile of Montaigu, the death of his four sons, and the concealed identity of the remaining one Roméo, brought up by Capulet as Dovedo. This makes the plot melodramatic and improbable, but once the concealed identity is admitted, it is logical in itself, and certainly the position of Roméo between his father and his benefactor is intensely dramatic.

In Shakespeare, the elder Montague scarcely appears, but Ducis has greatly expanded his role and character, making him hatred incarnate,
while Capulet represents generosity. Had Ducis stopped there the play would have been melodramatic without being ridiculous, but Ducis borrows a touch from Dante that apparently raised tragic pity and terror to their height for his 18th century audience, but which strikes a modern reader as extraordinary and absurd. By the machinations of the wicked brother of Capulet (since dead) Montaigne is shut up in a tower with his four sons, like Ugolino. The four sons perish of hunger, and as they die, offer their flesh to feed their starving father. Ducis is nowhere definite enough to enable one to decide whether Montaigne accepted this offer or not, but the idea is sufficiently horrible. It is this which has kindled the flame of undying hatred in his breast, and he returns to Verona to take vengeance after horrifying his son and along with the audience by the tale of his sons' death.

Shakespeare's characters are:

- Escalus, prince of Verona
- Paris, kinsman to the prince
- Montague
- Capulet
- Romeo, son of Montague
- Mercutio, kinsman to the prince and friend to Romeo
- Benvolio - nephew to Montague and friend to Romeo
- Tybalt - nephew to Lady Capulet
- Friar Lawrende and Friar John
- Lady Montague
- Lady Capulet
- Juliet
- Various servants, and the nurse
- Apothecary, musicians, pages, watchmen etc.

Of the minor characters, Ducis retains as 'figurants' Un Officier
- Gardes, soldats, courtisans, partisans de Montaigne
- partisans de Capulet.
- Escalus becomes Ferdinand, duc de Verone
- Montaigne
- Capulet
- Romeo
Juliette,
Albéric, friend and confidant for Romeo, replaces
Mercutio and Benvolio
Flavie, confidant to Juliette replaces the nurse.

It is obvious at once how much individuality the play has lost in the changing of the cast, but the characters Ducis has sacrificed were impossible on the French stage. Albéric and Flavie are mere confidants without personality. Tybault and Paris no longer appear on the stage at all, but are spoken of in the play. Le comte Paris remains the suitor for Juliette's hand, but proves a lukewarm one, and goes over to Montague's party. Thébaldo is no longer Juliette's cousin, but her brother.

The following is the story of the play as it stands in its new form:

ctéI. Juliette explains to Flavie the terror and vague forebodings awakened in her by the news that an old man has come to Verona from his hermit's retreat in the Apennines. She speaks of her love for Dolvédo, a young man whom her father has brought up without knowing his identity, and who has just distinguished himself as a soldier, Juliette knows what Capulet does not, that Dolvédo is Romeó, the son of Montague, "ce vertueux père", who had disappeared twenty years before. Juliette tells Flavie how Roger, her father's unworthy brother had stolen Romeó, and how Montaignu and his four remaining sons had fled, and never been heard of since. Romeó escaped and wandered homeless until Capulet in pity adopted him. Juliette was the first to hear his name, and she counselled him not to reveal it to Capulet. (She must have been an extraordinarily prudent child, since this had presumably happened long before.) Flavie suggests that the mysterious old man might be Montaignu, and his return the first step towards a reconciliation. Juliette, under the influence of an "affreux présage", makes an extraordinarily accurate forecast of
the later events in the play, and gives us an idea of what to expect of Montaigu.

"Ait que mon coeur charmé saisirait ardemment
L'espoir inattendu d'épouser mon amant!
Mais quand je te croirais, quand ce vieillard austère
Serais de Roméo le déplorable père
Qu'attendre d'un mortel qu'un horrible dessein
Semble avoir fait sortir des bois de l'Apennin;
Qui, peut-être irrité par quelque énorme crime,
Descend du haut des monts pour chercher sa victime
Et calme en apparence, en effet furieux,
Amène à pas tardifs, la vengeance en ces lieux ?
Je ne sais mais je tremble à cet affreux présage."

Theáldo, Juliette's brother, is to be married, and Juliette hopes that she will be able to remain unmarried and cherish in secret her love for Roméo - a love which he returns but knows to be hopeless. Roméo enters with the flags he has captured, to lay them at the feet of his benefactor Capulet.

Capulet comes and tells Juliette, in the presence of Roméo that he has decided her marriage with Count Paris. Juliette begs and weeps in vain: her father explains that he suspects the Montaigu party of preparing an attack, and Juliette's marriage would secure a powerful ally for the Capulets.

Roméo and Juliette are left alone, and there follows a scene which is a close imitation of the one between Pauline and Severe. Juliette is resigned to her fate, and her coldness brings passionate reproaches from the despairing Roméo, reproaches that cause her to give way to the tears she had been trying to hide.

Close upon their renunciation of one another, Alberic comes with the news that the mysterious old man is Montaigu, and that he is
preparing to attack. Count Paris is inclining to the side of Capulet's enemies, and desires to cancel or at least delay the marriage. Roméo's hope flames up, but Juliette cautions him not to reveal himself yet to his father and to do nothing without her.

Act II. Roméo tells Juliette that he has just seen the Duke, told him all, and received his approval of the plan that a marriage between the son and daughter of the rival houses should put an end to all strife. Juliette makes Roméo promise that he will reveal his identity to his father only if the latter accepts the reconciliation; if he vows eternal hatred to the Capulets, Roméo is to keep his secret, lest he be forced to take arms against his benefactor.

Ferdinand brings Montaigu and Capulet face to face, but the only result is an exchange of angry and defiant words. In spite of the entreaties of Roméo, Juliette and Ferdinand, Montaigu refuses to tell what has caused his grief and hatred, and defies everyone, declaring that he will never renounce his vengeance. Ferdinand, alarmed at his fury, orders him to be placed under restraint. Roméo remains alone with Montaigu, and tries to soften him, but still conceals his identity in obedience to his promise to Juliette. Montaigu is moved by the sympathy of this apparent stranger, but will reveal nothing to him, and is led off, still defiant, to captivity.

Flavius comes with the news that Montaigu's party are about to withdraw him by force from his prison; and Alberic follows to say that Capulet and his son Thebaldo have gone out to the fray, to refute taunts of cowardice from Montaigu's men. Both Roméo and Juliette go to try and stop the combat.

Act III. Roméo appears, followed by Alberic and crying "Je veux voir Juliette et mourir à ses yeux". He has just killed Thebaldo, as the only way to save his father who was being hard pressed by young Capulet. He has escaped at once after the fatal thrust, and no one knows who was
Montaigne's unexpected deliverer. Romeo feels that in the discharge of his duty he has for ever placed a barrier between himself and his love, and wronged the household which had befriended him.

Juliette comes with words of love and trust, and, naturally, for dramatic effect, speaks of the brother of whose death she has not yet learned, and of his friendship for Romeo - "Pour sauver ta vie il donnerait la sienne". Flâtre breaks in with the news of Thebaldo's death, and Juliette, in her grief, turns to Romeo for comfort, only to learn that it was his hand that had struck the blow. As Rodrigue does in "Le Cid", Romeo offers Juliette his life in expiation, and tells her how it was to save his father's life that he had struck. But Juliette's love is too great, in spite of what has happened, for her to consent to Romeo's death, and she implores him to flee for ever, before Capulet learns the truth, promising him her faith to the end.

But before Romeo can flee, Capulet comes seeking Dolvedo, that he may avenge his dead friend. Romeo's troubled hesitation infuriates Capulet as a piece of cowardice, and he turns to Juliette, bidding her offer herself as prize to Count Paris, if he avenges them. Juliette, too, hesitates and her hesitation betrays to Capulet the secret of their love. Then Romeo steps forward and reveals the whole truth, offering his breast to Capulet's sword. Capulet cannot strike, because Romeo refuses to defend himself, but he vows to be revenged. - An officer announces that the duke is coming.

Ferdinand comes, and straightway demands of Capulet that he should forget what has passed, and consent to the marriage of Romeo and Juliette as the best way to end the feud that is devastating the city. After only a moment's hesitation, Capulet actually consents.

Montaigné enters and Capulet greets him with words of reconciliation and Romeo falls at the feet of his generous foster father. Capulet goes with Ferdinand and leaves Montaigné in the palace, entrusting his
daughter to him while he is absent.

When Montaigu is alone with his son, he turns on him and reveals at last the secret of his grief. Then comes the horrible tale of this second Ugolino, shut up with his four sons in a tower —

"Raymond, Dolce, Sévere,
M'offrirent à genoux leur sang pour me nourrir,
Et chacun d'eux ensuite acheva de mourir."

Montaigu reveals the name of the enemy who had shut him up — Capulet's brother; and requires that Roméo should revenge him by striking down the daughter of his foe. Roméo demands in fury how Montaigu can repay Capulet's generosity and trust by such treachery —

"J'aspire à vous servir, je le veux, je le dois;
Mais s'il s'agit d'un crime, il n'est pas fait pour moi."

Romeo pleads with his father, but in vain. Montaigu is absolutely hard, and reproaches Roméo with disloyalty because he will not attack his benefactor.

The scene changes to the burying-place of the Montaigu and Capulets (It is surely strange that such foes should bury their dead side by side.) Juliette is there alone, waiting for death. Roméo comes to say that he has at last softened his father, who is coming to make peace with Capulet over the tombs of their fathers. Juliette answers:

"De sa sincérité, tiens, vois le témoignage!"

(Elle lui donne un billet.)

Romeo reads

"Voici le temps, compagnons intrepides,
D'exterminer les Capulets,
Et quand dans les tombeaux j'irai jurer la paix
D'enfoncer vos poignards dans le flanc des perfides.
Montaigu, Le barbare! Et je suis né de lui!"

Juliette stops Roméo, as he is hastening to warn Capulet, saying she
has found the way to make peace -

"Mon trepâs nécessaire

Va sauver à la fois ma patrie et mon père.

Ma maison, tu le sais, ne vit plus que dans moi;

La tienne maintenant n'existe plus qu'en toi.

Entre ces deux maisons, soit ton sang, soit le nôtre,

Il faut que l'une enfin n'importune plus l'autre;

Et pour n'avoir plus lieu de se persécuter,

Qu'un de ces deux partis cède en cessant d'exister.

Voilà le seul moyen de terminer nos haines ...

C’en est fait, Roméo; la mort est dans mes veines."

Romeo in despair cries

"Ce fer plus fidèle,

Au défaut du poison, servira mon dessein.

Un désespoir tranquille a passé dans mon sein.

Montaign va venir; sous ces voûtes terribles

Qu'il recule à l'aspect de nos corps insensibles;

Que mon barbare père, en entrant dans ces lieux,

Nous voie avec horreur expirer sous ses yeux.

Je ne sais quel pouvoir, fatal à l'innocence,

Dressa dans ces tombeaux l'autel de la vengeance

Il demande des morts, il veut du sang : eh bien;

Il sera satisfait; j'y verserai le mien."

Juliette, on the point of death, with the tombs as witnesses, takes

Romeo for her husband, and dies in his arms. Romeo falls beside her.

Ferdinand arrives with Montaignu and Capulet: Capulet takes the

oath of friendship, but Montaignu springs forward with a dagger. Then

Capulet sees his daughter dead, and at sight of his tears, Montaignu

cries exultingly -

"J'en joins. Te voilà comme mon coeur désir

Sens bien que tu la perds, et que mon fils respire."

"..."
Capulet (Il lui montre le corps de Romeó)

"Regarde, malheureux!"

Montaigu

"Que vois-je ? Quelle horreur!
Mon fils, ô mon cher fils! Ô vengeance! Ô fureur!
Et voila tout le fruit de ma rage inhumaine.
Ciel! es-tu satisfait? Ai-je épuisé ta haine?
Frappé! unis donc le père à ses malheureux fils!"

(Fil tombe sur le corps de son fils.)

Ferdinand

"Vous voyez quels effets votre haine a produits.
Vos injustes fureurs, source de tout de crimes,
Ont conduit à la mort d'innocentes victimes.
Peuple, qu'un monument conserve à l'avenir
De vos justes regrets l'éternel souvenir."

The play has many faults, but dramatic effect that explains its success for so many years. The first two acts are by no means equal to the last three. They are tedious and dull, and it is in them that one finds most of the discrepancies and improbabilities that strike one as ridiculous, and therefore out of place in tragedy. The general situation is too complicated and improbable; and as a consequence, Juliette's exposition is too long and complicated. One is tempted to ask various questions: how could Romeó have succeeded in hiding his identity all those years? How could Juliette possibly have been the first to have a long conversation with the foundling, to hear his name, and counsel him to conceal it, especially as they must both have been children at the time? Juliette's "pré sage" concerning the old man and his business in Verona is artificial and not very convincing; and the verse in the first Act is particularly
stilted and conventional - it lacks the energy that the more rapid
movement of the last Acts gives their verse. The proposed marriage
of Paris and Juliette, and subsequent scene between Romeo and Juliette
are rather flat, and lose all value when the rising of Montaigu breaks
the marriage in the very next scene. In Act II, the scene between
Capulet and Montaigu is good; but the rest are insignificant.

In Act III, the murder of Thébaldo has been committed, and the
action begins to move more swiftly. One has by then accepted the
situation, and its improbabilities are forgotten in the interest of
what results from it. This interest carries one on to the end of the
play, though there are still certain things that strike one as ridiculous
notably the story borrowed from Dante, and the setting of the last
scene - it is scarcely probable that the Montagues and Capulets would
bury their dead side by side, or that the duke would appoint that
burying-ground as a meeting place for the reconciliation ceremony.
The verse is very superior to that of the first Acts; it is simpler,
and often full of energy and eloquence; though the ordinary faults
of Ducis's verse are still to be found in it.

The characters are better drawn and more interesting than in either "Macbeth" or "Hamlet". They are all very different from
Shakespeare's, and resemble rather Corneille's heroes than the English
writer's - as was almost inevitable. Romeo is frank and courageous,
moved by honour and duty rather than by passion, as Shakespeare's
Romeo is. The most striking thing in his rôle is the unflinching
frankness with which he faces each successive ordeal - the meeting
with Juliette after her brother's death, the appeal of Capulet to
avenge his son, the appeal of his father to take vengeance on Capulet.
In this latter scene particularly Romeo's outburst of indignation
against his father's treachery, filled with the horror that youth feels
before outraged ideals, is eloquent and moving.

Juliette is no longer the passionate child, abandoning herself to her love and heedless of all else, but a mature, prudent woman, whose love is self-forgetting, and who is capable of noble self-sacrifice for those she loves. It is a character full of charm and beauty, that one remembers with pleasure. She is full of quiet dignity when she accepts her father's decision concerning the marriage with Paris, and silences Roméo's lamentations; when Roméo confesses he has slain her brother, though only in answer to the clear call of duty, her one thought is for the safety of her lover, and she urges him to flee, promising her faith to the end, though she never sees him again; above all in the last act, she is admirable in her quiet serenity before the death she has chosen for herself as the greatest service she can render those she loves.

It is noticable that while in Shakespeare the death of Roméo and Juliet is the result of the feud between the two houses, their own impetuosity, or at least Roméo's, is the immediate cause of the final tragedy. In Ducis's play, the two lovers are sacrificed entirely to the hatred of Montaigu; the death of Juliette is as much the consequence of her devotion to her father and her city as of her love for Roméo. She is the first to die, and sacrifices herself not out of loyalty to a dead lover, but to the living: it is Roméo who dies because he cannot face life without the loved one. It is characteristic that in Ducis, Roméo's last words, which close the death scene, are a reference to the hatred that has wrought all the woe, while in Shakespeare, beyond a passing reference to Tybault, neither Roméo nor Juliet think of the family feud or its share in their ruin - their one absorbing thought is of each other, their love and their reunion.

Roméo

"Juliette! Elle expire; ah dieux! père barbare!
Ta haine fit nos maux. c'est toi qui nous sépare..."
Mais malgré toi, cruel, nous serons réunis."

(Act V Sc 2.)

Eyes, look your last!

Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
The doors of death seal with a righteous kiss,
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!
Come, bitter conduct! Come, unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at last run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick, weary bark!
Here's to my love! [Drinks] O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

(Act V Sc 3.)

The greatest change that Ducis has made as regards the cast is
the development of the rôle and character of Montaignu. In Shakespeare
he scarcely appears, while in Ducis, he becomes the most important actor.
It was evidently the creation of this character that Ducis regarded as
the triumph of the play, for he says: "On a paru me savoir gré d'y avoir
peint le caractère d'un homme dont l'âme, autrefois vertueuse et tendre,
se trouve dénaturée, pour ainsi dire, par la barbarie persécution de ses
ennemis, et par l'amour le plus violent pour ses enfants. Le désir qu'il
a de se venger a moins frappé que la grandeur de ses malheurs, et les
pleurs qu'il donne encore à ses fils ont peut-être attendri sur le sort
de ce père infortuné." In spite of Ducis's plea for him on account of
his misfortunes, he remains a sinister figure more repellent than
pitiful. For once, Ducis has shown a human soul that steadily sinks, and
even at the last is overwhelmed not by remorse but by the fruit of its
own evil deeds. Montaignu suffered greatly, but it was his own savage
hatred and treachery, directed not against his persecutor, but against
the persecutor's innocent brother, that caused him to lose his last
remaining son, and with him all hope of happiness or peace. The picture is a more sombre one than Ducis usually paints: the depths of sullen hatred and misery in the soul of Montaigne, goaded to madness by the thought of the unworthy action into which he had been betrayed by his enemies, his utter deadness to every generous feeling whether in his own heart or in the hearts of others - all this makes him a sinister figure of real dramatic power. The introduction of the Ugolino incident seems to modern minds an unfortunate addition, which by overstraining the element of horror becomes ridiculous. Nevertheless, the 18th century French audience seem to have accepted it without question. The other weakness which sometimes spoils the artistic effect of this new conception of Montaigne, is the pompous, stilted verse with its conventional phrases; but in the most dramatic scenes, Ducis has been dominated by a greater inspiration than mere classical elegance, and the short, bitter phrases of Montaigne, varied occasionally by passionate outbursts, are worthy of his character which is one of Ducis's best pieces of work.

As a foil to this father whose love for his sons has been embittered so as to make of him a veritable monster, stands Capulet, the soul of generosity. Capulet, the soul of generosity. Capable of fierce enmity, he is incapable of real hatred, as Montaigne tells him bitterly - "Tu ne sais point haïr"; his affection for Romeó persists and in response to Ferdinand's appeal he actually consents to the marriage of his daughter with the man who has killed his son, in order that peace may reign. He has a lofty magnanimity that is almost more than human. As usually happens, the wicked character is more interesting than the virtuous; but the uprightness of Capulet, and his readiness to pardon, make a contrast that fittingly shows up the implacable hatred of Montaigne.

In Ducis's adaptation, Thébaldo is no longer the cousin, but the brother of Juliette; and instead of being the enemy of Romeó, has been
his friend since their childhood. This alteration serves the double purpose of making the situation more poignant both for Roméo and for the elder Capulet; and of bringing Thebaldo into closer relationship with the main characters and plot. This "tightening" of Shakespeare's loosely-woven plots is characteristic of Ducis - compare Claudius and Ophelie. It makes the story less natural than in Shakespeare, but as a rule, it heightens the dramatic tension.

Flavie, the colourless confidant, replaces the garrulous old Nurse, but she appears only to make announcements, and to listen to Juliette's exposition in the first scene. Albéric scarcely appears, and has no individuality whatever, unlike Romeo's lively friends in Shakespeare.

All the characters are slighter than in Shakespeare, and display only the sides of their nature that bear upon the tragedy, instead of revealing their natures as a whole - (this of course is always true of French characters as compared with Shakespeare's); but Montaigne and Juliette in particular are alive and interesting, despite the decadent classical verse that makes them at times seem artificial and stilted.

As always happens in Ducis's plays, the moral tone changes its quality and its emphasis. The French writer deliberately tries to create an uplifting moral atmosphere, that will teach and ennoble; Shakespeare shows the facts of life, sometimes ugly and repulsive rather than ennobling, and the effect is to make us shudder before the ugliness of evil and cleave to that which is good. A lover of Shakespeare would like to believe that in the end, Shakespeare can teach us deeper lessons by showing us evil in all its hideousness, than by hiding it and only showing us good: but certainly the impression left by reading a play of Ducis is more "moral".
French critics unite in saying that Romeo and Juliet are not moral at all; that they are irresponsible children, intoxicated by their own love, and rushing blindly towards it, ignoring duty and morality, that it was this blind passion as much as the feud between their families that led to disaster. Certainly there is no such heedlessness of passion in Ducis's play: the moral impression that the play leaves is of two lovers seeking to be loyal to the duties that separate them and ready to sacrifice, if not their love, at least their hope of union, to what they feel to be right. Juliette in the end deliberately takes her own life, not because she fears there is no longer any chance of happiness for her in this world, but because she thinks it is the best way to bring safety and peace to those she loves - her lover, her father, her native city. Roméo kills himself for love of Juliette, but only when he has done everything in his power to bring reconciliation between the two houses to both of which he is so closely bound. All his efforts have been baulked by the unworthy hatred of his father; he has fulfilled his duty to Montaigne, but can no longer give him love or respect, and since all that makes life worth living to him, his love and the honour of his house, have been lost, he seeks in death the only refuge left. He may join his bride in death, since there is no longer any duty left to separate them. The impression made is one of noble, if fruitless, striving to reconcile conflicting duties, and of self-sacrifice in the face of hereditary hatred so fierce that it makes life well-nigh impossible.

Roméo and Juliette are "nobler" than in Shakespeare, since their love is always subordinated to duty; but the feud is a bitterer one. The final tragedy of Juliette's death is planned and welcomed by the head of at least one of the rival houses; whereas in Shakespeare, the death of the lovers was the result of a series of accidents, and one feels that neither Montague nor Capulet hated so fiercely as to desire
the death of the innocent. Capulet's goodnatured refusal to attack Romeo when he found him in his house is sufficient proof that he bore no grudge against his rival's heir, and probably both would have been content to let the feud rest, had not the hot blood of their young kinsmen caused fresh strife. Reconciliation was easier for Shakespeare's enemies; and after the tragedy in the burying ground, they turned naturally and sincerely towards one another. The final note is one of reconciliation and peace: while in Ducis, Montaignu dies in unrepentant bitterness and despair, and there is no reconciliation. The death of Shakespeare's lovers has at least achieved peace and reconciliation, though it was not to bring them about that they died: but Ducis's lovers died in vain, the victims of a hatred that nothing could extinguish. For once, it is Ducis's play which ends in blackness of desolation.

**Style**

All that can be said concerning the style of "Romeo et Juliette" is what has been said of "Hamlet". Generally speaking, it is bad classical, artificial and monotonous, full of conventional phrases and periphrases; yet, as before, when Ducis in the interest of his characters and action forgets to be so preoccupied with elegance, he can write passages full of fire and eloquence. Even in these, an occasional word or phrase will jar as being out of place, but they are covered by the feeling that carries on actor and audience.

One of the worst passages, for the emotionalism and artificiality of its style is Montaignu's narrative of the incident in the tower; it is followed in the same scene by an outburst of savage hatred on the part of Montaignu that is simpler, and therefore much more effective in its ferocity: and then by Romeo's indignant protest before the treacherous act his father requires of him:
Dejà depuis trois jours dans mon cachot funeste,
Je sentais dans mon sein s'amasser la terreur,
Quand d'un songe effrayant la prophétique horreur
Offrit à mes esprits la plus fatale image.
Je m'éveillai tremblant, plein d'un affreux présage.
Je cherchais dans moi-même, immobile et glace,
Quel était ce malheur par mon songe annoncé.
Mes fils dormaient; j'y cours, leurs gestes, leurs visages,
Sur mon sort tout-à-coup éclairant mes présages,
De la faim sur leur lit exprimaient les douleurs;
Ils s'écriaient: 'Mon père', et répandaient des pleurs
Nous nous levons, on vient; nous attendions d'avance
L'aliment qu'on accorde à la simple existence.
Chacun se tait; j'écoute; et j'entends de la tour
La porte en mur épais se changer sans retour.
Je fixai mes enfants sans paroles et sans larmes,
J'étais mort... Ils pleuraient...je cachai mes alarmes;
Mais lorsqu'enfin (soleil, devais-tu te montrer?)
Dans eux tous à-la-fois je me vis expirer,
Je dévorai ces mains. Renaud me dit: 'Mon père,
Vis, tu nous vengeras.' Raymond, Dolce, Sévere,
Offrirent à genoux leur sang pour me nourrir,
Et chacun d'eux ensuite acheva de mourir.
Qu'ai-je entendu? grand Dieu!
Puisqu'il me faut poursuivre
Je restai seul vivant, mais indigné de vivre.
Ma vue en s'égarant s'éteignit à la fin,
Et ne pouvant mourir de douleur ni de faim,
Je cherchai mes enfants avec des cris funèbres,
Pleurant, rampant, hurlant embrassant les ténèbres,
Et les retrouvant tous dans ce cercueil affreux,
Immobile et mort, je m'étendis sur eux."

**Montaign** (speaking of Capulet)

Non, ce n'est pas son sang qu'il faut verser encore
C'est le sang d'un objet qu'il chérit, qu'il adore,
Qui tient à son amour par un si fort lien,
Qu'en lui perçant le cœur, tu perceras le sien;
C'est l'objet en qui seul vit encore sa famille,
C'est son unique espoir, c'est son sang, c'est sa fille,
C'est Juliette, enfin"

**Montaign** (speaking of Capulet's brother)

Le cruel chez les morts, tranquille et sans effroi,
S'est au sein des tombeaux retranché contre moi,
Et quand je trouve un fils, fameux par son courage,
Qui m'est exprès rendu pour se joindre à ma rage,
Lorsqu'aucun Capulet ne peut plus m'échapper,
Quand je n'ai qu'a vouloir, quand il n'a qu'à frapper,
À ses indignes feux c'est lui qui s'abandonne,
Je ne sais quel amour et l'enchaîne et l'étonne!
C'est lui qui délibère et qui même aujourd'hui
Craintrait dans ce palais de me servir d'appui,
Quel reproche odieux me faites-vous entendre?
Plutôt mourir cent fois que ne pas vous défendre
Malheureux! En quoi donc! avez-vous prétendu
Que pour de tels forfaits je vous serais rendu?
À peine mon ami dans son cercueil repose;
À peine, pour sceller la paix qu'on lui propose,
Un vieillard généreux vous livre sans soupçon
Son propre sang, son coeur, son palais, sa maison,
À peine entre vos bras il a remis sa fille
Que pour exterminer lui, son nom, sa famille,
Sortant de l'embrasser, vous exigez soudain
Que je plonge à sa fille un poignard dans le sein!
Seigneur, je suis soldat; pour venger votre outrage,
J'emploîrai, s'il le faut, la force, le courage:
Ce bras ne sait user que de moyens permis,
Et se teindre avec gloire au sang des ennemis.
Au chemin de l'honneur montrez-moi la vengeance
Vous connoîtrez alors si Roméo balance
J'aspire à vous servir; je le veux, je le dois,
Mais s'il s'agit d'un crime, il n'est pas fait pour moi."

(Act IV.Sc. 5)

Ducis has departed so much from Shakespeare's version of the story that there can be very little direct imitation of Shakespeare's scenes. The duel scene is only reported in Ducis, and does not resemble Shakespeare's one which is action: Capulet's proposal to Juliette that she should marry Paris is a scene similar to the one in Shakespeare, but direct imitation is impossible, for Capulet's sudden fury and coarse abuse of his daughter cannot be contemplated for a French version. The final scene in the burying ground is the only one where Ducis has followed Shakespeare fairly closely, and even there the situation is very different. It is Juliette who dies first, and dies of poison, and it is for Romeo to parallel Juliet's cry

"What's here? A cup, closed in my true love's hand?
Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end:
O churl! drunk all, and left no friendly drop
To help me after? I will kiss thy lips;"
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,
To make me die with a restorative."

(Act V Sc.3)

"As-tu bien pu penser quand tu cessas de vivre,
Qu'au cercueil Romeó put tarder à te suivre?
De quel droit m'ötiais-ty, par cette trahison,
La part que mon amour me donnait au poison?"

(Acte V.Sc 2.)

The soliloquy of Juliette waiting alone for death in the burying ground recalls that of Juliet before drinking Friar Laurence's potion: but the difference between them is all the difference between Shakespeare's Juliet, and Ducis's. In the one it is a child, full of superstitious terrors before the unknown, clinging to life, wholly occupied with the ordeal before her, yet desperately resolved for love of Romeo; in the other, a woman full of lofty courage, and self-sacrifice, serene in the face of death because it lies in the path of duty, and philosophically discussing life and death on the threshold of the tomb itself. The style, too, changes from an almost crude realism and simplicity to the flowing, rounded eloquence of an orator.

"I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life:
I'll call them back again to comfort me:
Nurse! What should she do here?
My dismal scene I needs must act alone.
Come, vial.
What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then to-morrow morning?
No, no: this shall forbid it: lie thou there. (Laying down her dagger)
What if it be a poison which the friar
Subtly hath ministered to have me dead
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he married me before to Romeo?
I fear it is: and yet methinks it should not,
For he hath still been tried a holy man.
How if when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? there's a fearful point!
Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die, strangled ere my Romeo comes?
Or if I live is it not very like
The horrible conceit of death and night,
Together with the terror of the place -
As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
Where for these many hundred years the bones
Of all my buried ancestors are packed:
Where bloody Tybault yet but green in earth
Lies festering in his shroud; where as they say,
At some hours in the night spirits resott;
- Alack, alack is it not like that I
So early waking what with loathsome smells
And shrieks like mandrakes' torn out of the earth,
That living mortals hearing them run mad,
- O, if I wake shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears?

(Act IV Sc.3)

"Dieu! quel jour effrayant dans l'épaisseur des ombres
Au sein de ces tombeaux repand ses clartés sombres!
Les mènes enchâines sous ces marbres poudreux
Semblent tous m'inviter d'y descendre avec eux.
Je vois avec plaisir, au sein de ces ténèbres,
Le jour pâle et mourant de ces lampes funèbres.
Cet astre des tombeaux, plus affreux que la nuit
Vient mêler quelque joie à l'horreur qui me sait.
Tout parle, tout m'entend dans ce vaste silence.
Mon frère ranimé s'éveille en ma présence:
Du fond de son cercueil il me dit: 'Hâte-toi,
Goute enfin le repos qui t'attend près de moi.'
C'est donc ici grand dieu! que la vengeance expire,
que le sort est dompté, que la vertu respire!
Ici nos fiers aieux, par la haine animés,
S'embrassent dans la poudre, unis et désarmés.
Je vais leur annoncer que leurs guerres funestes,
En moi de ma famille ont dévoré les restes.
Je sors avec dédain d'un coupable séjour,
Où le ciel a proscrit l'innocence et l'amour.
Qu'aurais-je à regretter? qu'ai-je vu sur la terre?
Des haines, des complots, la trahison, la guerre.
Un plus doux sentiment m'eût fait chercher le jour
Romeo m'adorait ... Je le perds sans retour.

(Acte V.Sc.1)

There is a curious case in Montaigne's story of his sons' death
where Ducis uses one of Shakespeare's most dramatic phrases from 'Macbeth', which had evidently struck him but which he could not use in 'Macbeth' because the incident of Lady Macduff is no longer there.

Malcolm: "Let's make us medicines of our great revenge
To cure this deadly grief.

Macduff: He has no children. All my pretty ones?"

('Macbeth' Act IV.Sc 3.)
"Ah de sa barbarie
Vous dûres bien je crois punir un inhumain!
Montaigne Il n'avait point d'enfants......

So must be altered Shakespeare's story of a passionate love - "jeune et frais, l'amour d'un jour de deux enfants" - to make of it a French drama. The interest passes from the love itself to the family feud that makes it tragic: the story is treated just as a greater writer had treated the same theme in 'Le Cid' - each of the lovers is true to duty and honour, and just because honour is unsullied and duty fulfilled love can persist and triumph through it all. The outline is the same, and the moral impression the same in 'Le Cid' and 'Romeo et Juliette', because they correspond to the fundamental conception of the drama in a French mind as opposed to an English one.

Yet notwithstanding all that they have in common, there is much to separate 'Le Cid' and 'Romeo et Juliette': it is not only the difference in genius between Corneille and Ducis, it is the difference in literary ideas and ideals between 1636 and 1772. The talent of Corneille and Ducis is similar, though so different in degree: both were romantic at heart, and loved great, heroic deeds and characters and lofty eloquence; both lacked a certain "sense of the fitness of things", though Corneille's genius was too great to let that spoil his work; and both were filled with a spirit of purity and truth that loved all noble things, and idealised faulty human nature to bring it to the stature of their dreams of it. But Corneille was bound by the new classical ideals of his age: simplicity, unity, dignity and restraint. All that was ugly and violent must be hidden behind the mask of serenity and dignity. Tragic pity and terror must not
be excited by what was horrible and revolting. When Ducis wrote, dramatists were striving to instil new life and interest into the lay-figure which was all that remained to them. They stimulated interest by adding fearful and wonderful complications to the plot, and fresh and unheard-of horrors: fortifying themselves by the conviction that they were still good disciples of Aristotle since he recommended concealed identities, and sanctioned the horrible provided that it was not seen, and therefore not spectacular. They permitted more action, and to make narrative more interesting, exaggerated the impressiveness of its style. To preserve the classical flavour, they kept the unities as far as possible, were lavish in their use of the conventions that had become the badges of classical drama (and which moreover were so useful to unravel complicated plots) and scattered freely the words that were so redolent of the classics - feux, flamme, chaînes, mânes, flambeaux de l'hymen, les dieux.

All these changes are visible in Ducis's 'Romeo et Juliette'. In 'Le Cid', the story is quite straightforward, there are no complications, and the situation out of which the tragedy arises is of the simplest - a coveted honour given to one noble rather than another. There is no striving after the horrible to produce effect: the moral tension of the story is sufficient to raise to their height tragic pity and terror. Ducis could not find sufficient these simple means. His audience demanded something new and exciting, and to the simple story he adds the concealed identity of Romeo which makes him friend to his father's enemies, and natural champion to both parties in the struggle; the rather involved story of the past atrocities of Capulet's brother, the seizing of Romeo, and the horrible tale of Montaignu and his four remaining sons; finally, the scene in a burying-ground, and the double suicide. The difference in style has been
sufficiently indicated by the passages quoted; the conventions are everywhere - notably the concealed identity, which plays an important part in the plot, and others which seem to have been dragged in for the sake of having them there: Montaigu has a dream in his dungeon before the death of his children -

"Quand d'un songe effrayant la prophétique horreur
Offrit à mes esprits la plus fatale image."

Juliette presents a "billet" to Roméo as proof of his father's treachery, and like Macbeth, Roméo shudders to open it -

"Quelle horreur ce billet va-t-il me révéler?
Au moment de l'ouvrir je sens ma main trembler."

The inevitable confidants are there, Alberic and Flavie; and the poignard, notably in the intended reconciliation scene, where it is the signal of Montaigu's treachery.

The distance between true classical drama, and the semi-romantic plays of the late 18th century is measured by these would-be adornments that Ducis has added to a simple story; and, on the other hand, the distance from Shakespeare's England to Ducis's France is seen in all that the English play has lost and gained, in its change from an Italian love-tale to the closing incidents in a fierce Italian feud.
CHAPTER VI.  King Lear.

Plan

1. Changes of plot.
2. Summary of Ducis's play.
3. The influence of the Classical Tradition in the changes.
4. The characters.
5. The influence of the new ideas.
Chapter VI. King Lear.

Eleven years passed between the performance in 1772 of 'Romeo et Juliette', and the appearance in 1783 of 'Le Roi Lear'; and one must suppose that the romantic ideas which were beginning to reveal themselves in 'Romeo et Juliette' have made considerable progress in the minds of the French public, since Ducis is so much bolder in his next two plays 'Lear' and 'Macbeth'. They are romantic melodramas where only the artificial language, the improbabilities which have been introduced into the plots in order to keep the unities, and the classical conventions which serve the same purpose, recall the tradition that Ducis was still striving to obey. Yet the influence of this dying tradition has been enough to spoil the plays. Out of respect for the 'good taste' of his audience, Ducis has been obliged to modify the romantic scenes and incidents that he so admired in Shakespeare, and as usually happens when one tries to compromise, the result is neither one thing nor the other. The conflict between classical and romantic is much more marked in these two plays than in the first pair, and the element of the ridiculous, which was only suggested in 'Hamlet' and 'Romeo et Juliette', spoils both 'Lear' and 'Macbeth'. It is impossible not to feel how ridiculous the plays are; but after all, they were written for an age when 'sensibility' and melodrama were not held to be ridiculous, and shocked no one. The two plays at least offered something new, and particularly in the scenes where Ducis has ventured to keep close to his great model, and present him as he is, there is a certain dramatic effect that explains the popularity of the dramas at the time they were written. They were sufficiently like the old classical plays to seem elegant and artistic; and contained enough of the newer revolutionary ideas to make them interesting. They were written for the public of a transition age, and the hybrid character that is their weakness to-day was their strength then.
Ducis has not entirely altered the plot as in the case of 'Hamlet' and more especially 'Romeo et Juliette'; he has followed fairly closely the general outline, but has had to alter the details considerably, and the changes that he makes are significant. In 'Lear' and 'Macbeth' the most interesting aspect of a comparison with Shakespeare's plays is the two-fold influence that determined Ducis in his adaptation: on the one hand, the old classical tradition, and on the other the new revolutionary ideas. The temper of the latter years of the 18th century has already been discussed: its sensibility, its passion for liberty and justice and humanity, its admiration of rustic life, its taste for the sinister and horrible - the ideas that were to produce in one sphere the French Revolution, and in another the Romantic Revival. Ducis was wholehearted in his devotion to the new ideas, but such was the tyranny of the old aristocratic ideal of Louis XIV.'s day, that without realising it, he allowed his genius to be stifled by it.

Already in 'Romeo et Juliette', Ducis had begun to be swayed by the new as well as by the old ideals: but in 'Lear' and 'Macbeth' the two influences, conservative and revolutionary, can be traced separately, and we see not only Shakespeare rewritten for a French audience, but adorned to suit the taste of an aristocratic audience in the last years of the French monarchy.

'Romeo et Juliette' was practically a new play written round a few ideas drawn from Shakespeare: in 'Lear' on the contrary, Ducis has reproduced or paralleled all the main incidents in Shakespeare's play except those that depended on the roles of the Fool, Gloucester and Edmund (characters who disappear or are entirely changed) and the conclusion itself: and in the incidents he adds, most are suggested
by something in Shakespeare. He has rearranged and altered, but he has rejected very little, and invented very little, as a study of the following analysis of the plots will show

Shakespeare,

Lear gives his crown to his elder daughters and banishes his youngest.

Kent, for interfering on Cordelia's behalf is banished.

Marriage of Cordelia to the King of France

Edmund, younger and illegitimate son of Gloucester, plots against his brother.

Goneril treats her father with cruelty and encourages the servants to slight him.

Kent comes in disguise to offer his services to Lear.

The scenes between Lear and his Fool

Cornwall and Regan's visit to Gloucester's castle

Edgar's feigned madness

Lear turns to Regan, hoping for love, and finds ingratitude

Goneril's appearance on the scene

Regan turns Lear out

The night on the heath - Lear's madness

Kent cares for Lear, and takes him to the hovel

Gloucester takes him to a farmhouse

In revenge, Cornwall blinds Gloucester and is killed by his own servant in so doing

Gloucester wanders sightless, guided by his own son in disguise

Ducis.

Parallelled.

Reproduced.

Parallelled.

Disappears

Reproduced

Parallelled

Disappears

Reproduced

Parallelled

Disappears

Reproduced (later in the play)

Reproduced

Parallelled (Kent and Gloucester, rôles united)

Disappears

Disappears
The French army invades England

The death of Oswald, and the rivalry of Goneril and Regan for Edmund.

Lear's sleep in Cordelia's care

Cordelia's army is defeated and Lear and Cordelia captured.

Goneril poisons Regan

Edgar kills Edmund

Goneril slays herself for Edmund's sake

Cordelia is strangled in prison, and Lear dies of grief.

The incidents that Ducis has added are mostly suggested by something in Shakespeare's play.

Ducis

The conspiracy of Kent's sons on Cordelia's behalf. Replaces the French invasion

Lear sees Goneril in both Regan and Helmonde (Cordelia)

Norcelète's presence in the cave to which Kent takes Lear.

Lear does not know Helmonde

Lear and Helmonde are not captured in battle.

Helmonde in confronted by Regan

A false report of Helmonde's death.

Cornwall's men desert to Edgard

Edgard saves Cornwall's life

Albany saves Helmonde just in time and she marries Edgard.

Paralleled

Disappears

Reproduced

Reproduced

Disappears

Disappears

Disappears

Disappears

Disappears

Suggested by the scene in the farmhouse on the heath.

Suggested by Edgar's presence in the novel.

Lear does know Cordelia at once.

Lear and Cordelia are.

Cordelia never meets her sisters again.

To replace Shakespeare's dramatic last scene.

Suggested by the interference of Cornwall's servants.

Ducis's love of generous acts.
The main changes in the plot, therefore, are due to the fact that Ducis fuses into one the roles of Kent and Gloucester, and does not keep the curious second plot of Edmund's ingratitude and treachery to his father and brother: that he leaves out the idea of Cordelia's French marriage and the French invasion, replacing it by her exile to a humble situation, and a rising of her compatriots; that he changes the ending to a happy one, where Lear and Cordelia live.

The list of characters is a longer one than usual, and more nearly corresponds to Shakespeare's. The latter has

Lear - King of Britain
King of France
Duke of Burgundy
Duke of Cornwall
Duke of Albany
Earl of Kent
Earl of Gloucester
Edgar, son to Gloucester
Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester
Curan, a courtier
Oswald, steward to Goneril
Old Man
Doctor
Fool
Captain employed by Edmund
Gentleman attendant on Cordelia
A Herald
Servants to Cornwall
Goneril
Regan } daughters to Lear
Cordelia

Knights of Lear's train, Captains, Messengers, Soldiers and Attendants.

Ducis has:

Léar, ancien roi d'Angleterre
Régane, seconde fille de Léar mariée à Cornouailles
Helmonde, troisième fille de Léar, non mariée.
Le duc d'Albanie, époux de Volnerille, fille aînée de Léar.
Le duc de Cornouailles, époux de Régane, seconde fille de Léar.
Le Comte de Kent, seigneur anglais
Edgard, fils du comte de Kent
Lénox, autre fils de Comte de Kent
Norclète, pauvre vieillard
Thus the two foreign suitors of Cordelia disappear as unnecessary, also the Doctor, Captain, Gentleman and Herald; the Fool disappears because he is inconceivable on a French tragic stage; Volnérille does not actually appear, because there is no need for her and no time for her; the parts of Kent and Gloucester are united in that of Kent. The other characters are the same as in Shakespeare.

One of the most striking things in Shakespeare's play is the curious parallel plot of Gloucester and his sons, as though the ingratitude suffered by one father was not enough. Ducis was evidently struck by the dramatic effect of the juxtaposition of the two unhappy fathers deceived by their children, and though he could not keep the second plot, he could not let it go altogether. A conspiracy of Gloucester's son, independant of Lear's affairs would have broken the unity of action; but Ducis rather cleverly substitutes for it a righteous conspiracy in favour of Helmonde, in which both sons join, and makes this serve instead of a foreign invasion. The sons refuse to tell their father of their enterprise, lest he should share its danger and he reproaches them with unworthiness and ingratitude; but as he finds out for himself immediately after what their secret was, the only possible reason of the scene is to reproduce something of Shakespeare's duplicate plot.

The play is thus rearranged by Ducis:

Acte I. Oswald, returned from a visit to Volnérille's court tells
Cornouailles how Lear, ill-treated by his daughter, is regretting his
lost crown and his banished third daughter. Cornouailles, disbelieving
the rumour of Helmonde's death and fearing a rising, has been
mustering his forces. He distrusts Lear's rash and fiery nature,
remembering the fierce wrath that succeeded his adoration for his
youngest daughter, and the exile which was the reward of Kent's forty
years of service, because he dared to defend Helmonde. Cornouailles,
however, has recalled Kent.

Lenox informs Edgard that their father has sent them orders to
join him in the retreat to which he has withdrawn. Edgard, in distress
explains that he cannot go; and then confides to Lenox his great
secret. Helmonde had been betrothed to Ulric of Denmark; Volnerille,
out of jealousy, had persuaded Lear that the marriage would mean a
Danish conquest of England, and it was broken off. She further
persuaded Lear that Helmonde had been plotting with Ulric against him
and by this false report turned all the people against Helmonde. Lear
in fury banished her; and then married his two elder daughters and
gave up his crown to them. Edgard had confided the unhappy Helmonde
to the care of an old man Norclette living in the woods, and to prevent
discovery had circulated the report of her death. He is now mustering
an army to attack Cornouailles, avenge Lear, and give Helmonde her
rightful place. Lenox pledges himself enthusiastically to the
enterprise.

Kent arrives, and finding it impossible to draw from his sons
their secret, taxes them with ingratitude, yet hopes in spite of
himself that their enterprise is a worthy one. Albanie informs him
that Lear has fled from the ill-treatment of Volnerille.

ACT II. Lear, his reason already troubled, comes alone in search of
Kent. There follows a long scene between themimitating various
speeches of Lear in Shakespeare. Régane, Cornouailles and Albanie
arrive, and Lear turns to his second daughter for consolation and affection. She appears to welcome him. Kent breaks in saying

"Volwick m'a tout appris. Non, tu n'as plus de fille
Ce palais est pour toi tout plein de Volnerille."

(Regnant Cornouailles)

Regane est digne en tout de ce monstre odieux
Je cherchais la vertu: le crime est en ces lieux."

Without making any attempt to prove or investigate the statement, Lear turns on Regane and abuses her. Volwick warns Kent and Lear to flee as their only hope of safety, and they go despite a coming storm.

Edgardo presents Helmonde to the conspirators, and they all swear loyalty, taking the thunder and lightning as an omen of heaven's favour.

Lear and Kent appear, wandering in the storm (a close imitation of Shakespeare's scene on the heath); Kent persuades Lear to shelter in the cave, where they find Norclete, and Lear, as with "poor Tom" cries

"Aurais-tu donc aussi donné tout à tes filles?"

Edgardo and Helmonde appear from the inside of the cave, and there follows a long scene between Helmonde and her father, where he takes her for Volnerille and abuses her, and when she insists that she is his lost Helmonde, he wants to kill himself to expiate his injustice to her. Finally he falls unconscious, and is borne off to the interior of the cave.

Edgardo goes off to join his army, and Norclete to reconnoitre. Helmonde and Kent bring Lear out to the entrance of the cave that the daylight may wake him. When he wakes, it is long before he realises who he is, and still longer before he recognises Helmonde; but he finally does so, and recovers his senses more or less completely.

Norclete brings word that Oswald and Cornouaille's men are searching for Lear and Helmonde. They hide Lear in a hollow tree,
and await the soldiers. The latter fail to find Lear, but Helmonde insists on questioning them as to what would be his fate if they did find him. At their reply 'La mort!' she faints, thereby, naturally, rendering herself suspect. She is arrested, and Lear comes from his place of concealment, and gives himself up.

V. Helmonde is brought before Cornouailles and Regane, and pleads for her father. She refuses to tell anything of the conspirators, and defies their threats of death. The duke of Albanie tries in vain to obtain her release, and Lear’s.

Strumor comes with the news that Edgard is carrying all before him, and Cornouailles hurries off to attack him. The wicked Oswald leads Helmonde away alone. Almost immediately, Cornouailles returns blood-stained and victorious, leading Edgard prisoner. Cornouailles announces that by his orders Oswald has put Helmonde to death.

Lear cries

"Tigre, tu m’as rendu ma raison tout entière."

Edgard appeals to Cornouailles’s soldiers, and first one, then a few, then almost all go over to Edgard’s side. They turn on Cornouailles, and only Edgard’s intervention saves him. Edgard now commands, and orders Cornouailles, Volnerille and Regane to be imprisoned.

Albanie leads in Helmonde, whom he has been just in time to save from Oswald. Lear, who has had a slight relapse since his last recovery, again returns to complete mastery of himself and unites the hands of Edgard and Helmonde, and concludes:

"Dieux! laissez-moi goûter leur tendresse fidele:
Si ma raison s’éteint, daignez la rallumer;
Ou laissez-moi du moins un coeur pour les aimer!"
Shakespeare's play extends over a considerable period of time; represents many different places; and has two plots which are cleverly interwoven, but which are nevertheless two different plots - Lear and his daughters, Gloucester and his sons. Thus all three unities are broken, and Ducis had to rearrange the plot considerably to make it fit the unities - the first requirement of the Classical Tradition.

Ducis has kept the unity of Action and the unity of Time; he has not strictly adhered to the unity of Place, but he has reduced the scenes to two: Cornouaille's palace in the first two Acts, and a cave in the forest for the last three.

It is in order to observe the Unity of Action that the story of Gloucester and his son's wickedness has disappeared. Since he could not keep the whole of the story, Ducis has very wisely suppressed the rôle of Gloucester altogether, and such characteristics as he wished to keep, he has passed on to Kent. He no doubt felt that the young English noble Edgar would make a better hero for Helmonde than a foreign prince; and being the son of one of Lear's own friends he would be more closely linked with the plot. Kent therefore inherits Edgard and Edmund who has become Lénox, and virtuous.

As remarked before, their rising on behalf of Helmonde and Lear replaces the foreign invasion. This gives greater compactness to the plot; makes it possible to keep Edgard by giving him a share in the main plot; and as will be shown later, it was in accordance with the new romantic ideas. Moreover, it avoids any reference to France and a French invasion, which would have seemed too modern and out of place.

The story of the blinding of Gloucester, and Cornwall's death at the hands of his servant has not been kept: the actual scene of the blinding would be too horrible to be tolerated on a French stage.
and it would be irrelevant, since it would distract the attention of
the audience from the main issue, the fate of Lear, Helmonde and Edgard.
The incident of Cornwall's own servants rising in revolt at their
master's brutality has, however, been used in a slightly altered form
for the dénouement.

As a result of the suppression of Edmund's treachery, various
scenes have disappeared such as those between Edgar and his blinded
father, the death of Oswald, the meeting of mad Lear and blind Gloucester
(though this has been imitated in the meeting of Lear and Kent.)
Notably, the disappearance of Edmund changes the dénouement. The rivalry
of Goneril and Regan for Edmund's love, the poisoning of Regan and
death of Goneril have become impossible. Ducis wisely avoids heaping up
horrors by trying to keep the death of either of them, and they are
left in fetters (though not on the stage) at the end of the play.

The changes made in order to preserve the unity of time are less
important: they are rather rearrangements than alterations. While
Shakespeare actually shows us Lear's distribution of his lands, banishment
of his youngest daughter and ill-treatment at the hands of his eldest
Ducis contents himself with relating these events. To compensate for
the loss of these, the scenes between Lear and his youngest daughter
are lengthened, and those between Edgard, Lenox and the conspirators
are inserted. The night on the heath, which is the middle of Shakespeare's
play is chosen for the single night which Ducis can represent. The
subsequent scenes have been precipitated to make them fit into the
twenty-four hours. The rebellion of Edgard has been already planned,
so that it can follow at once without improbability. This swift
succession of events gives rather an impression of breathless haste,
but it is not so hurried as to be ridiculous. The actual dénouement -
the defeat and capture of Edgard, change of fortune, and rescue of
Helmonde, follows with rather more unlikely promptness; but on the
whole, the restriction of the play to the twenty-four hours has wrought far less havoc with its "vraisemblance" than in "Macbeth". It is less natural to have so much happening in one night than in many weeks as in Shakespeare, but beyond this feeling of artificiality, the play has not suffered.

The other main principle of the Classical Tradition - the maintenance of the 'nobility' of characters and action - has been responsible for the banishment of the Fool; a loss that English readers would bitterly deplore, but that all French ones would welcome as a refinement. It has also occasioned the suppression of Kent's disguise. He was necessary as a confidant for Lear: but Lear could only converse freely with a noble, and a stranger offering his services to the fallen King would be no fit confidant for him. In this respect, Ducis has maintained Gloucester's part rather than Kent's. Moreover the disguise would have been an unnecessary complication, and Ducis has wisely avoided it.

These simplifications of the plot, then, have been made in order to restrict the play within the limits of a French classical drama. The other changes have been made rather to preserve the moral atmosphere of classical drama, than to obey any rules of technique; they are the story of Lear's resignation of the crown, the fate of Helmonte and the ending.

Ducis must have been struck by the sheer undefendable folly of Lear in making his test of his daughters' affection mere words, and in casting off his beloved Cordelia for so little. Possibly he did not realise that this was the first indication of Lear's madness, and that his action was dictated rather by mental instability than generosity. In any case such a piece of folly evidently did not seem to Ducis fit to be the cause of a tragic action. It did not become
the high seriousness of tragedy, and Ducis has invented a much graver charge for Helmonde than mere reserve and dislike of hypocrisy - a false accusation of treason by her jealous sister. This banishment of Helmonde comes first, and then Lear in pure generosity, divides his kingdom between his two remaining daughters. Helmonde in the mean time was not married, but must be reserved for Edgard: Ducis's choice of her place of exile was not dictated by the classical tradition, but by quite different ideas to be discussed later.

The death of Cordelia has always shocked and horrified. It seems too great an injustice that in the moment of her enemies' downfall, she, the innocent and pure, should perish too. For long, Shakespeare's play was performed with a happy ending, and Ducis has chosen this rather than the black tragedy of Shakespeare's version. It would have harrowed too much the feelings of his easily-moving audience, as the end of Othello was to do some years later - "toute l'assemblée se leva et ne poussa qu'un cri. Plusieurs femmes s'évanouirent"; and it would have shocked their moral sense - Aristotle says that a virtuous man must not be brought to ruin, or it revolts us.

The characters too have been simplified, and so much simplified that they have lost all life. Lear is a pale copy of Shakespeare's Lear; but he has no longer any real individuality. Many of his speeches are closely copied from Shakespeare, and his role is very similar to that of Shakespeare's King; but one has the impression that Ducis is rather laboriously trying to string together speeches suitable for a mad king, and that he talks like that because those are the speeches Ducis has written for him. One never feels that he was a living character in Ducis's mind, with a personality of his own in which the author's is lost; and consequently he is not a living personality for
us either, despite his pathos.

Valnerille does not appear at all; and Regane very little. The latter scarcely speaks, and when one has said that she is heartless and cruel, it is all that one can possibly say about her.

Helmonde on the other hand is pure filial devotion, and there is little else one can say of her. She seems much less alive than Juliette, and while our pities her misfortunes and admires her unselfish devotion to the father who has so wronged her, she remains a mere abstract type.

Edgard is another abstract type: the virtuous young man, courageous and devoted. He is agreeable, but not interesting. Lenox is a mere shadow of his brother.

Kent is Lear’s confidant, guide and protector in his misfortunes. He has lost all the blunt downrightness of Shakespeare’s Kent, and is a polished courtier generally addressed as “Cher comte”. He is fidelity personified, and is very ‘sympathique’ if somewhat abstract.

Cornouailles and Oswald are the villains, and rather resemble Claudius and Polonius, being black but not complicated.

Albanie like Shakespeare’s Albany is upright and generous.

The remaining characters scarcely appear, and are without individuality. It seems extraordinary to dismiss in so few words the characters of a tragedy, but there is nothing else to say about them. They are all stereotyped and artificial, except Lear himself; but even he is not very convincing.

Influence of New Ideas

The new spirit that was stirring in the latter half of the 18th century was nearer in many ways to Shakespeare than that of the previous century: and under its influence, Ducis kept much in Shakespeare’s plays that an earlier writer would have
refused as barbarous - such things as the burying-ground in 'Roméo and Juliet', the Witches in 'Macbeth', the madness of Léar and the storm on the heath. It was this presentation of a mad king that had most struck Ducis in 'King Lear', and after some hesitation he decides to keep it. He says himself: "J'ai tremblé plus d'une fois, je l'avoue, quand j'ai eu l'idée de faire paraître sur la scène française un roi dont la raison est aliénée. Je n'ignorais pas que la sévérité de nos règles et la délicatesse de nos spectateurs nous chargent de chaînes que l'audace anglaise brise et dédaigne."

('Avertissement de Léar'.)

Stapfer remarks how mental specialists have admired the truth of Shakespeare's study of madness in Lear: first 'orgueil, mauvais jugement, pressentiment de folie' - his conduct to his daughters in the first act can only be explained as incipient madness - Regan says "'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself" - Goneril: "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash." (Act I.1) Then comes the shock of his daughters' ingratitude - "L'ingratitude de ses filles devient naturellement l'idée fixe du pauvre malade; désormais tous les objets extérieurs qui affectent ses sens ramènent par une association fatale sa pensée à cette préoccupation unique. Les idées fixes conduisent aux hallucinations, et il croit voir ses filles dans des escabeaux. Le même médecin fait remarquer que Shakespeare ne permet à Léar que le degré d'amélioration possible pour lui, et il s'abandonne à son amour paternel pour Cordelia avec autant d'exaltation que sa haine. "Tout autre poète l'aurait fait guérir."

While Ducis has followed Shakespeare closely in some ways in his presentation of Lear (it is principally Lear's speeches which he has imitated or translated) he has considerably altered the nature of his madness. In Shakespeare it is violent, and Lear raves incoherently:
Ducis must have felt that this was impossible on a French stage - if he were daring enough to present a mad king, it must be one who was mad in an orderly and dignified manner. Moreover he has only twenty-four hours, and not many weeks as Shakespeare has, and Lear must not be quite mad either at the beginning or the end of the play. To meet these altered requirements, Ducis has made of Léar's madness rather a loss of memory than anything else. Often he is vehement in his anger or remorse, but for the most part, he is just a very old man whose memory and understanding are slipping from him, and leaving him vacant and helpless. Again and again recur the words "avec un égarement doux et paisible". Shakespeare's Lear was seldom either 'doux' or 'paisible'.

Since Lear's madness was the chief interest of his part, his speeches while he is on the stage must always be in keeping with it. Senseless raving was impossible, and Ducis must have found it rather difficult to know how to occupy Lear. Struck apparently by the scene in the farmhouse where Lear arraigns his daughters, and thinks he sees Goneril in a joint-stool, Ducis has repeated this idea several times. Lear takes Regane for Volnerille; then Helmonde for Volnerille and he drags her before the gods, who, he says, are assembled to try her; he does not recognise Helmonde at all, and she spends most of two scenes in trying to tell him who she is; when he meets Regane again he has forgotten all she has done, and is gently affectionate to her. When he wakes from his sleep in Helmonde's care, he does not know who he is, and has forgotten all about his daughters.

As with Shakespeare's Lear, his mind has apparently always been unbalanced and inclined to extremes: like Shakespeare's Lear, he has a presentiment that his mind will give way: "Le malheur tôt ou tard éteindra ma raison." (Acte II.-4.) It has been remarked how it would have been a psychological error for Shakespeare's Lear to have quite
regained his reason: Ducis's Léar does, but it seems quite compatible with the form of madness from which he suffers. His mind was not so much 'jangled out of tune' as numbed and paralysed, and a sudden violent shock like the report of Helmonde's death might sting it into life again, and give it back at least temporarily, its touch with reality. Lear regains his old kingly dignity as he rewards his faithful defenders, but he evidently feels the insecurity of his reason, for his last words are

"Dieux! laissez-moi goûter leur tendresse fidele!
Si ma raison s'étient, daignez la rallumer;
Ou laissez-moi du moins un coeur pour les aimer."

(Acte V. 12.)

For a competent judgment on such a question, some considerable medical knowledge would be necessary, but it seems that Ducis's changed conception of the mad King is psychologically possible, and certainly much more suited to the French stage. Corneille's audience probably would not have tolerated Léar at all: but Ducis's, with its taste for novelty, and above all for anything moving and pathetic, welcomed such a figure, provided that he never grew violent and revolting, and maintained his interest by an appeal to their sensibility.

But the execution is not equal to the conception: there are scenes where Léar is tragic and dramatic (and they are the scenes where Ducis has kept closest to Shakespeare); but there are others which are trivial and tedious with a straining after pathetic effect which becomes merely sentimental. Notably, the scene after Léar awakes is too long drawn out and exaggerated.

The 'sensibility' to which Léar's madness was intended to appeal was one of the new Romantic tendencies: another was the admiration
begun by the writings of Jean-Jaques Rousseau for country life with its purity and simplicity. Yet another was the liking for sinister and awful scenery - the kind of landscapes that were to figure later in Romantic pictures. Ducis appealed to all these new tastes in the fate he chose for Helmonde after she was cast off by her father. Edgard entrusted her to the care of Norclète, an old man who has lived all his life far from the haunts of men, and who has all the virtue of man unspoiled by civilization. The home he took her to was desolate and terrible enough to give the audience a delightful shiver: the directions for the scenery are as follows:

"Le théâtre représente une forêt herissée de rochers; dans le fond, une caverne, auprès de laquelle est un vieux chêne. Il est nuit. Le temps est disposé à un orage épouvantable." Edgard thus describes her retreat:

"Dans ce bois solitaire,
L'impenetrable horreur d'un rocher tutelaire
Sous un abri sacré la dérobe aux humains:
Mon œil seul en connaît l'entrée et les chemins.
C'est là, cachant son sort, que sa vertu tranquille
D'un vieillard indigent a partagé l'asyle."

(Acte I. - 4.)

Kent praises the simplicity of country life when he offers Lear a home in his retreat,

"Dans les modestes champs laissés par mes ancêtres,
Fuyons l'indigne aspect des ingrats et des traitres:
Leur asyle innocent convient aux coeurs blessés;
Leur sol pour deux vieillards sera fertile assez.
La rien n'est imposteur. La terre, avec usure,
Par des trésors certains nous paiera sa culture.
Ce bras, nerveux encore, est propre à l'entrouvrir;"
Il combattit pour nous il saura vous nourrir.
Le toit de mes aïeux, leur antique héritage,
Si vous y consentez, voilà notre partage"  
(Acte II.- 4.)

In Shakespeare's plays there is usually one special scene which by its dramatic power moves Ducis to imitate it closely, even though he may be risking a dangerous innovation. In 'Léar' it is the night of the storm on the heath.

Such a scene would have been inconceivable in a true classical tragedy: in the first place, it necessitated a change of scene, and a setting that was quite unclassical; in the second place, it laid stress on nature and the weather, things that were not generally considered worthy of a place in tragedy, the scene meant a display of violence that was quite out of keeping with the classical dignity and restraint, and the use of artificial stage accessories that contributed to spectacular effect merely (the wind, rain, thunder etc.) and were therefore to be condemned as inferior; and finally, it is not really necessary for the advancement of the plot, and has therefore no business to be there. It is significant of the change of taste in France that Ducis could introduce such a scene and find it meet with success.

Ducis uses the forest and cave that are the home of Norcète, instead of Shakespeare's heath, but otherwise the scene is closely imitated, and is dramatic and effective.

In 1783, the wind of revolution was already abroad, and men were talking eagerly of deliverance from tyrants, and the rights of all. It was the day of enthusiasm, and France was quivering with the excitement of the American War of Independence. Young Edgard and his romantic band of adventurers hidden in the depths of the forest, and
awaiting their opportunity to attack the far superior forces of Cornouailles - they replace the much more prosaic French army in Shakespeare, and are much more in keeping with the 18th century. Edgard's rather florid and declamatory speeches to them must have roused answering enthusiasm in the audience -

"Nous combattrons. Pour qui? Pour Léar, pour Helmonde.
Est-il quelqu'un de nous qui dans un tel danger
Ne croie avoir son père ou sa sœur à venger?
Grands dieux! En ce moment, Léar verse des larmes.
Défendez notre cause en protégeant nos armes!
Nos jeunes coeurs sont purs; nos bras vous sont soumis;
Daignez les employer contre nos ennemis!
C'est vous, c'est un vieillard, la beauté, qu'on opprime.
Le fer est préparé; livrez-nous la victime:
Et, s'il nous faut mourir, que nos pères jaloux
Gravent sur nos tombeaux: 'Ils sont dignes de nous'"

'Acte III. - 1.)

Another romantic scene is the denouement where Cornouailles's army deserts to Edgard's side. The scene is not a necessary one: for when Cornouailles hurries out to oppose the victorious Edgard it would have been easier to let Edgard continue to be victorious, and come back in triumph, having just saved Helmonde from Oswald. But evidently Ducis in this instance was thinking more of the 'scènes à faire' than the classical structure of his play, and he could not sacrifice Shakespeare's dramatic incident of Cornwall's death.

In Ducis, the scene is less natural, for it is not a few servants who rise in revolt at their master's brutality, but a whole bodyguard that deserts, while their chief, instead of boldly attacking Edgard as he stands, and rallying the men who are left to him - as any self-respecting
Man would have done - merely cries "Tremblez, traitres. - - - Hé bien! - - - Où suis-je?" and allows events to follow their course.

However, the audience was probably less affected by these incongruities than by the unexpectedness of the sudden turn of fortune, and the moving spectacle of the virtuous young man, who by the mere appeal of his virtue drew to his side the forces of wickedness. As always happens, the play, in Ducis's hands, becomes a definite moral lesson with an atmosphere of idealised virtue. Once again Ducis has stressed the beauty of good, and its triumph, not only moral but actual, over evil. The emphasis falls not on the wickedness of Volnérille and Régane, but on the virtue of Helmonde and Edgard.

The subject of filial devotion was one which always tempted Ducis. His own adoration for his parents coloured all his life and thought, and it was with particular delight that he dwelt on this theme. He had already treated it in 'Hamlet' - thereby considerably altering the intention of Shakespeare - and in 'Léar' he takes it up again.

Alongside the filial affection of Helmonde are the loyalty and devotion of Kent and Edgard. As in Shakespeare the triumph of devotion lies in the fact that the two most faithful friends of Léar are the two he has most wronged - Kent and his youngest daughter. But while in Shakespeare Cordelia appears very little, in Ducis she occupies the stage most of the time.

The other characteristic which most strikes one in the play is its sensibility. This was so natural to Ducis as well as to the age in which he wrote, that there are at least some traces of it in all his plays; but in 'Hamlet' and 'Romeo et Juliette' it is lost in the swifter movement of the dramatic action. In 'Léar' it was the pathos of the old mad king, spurned and slighted by his own daughters, that had
fascinated Ducis, and he makes of it a play whose first virtue, he says himself, is its sensibility. To this he sacrifices even the conduct of the plot in some measure since some of the scenes do not advance the action, and are merely there to move us to tears (e.g. the long scene after Lear awakes). The result is that this play loses what was the virtue of the other two, a well-constructed, swiftly-moving dramatic action. In Lear, the action seems rather to drag, and its interest is no longer dramatic but sentimental. To those who enjoy such sentiment, as the audiences to whom it was first performed, the play will be a success: but to a modern English reader, the straining after emotional effect and the continual tears are irritating and ridiculous.

Ducis sets the keynote for the play in his dedication to his Mother, and in the avertissement: "Ma tendre et respectable Mère, Oui, c'est à vous que je dois dédier un Ouvrage dont tout le mérite peut-être est dans une sensibilité héritaitaire que j'ai puisée dans votre sein. N'est-ce pas vous qui avez pleuré la première sur le sort de Léar? Pourrais-je jamais oublier ces heures délicieuses où dans le calme d'une soirée d'hiver, sous votre toit solitaire et tranquille, vous faisant connaître pour la première fois ce Père abandonné, interrompu moi-même au milieu de ma lecture par notre commune émotion, dans le plaisir et le trouble de la douleur je me vis tout à coup baigné des larmes de mes enfants, de ces deux orphelines, qui ne m'ont jamais causé d'autre chagrin que de retracer trop vivement à mon souvenir les grâces intéressantes et surtout l'âme si pure et si sensible de leur mère!"

"Je sais tout ce que je dois au bonheur du sujet dont j'ai été avertie par mes larmes dans le charme de la composition ....... Il m'est sans doute échappé bien des fautes dans cet ouvrage; mais je me félicite au moins d'avoir fait couler quelques larmes dans une pièce utile aux
... oeufs ou j'ai vu les pères conduire leurs enfants." (Avertissement.)

One feels that with Ducis the emotion was sincere, and not a pose as with so many of his audience, but it is a long way from Shakespeare to this atmosphere of emotionalism where men and women alike revel in the delight of shedding tears.

'Le Roi Lear' obeys most of the classical canons: the unities (with the exception of the change of place); the nobility of characters and language; the teaching of a moral lesson; it reduces Shakespeare's rambling, complex story to a single plot, taking a moment of crisis in the struggle between fidelity and ingratitude. So far it is classical: yet there is more that is romantic in it. The main interest is not the plot, but the portrayal of Lear's misery; there are several scenes which are there not to advance the action, but to move the audience to tears; the atmosphere is one of unrestrained emotion; the scenery is out-of-doors, counts for much in the dramatic effect, and is wild and desolate; a violent thunderstorm is represented on the stage; a mad King appears and speaks like a madman; a band of young conspirators, hidden in the fastnesses of the woods, meet secretly to swear their loyalty, and then go out to fight; the villain's army, in a wave of enthusiasm deserts to the side of virtue; only the wicked perish and the play ends with a wedding. Thus described the play sounds like a romantic melodrama: and that indeed is what it is, only it is written in the poetic diction of classical drama, whose words and phrases by their association, serve to keep the atmosphere of the great classical plays.

There are the usual periphrases and artificialities of style:

Oswald, forbidding Norclète to shelter Lear says:

"Si Lear, par ses pleurs, sous cette horrible voûte,
Vient implorer, la nuit, tremblant, saisi d'effroi,"
La grâce d'y fouler ces roseaux près de toi
Sois sourd à sa prière et demeure inflexible."

(Acte IV. - 9)

Cornouailles calls Oswald

"Ministre intelligent de ma fureur secrète,
Toi qui lis mes terres dans mon âme inquiète
Qui, sur le moindre signe expliquant mon courroux,
Perces d'abord le sein que j'indique à tes coups,
Oswald, mon cher Oswald ........."

(Acte V. - 1.)

Edgard's speech to his fellow conspirators:

"Anglais, leur ai-je dit, un monstre plein de rage
Appesantit sur nous le plus vil esclavage,
Irrite avec plaisir notre juste fureur,
Et la haine privée et la publique horreur:
Tout son règne odieux n'est qu'un tissu de crimes:
Comptez si vous pouvez les noms de ses victimes.
La mort suivra ses pas: Ce tigre qu'on abhorre
De son regard déjà nous marque et nous dévore.
Pâlirons-nous toujours sous des couteaux sanglants!
Depuis quand les Anglais souffrent-ils des tyrans? "

(Acte I. - 4.)

Lear says to Albany, speaking of his unworthy wife:

"Halas en t'unissant à ce tigre inhumain,
J'ai placé dans ton lit un poignard sur ton sein."

(Acte II. - 6.)

(By the way, it is interesting and somewhat amusing to note
how much Corneille's

"Tigre alteré de sang, Décie impitoyable! "

has become part of Ducis's vocabulary. The 'tigre' reappears in four
out of the six plays, sometimes more than once in the play -
"Va tigre impitoyable
Conserve si tu peux ta fureur impitoyable"
( Ophélie - 'Hamlet'.)
"Tigre,entends mes sanglots,insulte à mes soupirs."
(Capulet - 'Roméo et Juliette'.)
"Tigre,tu m'as rendu ma raison tout entière."
(Lear - 'Lear'.)
"Tigre, es-tu satisfait? vois-tu ces corps sanglants?"
(Hubert - 'Jean Sans-Terre'.)

The two scenes most closely imitated from Shakespeare are the scene on the Heath, and the one when Lear awakes in Cordelia's care. The scenes are too long to quote in full from Shakespeare.

**Lear:**

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man:
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!
Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipped of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

Kent. Here is the place, my lord, good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

Lear. Let me alone.
Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt.

The tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home:
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,
O that way madness lies; let me shun that;
No more of that.

Kent.

Lear.

Good my lord, enter here.

Lear.

Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease;
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

Poor naked wretches, where so 'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these? O I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayest shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

(Act III. 2,3.)

Ciel! un père!

Des monstres dévorants sont entrés dans mon sein
Quoi! ma fille! mon sang! ... couronné par ma main!
O ma raison s'envi t à cette horrible idée!
Lear, tu n'es plus rien; ta puissance est cédée,
Tu te repens trop tard.

(Acte II. -4.)

Je ne vois

Que ce ciel menaçant prêt à fondre sur moi.
Redoublez vos efforts, cieux, tonnerre, tempête!
Versez tous vos torrents, tous vos feux sur ma tête!
Je n'en murmure pas, je la livre à vos coups.
Lear n'a point le droit de se plaindre de vous.
Exercez donc sur moi toute votre fureur;
Frapperez ce coeur mourant, cette tête flétrite,
Ce front mal défendu par quelques cheveux blancs
Qu'au gré de leurs combats se disputent les vents:
N'y voyez plus la place où fut mon diadème.
Sans pouvoir de mon sort accuser que moi-même,
Me voici sous vos coups humblement incliné,
Dans ces vastes forêts sans guide abandonnée.

Quand le ciel est en feu, sous vos chastes asyles,
Dormez, coeurs innocents, soyez du moins tranquilles:
Mais vous, surtout, tremblez, au fond de vos palais,
Ingrats, à qui ces dieux ne pardonnent jamais!
Parlez: entendez-vous ces accents redoutables,
Ces messagers de mort, tonnant sur les coupables?
Pour moi, j'ai la douceur, dans cet affreux danger,
Que le crime à mon cœur est du moins étranger,
On m'a fait plus de mal que je n'en ai pu faire.

J'apprends, par ma douleur, à plaindre l'indigence.
Hélas! à leur grandeur les rois trop attachés
Du sort des malheureux sont faiblement touchés.
Peut-être en ce moment, quelque vieillard expire!
Combien d'infantins, soumis à notre empire,
Reclament loin de nous la nature et nos soins!
J'ai peut-être moi-même oublié leurs besoins.
Par pitié pour tous deux, venez, suivez mes pas.

Kent. Tu le veux?

Kent. Avançons.
Vos yeux ont assez vu cette horrible tempête:
Que funeste plaisir pouvez-vous y trouver?

Certes dans mon sein va bientôt s'élever
Seigneur, au nom des dieux, mon souverain, mon maître,
Le ciel de nos malheurs aura pitié peut-être:
Ne me résistez plus, hélas! dans ces forêts
Les monstres sont cachés sous leurs antres secrets:
Vous seul, de tant d'États votre héritage,
N'auriez-vous pas du moin un asyle en partage?
Entrons, seigneur, entrons, sous cet obscure séjour
Je vous tiens lieu de tout, d'amis, d'enfants, de cour;
C'est le sort de mon sang de vous être fidèle:
Faut-il que par des pleurs, je vous prouve mon zèle?
Faut-il que me jetant à vos sacrés genoux .....?

Ahi tu brises mon cœur.  

(Acte III. - 6.)

How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed:
Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence,

[To Edgar] Thou robed man of justice take thy place.
[To the fool] And thou his yoke-fellow of equity,

Bench by his side: [to Kent] you are o' the commission,

Sit you too.

Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath
before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor

king her father.

Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

She cannot deny it.
Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.
And here's another, whose warped looks proclaim
What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?
(Act III - 6.)

Qu'on la charge de fers. Avancez, Volnerille.
Vous, Régane, approchez. Me reconnaissiez-vous?
Qui vous donna le jour, un sceptre, votre époux?
(À Helmonde, croyant voir Volnerille)
Et toi qui contre Helmonde excitas ma vengeance,
Devant moi sans pitié tu trânas l'innocence:
Il est temps ......
Arrêtez!
Plus de pardon.
O cieux!

Je te traîne à ton tour au tribunal des dieux:
Les voilà tous assis pour juger des perfides.
Oubliez, s'il se peut des enfants parricides.
Qui, moi, les oublier! Dieux jugez entre nous!
Les accusés tremblants sont ici devant vous
J'atteste avec serment par ces mains paternelles,
Que toujours dans mon coeur je portai les cruelles.
Vous auriez dû donner à ces monstres affreux
Quelque enfant meurtrier qui m'aurait vengé d'eux.
Eclatez, il est temps; c'est moi qui vous implore:
Ne craignez pas pour eux que le sang parle encore,
Pour lancer votre arrêt, pour diriger vos coups,
Sur vos trônes sacrés je m'assièds avec vous.
(Acte III. - 8.)
Cordelia: How does the King?
Madam, sleeps still.
O you kind gods,
Cure this great breath in his abused nature!
The untuned and jarring senses, o, wind up
Of this child-changed father.

O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!

Kind and dear princess!

Kent: Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face
To be opposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick cross lightning? to watch — poor perdut —
With this thin helm? Me enemy’s dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
’Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all. He wakes. Speak to him.

Doctor: Madam, do you. ’Tis fittest.

Cordelia: How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?
You do me wrong to take me out o’ the grave:
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
Cordelia, sir, do you know me?

You are a spirit I know: when did you die?

Still, still far wide!

He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity, To see another thus. I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands; let's see; I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured Of my condition.

O look upon me, sir,

And hold your hands in benediction o'er me: No, sir, you must not kneel.

Pray do not mock me:

I am a very foolish, fond old man, Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less; And to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind. Methinks I should know you and know this man; Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant What place this is; and all the skill I have Remembers not these garments; nor I know not Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me, For, as I am a man, I think this lady To be my child Cordelia.

And so I am, I am.

Be your tears wet? Yes 'faith. I pray, weep not: If you have poison for me, I will drink it. I know you do not love me; for your sisters Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
You have some cause, they have not. No cause, no cause.

Cordelia

Am I in France?

Lear

In your own kingdom, sir.

Kent

Do not abuse me.

Lear

Wilt please your highness walk?

Cordelia

You must bear with me;

Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

Helmonde

Que pensez-vous, cher comte? Hélas! voilà mon père.

Son trouble est-il calme? Que faut-il que j'espère?

Lisez-vous sur son front quelque présage heureux?

Kent

Je n'y remarque rien qui détruisse vos vœux.

Helmonde (baisant doucement le front de Lear endormi)

Tendre coeur de mon père, oh! puissent de ma bouche
Sortir de doux accents dont le charme te touche!

Qu'ils guérissent la plaie et les coups douloureux
Dont mes soeurs ont percé ce cœur trop généreux!

Kent

O ciel, que de vertus! Âme sensible et pure,
Sous quels indignes traits te peignit l'imposture!

Helmonde

Quand mes soeurs à ton sang n'auraient pas dû le jour
Au cri de la pitié leur sexe était-il sourd?

(En pleurant)

Mon père, étais-tu fait pour incliner la tête
Sous le poids des torrents vomis par la tempête!

Hélas! je les ai vus, ce front, ces cheveux blancs,
Sous le feu des éclairs, insultés par les vents!

Quelle nuit en horreurs fut jamais plus fertile!

Au dernier des humains j'eusse ouvert un asyle:

Et toi, mon père, et toi ... voilà tous les secours
Que le ciel m'a prêtés pour conserver tes jours
Ces bras qui t'on recu,la caverne ou nous sommes,
Le mépris qui te cache a la fureur des hommes,
Ce déplorable lit, ces roseaux, que du moins
La pauvreté sensible offrit à tes besoins.
Ah! si par tes douleurs la raison t'es ravie,
Sans peine à te servir je consacre ma vie.

............... O ciel! Quel spectacle nouveau!
Pourquoi me forcez-vous à sortir du tombeau!

(Charmé par les rayons de l'aurore)
O la douce lumière! ... Ah! d'ou reviens-je? Ou suis-je?
Ce jour, ce lieu, ce corps, tout me semble un prestige;
Tout chancelle et s'échappe à mes yeux incertains;
Je n'ose qu'en tremblant me fier à mes mains.
Dans cet état honteux j'ai pitié de moi-même.
Regardez-moi, seigneur, songez que je vous aime.
Ah! ne m'insultez pas.

Seigneur, que faites-vous?
C'est à moi qu'il convient d'embrasser vos genoux.
Vous voyez, je suis faible.

Helast! Ma fin s'apprête
Les ans se sont en foule entassés sur ma tête.
Daignez me protéger.

Contre qui?
Contre ... En quoi?
Vous ne savez donc pas leurs complots contre moi?
Quels sont vos ennemis?

Attendez ..... ma mémoire ..... 
Je ne m'en souviens plus.
And so the scene continues for sixty lines before Lear recognises Helmonde, and its dramatic effect is spoilt by exaggeration.

It is evident what a difference there is between 'Lear' and the two earlier adaptations of Ducis. French tragedy has gone far from its Classical models, and already the way is prepared for the romantic drama that was to carry off so signal a victory over its classical predecessor.
Plan

1. The three influences: Shakespeare, the Classical Tradition, and the new Romantic ideas.
2. The Changes of Plot: the three influences at work.
3. The Characters and the three influences.
4. The Moral Tone and the three influences.
5. The Style and the three influences.
6. Conclusion: "Macbeth" more a romantic melodrama than a classical tragedy.
"Macbeth".

'Macbeth', performed in 1784, is one of the most interesting of Ducis's plays to analyse. Like 'Lear' it is a romantic melodrama, very far from the restrained dignity of a true classical play. Ducis was evidently fascinated by the sombre horror of 'Macbeth' - the witches, the night of the murder, the ghost, the sleep-walking scene - all these filled his soul with tragic pity and terror, and he longed to reproduce them. Had he been content to do so, the play might have been one of his best, for some of the scenes are not unworthy of his inspiration; but he felt obliged on the one hand to simplify and refine, to make the barbaric splendour of Macbeth fit the limits prescribed for French tragedy; and on the other he could not resist the temptation to enhance in his own way the pity and terror of his subject.

The result is an extraordinary mixture, neither classical nor Shakespeare. The real poetic talent of Ducis, that might have been well-fitted to deal with such a subject as 'Macbeth', has been stifled by his timidity and respect for a tradition, and only here and there does it free itself for a moment; and to compensate for what he dare not keep, Ducis has added horrors that overshoot the mark as far on the other side, and become ridiculous. One cannot but smile at his own rather naive explanation of what he has done, and his claim for admiration:

"Je me suis appliqué d'abord à faire disparaître l'impression toujours révoltante de l'horreur, qui certainement eût fait tomber mon ouvrage; et j'ai tâché ensuite d'amener l'âme de mon spectateur jusqu'aux derniers degrés de la terreur tragique, en y mêlant avec art ce qui ouvrait la faire supporter. Il m'a paru que mes précautions n'avaient pas été infructueuses, et que la critique même la moins indulgente, en attaquant mon sujet, ne me contestait pas du moins le mérite de la difficulté vaincue."
It is possible to pick out all the strands - Ducis's admiration for Shakespeare, his respect for the Classical Tradition, his enthusiasm for the new ideas; and it is possible to see very clearly why Ducis has treated the play just as he has done. His admiration for Shakespeare is seen in the efforts he has made to keep the scenes he admired, even though they did not fit well into the play as he has rearranged it: notably there are the witches, Duncan's arrival at the castle the night of the murder, the banquet scene and the sleep-walking scene. It was the Classical Tradition which made it necessary to change Shakespeare's story, and alterations of plot and structure were all made to satisfy its exigencies; but it was mainly the new spirit of 1780 that influenced Ducis in what he added, and the method he chose of reconstructing the story. He was obliged to sacrifice much that he admired in Shakespeare in obedience to classical authority, but he did his best to preserve the atmosphere of sinister horror, that so appealed to the tastes of his day.

The principal changes Ducis made in the plot are in the part played by the witches, the story of Malcolm, Banquo's rôle, and above all, the dénouement. Shakespeare in "Macbeth" shows the degradation of a weak, though not originally vicious, character, through crime: Macbeth makes a feeble struggle before committing the first murder, but once a step has been taken on the fatal slope of evil, he slips unresisting into the abyss, urged by his very weakness and fear to fresh horrors, until he dies unrepentant and unregretted. The foundation of the plot remains the same in Ducis: Duncan, the aged King, is murdered by his general Macbeth, who is urged on to the deed from which he shrinks by the taunts of his wife; Malcolm, son of the murdered King, returns and claims his father's throne. But in Ducis Macbeth, instead of perishing miserably, after a life in which the murder of Duncan was only the first of a series of crimes,
regrets his murder from the moment of its committal, and gladly seizes the opportunity of resigning the ill-gotten crown to Malcome, and expiating his own wickedness by voluntarily seeking death; his wife Frédegonde rushes dishevelled on to the stage to announce that in her sleep she has killed her own son in mistake for Malcome, and is bidden by the nobles to expiate her crime by living on. In a variant ending, Macbeth is slain by the murderers whom his wife has posted to watch for Malcome, and before he expires, surrenders the crown to the rightful heir whose life he has saved; while Frédegonde, after killing her own child in her sleep, kills herself beside his cradle. Thus Macbeth recovers his lost virtue, expiates his crime and dies honourably; while Frédegonde becomes the true "villain of the piece", bears the responsibility of all the evil, and perishes miserably. Our sympathies are with Macbeth all through, and at the close he justifies them; while Frédegonde inspires only horror, and acts as a foil to her generous husband. (It is noticeable how similar this is to Ducis's treatment of Gertrude and Claudius in Hamlet.)

The story of Malcolm is quite different in Ducis's play. Shakespeare makes him flee to England at the time of the murder, and return later with an English army to avenge his father and claim his rights. In Ducis's story, the rebel Cador had killed the older son Donalbain, years before, while Malcome had disappeared, and all mourned him as dead; in reality he had been brought up by an old mountain peasant Sévar as his own son, and none but he and Duncan know the secret. Sévar, apparently on hearing the news of Duncan's murder - it must have travelled swiftly, for he arrives the same night - comes to the newly crowned Macbeth with the momentous news that Malcome is alive and there to claim his father's throne. Lady Macbeth would promptly kill both Sévar and Malcome, but Macbeth prevents it, and resigns the crown.
Banquo's rôle is entirely changed. He is represented by Glamis, who is no longer Macbeth's friend, but Duncan's confidant, and heir to the throne after the death of Herfort and Menteth (before Macbeth, therefore). He has a part of very little importance: he is Duncan's listener during the exposition in the first act, accompanies him to Macbeth's castle, and apparently perishes with him there, though there is no more direct reference made to his death than in Fredegonde's allusion to "nos victimes", or Sevar's to "des Glamis, des Duncan les gemissantes ombres." At one time he appears to be assuming a part of greater importance: in Act III, Sc. 4, Macbeth tells Fredegonde that Glamis is now heir to Duncan, and she sees at once that to bring any advantage to Macbeth, the blame of the murder must be cast on Glamis, and so remove Glamis and clear Macbeth at one and the same time; to persuade her husband, she relates a highly-coloured tale of a midnight attack on the castle, supposed to be instigated by the jealous Glamis, but it seems impossible that such a mild and upright old man, so high in Duncan's favour, could be suspected of such petty plotting, and Macbeth evidently doubts it. It seems, therefore, as if Ducis had thought of making Glamis bear the blame of the murder, but instead, he makes the friends of the rebels Cador and Magdonel attack the palace, and in the general confusion Macbeth easily kills his guests, and diverts suspicion to the rebels. With Banquo's rôle, the banquet scene disappears, but Ducis replaces it by one where Duncan's ghost appears to Macbeth before the nobles who have come to offer him the crown.

In Shakespeare's "Macbeth", the witches provide the keynote of the play, and are of considerable importance in the plot. Ducis could not make up his mind to sacrifice them altogether, but he dare not give them a rôle of such importance, and he attempts a compromise. Hecate becomes Yphyctone, and the witches become the Furies. Duncan tells Glamis in the first act that they have been seen recently—an omen of evil: and he
adds a variant in which they are heard, and half-seen as they glide away, but their "raison d'être" is simply to increase tragic terror, and they are in no way necessary for the plot. Ducis says "On peut finir cet acte en y ajoutant la scène suivante, qui servirait peut-être à augmenter la terreur du sujet." The conversation of Duncan and Glamis is interrupted by a long-drawn groan (this is unfortunate and somewhat ludicrous) and Glamis cries -

"Si c'étaient ces trois sœurs . . . .

(Les trois furies ou magiciennes sont cachées derrière les rochers. La première tient un sceptre, la seconde un poignard, et la troisième un serpent.)

(La Magicienne qui tient un poignard:)

"Le charme a réussi:

Le sang coule, on combat. Resterons - nous ici?"

(La Magicienne qui tient un sceptre.)

"Non, je cours de ce pas éblouir ma victime."

(La Magicienne qui tient un poignard.)

"Et moi, frapper la mienne."

(La Magicienne qui tient un serpant.)

"Et moi, venger ton crime."

La Première.

Du sang!

La Seconde.

Du sang!

La Troisième.

Du sang: "

(Elles sortent toutes ensemble du milieu des rochers, et ne se laissent apercevoir qu'un moment, ou même elles peuvent s'échapper sans être vues du spectateur.)

"Quel présage odieux!"
The scene is in itself good, but the commonplace remark of Sevar that ends it makes rather an anticlimax, and the whole scene is out of place after the conventional conversations of which the act is composed. Macbeth sees Yphyctone as he returns to his castle, and Frédégonde, to persuade him to the murder, relates a conversation she has had with the dread visitor, in which the latter declares—"La couronne t'attend!" (Act III Sc 2.) Incidentally, one is tempted to doubt the veracity of Frédégonde and the reality of the reported interview, as she says, when Macbeth leaves her, "Enfin je l'ai seduit!" (Act III Sc 3.) Finally, Macbeth has a dream which inevitably recalls Athalie's and Pauline's:

"Je croyais traverser dans sa profonde horreur,
D'un bois silencieux l'obscurité perfide.
La vent grondait au loin dans son feuillage aride.
C'était l'heure fatale où le jour qui s'enfuit
Appelle avec effroi les erreurs de la nuit,
L'heure où, souvent trompés, nos esprits s'épouvantent.
Pres d'un chêne enflammé devant moi se présentent
Trois femmes. Quel aspect! Non, l'œil humain jamais
Ne vit d'air plus affreux, de plus difformes traits.
Leur front sauvage, et dur, flétri par la vieillesse,
Exprimait par degrés leur féroce alegresse.
Dans les flancs entr'ouverts d'un enfant égorgé,
Pour consulter le sort leur bras s'était plongé.
Ces trois spectres sanglants, courbes sur leur victime,
Y cherchaient et l'indice et l'espoir d'un grand crime,
Et ce grand crime enfin se montrait à leurs yeux,
Par un chant sacrilège, ils rendaient grace aux dieux.
Étonné, je m'avance : 'Existez-vous?' leur dis-je
'Ou bien ne m'offrez-vous qu'un effrayant prestige?
Par des mots inconnus ces êtres monstrueux
S'appelaient tour à tour, s'applaudissant entre eux.
S'approchaient, ne montraient avec un ris farouche;
Leur doigt mystérieux se posait sur leur bouche
Je leur parie et dans l'ombre ils s'échappent soudain,
L'un avec un poignard, l'autre un sceptre à la main,
L'autre d'un long serpent serrait le corps livide:
Tous trois vers ce palais ont pris un vol rapide,
Et tous trois dans les airs, en fuyant loin de moi,
N'ont laissé pour adieu ce mot: 'Tu seras roi'
Un exécrable espoir entrait dans ma pensée
Si loin du trône encor, comment y parvenir!
Je n'osais sans trembler regarder l'avenir.
Enfin dans mes exploits, dans ma propre innocence,
Ma timide vertu trouvait quelque assurance.
Je cherchais dans moi-même un secret défenseur,
Et déjà du repos je goûtais la douceur:
À l'instant j'ai senti sous ma main dégoutante,
Un corps meurtri, du sang, une chair palpitante;
C'était moi dans la nuit sur un lit ténébreux
Qui perçait à grands coups un vieillard malheureux."

That is all that we see or hear of the witches.

The story as Ducis has rewritten it:

Duncan - roi d'Écosse
Malcome - fils de Duncan, héritier de la couronne
Glais - premier prince du sang
Macbeth - prince du sang, commandant l'armée de Duncan.
Frédegonde - femme de Macbeth
Loclin
Séton - guerriers sous les ordres de Macbeth
Sévar - montagnard écossais, cru père de Malcome.

Un soldat
Plusieurs Assassins
Grands d'Écosse
Peuple.
La scène est en Écosse dans la province et dans le palais d'Inverness.

Le premier acte se passe dans la forêt du même nom.


(Then follows, for the producer who has courage to insert it, the variant scene with the witches.)

II. Frédégonde raconte à Malcolm, Sévar et un groupe de Highlander le triomphant succès de Macbeth qui a tué Cador et a envoyé Magdonel en déroute. Loclin arrive et relate l'histoire de la bataille.

Malcolm et Sévar, seuls, discutent de la grande beauté des Rois, et Malcolm dit qu'il ne changerait pas son humble état pour tout le luxe de la royauté. L'arrivée de Macbeth, troublé et réfléchissant même dans sa victoire, interrompt leur conversation.

(Left alone with his wife, Macbeth lui dit avec le dernier regard que le drame a eu lieu, et de la terrible pensée qui suggère. Alors qu'ils discutent, Sétône arrive pour annoncer l'arrivée du roi dans le palais. Duncan entre, et exprime sa confiance en Macbeth's fidélité.)

III. Frédégonde soliloque sur l'acte sombre qui doit être accompli. Quand Macbeth arrive, elle l'encourage à l'action, et finalement persuade Macbeth en lui racontant son entrevue avec Yphyctone. Macbeth lit un 'billet' qui lui a été récemment donné et qui annonce la mort, en tant que trahison, de Menteith et la mort, en bataille, de Herfort, ce qui signifie qu'il n'y a plus de personne entre Macbeth et Duncan. Frédégonde prépare tout, et juste quand Macbeth est sur le point d'entrer dans la chambre du roi, Sétône vient avec des nouvelles d'une attaque de Magdonel, qui par sa confusion, couvrira l'action. Macbeth va alors pour repousser l'attaque, et tuer le roi.
La scène est en Écosse dans la province et dans le palais d'Inverness.
Le premier acte se passe dans la forêt du même nom.

1. Duncan and Glamis are alone in a wild forest. Glamis laments the untimely death of Donalbain and Malcome, slain by the rebel Cadgor. Duncan tells him of his own presentiment of death. Then Sévar, an old Highlander, appears, and Glamis learns to his joy and astonishment that Malcome is not dead, but has been brought up by Sévar as his own son.

(Then follows, for the producer who has courage to insert it, the variant scene with the witches.)

II. Frédégonde relates to Malcome, Sévar and a band of Highlanders the glorious victory of Macbeth who has slain Cadgor and put Magdonel to flight. Loclin arrives and tells the story of the battle.

Malcome and Sévar, left alone, discuss the greatness of Kings, and Malcome says he would not change his humble state for all the pomp of royalty. The arrival of Macbeth, troubled and thoughtful even in his victory, interrupts their conversation.

Left alone with his wife, Macbeth tells her of the glimpse he has had of Yphyctone, of his dream of the three Witches who told him 'Tu seras roi', and of the terrible thoughts it has suggested. As they talk Seton comes to announce the King's arrival in the palace. Duncan enters, and expresses his trust in Macbeth's faithfulness.

III. Frédégonde soliloquizes on the dark deed that is to be done. When Macbeth comes, she spurs him on to action, and finally persuaded him by relating her interview with Yphyctone. Macbeth reads a 'billet' which he has just received and which tells of the death, as a traitor, of Menteith and the death in battle of Herfort, which means that there is no one now between Macbeth and Duncan. Frédégonde prepares everything, and just as Macbeth is about to enter the King's chamber comes Seton, with news of an attack of Magdonel which by its confusion, will cover the action. Macbeth goes forth to repel the attack, and to murder the King.
The deed has been done, and already Macbeth is torn with remorse and haunted by the sight of Duncan's bleeding body. Fédégonde tries to calm him; Loclin arrives to offer Macbeth the crown, and forces him to promise vengeance on the murderer. Before Macbeth can take the diadem for which he has stained his soul, the Ghost of Duncan appears to him and fills him with terror. Fédégonde, after trying in vain to stop his wild words, asks Loclin and the people to leave them.

Macbeth, left alone, recovers his composure, but Sevar enters bringing Duncan's note attesting the birth of Malcome. Fédégonde tries to persuade Macbeth to burn it at once, but he refuses. Fédégonde left alone plans the murder of Malcome and Sevar, that they may keep their ill-gotten crown.

Macbeth wanders alone, a prey to remorse. Malcome enters, Malcome fleeing from the power and grandeur he does not want. In conversation with him, Macbeth recovers his lost virtue, and decides to sacrifice the crown. Sevar and Malcome are left alone, and Lady Macbeth enters, walking in her sleep, and they listen, frozen with horror, to the secret she reveals.

Macbeth returns, bringing soldiers, people and nobles with him, surrenders the crown to Malcome, and confesses his own guilt. While he is still speaking, comes Fédégonde who has just killed her son in mistake for Malcome. Loclin bids her live as punishment, and Macbeth offers his life in expiation.

It was impossible for Ducis to keep the story of 'Macbeth' as it was because it violated the Unities of Place and Time, it was too violent and spectacular, and not moral enough. As usual, the Unities of Time and Place were the first things to consider. Shakespeare's play shows the gradual degradation of a human soul, and extends over months:
Ducis made the whole story fit into a single night, and though he made various alterations to suit this, he could not prevent the probability, and even possibility of the story suffering badly. It is difficult to believe that the Unity of Time has been strictly observed, when one reads the play with its crowded events; yet at the end Macbeth says "C'est moi qui cette nuit l'ai tuée de ma main," and from Act III to Act V the action takes place at night, ending in Act V. Sc 9 and 10, where "il fait jour". (Macbeth may well exclaim, as he does, "Que cette nuit est longue!"

Ducis does not adhere to the Unity of Place, but he contents himself with two scenes "la province et le palais d'Inverness - la forêt du même nom," instead of Shakespeare's Forres, Inverness, Fife, Dunsinane, the open country near each place, and even England.

Apart from the moral question of Macbeth's downfall or recovery it was impossible to keep Shakespeare's gradual evolution of character, since it occupied several months, and such utter ruin of a human soul could not be wrought in one night. True to classical tradition, Ducis takes only the moment of crisis and of struggle between Macbeth's better self and his ambition; he must bring his dénouement within the compass of twenty-four hours, and as it would be unthinkable to leave Macbeth triumphant and unsuspected on his blood-stained throne, he is faced with the alternatives of instant discovery and retribution, or repentance and confession. He chooses the latter, and certainly more attractive way, and thus changes the whole purpose of the play, showing, not the ruin of a weak soul, but the rehabilitation of one that has momentarily lapsed. This provides the exalted moral lesson that French tragedy demanded and Ducis loved; and it brings the story fairly naturally within the prescribed time-limits of a French play.

Since Macbeth's share of the evil has been so much lightened, Lady Macbeth's must be correspondingly increased. It was she who had urged, almost forced, Macbeth to the crime, and she must suffer accordingly.
not only for murdering Duncan, but for leading her husband into wrong-doing. The fate Shakespeare assigns to her was impossible for Ducis: Lady Macbeth, after months of misery, takes her own life, worn out by the remorse of the remorse that will let neither mind nor body rest; Fredegonde's fate must be swift to overtake her on the very night of the murder. She is too heartless and implacable to feel real remorse or suffer the tortures of mind that Lady Macbeth does, and she must have some severer shock to punish her and dispose of her at once; moreover, she must be punished without involving Macbeth in any further crimes. She plans the murder of Malcome without her husband's knowledge and against his wishes, and in the attempt causes to perish by her own hand the one being on earth who is really dear to her. The conception was a sound one—no punishment could be so dreadful to Fredegonde as to lose her child by her own fault; but it is unfortunate that the carrying out of the idea should be so improbable and melodramatic as to become ridiculous, and spoil the artistic value of the retribution. However, it brought the downfall of Lady Macbeth within the twenty-four hours, and satisfied the audience's moral sense, besides more than satisfying their taste for horror.

Similarly, the change in the story of Malcome was made in the first instance to preserve the Unities. There was no time for Malcome to flee and return with a foreign army; yet he must be kept out of the way at the time of the murder, and then appear in a sufficiently dramatic manner to make a denouement and confound Macbeth. Moreover (and this was the most difficult problem) his existence must not be known to Macbeth and the thanes, or else he would have been the heir, and the murder would have brought Macbeth no nearer to the crown. It was therefore necessary to leave Macbeth a clear field at the beginning and to produce Malcome at the end of a single night; Ducis had recourse to that most useful of expedients—the concealed identity. It could
usually be relied upon to make possible the presence of a person whose presence was necessary but inconvenient were he known to be there; the great drawback was that it usually meant a most improbable and often rather ridiculous story, and that is the case here. Theoretically it solves the problem quite satisfactorily, but actually it makes the situation so unlike real life that it betrays itself as an expedient. However the Classical Tradition had permitted the use of the expedient so an 18th century audience would find no fault with it and it certainly "tightened up" the plot in a wonderful manner. It gave Macbeth his opportunity to restore his self-respect and honour by voluntarily sacrificing the crown (for he might well have suppressed the news by killing the unsuspecting Malcome and Sévar, or even by destroying the note with Duncan's signature, as Frédégonde wanted him to do.) Moreover the rebellion of Cador is made to run right through the story and unite the different parts of it: it was this rebellion that made it necessary to hide Malcome, that now gave Macbeth his chance to win laurels in the field, and then finally provides the nocturnal attack which facilitates the murder and secures Macbeth from Suspicion. As not infrequently happens, Ducis sacrifices probability to a symmetrical and closely-knit plot (compare Ophelia's relationship to Claudius, and Romeo's to Capulet.) Moreover, in the arrangement of his concealed identity, Ducis availed himself to the full of the opportunities for introducing some of the new ideas that were in favour. If he must change Shakespeare's story to satisfy the Classical Tradition, he would do so in such a way as to make it even more attractive than Shakespeare's. His audience would respond at once to the appeal of the virtuous old peasant, and Malcome's delight in his simple country life. A 17th century writer would no doubt have entrusted the little prince to some old warrior or obscure noble, but Ducis preferred a "child of nature". He took full advantage of the opportunities offered for dramatic conversations, as when Malcome.
ignorant of his high birth and destinies, sings the praises of country life, and says

"J'en atteste les dieux, oui, selon mon désir,
S'ils m'e laissaient un père et mon sort à choisir,
S'ils m'offraient à l'instant, avec le diadème
L'honneur de devenir le fils de Duncan même:
Rendez-moi, leur dirais-je, à mes déserts borné,
Le père vertueux que vous m'avez donné."

Banquo or Glamis could not be suppressed altogether, as he was required to act as confidant and companion to Duncan, but Banquo as he is in Shakespeare was quite unnecessary in Ducis, and therefore could not be kept. He was not needed as companion to Macbeth in the meeting with the witches, since there was no such meeting; there was no time for a separate murder of Banquo, nor for the banquet scene; Macbeth's fear of his descendants would have been out of place, for once the murder is committed it is repentance and not self-interest that actuates Macbeth. Banquo, therefore, becomes not only irrelevant, but would have been very difficult to work in in his original character. The only scene in connexion with his part which Ducis is anxious to keep is the appearance of his ghost, and it was easy to make the spectre that of Macbeth's first victim, and the occasion of its appearance the moment when Macbeth, in presence of all the nobles, is offered the crown. The scene is dramatic for Macbeth is naturally required to promise vengeance on Duncan's murderers, and it is while he is making the hypocritical promise that the sight of his victim freezes the words on his lips in guilty terror.

The question of Hecate and the witches is of some importance, for they are of the very essence of Shakespeare's play, and while they appeal strongly to Ducis's own mind, they come into immediate conflict with the Classical Tradition and the French temper. An English audience of Shakespeare's day accepted them without question, for men believed
firmly in the existence of witches, and every year, wretched old women were burnt for trafficking with the devil. Hence they were accepted quite seriously and despite the mention of Hecate, most people would not think of connecting them with the Furies, but would consider them merely women sold to the evil one. To the rational mind of an 18th century Frenchman, such an idea would be ridiculous, but the three sisters would certainly suggest the Furies, and as such might be tolerated, since the Greek writers accepted them. But they could not appear on the stage, and no such grotesque scene as their horrible cauldron was conceivable. Ducis certainly did appreciate fully the sinister, evil presences, with their suggestion of crime and hidden wickedness: his variant in Act I shows that, for, while it is quite different from any of the written scenes in Shakespeare, it is worthy of Shakespeare's "Weird sisters". They never appear again, but it is their prophecy in Macbeth's dream, coinciding with his jealousy of Glamis, whom another noble Norfolk has accused to him, that first suggests to him the horrid possibility of murder. Frédégonde, whose ambition is much greater than her husband's, uses Yphuctone's knowledge of Fate, and infallibility in prophecy as the main argument to persuade Macbeth. The timidity of their presentation rather obscures their rôle, but Ducis has done his best to make them play the same part as in Shakespeare, making the rest of the temptation come from fear of Glamis' treachery. They are too much explained instead of being mysterious and sinister: Duncan tells Glamis (and the audience):

"Yphuctone, interprète et ministre des dieux, Qui se montre aux mortels et s'échappe à leurs yeux, Qui prédit leur trepas, leur grandeur passagère Que le ciel rend présente aux forfaits de la terre, Et qui semble aujourd'hui détournant ses regards Ne plus voir que des morts, du sang et des poignardis, On dit que ses trois sœurs, exécrables, impies, Dans qui le Nord tremblant reconnaît ses furies,
Ces trois sœurs qui d'Odin ranimant les soldats
Couraient, volaient, frappaient, hurlaient dans les combats;
Et qui, soufflant le meurtre et la fuite et la rage,
Dans les champs de la mort présidaient au carnage:
On dit que ces trois sœurs, sous des rochers déserts,
Où gronde et le torrent et la voix des hivers,
Dans leurs flancs caverneux quand tout dort sur la terre,
Au bruit d'un feu magique, aux accents du tonnerre,
Parmi des coeurs flétris et volés aux tombeaux,
Les Membres déchirés, la cendre, les lambeaux,
Et tout ce qu'on redoute, et tout ce qu'on abhorre,
Préparant des forfaits qui vont bientôt éclorer,
Par des mots tout-puissants, des cris mystérieux,
Ébranlent la nature et l'enfer et les cieux."

(Act I. Sc 1.)

However, the vigour and picturesqueness of the verse, with the effect of breathless, shuddering terror in its jerky phrases, redeems the somewhat over-detailed explanation. Ducis was torn between his classical fear of shocking reason and good taste, and his romantic delight in the supernatural and horrible, and his witches are a compromise, with the usual defects of compromise, but considerable romantic interest nevertheless.

Such is Ducis's reconstruction of the play, prompted partly by his reverence for the Classical Tradition, partly by his own romantic tendencies, and partly by his admiration for his model. "Macbeth" was a very difficult play to fit into the classical framework, and it is easier to criticise than it would be to improve the play. The result is undoubtedly not good: the events are so precipitated as to be almost
impossible, and Ducis's expedients are so ingenious and far from ordinary probability as to be very visibly expedients. In his efforts to keep tragic pity and terror at the height to which Shakespeare raises them, and yet not shock or revolt his audience, Ducis becomes melodramatic in the extreme, so melodramatic that he is frequently ridiculous. Yet he conceived better than he executed: the conception of a weak nature that allows itself to be almost hypnotised into crime, and then in the awakening to the horror of guilt and remorse finds a sudden energy that is strong enough to break the chains, and in one heroic act find atonement and freedom in death; the tragedy of a woman who closes her heart to all pity and commits a terrible crime for her child's sake, only to find that by her own act she has destroyed her child and brought upon herself the suffering she destined for others—surely these are not unworthy of the two great ideals Ducis was seeking to unite. As for the story of Cador's rebellion, and Malcom's concealment with Sevar, if they are not very convincing from the point of view of verisimilitude, they are at least exceedingly ingenious in the way they fit into the various elements of the plot. Had Ducis been content to sacrifice either the unity of time or more of Shakespeare's story, he might have written a much better play; his error lay in trying to unite two irreconcilable elements, and considering the impossibility of the task he set himself, he made at least a very courageous attempt.

The changes in characters and moral tone are closely connected with the changes of plot, partly as cause and partly as effect, and have already been discussed in passing. The tendency is at work here as in the other plays to simplify character and reduce it to certain conventional types, and to lay greater stress on the moral lesson and presentation of positive virtue—a tendency due partly to the French
system of tragedy and partly to Ducis's own limitations and lofty ideals.

Of the minor characters, Lennox, Ross, Menteith, Angus, Caithness, Fleance, Siward and his son, Lady Macduff and her son, the Doctors, Sergeant, Porter, Gentlewoman, and the Lords, Gentlemen etc., disappear. This is partly because such a host of characters is impossible in a French play, partly because they are either unnecessary or unworthy of the dignity of tragedy. Of the six principal characters, Macbeth himself is by far the most interesting. He follows Shakespeare's Macbeth fairly closely in many ways, but the general impression is quite different. Shakespeare's Macbeth is a man with much in him of both good and evil who having once yielded to temptation persists with a sort of dogged desperation in the path he has chosen, and makes no attempt to turn back. He is tortured by remorse, but not repentance, since he makes no attempt to repair his crime, but only commits others to make him secure from the consequences of the first. He is a Celtic criminal who is urged by an impulse to commit murder, and then pursued by a remorse that takes outward forms—voices and spectres. Shakespeare does not stop to consider in much detail why Macbeth acted as he did, but concerns himself more with the results of his action. Ducis's Macbeth is nobler; the scruples which hold him back are more moral, and not merely the fear of judgment here; the remorse that descends on him as soon as the murder is committed is accompanied by real repentance, and the desire to atone. Fréleigonde would urge him to further crime, but he is firm in his refusal, and like Gertrude in "Hamlet" thinks only of expiating his crime, and not of assuring its fruits. Ducis calls him "une âme née pour la vertu, mais qui malheureusement dégradée et comme détruite par le crime, cherche encore avec tant de douleur à se recomposer parmi ses ruines." Ducis seems to have felt how largely Shakespeare's Macbeth acted upon impulse, and how little he really reflected upon why he was acting and whether it was worth while: it was too vague for a
French tragedy, but instead of giving Macbeth a stronger character and a more definite purpose, Ducis makes him weaker still, and more under the sway of outside influences. He seems to have only a slight desire for the crown, and even his efforts to strengthen this desire by reflecting on the reported treachery of Clamis never seem to kindle in him such a spark of resolution as would lead him of himself to commit the fatal act. He is moody and temperamental -

"Il est des jours d'ennui, d'abattement extrême
Où l'homme le plus fême est à charge à lui-même
Pendant l'accès mortel de nos profonds dégoûts,
Que le temps qui s'enfuit marche à pas lents pour nous:
De noirs présentiments notre âme embarrassée
Soulève un poids fatal dont elle est oppressée."

(Act III Sc. 2.)

Indeed he would appear to be without doubt what some critics have accused Shakespeare's Macbeth of being, a man dominated by some fatality and not a free agent - he says so:

Je sens que ma raison s'enfuit et m'abandonne,
Oui je vois malgré moi qu'au meurtre destine,
Par un pouvoir fatal ce bras est entraîné.
On dirait que ce sort puisqu'à tout il prêside,
Sur ses tables de fer grava mon parricide.
Je m'arrête et j'y cours."

Shakespeare's hero never tries thus to blame fate for what he is doing, but takes the full responsibility on himself. Ducis's Macbeth is a thorough weakling, completely dominated by his wife, and it is only when the irrevocable act has been committed that he can summon up resolution to defy her and make reparation in spite of her - even then it is only when she is not present, for he warns Malcom not to waken her. He is so half-hearted in his wickedness that he has not the resolution to
carry on the pretence of innocence and stifle his remorse, while he has a sincere uprightness of soul that is lacking in Shakespeare's Macbeth. It is clear why Ducis has thus made him at once nobler and weaker than Shakespeare's hero: since he was to repent and confess on the very night of the murder, he could not be too whole-hearted and determined in the pursuit of the crown, and must have more good than evil in him; and to explain why he committed the murder at all, Ducis has made him so much under the influence of others that he was practically driven to an action for which he was not responsible. The character is an interesting one, and the change skilfully made to meet the altered requirements.

Féodore is the personification of ambition and heartlessness. She is more implacable and terrible than Lady Macbeth, for the latter shows momentary glimpses of feeling -

"Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't . . . .
My husband! . . . ."

- and she is killed at last by the torture of remorse; Féodore has no redeeming feature, save, perhaps, her love for her son, and even that gives no tenderness to her nature. Indeed her reiterated "Je suis mère, Macbeth" becomes ludicrous in the end. (To the logical French mind some stronger incentive than mere personal ambition must have seemed necessary to drive her to such cruelty, and Ducis makes her sin for her child's sake.) She is absolutely unscrupulous: she almost forces Macbeth to the murder, urging him on by tales of Ulysse and slander of Glamis; she has no pity for Duncan, and she would murder Malcom and Sevar if she could. Even in the sleep-walking scene, in spite of her efforts to remove the bloodstains, it is not remorse but murderous intent that fills her mind. She is too like an abstract personification of heartlessness to have much individual life, or to be very interesting.
The reason she has become such a monster of wickedness is no doubt partly that Ducis's villains were always very black but not complicated—he seems to have been unable or unwilling to make a study of subtle evil as Shakespeare does—and partly that she might be bad enough to bear the whole blame of the murder.

Duncan, as in Shakespeare, is an old man; he is noble, upright and dignified, but weighed down with weariness and melancholy after his long, stormy reign. He tells Glamis that after a vain struggle against this lassitude and presentiment of the approaching end, he has yielded—

"Je n'ai plus, sans chercher d'où me vient cet effroi qu'à laisser faire au sort, et qu'à mourir en roi."

The knowledge of his son's fitness to succeed him, according to Sevr's report, is the last great consolation he needs.

Glamis is a confidant, loyal, respectful and submissive, evidently like Duncan, an elderly man. He appears very little and is quite colourless.

Macbeth would make an ideal romantic hero. He is young, ardent and impulsive. Macbeth's military success moves him to enthusiastic admiration, but he would not leave his rustic life for any earthly glory, and has no desire for a crown. When he learns who he is, he is overwhelmed with grief at leaving Sevr, and with terror at the task that awaits him. He impulsively tries to escape from the palace, when Macbeth himself meets him and persuades him to stay. He is evidently a good athlete and huntsman, virtuous and unspoiled because he has been brought up in rustic simplicity, and somewhat sententious in his discourses upon his rustic life—

"Que n'ai-je pu, mon père, ayant servi mon roi,
Sur ses pas aujourd'hui me montrer devant toi!
Mais je t'aurais quitté, mon sort, digne d'envie,
Enchaîné à ton destin mon bonheur et ma vie."
Pourrais-je abandonner mon père en sa vieillesse?"

(Act II. Sc. 3)

He suggests Émile, and is a sort of abstract representation of what a young man ought to be brought up under ideal conditions. He is very different from the coldly calculating Malcolm of Shakespeare’s story: but he is better suited to the part he has to play, where it is rather fate than his own actions that decides his destiny.

Sevar is exactly the same type, but older and represents the ideal of a man brought up close to nature.

Loclin replaces the wounded sergeant to give an account of Macbeth’s prowess, and later acts as a mouthpiece for the people when presenting the crown to Macbeth. He has no individuality whatever, but seems to represent the ideas that men were discussing so enthusiastically at the time, the rights of the subject and the duties of the sovereign. He makes Macbeth swear to devote himself to the good of the people, and consider himself only "un premier citoyen."

The Moral Tone of the play is closely linked both to the plot and to the characters. As usual, Ducis sets himself a much more definite lesson to convey than Shakespeare; and the atmosphere of the play is less sombre. In Shakespeare it is the tragedy of a man who yields to temptation, and therefore sinks lower and lower, a study of the fatal weakness of the human soul. Ducis on the other hand studies "la dignité de l’âme née pour la vertu, mais qui malheureusement dégradée et comme détruite par le crime, cherche encore avec tant de douleur à se recomposer parmi ses ruines." (Avertissement.) He preaches the gospel of possible recovery for the weakest and guiltiest. It is a gospel of hope, despite the terror with which he has purposely sought to fill his play. He says "Je me suis appliqué d’abord à faire disparaître l’impression toujours
révoltante de l'horreur, qui certainement eût fait tomber mon ouvrage; et j'ai tâché ensuite d'amener l'âme de mon spectateur, jusqu'au dernier degré de la terreur tragique en y mêlant avec art ce qui pouvait la faire supporter." This then is the characteristic impression made by the play: a mixture of the idealised truth of classical drama, and the sombre terror of romantic tragedy. Ducis calls "Macbeth" "la plus terrible" of Shakespeare's productions, and he has tried to keep as much as possible of this terror without shocking the sensibilities of his audiences.

As far as the tone of the play is concerned, the Classical Tradition is represented by the extreme refinement which becomes artificiality, and by the moral lessons and reflections. Ducis's "Macbeth" is very artificial: this is not all the fault of the Classical Tradition, for it is characteristic of exaggerated melodrama, also leads to artificiality and in this case, the tragedy suffers both from over-refinement and over-excitement. As the story is restricted (except for the first act) to the vaults of Macbeth's palace, and as violent and spectacular display is to be avoided, there is practically no action in the play at all. It is a series of lengthy conversations, some of them very tedious, and it cannot but seem lifeless after the animation and movement of Shakespeare's Macbeth.

"Macbeth" contains more than does any other adaptation of the moral observations and "vers-maximes" that were so characteristic of French tragedy. To an English reader they always sound somewhat sententious and the stiffness of the language in Ducis makes them worse. But they were in favour in an age of reason and the "rôle de raisonneur" was always a successful one—witness Sévère and Burrhus. In "Macbeth", even Young Malcom moralises, and on almost every page there are maximes and moral comments. (Incidentally, Ducis has exaggerated the dramatic possibilities of remarks which have a double significance to the audience because they know something which all the characters do not know.)
insists too much on his assurance of Macbeth's loyalty, and Malcome on the superiority of rustic life over court life.)

Duncan: "Va, ce desert sauvage.
Par son terrible aspect, afflige moins mes yeux
Que d'un mortel ingrat le visage odieux."

(Act I. Sc 1)

"un mortel geneereux connait mal l'imposture
Aisement dans un autre il croit voir sa droiture
Des pieces qu'on lui dresse il n'est point occupe,
Et ne trompant jamais, il est toujours trompe."

(Act I Sc. 1)

Ahi tu dois etre heureux.

J'ai trop sujet de l'etre.

Les mechantes quelquefois ont l'art de le paraire.

(Act II. Sc 9)

Even young Malcome says

"Tout ciel est agreable ou notre ame est paisible."

(Act V. Sc 2)

Macbeth (le sommeil) "Il est terrible au crime et doux a l'innocence."

"Ahi qui vit sans remords, Macbeth, ne le craint pas."

In "Macbeth" much more than in any other of the adaptations, we find a reflection of the times in which Ducis lived. All its new characteristics are there, and are important elements: sensibility, the sentimental admiration of rustic life, the fascination of the sinister and of wild and gloomy scenery, and the political ideas of the day. Despite the classical refinement and morality of the play, it is these new tendencies that give it its dominant impression.

All the characters, except perhaps Fredegonde, are emotional and
given to transports of joy or pity, grief or tenderness. Duncan exclaims when he sees Macbeth's little son (and the pauses must have been filled by tears )

"Hélas! il me rappelle . . . .
Mon cher fils . . . . Donalbain qu'une main trop cruelle . . .
Dis, te fais-tu, Macbeth, cet horrible tableau,
Massacrer de sang-froid un enfant au berceau?"

(Act II Sc 9.)

After the murder Macbeth cries -

"O supplice! O prodiges!
Quoi! de sa mort partout j'aperçois les vestiges!
Il avait bien du sang . . . . Si je pouvais pleurer!
Loin de moi sans retour je me sens égarer.
Le désespoir . . . . Prions: 'Ciel qui. . . . ' Tais-toi, perfide
Cest mot vient d'expirer dans ta bouche homicide."

(Act IV Sc 1.)

When at last he decides to surrender the crown to Malcom, he exclaims "avec transport"

"Je suis encore moi-même! 0 moment plein de charmes!
Je te rends grâce, O ciel! Tu m'as rendu les larmes."

(Act V Sc 3.)

Frédegonde exclaims repeatedly,

"J'étais mère, Macbeth!"

"Je songeai, cher Macbeth, que j'étais encore mère."

"Je suis mère, Macbeth!"

"Que m'annoncent ces mots - 'Va, le ciel te fit mère'?"

(Act IV. Sc 7 )

"Qui m'a donc dit ces mots - 'Va, le ciel te fit mère'?

(Act V Sc. 7.)
Malcome, on hearing what he calls the "noble bruit" of Macbeth's arms as he returns in triumphs, exclaims

"Mon coeur fremit de joie!" (Act II.Sc 3.)

and again:

"Ciels avec quel plaisir après sa longue absence
Il va revoir son fils, caresser son enfance!
Que n'ai-je pu, mon père, ayant servi mon roi,
Sur ses pas aujourd'hui me montrer devant toi!
Mais je t'aurais quitte. Mon sort, digne d'envie,
Enchaîne à ton destin mon bonheur et ma vie.
Pourrais-je abandonner mon père en sa vieillesse?"

The play is full of the influence of Rousseau: it seems more than probable that Ducis was thinking of Émile in his description of Malcome, brought up under ideal conditions in the country. The comparison of the simplicity, innocence and security of country life with the cares and responsibilities of high birth and important offices is maintained throughout the play, and is one of the most outstanding truths in it. Malcome's foster-father Sévar and his happy, peaceful existence stand in contrast to his real father Duncan, with his troubled reign and tragic death; and Malcome himself receives the crown and the duties it brings him as a burden from which he would fain escape. The following quotations are typical:

Duncan: "C'est un de ces mortels, qui, dans l'obscurité,
Par de mâles travaux domptent l'adversité,
Qui près de leurs enfants, de leurs chastes compagnes,
Courent des jours heureux au sein de ces montagnes."

(Act I.Sc 1.)

Malcome: "Hé! quel prince pourrais-je envier sur la terre!
Iacbeth: Aux montagnards.
donnez mon arc: nous verrons si sa main
Je vis libre et cache, mon âme est calme et pure;
Connais-tu quelque sort plus doux dans la nature?"

(Act II. Sc. 3.)

Macbeth: "Pour vous, de mes travaux compagnons héroïques,
Rentrez avec plaisir dans vos foyers rustiques;
Revoyez vos enfants, et goûtez entre vous
Des destins moins brillants, et peut-être plus doux".

(Act II Sc. 4.)

Sévar's description of Malcom's education:

"Seigneur dans nos antres rustiques,
Je n'ai pu le former qu'aux vertus domestiques,
Aux moeurs de la nature à la simple équité,
À voir avec respect, dans leur simplicité,

Ces mortels belliqueux, ces montagnards terribles,
Endurcis aux travaux, au seul honneur sensibles,
Qui tant de fois pour vous ont brave le trepas,
Soldats dès le berceau, vieillis dans les combats,
Venant dans leurs foyers, après de longs services,
Montrer à leurs enfants leurs larges cicatrices.
J'ai voulu dans ses jeux qu'enemi du repos
Il imitât surtout les fils de ces héros,

Ces fils de nos rochers, de nos forêts profondes,
Nés au bord des terrents, plus fongueux que leurs ondes,
Votre peuple en un mot, suçant tout à la fois
Et l'instinct du courage et l'amour de leurs rois.
Voilà de quels amis j'entourai sa jeunesse:
Ce fut la tout mon art, mon secret, mon adresse;
Je dus en faire un homme, et ne l'ai point flattere
Ducis had said that he wished to banish revolting horror, but to raise tragic terror to its height. The difference between the two seems to be that anything is permissible as long as it is not shown on the stage, and the narrative that relates it is couched in sufficiently dignified language. Consequently the "revolting" scenes in Shakespeare disappear from the stage if not from the play: there is no murder scene such as those of Banquo and Lady Macduff, the witches do not appear with their horrible cauldron, the ghost with its gory locks is not visible to the audience. Throughout the play, the characters on the stage do nothing but talk to one another, and we see absolutely nothing in the way of action until the very end, (and even there, in the first ending we see no actual death, since Frédégonde does not die, and the curtain falls on Macbeth as he raises his dagger; in the variant, both Macbeth and his wife die on the stage, but the producer can always choose the first version.) To compensate for the horror which is not seen, Ducis has multiplied allusions and descriptions; but these are so obviously invented only to add to "la terreur du sujet" as Ducis says himself, that they lose all artistic value in their striving after effect, and by their exaggeration become ridiculous. There is the long-drawn groan at the end of the first act, the account of the brigands' attack in Act II Sc. 6, an eerie suggestion of the continual presence of Yphyctone, if not of the three sisters themselves, in the palace; the sleep-walking scene is made yet more terrible by the addition of a dagger in the hand of Frédégonde, and further murderous intent in her mind. But the conclusion is the supreme effort of Ducis to carry tragic terror to its height, and is the most melodramatic and unfortunate of his additions. It is in the first
place surely ridiculous that Frédégonde should think of sleep on a night when the whole palace was in confusion after the attack of the rebels and murder of the King - how could the mistress sleep? In the second place, what was her child's cradle doing in the vaults of the castle instead of in the nursery, and why did the audience not see her kill the child since they have been watching the stage continuously ever since the sleep-walking scene? Finally, it is surely not possible that a mother should in her sleep go to the cradle and kill her own child, thinking to kill a grown-up man? To a modern reader, there is something ludicrous about the whole scene; though it is possible that an audience which had been watching the whole play, and had been worked up to a high pitch of excitement, would accept the dénouement without bringing over-critical faculties to bear on it.

All that Ducis adds of his own invention to the "terreur du sujet" has too much of melodrama and irrelevancy to be really successful; but where he contents himself with following Shakespeare, and reproducing the tragic terror that is inherent in the subject, he succeeds in being truly dramatic and terrifying. The episode of the rebels' attack just at the moment of the murder is so "fortuitous" that it seems to interrupt the tension of Macbeth's last hesitation; but apart from that, the scene is good, and Macbeth's guilty panic after the deed is done is excellently rendered.

"Il est donc toujours là! quel témoin! qu'on l'emporte! Enrons - le voir encore! Il semble à cette porte, que son corps tout sanglant est prêt à m'arrêter. Quelle horreur! Quel forfait! ou fuir? ou m'éviter?

(Avec terreur)
J'entends du bruit. On vient... O supplice! O prodiges! Quoi! de sa mort partout j'aperçois les vestiges.
Il avait bien du sang... Si je pouvais pleurer!
Loin de moi sans retour je me sens égarer.
Le désespoir... Prions: 'Ciel, qui... Tais-toi, perfide.
Ce mot vient d'expire dans ta bouche homicide.
Mourons... Il est des dieux; je n'échapperai pas.
Je crains également la vie et le trepas.
Macbeth poursuit Macbeth. Ah! dans mon trouble extrême,
Le plus grand de mes maux est de me voir moi-même.
Je sens là des remords....

(Act IV. Sc 1)

A later scene where Macbeth wanders alone in the vaults again suggests vividly the horror of remorse: the part of it which closely follows Shakespeare is quoted later on. The ghost scene has a different setting and the ghost itself is that of Duncan not Banquo: otherwise it imitates Shakespeare's scene successfully. Macbeth's situation is dramatic, faced by Loclin who demands promises of justice, and punishment for Duncan's murderer, that Macbeth is forced to make with the knowledge of his guilt heavy upon him.

The sleepwalking scene probably fascinated Ducis more than any other, and he was determined to keep it at all costs. It was somewhat bold to present to a French audience a woman walking in her sleep, but provided he could make the scene dramatic enough to be successful in itself, he was fairly sure of its acceptance by the public by that time. The other and more serious difficulty either did not strike him, or else he ignored it. In Shakespeare's play, Lady Macbeth has been tortured for many weeks by remorse, and probably also by the change in her husband. Her nervous system is giving way under the strain, and neither mind nor body can rest. It was absolutely natural and likely that she should walk in her sleep, and betray the secret she strove so hard to hide during the day. The scene is as realistic as it is dramatic. The restriction of the play to twenty-four hours should make the scene
impossible: as already suggested it was most unlikely that Fredegonde should attempt to sleep when the palace was in such confusion, and above all when she was planning the murder of Malcome, and was still uncertain as to whether it would succeed. Placed as it is, the scene is absurd; and this is unfortunate, since in itself it is excellent. It is another example of what a pity it is that Ducis should not have been able to develop his talent unhindered by rules that were not intended for the type of tragedy he would have liked to write.

One curious development of the 18th century liking for the sinister and horrible, was the taste for gloomy and terrible scenery. Frowning rocks, dark forests, wild torrents and waterfalls, barren moorland and medieval castles - these were the settings that pleased a court accustomed to the sunshine and regularity of Versailles.

Letourneur in his preface speaks of nature in Shakespeare and remarks that there is a certain type of scenery that is more than "romanesque" or "pittoresque": it has the power to call up strange images and ideas and Letourneur suggests the word "romantique" to describe it coined from the English "romantic". This was the scenery which Ducis himself delighted, and he uses it wherever possible in his plays. "Macbeth" was particularly attractive, for its setting was far-off Scotland which the translation of Ossian in 1776 had made popular as the very home of romance, with its misty mountains and torrents and valleys inhabited by wild and hardy mountaineers. Instead of the stark simplicity of Shakespeare's "An open place. A heath. A room in Macbeth's castle", in Ducis there are more detailed descriptions, striving after as much dramatic - or melodramatic - effect as possible. "Premier Acte - Le théâtre représente l'endroit le plus sinistre d'une forêt antique, des rochers, des antres, des précipices, un site épouvantable. Le ciel est menaçant et ténébreux. Deuxième Acte - Le théâtre représente un palais vaste et antique, où se croisent des voûtes longues et ténébreuses."
Il doit être d'un caractère terrible. Troisième Acte —

Il est une heure ou deux après minuit. Le théâtre n'est éclairé que par la faible lueur d'une lampe. The first words of the two plays are characteristic: the words of Ducis sound like an early romantic.

1st Witch. When shall we three meet again,
In lightening, thunder or in rain?

2nd Witch. When the hurly-burly's done
When the battle's lost and won.

3rd Witch. That will be ere set of sun.

ALL Pair is foul and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Glamis
"Seigneur, ou sommes-nous? jamais des cieux plus sombres De ces tristes forêts n'ont épaissi les ombres. Quels antres! Quel rochers! j'admire avec terreur De ce désert muet la ténebreuse horreur. Ici les seuls torrents ont marqué leur passage."

"Macbeth", in a very much greater degree than any of the other adaptations reflects the political spirit of the times. The revolution was approaching, and men were discussing reform, the rights of the subject, and the duty of the King in a way that would have been inconceivable some years earlier. The scene where Loclin comes and offers Macbeth the crown is a most extraordinary description of what the appointment of a King ought to be, according to the new ideas. Ducis loved liberty and independence and the people, and though he remained a royalist to the end, M.Leroy (in the Biographie de Michaud) declares that it was out of personal loyalty to the royal family to which he was indebted, and that he was a republican at heart. It is noticeable in this scene that the people have at least a passive share in the choosing of
their new King after the murder of Duncan: "le peuple" is present in Act IV.Sc 4, and Loclin speaks for them when he differs the crown to Macbeth. The first sign of power that Loclin brings to Macbeth is not crown or sceptre, but the book of the Law: he says

"J'apporte devant toi
Ce signe du pouvoir, le livre de la loi;
S'il t'assure le droit qu'il te donne a l'empire,
De tes devoirs sacrés il doit aussi t'instruire.
Ce livre inexorable, à toute heure, en tous lieux,
Offrira le reproche ou la gloire à tes yeux."

He demands the punishment of Duncan's murderer, and the wretched Macbeth can but consent; he then adds a touch of "local colour" that is meant to represent the Scotland of the time, but in the last lines again it is the voice of a Frenchman that speaks:

Loclin

"Songe bien qu'ici la liberté
S'unit avec l'honneur et le fidélité;
Que la pompe des camps seul a droit de vous plaire;
Qu'un roi dans nos rochers n'est qu'un chef à la guerre;
Que ce livre surtout qu'ici je te remets
Te défend d'accorder le pardon aux forfaits;
Qu'il n'en existe point pour le mortel perfide
Qui trahit son pays, jamais pour l'homicide.
Songe qu'en ce moment l'Écosse par ma voix
Te fait le défenseur, non le tyran des lois,
Qu'il leur faut obéir, pour que l'on t'obéisse.
Nous aimons la valeur, mais surtout la justice."

(Act IV. Sc 4.)

Later when Macbeth has somewhat mastered his terror occasioned by the sight of Duncan's ghost, Loclin demands:

"Jure donc devant nous sur ce livre terrible
"Qu'au seul bien de l'État ton cœur sera sensible;
Que tu n'es rien ici qu'un premier citoyen
Qui peut tout par la loi, qui sans la loi n'est rien.

One seems to hear an echo from the shouting crowds on the Champ de Mars, six years later: but what would a Scottish monarch of the 11th century have said had a subject presented him with such a demand? Later, when Macbeth meets Malcolm fleeing from unwelcome honours, he tells him:

"Si vous aimez le peuple et savez le défendre
Votre cœur vous a dit tout ce qu'il faut apprendre
Oui, le peuple l'ordonne, il lui faut oéir;
Moi-même je vous veux forcer à le servir."

(Act V. Sc 2.)

A King who must obey the people! Where is the Divine Right of Kings?

The Style of "Macbeth" is very unequal: it contains some of Ducis's worst writing, and some of his best. In general, it is either jerky, or monotonously regular; terribly dull, artificial and pompous; and containing some extraordinary periphrases. But there are many passages in it that are most striking, either for their swiftness and vigour, or for their dramatic power. Some of the long conversations, notably the exposition in Act I. Sc 1, are intolerably tedious, and it seems as if Ducis were beating out the couplets laboriously; but when he is carried away by the interest of his subject, his verse soars beyond its usual limitations, and becomes truly inspired. The Classical Tradition claims its share of homage in the artificiality of the would-be elegance, and the classical jargon; the newer ideal is manifest in the sensibility and melodrama of the pathetic or impressive passages; and Shakespeare's influence is shown in the passages closely imitated from him, and which are among the best. Examples of these various defects and merits are not difficult to find.
Jerky verse -

**Frédégonde**

"Je suis mère, Macbeth; oui, ton songe, Fyphytone,
Ont tourné, malgré moi, mes yeux vers la couronne,
Et surtout de Glamis en prevenant les coups,
J'aspirais à sauver mon fils et mon époux."

(Act III Sc 4.)

Monotonous verse and stilted language -

**Glamis**

"Le barbare Cador auteur de tant de crimes,
Fit immoler, dit-on, ces deux tendres victimes.
Il crut, de la discorde exécetable tison,
Faire passer bientôt le sceptre en sa maison.
Fier d'oser y prétendre, avec quel artifice
De sa superbe audace il couvrit l'injustice!
Comme il sut par l'éclat de ses droits captieux,
Égarer les esprits, éblouir tous les yeux!"

(Act I. Sc I.)

A roundabout way of saying "un paysan" -

**Duncan**

"C'est un de ces mortels qui dans l'obscurité
Par de mâles travaux domptent l'adversité;
Qui, près de leurs enfants, de leurs chastes compagnes,
Coulent des jours heureux au sein de ces montagnes,
Tu le verras bientôt."

(Act I. Sc I.)

Classical jargon -

**Frédégonde**

Ainsi, mon cher, Macbeth, vous me fermez votre âme.
L'hymen qui nous unit par la plus tendre flamme,
Votre fils au berceau, ce nom de mon époux,
Tous ses titres sacrés n'ont plus de droits sur vous."

(Act II. Sc 6.)
"Oublierai-je qu'ici, (souvenir plein d'horreur!) Des brigands dans la nuit répandant la terreur, D'un vaste embrasement, du meurtre et du pillage, Partout à mon réveil je rencontrai l'image. J'étais mère, Macbeth: dans son berceau brûlant Je courus à la flamme arracher mon enfant. Parmi les cris, les feux, les poignards homicides, Je le serrai tremblant dans mes bras intrepides. Il était temps encore. Mais quand dans ce palais La fuite des brigands eut ramené la paix, Je songeai, cher Macbeth, que j'étais encore mère; Quand revoyant enfin mon fils et la lumière Lorsque je crus, hélas, au doux son de sa voix, Le faire naître encore une seconde fois, Dans ce trouble confus de mon âme oppressée Glamis vint tout à coup s'offrir à ma pensee."

(Act II.Sc 6)

Oui j'ai tué mon fils, sa mort est mon ouvrage!
Mon fils! Ah malheureuse!

Oui, j'ai versé son sang.

Donnez-moi vingt poignards pour me percer le flanc.
Le mien me manque! O ciel! C'est Malcome. O surprise!

Les dieux ont fait manquer ton horrible entreprise.

Va, Malcome est vivant. Va, Macbeth m'a remis Ce billet de Duncan; connais, connais son fils!

Je vois tout; mon sommeil... Le ciel dans sa colère A massacré mon fils par la main de sa mère.
Vers Malcome croyant diriger mon chemin,
C'est sur mon propre fils qu'il a conduit ma main.
Oh, donnez-moi la mort!

Loclin

Non, tu vivras, cruelle,
Ce sera ton tourment: qu'on se saisisse d'elle."

(Act V Sc 10.)

The best passages are the description of Macbeth's valour,
where the impetuous rush of the verse follows the movement of the
battle and monotony is lost in the excitement of the fight; Macbeth's
horror and remorse after the murder (already quoted in part);
some of the passages about the witches (already quoted);
the appearance of the ghost, and the sleepwalking scene. Most of
these are imitated from Shakespeare, and may be compared with his
freer verse.

Sergeant:

"For brave Macbeth - well he deserves that name -
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's munion carved out his passage
Till he faced the knave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.
As when the sun 'gins' his reflection
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come,
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark;
No sooner justice had with valour armed
Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
But the Norweyan lord surveying vantage,
With furbished arms and new supplies of men
Began a fresh assault."

(Act I. Sc. 2)

"La terre en un instant a rougi de carnage.
Chacun des deux partis montre un égal courage.
On se cherche, on s'attaque, et sans ordre et sans choix
Ce n'est plus un combat, c'en est mille à la fois.
La fureur nous aveugle, et les roches frappées,
De nos mains en éclats font voler nos épées.
Des poignards aussitôt arment les combattants.
On perce, on est percé, sur des corps palpitants,
Je ne vois plus alors sur la terre sanglante
Que la rage qui tue, ou la rage expirante.
Déjà, déjà Cador semait partout l'effroi:
Macbeth vole vers lui: 'Viens, dit-il, à ton roi
Viens payer par la mort la peine qui t'est due.'
La victoire un moment à peine est suspendue:
Il fait tomber sa tête, et son bras furieux
La saisit dégoutant et l'offre à tous les yeux.
L'ennemi cède alors et connaît les alarmes.
Il jette en frémissant ses drapeaux et ses armes.
Nos cries font retentir les sommets du Valda,
Les torrents de Malmor, Les échos du Loda,
Dans nos sombres vallons la terreur les disperse;
Du haut de nos rochers la frayeur les renverse:
Tels tombent du torrent les flots précipités.
Et tant de soldats pour Cador révoltés,
Qui soutinrent sa cause aux Champs de la Molvide,
Vers les antres d'Olberg, sur le bord de la Clyde,
Il n'en est pas un seul, qui tombant sous nos coups,
N'ait mordu la poussière ou fléchi devant nous.

(Act II Sc 2.)

Duncan
"This castle hath a pleasant seat, the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo
This guest of summer,
The temple haunting martlet, does approve
By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here."

(Act I.Sc 6.)

Duncan
"Mon bonheur est grand. Que faut-il que j'augure?
En entrant sous ces murs, en avançant vers vous,
J'ai cru, mes chers amis, sentir un air plus doux.
Des oiseaux fortunés volent sur mon passage,
D'un repos enchanteur m'offraient l'heureux pressage.
Le ciel m'a délivré d'un noir pressentiment.

(Act II. Sc 9.)

Lady Macbeth
'Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it; what thou wouldst highly
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'dst have, great Glamis
That which cries 'Thus thou must do if thou have it,
And that which thou dost rather fear to do
Than wishest should be undone. "

(Macbeth, Act I Sc 5.)

"Macbeth dans sa pensee accomplit un ouvrage
Dont lui-même il a peine à supporter l'image.
Ah! si l'ambition avait pu l'entrainer!
S'il brûlait comme moi de la soif de régner!
S'il osait .... Mais que dis-je? Il est né trop timide;
Ce n'est qu'en combattant qu'il se montre intrepide
L'éclat d'un sceptre en vain flatterait son désir;
Il ne sait que l'attendre, et non pas le saisir.
Tu n'as point, ô Macbeth, épargnant tes victimes,
L'inflexibilité qui convient aux grands crimes!"

(Macbeth, Act III. Sc 1.)

"My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night."

Lady Macbeth

And when goes hence?

Macbeth

To-morrow as he purposes.

Lady Macbeth

O never

Shall sun that morrow see. "

(Macbeth, Act I Sc. 5.)

Fredegonde

Duncan pres de Glamis repose en ce palais.
Quand s'éveilleront-ils?

Macbeth

Avec le jour.

Fredegonde

Jamais!

(Macbeth, Act III. Sc 4.)

Macbeth

He's here in double trust,
First as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. "

(Macbeth, Act I Sc. 6.)
Macbeth

Mais l'honneur, mais la reconnaissance
Mais un vieillard, un roi, mon parent, mon ami,
Lei dans mon palais sous ma grande endormi;
Qui, si des assassins venaient pour le surprendre,
Crieraient d'abord: 'Macbeth, Macbeth, viens me défendre.'
(Act III Sc 4.)

Lady Macbeth

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed his brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.
(Act II. Sc.1)

Je suis mère, Macbeth.

Mais je t'avouerai si seule et dans moi-même
Je m'étais dit jamais 'Je veux le diadème,
Je veux que dans le jour mon front en soit orné,'
Je suis d'un sexe faible, du fuseau destine,
Mais au moment d'agir sous un dehors timide,
J'eusse en de vingt Macbeth la vigueur intrépide,
J'ignore quel tourment m'eût été reserve,
Mais le projet conçu, je l'aurais achevé.
(Act III. Sc 4.)

Macbeth

Thou sure and firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time
That suits with it.
(Act II. Sc 1.)

Macbeth

Marbres silencieux,

Soyez sans souvenir, sans oreilles, sans yeux!
Doublez autour de moi vos épaisses funèbres,
Ne sentez point mes pas glisser dans les ténèbres
Voici l'instant.  
(Act III Sc 5.)

Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house,
'Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more;' Macbeth shall sleep no more.'
(Act II Sc 2.)

Le sommeil pour jamais a fui de ma paupière,
Et je l'invoquerais par des voeux superflus!
Duncan m'a dir tout bas 'Tu ne dormiras plus.'
(Act V. Sc 1.)

But in these cases,
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.  
(Act I Sc 7.)

Non: l'homme impunément ne fut jamais barbare.
Il est des dieux vengeurs dont l'oeil partout le suit.
En vain, nous entourant des voiles de la nuit,
Nous espérons tromper cet œil qui toujours veille.
Au moment du forfait la justice sommeille;
Mais soulevant son voile après l'acte inhumain,
Elle apparaît terrible, et le glaive à la main.
(Act V. Sc 1.)

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave:
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.

(Act III Sc 2.)

Quel tourment de trainer des jours tissus d'âlames,
De se lever la nuit dans d'horribles transports,
Sans pouvoir de son sein arracher le remords!
Il vaudrait mieux cent fois, affranchi de son crime,
Dans le fond d'un cercueil remplacer sa victime.
Duncan, dans le tombeau tu ne sens plus d'effroi!
Il n'est plus de Cador ni de Macbeth pour toi.
Des complots éternels n'assiègent plus ta vie!
Le croirais-tu, Duncan? c'est ton sort que j'envie
N'élève plus ta voix vers ce ciel outrage!
Puisque je vis encore, tu n'es que trop venge.

(Act V Sc.1.)

The sleep-walking scene:

Frédégonde (Elle entre endormie, un poignard dans la main droite,
et un flambeau dans la main gauche. Elle s'approche d'un
fauteuil. Levant les yeux au ciel avec la pression d'une
 crainte douloureuse)

Dieux vengeurs!

(Elle s'assied, pose le flambeau sur une table, remet le
 poignard dans son fourreau)

Sevar (bas) Un forfait la poursuit.

Ecoutons.

Frédégonde (avec joie et un air de mystère)

Ce grand coup fut caché dans la nuit.
La couronne est à nous. Macbeth pourquoi la rendre?
(Avec le geste d'une femme qui porte plusieurs coups de poignard dans les ténèbres)
Sur le fils à son tour . . . .
Ciel! que vais-je entendre!

Sevár
Fredegonde (en s'applaudissant, et avec la joie de l'ambition satisfaite)
Oui, tout est consommé, mes enfants régneront.
(Avec la complaisance et le plaisir de la tendresse maternelle)
Que j'essaye, Ô mon fils, ce bandeau sur ton front,
(Tâchant de rappeler un souvenir vague à sa mémoire)
Qui m'a donc dit ces mots? 'Va, le ciel te fit mère.'
(Avec serrement de cœur)
S'ils éprouvaient les coups d'une main meurtrière!
(Très tendrement)
Ô ciel!
(Portant sa main à son nez avec repugnance)
Toujours ce sang!
(Très tendrement)
Je verrais leur trépas!

(Avec larmes)
Moi, leur mère!
(Avec terreur, se grattant la main)
Ce sang ne s'effacera pas!
(Avec la plus grands douleur)
Ô dieux!
(En se grattant la main vivement)
Disparaîs, donc, misérable vestige!
(Avec la plus tendre compassion)
Mon fils, mon cher enfant!
(se grattant la main plus vivement encore)
Disparaîs, donc, te dis-je!
(Se grattant la main avec un dépit furieux)
Jamais! jamais! jamais!
(Comme si elle sentait un poignard dans son sein)
Mon coeur est déchiré.
(Avec de longs soupirs, les plus douloureux, et tires
du plus profond de son coeur.)
Oh! oh! oh!
(Son front s'éclaircit par degrés, et passe insensiblement
de la plus profonde douleur à la joie et à la plus
vive espérance.)
Quel espoir dans mon sein est rentré?
(tous bas, comme appelant Macbeth pendant la nuit, et
lui montrant le lit de Malcolm qu'elle croit voir)
Macbeth! Malcolm est là.
(Avec ardeur)
Viens.
(Croyant le voir hésiter, et levant les épaules de pitié)
Comme il s'intimide!
(Decidée à agir seule)
Allons,
(Avec joie)
Il dort.
(Avec la confiance de la certitude, et dans le plus
profond sommeil)
Je veille.
(Elle regarde le flambeau d'un œil fixe; elle le
prend et se lève)
Et ce flambeau me guide.
(Elle marche vers le côté du théâtre par lequel elle
doit sortir. S'arrêtant tout à coup avec l'air du
désir et de l'impatience, croyant entendre sonner l'heure.
Sa mort sonne.
(Avec la plus grande attention, immobile, le bras droit étendu, et marquant chaque heure avec ses doigts.)

Une.... Deux.
(Croyant marcher droit au lit de Malcom.)

C'est l'instant de frapper.
(Elle tire son poignard, et se retire, toujours dormant, sous l'une des voûtes.)

It is difficult for me to judge the play fairly.
To a lover of Shakespeare, it cannot but seem like a travesty, a cold artificial imitation; yet the audience to whom it was played would not have appreciated the original, and did appreciate the adaptation.

So Ducis interweaves his three strands: his adaptation of Shakespeare provides him with the outline of the story and general situation; the characters of Macbeth, Fredégonde and Duncan, the atmosphere of tragic and supernatural terror, and certain of the most striking scenes. To satisfy the classical tradition, Ducis
reduces the play to twenty-four hours, avoids most of the action, and banishes the witches from the actual stage; he reduces the number of characters, and idealises those that remain; he teaches a more definite moral lesson, and avoids revolting horror; and he refines and embelishes the style. The romantic temper of the day provided the new rustic plot of Siward and Malcolm, much sensibility and would-be tragic terror, the picture of an ideal monarchy, and considerably increased picturesqueness of style. The three influences share the honours pretty equally, but it will be noticed that the effect of the Classical Tradition was mainly restriction and expurgation. Because the Romantic influence was constructive and because it arrayed itself with that of Shakespeare against the restrictions of the Classical Tradition, it dominated. Despite the obedience to most of the older rules, "Macbeth" is less a classical play than a romantic melodrama, with a background of the wild woods and mountains of "La vertu Écosse" the land of romance.
"The time has been,
That when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools: this is more strange
Than such a murder is.

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation is those eyes
Which thou dost glare with

Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me.

(Act III. Sc. 4.)

Arrête! Eh! depuis quand couverts de leurs lambeaux,
Des spectres déchaînés sortent-ils des tombeaux?
Viens-tu régner encore du sein de la mort même,
Et de ton front hideux souiller le diadème?
Et quand tu m'offriras tes yeux étincelants,
Et ta tête blanchie, et tes cheveux sanglants......

(avec étonnement) Ciel!
L'univers jamais n'a-t-il donc vu des crimes?
Le cercueil autrefois renfermait ses victimes;
La tombe était fidèle: aujourd'hui révoltée
Les morts dans nos palais rentrent de tous côtés.

(Act IV. Sc. 4.)
CHAPTER VIII. King John.

Plan.

1. The whole play based on one scene from Shakespeare.
2. Changes of plot.
4. The characters.
5. The moral tone.
Chapter VIII. King John.

After 'Macbeth', seven years passed, and then in 1791 and 1792 appeared another pair of plays 'Jean Sans-Terre' and 'Othello'. While the other adaptations met with brilliant success in their own day, 'John' was a failure, and even Ducis's efforts to improve it did not make much difference.

Ducis said himself that he was greatly struck by one scene in Shakespeare's play, the one where Arthur pleads with Hubert to spare his eyes, and that he desired to reproduce it. The rest of the play was quite unsuitable for adaptation and consequently Ducis has had to write a new play in which to set the scene he admired. His new plot is not very successful. It is artificial and improbable, and not convincing in any way.

The only other element of Shakespeare's play that Ducis has kept is the tragic figure of Constance, and her love and grief. But he has given her a rather insignificant rôle and has robbed her of all individuality, if he has left her nobility of character. The stormy, passionate princess of Shakespeare's play, with her torrent of words, has disappeared and given place to a conventional mother, who, like Fredégonde, keeps reiterating 'Je suis mère', and who depends entirely for her success on an appeal to the sensibility and emotionalism of the audience.

In 'Jean Sans-Terre' the scene on which the play turns is a misunderstanding of Shakespeare. Ducis says in his 'Avertissement' - "On ignore point que c'est Shakespeare qui m'a fourni la scène où le roi Jean engage Hubert à bruler les yeux du jeune Arthur avec un fer rouge, et celle où Hubert tâche, mais en vain, d'éluder cette horrible commission. Ces deux scènes sont dignes du pinceau de ce grand poète, quand il excelle; et c'est la seconde de ces deux scènes où Arthur parle avec tant de charmes et d'éloquence à Hubert, qui m'a comme
force par la vive émotion dont elle m'a penetree, a faire passer ce sujet sur notre théâtre." Ducis evidently thought that in Shakespeare's play Arthur is actually blinded; while in reality, his prayers prevail on Hubert, and when he dies in attempting to escape, he has not lost his eyes. This misconception of Ducis results in a species of confusion at the end of his famous scene, for he copies Shakespeare closely in making Hubert yield to Arthur's entreaties—

"Je me charge de tout. Je crois devoir suspendre,

Pour quelques temps encore, l'ordre que j'ai reçu."

Arthur appears to be saved, and Hubert says to the soldiers "Vous, soldats, laissez-nous", and yet the soldiers drag Arthur out, and the next that we hear is that John has caused his order to be executed by some one else, though he had no reason to doubt Hubert's fidelity. When Arthur reappears, he is blind, and Ducis makes the most of his pitiful situation (One wonders whether he was thinking at all of Gloucester in 'Lear', and the scenes that he had to forego there.)

It was apparently this blinding of Arthur that caused the fall of the play when it was first performed. Ducis says—"Je me suis aperçu, aux représentations de cette tragédie, lorsqu'elle était en cinq actes, que les deux derniers n'interessaient que faiblement: mais c'est le public, que le sentiment ne trompe jamais, qui m'a ouvert les yeux; c'est lui, et lui seul, qui m'a fait connaître cette faute essentielle à laquelle peut-être j'ai été entraîné, sans le savoir, par l'affection même dont je m'étais passionné pour mon sujet. J'aurais dû penser que, du moment où Arthur, cet enfant si aimable et si malheureux, est privé de la vue, c'est, en quelque sorte, pour le public, comme s'il était privé de la vie. Il semble que la lumière du jour, en s'éteignant pour lui, fasse disparaître en même temps, l'intérêt de la pièce pour le spectateur. J'ai donc pris le parti de la reserrer en trois actes, et de courir à grands pas vers mon dénouement. en hâtant la mort d'Arthur et de sa mère.
Ij fait périr ce prince par la main du roi son oncle; parce qu’en effet
moi perfide et barbare le poignarda lui-même, et qu’il m’eût été
impossible de démentir l’histoire sur un fait aussi connu; mais j’ai cru
voir le punir, en quelque façon en lui faisant annoncer par Hubert une
se peut funeste et terrible, qu’il trouverait dans une coupe empoisonnée; et
s’ils thi en cela Shakespeare, qui le fait expirer devant les spectateurs,
de ce genre de mort, dans les douleurs les plus cruelles."

Ducis was quite right in thinking that the interest of the audience
falters when Arthur has lost his eyes: one is impatient to see death
come to the poor little prince for whom life is no longer worth living.

The method of hastening 'à grands pas' towards the dénouement has
drawbacks. The dénouement becomes an utter confusion: Arthur and
Constance follow confidently the Breton who has come to tell them of the
complete victory of the insurgents and discomfiture of John; and yet, a
moment later, John appears, unharmed, to announce that he has just killed
Constance and Arthur. One wonders what the soldiers were doing to allow
John thus to wreak his vengeance; and why John had not more sense than
to make his position a hundred fold more difficult in the hour of defeat
by such a piece of cruelty — unless, indeed, he thought a dead child less
pitiful than a blinded one. Hubert’s prophetic outburst, however necessary
it may be to punish the King, seems rather too detailed and accurate to
be convincing.

It was quite impossible for Ducis to keep Shakespeare’s play
as it stands. In the first place, it violates all the unities: it is the
story of a war that extends over many months, and is fought in two
countries, France and England; and to a Frenchman, it has no unity of
action, for there is not only the story of Arthur, but that of John and
Philip of France, John and the Catholic Church, John and his nobles,
the Dauphin and Blanche of Castille, and that strange, fiery Bastard with his sudden change in fortune. It is a perfect example of an English 'epic' play - a period of history set upon the stage - and to a French dramatist, there was material for half-a-dozen plays. The incident that Ducis chooses is that of Arthur's capture and death. He calls his play "Jean Sans-Terre ou la Mort d'Arthur"; while the English one is entitled "The Life and Death of King John".

But the incident of Arthur's death alone was not enough to make a tragedy, and it was necessary to add something to fill up the acts. Ducis has not kept anything of Shakespeare's plot. The war between France and England and the French invasion have disappeared as they did in "King Lear". Probably Ducis felt that a war between France and England resembled too much a topical allusion, and suggested various ideas not in keeping with tragedy. Moreover, a war presented almost insuperable difficulties of time and place. Ducis knew of the strained relations between John and his people, and a rising of the English replaces the foreign invasion.

Ducis wished to keep Constance, and had to solve the problem of how to bring her to England. He falls back on the favourite 18th century way of arranging for the presence of someone whose presence would not be tolerated - an unknown identity. Every time Constance appears, she is "Constance sous le nom d'Adèle".

The scene is laid in the tower of London, and Hubert becomes "commandant en chef de la tour de Londres", with Neville as second in command, and second in villainy to Jean. The characters do not go in the usual pairs of principal and confidant: there is no confidant in the play. The remaining character is Kermaudec, an old Breton who is plotting for the restoration of Arthur to his states in Brittany - not for his elevation to the English throne, which they do not seek at all.
The characters, then, are:

Jean - roi d'Angleterre, surnommé Jean Sans-Terre
Constance - duchesse de Bretagne, veuve de Godefroi, frère de Jean Sans-Terre et mère d'Arthur, sous le nom d'Adele.
Arthur - jeune prince, âgé de dix ans, fils de Godefroi et de Constance, neveu du roi.
Hubert - commandant en chef de la tour de Londres
Névil - commandant en second dans cette tour
Kermadeuc - vieillard Breton.

Un officier
Un soldat

Personnages muets: Gardes du roi Jean

Troupe de soldats

Peuple

Acte I

The King sends for Hubert and Névil, and confides to them his fear of young Arthur. Hubert declares that Jean has no right to keep the prince, and ought to send him back to his estates in Brittany.

Névil, on the other hand counsels the keeping of Arthur as a necessary hostage, and maintains that since Jean has spread the false report of Arthur's blindness, he has nothing to fear from the people. Hubert thinks that it is the way to rouse people's sympathy and indignation.

Hubert is left alone to interview the prince. Arthur asks in vain for news of his mother. Then follows an imitation of Shakespeare's dialogue between Hubert and Arthur. But Ducis adds this incident:

Arthur confesses to Hubert that upon a cross hung round his neck by his mother he has engraved the words "Anglais, sauvez Arthur", and has thrown it from his prison window, in the hope that it might stir men to rise and deliver him.

Jean returns to announce that they have caught the chief of the rebels, an old Breton. There is already in the Tower, a young woman
named Adèle, captured in the last rising on Arthur's behalf. Jean charges Hubert to allow her to talk to the old Breton, and to listen in the hope of surprising the secret of both.

II

Kermadeuc and 'Constance sous le nom d'Adèle' are allowed to meet. Kermadeuc laments that he will never again see his sovereign Constance, and tells the stranger of his plot on Arthur's behalf. He was wandering round the outside of the tower when he saw something thrown from a window. He picked it up, and found it was Arthur's cross, proving his presence in the tower. At this intelligence, 'Adèle' betrays her identity by the cry 'Mon enfant! Arthur, mon cher Arthur!'. Kermadeuc salutes his sovereign, and tells her he has given the cross for safe keeping to one Kerbeck, who is to rally the party.

At this juncture Hubert appears, having listened to all the conversation. His heart, however, is touched by the plight of the unhappy mother and son, and he promises to help them as far as he can. Constance begs to see her son, and promises not to reveal herself. Hubert goes to seek Arthur, and brings him in. The scene that follows is simply to appeal to the sensibility of the audience, for it has no place in the plot. Arthur asks for news of his mother, and cries imploringly 'Ma mère! ... Viens près de moi! ? Constance, hidden in her recess cries 'O contrainte cruelle! .......Je meurs! " Arthur continues to call on his mother, and thereby to torture Constance who dare not betray her presence. Then Hubert hears the sound of someone coming, and dismisses them all.

Jean returns, and there follows an imitation of the scene where the King in Shakespeare protests his fondness for Hubert, and his intention to show him favour, and then gives him the horrible commission to remove the serpent in his path - but not by death, by making true the rumour that is abroad of Arthur's blindness.
III. Hubert, left alone, hesitates before the task that has been set him. Then Arthur enters, and there follows the scene of the play, where Arthur pleads for his eyes. Hubert gives way and postpones the order, but the soldiers lead off Arthur (One wonders why Hubert, the commander, who has just said "Vous, soldats, laissez-nous" does not attempt to keep Arthur with him.)

Nevil enters to tell Hubert that the King has changed his purpose: there is a rumour of Constance's presence in London - if it is confirmed Arthur is to be killed outright; if it is not, the first order is to be carried out by an unknown hand. While they are still speaking, an officer comes to tell them that Arthur has been blinded. The King has given orders that he is to be handed over to the care of "Adèle". She is overjoyed to hear that she is to care for her son, but Hubert has to add the terrible news of Arthur's blindness. Constance's horror can be imagined. Hubert implores her for the sake of her own and Arthur's safety, not to reveal her identity lest the King should hear of it. Arthur is led in by Hubert, and entrusted to the strange woman, whose voice resembles that of his mother, but who declares she is not. The emotional possibilities of the scene are fully exploited, until finally Constance can resist no longer, and reveals herself to her son.

The officer brings the news that the King in great anger demands to see the four, Adèle, Arthur, Hubert and Kermadeuc, as the result of an interview he has just had with a newly captured conspirator. Jean questions Kermadeuc closely, and produces Arthur's cross which has fallen into his hands. To save Kermadeuc, Arthur confesses the truth. The King says he will send them all to Pomfret, the most dreaded prison of all. Adèle's terror moves him, and he offers her her liberty. She, naturally wishing to remain with Arthur refuses it, thereby arousing all Jean's suspicion. He separates Constance and Arthur, and
the blind prince's cry "Ma mère!" betrays them both. Constance's reproach to Hubert betrays to Jean the sympathy of his lieutenant for the prisoners, and Hubert turns on Jean with bitter reproach and condemnation.

While the King is ordering a general arrest, the officer brings the news that a popular rising is in progress, and the King goes to quell it. Kermadeuc breaks in a moment later to tell them that Névil is dead, and Hubert is leading the insurgents. Jean is unarmed, and himself being dragged into the tower, Constance and Arthur gladly follow Kermadeuc. Hubert and the officer come to seek them, and find them gone; then the insurgents break in, with Jean, who points to the bodies of the two victims that he has just slain with a concealed dagger. Hubert holds back the people who would attack Jean, and thunders at him the long prophecy of his death based on Shakespeare's closing scenes. He concludes

"Dans ton sein entr'ouvert, de tes mains arrache,
Par ses poisons brulants ton coeur sera seché;
Il paraîtra, ce coeur, sous l'œil de tes victimes
Que partout sous ces murs entasseront tes crimes.
Tous ces mènes sanglants, sortis de leurs tombeaux,
Viendront près de ton lit, contempler tes lambeaux;
Et dans ce même instant où ton effroi commence
L'Eternel sur tes pas a place sa vengeance."

Jules Lemaitre has defined the difference between tragedy and melodrama by saying that tragedy is the play of character and passions upon one another, melodrama an extraordinary combination of fortuitous events. The glory of French tragedy was that it dispensed with fortuitous events, and made each link in the close chain of action follow naturally and inevitably from the last, and what the characters
did depend on what they were. Ducis had not power to conceive characters with enough depth and reality to make a whole action follow from them, and he fell back more and more on the help of fortuitous events. In an English play, one accepts without question a rambling story, where the scenes do not all follow from one another, provided that it is a true representation of life, with characters that are real men and women - one does not look for a logical argument. But a French play, so much more condensed and simplified, loses its virtue if it loses its clearness and logic.

It is here that 'Jean Sans-Terre' fails: it does not satisfy the mind as a clearly-planned piece of logic. It is confused and disjointed, and provides neither an imitation of life that satisfies one philosophically, nor a well constructed, logical action that satisfies one intellectually. There is no action, only a series of interviews, either between Hubert and the prisoners, or between Hubert and the King who keeps coming back to report some new development or capture in connection with the rising that appears to be going on outside, and to issue further orders.

Some of the scenes are dramatic in themselves, but are spoilt by the artificiality of the verse, or by the overdrawn emotional effect. The best are those imitated from Shakespeare, since it was in those that Ducis felt inspired - the others are written mainly to connect them. Hubert's outburst of invective against Jean, when he finds he can no longer serve Constance and Arthur by concealment, is good in its fiery indignation, though it is marred by faults of style.

The characters The main characters have been imitated closely from Shakespeare, but have lost much of their individuality, as inevitably happens in Ducis. Jean is too like the other villains, bloodthirsty and
treacherous and afraid of others' treachery. He is only occupied by his desire to crush the rising and dispose of Arthur - he has not the many conflicting claims and interests, hopes and fears, that make of Shakespeare's John such a strange figure, blustering and mean and cowardly, alternately bold in wickedness or shaking before its consequences. Jean is always a hardened villain, urged to villainy by the fear of his enemies, which Ducis makes the retribution of wickedness.

Hubert, instead of a rough, blunt soldier, becomes virtuous, with the 18th century taste for sensibility and moralising. In Shakespeare he is sincerely devoted to John, and prepared to carry out even his most brutal orders, until the pleading of Arthur surprises his kindness and on a sudden impulse he leaves the order unfulfilled. Except in that one instance he never seems to have thought of opposing John. But Ducis's Hubert condemns Jean's wickedness from the beginning and retains his post in the tower only to help the prisoners, and frustrate the King's injustice. He says:

"Demeurons dans ce séjour du crime.
Peut-être j'y pourrais sauver quelque victime.
Auprès d'un roi cruel, de son peuple ennemi,
L'innocence à toute heure a besoin d'un ami."

He plays a double part: apparently Jean's faithful servant, he is all the time opposing his schemes, and trying to save his victims. He becomes conventional, easily moved to transports of pity or tenderness; but he is "sympathique" in his determined efforts to save Arthur and Constance, and admirable in his fearless attack on the King when his attitude has been betrayed. The change from Shakespeare's Hubert to Ducis's is typical of the difference between their plays: from a very lifelike man-at-arms to a sort of abstract type of generosity and virtue and sensibility. A quotation from some of his monologues will indicate the manner of man he is:
"Cher Arthur quel sera ton destin aujourd'hui?
Croirai-je enfin pour toi que le ciel se déclare?
Mais hélàs! Je crains tout d'un roi sombre et barbare.
Noble et jeune captif qu'on prive de son rang,
À quoi tiennent tes jours? À la peur d'un tyran.
Va, je te servirai jusqu'à ma dernière heure.
O le sang de mes rois, est-ce là ta demeure?
Dieu! soustrais son enfance à de perfides coups!
Mais ouvrons. Ma main tremble.

(Acte I - 3.)

"Ai-je assez contenu mon horreur, mon effroi!
Oh, maintenant mes pleurs, coulez, sans vous contraindre!
Des regards du méchant vous n'avez rien à craindre.
Dès son aurore, hélàs! Ô mon prince! Ô mon roi!
L'étoile brillant du jour est donc éteint pour toi!
Est-ce là l'héritier du sceptre d'Angleterre?
Oh ciel! dans quel état le rendrai-je à sa mère?"

(Acte III - 1.)

His outburst of condemnation -

"Oui, je servais le ciel, l'honneur et la nature,
La veuve d'un héros, le fils de Godefroi.
Dans quel état, barbare, as-tu réduit mon roi!
Enfant à qui le ciel prodigua tant de charmes,
Pour la dernière fois sois baigné de mes larmes.
Voilà, voilà ta mère! Ah! vois-tu, malheureux,
Ces voûtes s'indigner à ton aspect affreux,
Ces pierres, ces anneaux, moins durs que tes entrailles,
S'élèver contre toi du sein de ses murailles?
Non: je n'invoque plus, pour payer tes forfaits,
Cette foudre qui gronde et ne punit jamais,
Cieux, frappez les tyrans par un autre tonnerre!
Du sort de cet enfant instruisez l'Angleterre!
Qu'à ce bruit chaque mère, au lieu de s'affliger,
Croie avoir sur lui seul un enfant à venger!
Pour déchirer tes yeux par un juste supplice,
Qu'un fer entre leurs mains étincelle et rougisse!
Ou plutôt, que tes yeux, de ton ombre alarmés,
Ne se rouvrent jamais par la terreur fermés!
Règne, mais en tremblant, muet, pâle, immobile,
Rampant sous ces cachots pour chercher un asyle,
Sechant, mourant enfin de l'éternel effroi
Que réserva le ciel aux tyrans tels que toi.

(Acte III. - Sc 13)

Constance is a pathetic figure of maternal love and distress, and that is all. One thinks of Shakespeare's Constance as of a person one has known; she is real and living and startling, with her passionate nature, so quick to break out in fiery invective, or stormy grief. Ducis's Constance comes to the mind rather as an idea than as a person. She is tearful and pathetic, and most of her speeches are exclamations and lamentations.

"Votre pitié me touche.
Heïlas! mes longs malheurs m'avaient fermé la bouche.
Qu'il est doux pour ce coeur qui trop longtemps s'est tu
D'entendre encore du moins l'accent de la vertu!

(Acte II - 2.)

Oh dieu!
O contrainte cruelle!
Je meurs! O constance! O tourment!
Arthur! mon cher Arthur!

"Je me meurs! O mon fils! Quel monstre! Je succombe!
Arthur! mon cher Arthur! mon enfant!

Ah! la tombe

Va s’ouvrir pour tous deux.

Le ciel me ténera.

J’armerai l’Angleterre et Londres m’entendra.
Frémis, tyran, frémis. On verra mes misères.
Mon enfant dans les bras, j’appellera mes mères.
Je me meurs, je me meurs ..., O jour! fuis de mes yeux,
Puisque mon cher Arthur ne peut plus voir les cieux!"

(Artre III. - 8.)

Arthur is always "cet enfant si aimable", and is the most attractive
of the characters. His one fault is that he has too much of the
sententiousness of the 18th century, which does not very well become a
child of ten, as Ducis makes him; and with that, an uncanny accuracy in
making just the remarks which will produce the most pathetic effect on
the audience, who know what he does not, that his mother is there, or
that Hubert is meditating such a fell purpose. Otherwise Arthur is
charming, and, usually, at least, natural.

Névil is the counsellor of evil - Narcisse, Polonius or Oswald.
He appears very little. Kermadeuc is like Kent, virtue and loyalty. He
too is sententious and pompous for the most part, but he is admirable
in the scene where he serenely faces the angry King, and where his
answers in their brevity and simplicity are infinitely more effective
than his fine speeches.

Le roi

"Que cherchais-tu dans Londres? Est-ce un asyle?

Kermadeuc

Moi!

Je n’en ai pas besoin.
Le roi

Kermadeuc

C'est mon secret.

Le roi

Je veux pénétrer ce mystère.

Kermadeuc

Tu ne le sauras point.

Le roi

Les rois (l'ignores-tu?)

De se faire obéir ont toujours la vertu.

Kermadeuc

Je sais mourir.

Le roi

Crois-moi, vieillard dur et farouche,

Les supplices bientôt pourront t'ouvrir la bouche.

Kermadeuc

Je sais souffrir.

Le roi

Peut-être. Et le tourment plus fort ...

Kermadeuc

Un Breton brave tout, la douleur et la mort."

(Acte III. - 13)

Moral Tone

The impression left by Shakespeare's 'King John' is a rather humiliating one of the pettiness and inconstancy of human nature, and the power of self-interest over generosity and disinterestedness. The French King's zeal in his crusade for an oppressed and fatherless boy is soon chilled by the offer of an advantageous marriage for his son; John's bold defiance of an "Italian priest's" interference in his national affairs soon melts into submission when he has to suffer for defiance; the Dauphin's righteous war against a heretic reveals its true character when the heretic repents and the war goes on; the helplessness of a child is powerless to move John to pity, but the consequences to himself of his cowardly brutality move him to instant and frantic repentance. The only bright gleam in the dark picture is at the end, in the splendid recovery of England, once the King is dead who by his cruelty and injustices divorced his cause from his country's, and left his people hesitating which way lay their duty. John had divided his country and his people, and they had suffered defeat in
division; but when he is dead, the selfishness and meanness that have
reigned are lost in the glory of a people’s devotion, and the
magnificent cry -

"This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
If England to itself do rest but true."

Shakespeare’s play is in some sort a national play, where the
interest that counts most is that of England, and where the death of
Arthur is only an incident. In Ducis’s play all the interest is in the
opposition of a child and an unscrupulous man, and above all in the efforts
of Jean’s own officer Hubert to frustrate his master’s schemes and save
innocence from destruction. The moral atmosphere is there, as the classical
tradition required it should be, and the downfall of wickedness is at
least promised, if not shown; but there is no such definite moral lesson
as in the other plays. The object of the play is to present a pathetic
incident, rather than any problem-situation: and the only possible
struggle between conflicting duties or sentiments would be in the soul
of Hubert, between his duty to Jean and to Arthur; but Hubert never
hesitates, and is wholly on the side of Arthur from the beginning. The
play falls outside the ordinary category of French tragedies, and
resembles an English story-play - and the French public showed its
disapproval of the departure from accepted standards. The play lacked
the recommendation of the English story-play, reality and life-likeness;
it is impossibly artificial, and the estimate of the French public was
a just one.
One thing of interest to note is how once again Ducis uses the theme of the love between parents and children. It seemed to fascinate him, for it appears in every one of his adaptations, whether Shakespeare had given any justification for it or not. It is the central theme of 'Hamlet', 'Romeo et Juliette' and 'Lear'; it appears in 'Macbeth', since it was for her child that Frédegonde sinned; in 'Jean Sans-Terre' it is second only to the interest of Hubert's relations with Arthur; and even in 'Othello', as will be seen, the story turns on Deademona's devotion to her father. It seemed to interest Ducis more than the love between man and woman, and it is in the devotion of father or mother and child that he seeks his pathetic effects. In 'Le Roi Lear', Helmonde marries Edgard, but there is no word of love in the whole play—everything else is swallowed up in the adoration of Lear for his daughters, and of Helmonde for her father. In 'Jean-Sans Terre' one of the principal themes is the longing of the little prince for his mother, and her devotion to him. She says "Je suis mère" as Lear had said "Je suis père" and those words seemed to sum up her whole existence.

Arthur asks Hubert

"Dites-moi, cher Hubert, avez-vous des enfants?"

and Hubert replies, (in one of the most stilted of all Ducis's phrases)

"L'hymen ne m'a jamais fait de si chers présents";

and later, when Constance is begging to see her son, she asks

"Estes-vous père?"

Hubert

"Moi! ce nom m'est étranger

Constance

"Je n'en obtiendrai rien."

It is unfortunate that Ducis's execution was not equal to his conception, and that so often his representation of filial or parental love became sentimental or sententious; but at least his conception is a noble one, and in spite of his failures in many ways, he does convey the majesty of the relationship that he revered so highly himself.
The romantic taste for what is sinister and horrible possibly gave the scene between Hubert and Arthur an additional charm for Ducis. It would rouse not only the pity of the audience, but also their terror, for what can be more horrible than the blinding of a child? Since it is not done on the stage, it has not the crude and spectacular horror of Shakespeare's blinding of Gloucester, but the imagination could play on the scene, and give it horror enough. The atmosphere of the gloomy prison, within whose frowning walls so many dark and dreadful things were done, would add further to the romantic horror of the situation.

By 1791, the Revolution was well on its way, and Ducis cannot but have been deeply moved by the stirring events of the past years. Some echo of them, perhaps is heard in the passionate condemnation of tyranny and injustice that breathes through the play. One's sympathy is all with the people in their rising against a tyrant who has wronged them. The men of London appear only as a crowd in the doorway at the end, but it is they who have defeated Jean, and evidently Ducis felt it was a right and noble thing that they should attack a monarch who was unworthy of his trust, be it divinely granted or no. The glory of humanity, that men so admired in those days is in the lines:

**Constance**

Vous êtes donc encore sensible à la pitié?

**Hubert**

Ne suis-je pas un homme?

**Constance**

Ah jamais sur la terre,

Les tyrans n'éteindront ce sacré caractère.

Avec ce sentiment hélas! tout cœur est né;

L'homme gémit partout sur l'homme infortuné.

(Acte II. Sc.3.)
It is significant of the weakening of classical tradition that Ducis has reduced his play from the sacred five acts to three, and has not even thought it necessary to apologise for it, but has announced it as a matter of course. Moreover, the play is full of monologues - not one long one, but a number of short ones, for Hubert is left alone on the stage between each set of interviews, with the King, with Arthur or with Constance.

The classical atmosphere of the play is provided by the keeping of the unities - and strictly in this case; the nobility of characters and speech; the banishing from the stage itself of the merely spectacular such as the blinding of Arthur and the combat; the moral lesson of the beauty of maternal love, and the final triumph of justice over injustice; and above all, by certain conventions and by the style. Ducis has made full use of the concealed identity of Constance and the recognition scenes it makes possible; the favourite convention of the "billet" which betrays or incriminates appears in a slightly altered form - in this case it is the cross with the words 'Anglais, sauvez Arthur' (a reminiscence, perhaps of Zaire.)

The style, above all, betrays the classical convention - its "grand" way of saying simple things: Hubert's fashion of saying "Je n'ai pas d'enfants" was "L'hymen ne m'a jamais fait de si chers présents". Even Arthur, who sometimes talks with the charm and simplicity that Ducis meant him to have, can say such things as:

"Dans mon berceau, ma mère, à ma naissance,
Se plût d'un don bien cher à parer mon enfance,
D'une croix que toujours, fidèle à son dessein,
Avec respect, Hubert, je portai sur mon sein."

The scenes that inspired the play, those between Hubert and Arthur in prison, are the most interesting. Ducis himself mentions also John's
commission to Hubert, but he has not reproduced this so well: the order is different — blinding, not death — but John’s hint of a thing he scarcely dare say is the same, and well done; the metaphor of the serpent in the path that is so natural in Shakespeare, has not been skilfully treated and becomes somewhat ludicrous.

John

"I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way;
And whereso'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me: dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper.

Hubert

And I'll keep him so,
That he shall not offend your majesty.

John

Death.

Hubert

My lord?

John

A grave.

Hubert

He shall not live.

John

Enough.

I could be merry now. Hubert, I love thee;
Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee:
Remember."

(Act III, Sc 3.)

Le roi

"Hubert, je vois sur mon chemin
Un serpent qui . . ."

Hubert

Parlez

Qui m'épouvante.

Le roi

Enfin?

Hubert

Qui s'accroît tous les jours .... Qui vit dans ce lieu même
Que tu connais.

Hubert

Arthur?
C'est lui. Le rang suprême
Le jour tant qu'il vivra me seront odieux.
Je crois le voir l'entendre, à toute heure, en tous lieux.
Il faut de ce tourment qu'enfin je me délivre?
Vous voulez donc sa perte et qu'il cesse de vivre?
Oh non! je ne veux point ordonner son trépas.
Il n'est point nécessaire.
Il ne mourra donc pas?
Mais quels sont vos désirs?
Tu sais que l'Angleterre
croit ses yeux des longtemps fermés à la lumière;
Il faut, mon cher Hubert, sans que rien nous retienne,
Il faut que ce faux bruit . . . .
Achevez
Qu'il devienne
Vrai, vrai. Tu m'as compris; tu peux tout dans ce lieu
Tu ne veux point sa mort. Sauve ton maître. Adieu.
(Acte II. Sc 7.)
You are sad.
Indeed, I have been merrier.
Mercy on me!
Methinks nobody should be sad but I;
Yet I remember, when I was in France,
Young gentlemen would be as sad as night,
Only for wantonness. By my christendom,
So I were out of prison and kept sheep,
I should be as merry as the day is long;
And so I would be here, but that I doubt
My uncle practises more harm to me;
He is afraid of me and I of him.
Is it my fault that I was Godfrey's son?
No, indeed, is't not; and I would to heaven
I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert."

O, save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out
Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.
Give me the iron, I say, and bind him here.
Alas! what need you be so boisterous-rough?
I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still.
For heaven sake, Hubert, let me not be bound!
Nay, hear me, Hubert, drive these men away,
And I will sit as quiet as a lamb;
I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word,
Nor look upon the iron angrily:
Thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you,
Whatever torment you do put me to.

O spare mine eyes,
Though to no use but still to look on you!
Lo, by my troth, the instrument is cold,
And would not harm me.

I can heat it, boy.

No, in good sooth, the fire is dead with grief,
Being create for comfort, to be used
In undeserved extremes; see else yourself;
There is no malice in this burning coal;
The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit out
And strew'd repentant ashes on his head.

(Act IV. Sc 1.)
Vous êtes triste, Hubert!

Oui.

D'où vient ce nuage?

J'ai cru que j'avais seul la tristesse en partage. Si j'étais libre, Hubert, comme un simple berger, aucun chagrin, je crois, ne viendrait m'affliger. Je vivrais, même ici, content, et sans me plaindre. Mais mon oncle me craint, je dois aussi le craindre. Hélas! qu'ai-je donc fait? Est-ce ma faute à moi, Hubert, si je suis né le fils de Godefroi?

Ah! plût au ciel, Hubert, que vous fussiez mon père! Car vous m'aimeriez, vous.

Moi!

Quel regard sévère!

Vous aurais-je offensé?

Non

Pourquoi, donc, hélas!

Votre œil est-il changé, si le cœur ne l'est pas? D'où vient donc que pour moi vous n'êtes plus le même? N'aimez-vous plus Arthur autant qu'Arthur vous aime?

Les voilà! Cher Hubert, sauvez-moi! Justes cieux!

Je crois qu'en ce moment, ils m'arrêtent les yeux.

Faudrait-til le lier?

Je vais être immobile

Tenez, me voilà doux, soumis, muet, tranquille, Ah! ne m'attachez pas. Hubert, défendez-moi!

Je suis le fils d'un prince, et le neveu d'un roi. J'ai perdu mes états, ma liberté, ma mère.

Laissez-moi du soleil voir encore la lumière.
Oh! laissez-moi mes yeux. Voyez, le feu s'èteint.
Le fer s'est refroidi. C'est le ciel qui me plaint;
Ce fer, ce feu, pour moi, n'ont plus rien de terrible.
Hubert, vous qui m'aimiez, seriez-vous insensible?
Mais non, vous soupirez, votre œil est sans courroux.
Des pleurs... Hubert! Hubert!

Soldats, retirez-vous

J'ai revu mon ami. Son cœur vient de se rendre.
Je me charge de tout. Je crois devoir suspendre,
Pour quelque temps encore l'ordre que j'ai reçu.
Je m'étais bien douté que vous seriez vaincu.

Silence!

Hubert!

Sortez!

Hubert!

Sortez, vous dis-je!

Vous soldats, laissez-nous."

(Acte III. Sc 3.)

The first two adaptations, 'Hamlet' and in a less degree 'Romeo et Juliette' had kept some of the virtues as well as the vices of the fast decaying classical tradition. The ideal of that tradition was a well-knit plot, moving swiftly to its conclusion, and forming an artistic whole; an action that depended on the play of character and passion; a majesty of character and conduct that lifts one into an idealised world. All these things the first plays of Ducis possessed at least in some measure: the plots, after a little fumbling at the beginning sweep on to their conclusion, and are determined by the passions of the characters - filial devotion, love or hatred. In spite of conventionality there is in them the lofty ideal of honour and sacrifice that classical
tragedy demands, and even in their stiffness, the characters reproduce something of the real nobility of soul that was in Ducis.

The next two adaptations "Le Roi Léar" and "Macbeth" lose much of their classical character: the plots are not so well constructed, and depend more on outside events. The loftiness of character remains, but the dignity and restraint of classical heroes and heroines is lost in sensibility and emotion. To compensate for what they have lost, they have gained something, a foretaste of romantic ideals. Ducis has not been altogether successful in handling this new element: his pity and terror too often seem to us emotionalism and melodrama expressed in artificial poetic diction, but he was writing for an audience which saw everything through a veil of convention, and shunned crude realities. He gave his countrymen at least a breath of the wind that blows over Shakespeare's moors and heaths, and the witches, the sleep-walking scene, the night of the storm gave them a glimpse of worlds that till then been rigorously excluded from tragedy.

'Jean Sans-Terre' failed because it was equal to neither group of the earlier plays. It has no clear or logical unity and the plot is ill-constructed and unconvincing depending on exterior events. With the exception of the single scene between Arthur and Hubert there is nothing so startling or interesting as in 'Léar' and 'Macbeth'. The play depended entirely on its appeal to the emotions, and much as men loved to weep at that time, it was not enough. Ducis thought the play fell because it dragged on too long after Arthur's blinding; but even in its altered form it is a failure because it is neither artistic, convincing, nor interesting.
CHAPTER IX. Othello

Plan.

1. "Othello" and "Zaïre".
2. The change in Iago's rôle, and its influence on the conception, plot and literary value of the play.
3. The influence of the Classical Tradition in all the changes.
5. The characters.
7. The style: extracts.
Chapter IX. Othello.

The subject of 'Othello' had already inspired one of the greatest of 18th century tragedies, Voltaire's "Zaire". It now in turn inspired Ducis, and it is interesting to compare the treatment of the theme by the two dramatists, for it seems to illustrate the two possible ways of dealing with Shakespeare in presenting him to a French audience. Both plays were brilliantly successful at the time of their first presentation, but while Ducis's is now forgotten and unread, Voltaire's is still sometimes performed, and still finds enthusiastic admirers. If the judgment of posterity is to be accepted, it was Voltaire who had found the better way.

In 'Zaire', Voltaire has borrowed the central idea from Shakespeare and that is all. Zaire like Desdemona is a European woman loved by a man of another and more passionate race, who, under the impulse of mistaken jealousy, kills his bride only to find out his mistake when it is too late. There the resemblance ends: the situation is different, the events are different, the characters are different. Orosmane is a Sultan, and Zaire, of French origin, is his captive. She is betrothed to her captor, and returns his deep love for her. On the eve of her marriage she finds among other captives of Orosmane, her father Lusignan and her brother Nérestan, captured like herself during the Crusades. They explain to her the Christian faith she has forgotten, and implore her not to marry an infidel. Zaire is torn between her love for the noble Orosmane and her loyalty to her newly-found father and the Christian faith. They forbid her to reveal anything to her lover. Orosmane detects the new constraint in Zaire's manner, and is suspicious. He finds her in conversation with the young Frenchman Nérestan, and his suspicions seem confirmed. Zaire is still torn by the struggle between conflicting duties. She goes secretly to meet Nérestan to be baptised, Orosmane learns of her going, and follows her. Her first words to
Nérestan seem to prove her guilt, and in a passion of jealousy, Orosmane stabs her, to be undeceived a moment later by Nérestan's cry—"Ah! ma sœur!" In despair he kills himself beside his bride, after generously liberating his French prisoners.

The story, therefore, is quite different. There is no treacherous friend: the tragedy comes from misunderstanding and not from intentional malevolence. There is a study of jealousy in the soul of Orosmane, but the chief interest centres in Zairè and the age-old struggle between the claims of love and religion. Voltaire has recast the story to fit French ideals—a problem-situation and a struggle, an atmosphere of generosity and sacrifice. He abandons altogether Shakespeare's conception of the ruin of a noble soul by jealousy born of treachery and nourished by slander, and chooses instead the theme that appears in nearly all classical plays—a struggle between conflicting feelings both noble and right in themselves. It becomes the story of a woman torn between her religion and her love, and sacrificed to the impatient jealousy of the lover who does not wait to find out the nature of the barrier that has come between him and his bride. "Zairè" represents the French version of the story as "Le Cid" represents the French version of the theme Shakespeare treats in "Romeo and Juliet."

The play is inferior because its writer had not the genius of Corneille or Racine; but it remains the greatest of Voltaire's tragedies and still gives pleasure. The situation is too artificial and melodramatic, and the characters too superficial: but they have life and attractiveness, and behind the artificiality of the situation is a real problem. The play is interesting and effective.

Ducis has tried to keep what is most essential in Shakespeare, but in a modified form; and to add the elements necessary for a French classical tragedy and lacking in Shakespeare. The result is something which recalls Shakespeare and recalls Voltaire and yet reproduces
neither the one nor the other. Ducis has sought to fuse Shakespeare's conception with Voltaire's, and the result is a loss of unity in the interest of the play. It fails as a study of jealousy fostered by malevolence because it is too half-hearted, and as a study of conflicting loyalties because that element is too obviously a secondary one added by Ducis, and because in any case that was not what Ducis meant the play to be. The witness borne by "Othello" is that it is not possible to produce a work of lasting merit by making a patchwork of what is least "barbarian" in Shakespeare, and what is most essential in French tragedy: you must either take Shakespeare as he is and recognise the fact that he will not conform to your standard; or else take only what is independent of time, place and literary systems - the particular combination of passions and feelings which are universal because they are human; and then recast to suit your national standards the details of the situation which is after all only the setting of the jewel.

Iago's Rôle

The whole of the English 'Othello' depends on Iago's rôle. His evil plotting is the central fact to which he subordinates all else, outward events, the weakness of Roderigo and Cassio, the very love of Othello and Desdemona - by his diabolical cleverness he makes them all serve his purposes. The play treats of the destinies of Othello and Desdemona, but it is Iago who shapes those destinies, and there is nothing and no one in the play that does not directly or indirectly serve to further his schemes. Without him, the play could no longer exist; and to alter his nature and the black purpose that animates him would be to destroy the equilibrium of the whole play, and affect every incident in it. Yet this is what Ducis has done. His own
dramatic genius answered at once to the greatness of Shakespeare's presentation of Iago, but he knew that it was impossible to present Iago as he was on a French stage. He rejected Voltaire's solution of the difficulty — to leave out Iago altogether, and rewrite the play to suit French ideas — and choose the far more difficult path of compromise. The result was not a success: compromise seldom is. He made of Iago only a pale copy of Shakespeare's villain, and left him only half the responsibility of the catastrophe. Instead of his wicked purpose being evident from the very outset of the play, and turning to account all that happens, half of Ducis's "Othello" had nothing at all to do with Pézare (Iago) and would have happened as it did without him. His treachery begins to work half way through the play, and he avails himself of a chance happening which has nothing to do with his scheming, to convince Othello of Heidelberg's (Desdemona's) guilt; but it is only when he is unmasked in the closing scene that the audience learns that he has been the villain — till then no one would suspect him.

Since Pézare's plotting is responsible only for the last scenes of the play, and is not revealed till the very end, something else must be added to take its place, provide an interest through the play and prepare the situation of which Pézare avails himself to bring about the final catastrophe.

The alternative that Ducis chooses is characteristic both of the tradition he served, and of his own personality: he creates in the soul of Heidelberg (as Voltaire did in the soul of Zaire) a struggle between her love, and her devotion to her father, and it is in her ill-advised efforts to serve her father that she puts into the hands of Pézare the instruments of her destruction. Once more, filial devotion becomes one of the chief elements in the tragedy.
Thus all the first part of the play becomes a typical French tragedy: Hédelmone is torn between her father and her lover, and tries to reconcile her duty to both. In her distress she turns, as Pauline did in 'Polyeucte', to a rejected suitor to help her; but her loyalty to Othello is unshaken, and his belief in her is as sure — and there lies the great difference from Shakespeare's tragedy. Othello's jealousy does not grow gradually, it springs to life suddenly and without other warning than a vague misgiving dismissed as soon as conceived; Pézare produces the "proofs" of Hédelmone's guilt, and at once Othello accepts the evidence, takes no heed of his bride's explanation, and deliberately kills her. From the moment Pézare makes his terrible announcement to the end, the play becomes more or less Shakespeare's 'Othello'.

It is evident why such a hybrid play could not be successful: there is no longer a unity of action, for the interest is divided between Hédelmone's efforts to save her father, and Pézare's efforts to ruin his friend; these two elements have originally nothing to do with each other, but are linked together by an entirely "fortuitous event". The result of such an obvious 'join' is that the play becomes artificial, and full of small discrepancies. The treachery of Pézare is so skillfully hidden until the very end that instead of presenting a study of human passions where the audience can watch the working of each, it is more like a detective play, where in the closing scene the very last man one suspected proves to be guilty of the crime. The surprise of Pézare's guilt is too melodramatic to be tragic.

But the greatest flaw of all is in the alteration in Othello, and its effect on the dénouement. Shakespeare's Othello is an open, generous confiding nature, which is slowly poisoned by the suggestions of a bad man, and becomes coarse and brutal in the suffering of outraged
love. Ducis's Othello is a conventional hero, young (unlike Shakespeare's Moor), gallant and eloquent. Several fleeting suspicions cross his mind, when he finds Hédelmone in conversation with a young man, or when she seems reluctant to go with him to the altar, but no one else does anything to foster them. He himself stifles them at once, and his trust in Hédelmone remains unshaken until at one blow it is shattered by Pézare. His last words before Pézare's arrival are

"Non, rien dans l'univers, non rien dans la nature,
N'approchera jamais d'une vertu si pure."

Until this moment, he has been correct and conventional, almost impersonal, and appearing fairly little: this is typical of his conversation:

"Dis: penses-tu qu'un jour mon père nous pardonne?
Il nous aimait tous deux.

Je l'espère, Hédelmone.

Oui, je pense m'en flatter; mais calme la terreur
Que vient de t'inspirer l'excès de sa fureur;
Il verra tôt ou tard avec quelque indulgence,
Cet excusable amour dont son orgueil s'offense."

Yet in a moment he becomes as frenzied as Shakespeare's Othello after days of torture, and kills his bride, not in his first outburst of fury (one might have understood that) but some little time afterwards, when he has cooled down sufficiently to listen to Hédelmone's explanation, tell her he does not believe it, and deliberately announce his intention of killing her. Shakespeare's dénouement seems natural and almost inevitable: Iago had worked so well that Othello had seen his suspicions confirmed by one apparently indisputable proof after another, had been forced to see in Desdemona a woman so evil and so hardened, and had suffered such long, unspeakable torture, that even his implacable fury is comprehensible, and almost pardonable. We watch the storm gathering in Othello's soul and know that it must break. Ducis's Othello has no
such justification: his suffering has been short, he has had far less proof, and is offered an explanation, which, if somewhat improbable, is at least worth verification. His final fury is not justified by circumstances, nor even by his character. He is much too conventional and proper in the first part of the play to lead one to suspect what he would become later.

Ducis must have felt that his dénouement was not the inevitable outcome of the play of passions in the first acts, and has tried to prepare it by artificial means - presages, prophecies and dark hints; but these could only make melodrama and not tragedy, and his audience evidently seemed to find the unexpected shock of the final catastrophe too great, for it roused such a storm of revolt that Ducis was obliged to provide a variant happy ending.

The great fault of Ducis's 'Othello' is its artificiality: both in the whole conception of the plot, and in various small details. To be successful, a tragedy must have truth of some sort, either the truth of life as we see it, or the idealised truth of French tragedy; above all the truth of consistent characters. Ducis's 'Othello' has none of these: and it is not even successful as a melodrama because it is not skilfully constructed, and there is not enough action.

Classical Tradition

Ducis had really set himself an impossible task in trying to restrict Othello within the limits of a French tragedy, and yet keep as much as he did of Shakespeare's story. He himself appreciated and admired the greatness of Shakespeare's play, and realising that the treachery of Iago was the most dramatic feature in it, determined at all costs to keep at least something of it. Yet as soon as he reflected upon the possibility of keeping Iago, he found himself confronted on all sides by difficulties created by the
Classical Tradition in France.

In the first place, Shakespeare's play depends on the slow working of a poison, and the gradual transformation of a human soul. All the incident is destined to show the poison at work, and the dénouement is the outcome of its corruption. Such a process necessarily extended over some time, and it was impossible to present it in a French tragedy that must be confined within the space of twenty-four hours. There is never time in France for a play that depends on such a slow transformation of character.

The first remedy that suggests itself is simply to hasten events: to make Iago's proofs follow swift upon one another, and Othello strike in the first horror of his discovery. No doubt the play would have been less natural than the English one where events move more slowly, but it would have been possible to make an effective and dramatic story whose interest would have covered its improbability, as it is the case with some of the others. Had Ducis done this, his play might at least have been as good as his earlier ones: but he was faced by a new and greater difficulty - the moral atmosphere of the play.

Shakespeare's 'Othello' is one of his most sombre plays; it is a study of wicked malevolence, of too easy credulity, and of the havoc wrought by the ugliest of all passions, jealousy. Shakespeare has masked nothing of the horror of his subject, and has done nothing to relieve its tragedy. It is a hideous catastrophe that leaves one shuddering; and yet - and this is what makes it great, and not merely horrible - though evil has triumphed in the material world, its very victory only shows its own inferiority and final impotence. "Where do the reader's sympathies lie? Does he crown Iago as a victor? Does he not deeply feel that Iago (apart from any torture that may await him) is ruined, lost, and damned, an outcast from the light, unclean, a living
death? And with equal intensity does he not feel, even to the point of tears, that it were ten thousand times better to be Desdemona in her gentleness, ten thousand times better to be Othello, for all his sin and suicide, than the vile wretch whose evil slew them? That is the moral power of Shakespeare. He never twists the facts. But he leaves you in the midst of hideous facts, loathing the evil, cleaving with all your being to what is high and true and good, spite of its sin and failure."

(Dr. Morrison)

Such a study, despite its implied condemnation of evil, was not possible for Ducis. The Classical Tradition demanded an atmosphere of exalted morality, the triumph of virtue, and above all, a definite moral lesson. There must be generosity and honour and sacrifice, and even the wickedness of the villain must be in some sort dignified, and not merely base and mean and repulsive. Ducis knew that a French audience would not tolerate such a figure as Iago. He says in the 'Avertissement':

"L'exécrable caractère de Iago y est exprimé surtout avec une vigueur de pinceau extraordinaire. Avec quelle souplesses effrayante, sous combien de formes trompeuses, ce serpent caresse et seduit le généreux et trop confiant Othello! ... Je suis bien persuadé que si les Anglais peuvent observer tranquillement les manoeuvres d'un pareil monstre sur la scène, les Français ne pourront jamais un moment y souffrir sa présence, encore moins l'y voir développer toute l'étendue et toute la profondeur de sa scelératessen."

Ducis might possibly have tried by an unknown identity, or by some misconception on Iago's part of the evil he was working, to preserve the tragedy without the horror of wilful wickedness; but he evidently did not wish to do that, or preferred to keep the intentional treachery—

with precautions. He continues: "C'est ce qui ma engage à ne faire connaître le personnage qui le remplace (i.e. Iago) si faiblement dans ma pièce, que tout à la fin du dénouement... ... Je me suis bien garde de
le faire paraître du moment qu'il est connu, du moment que j'ai révélé au public le secret affreux de son caractère. Je n'ai pas manqué non plus, des que je l'ai pu, dans un court récit, d'instruire ce même public de sa punition, de sa mort cruelle dans les tortures. J'ai pensé même que si le spectateur avait pu, dans le cours de la tragédie, le soupçonner seulement, au travers de son masque, d'être le plus scélérat des hommes, puisqu'il est le plus perfide des amis, c'en était fait du sort de tout l'ouvrage, et que l'impression prédominante d'horreur qu'il eût inspirée aurait certainement amorti l'intérêt et la compassion que je voulais appeler sur l'amante d'Othello, et sur ce brave et malheureux Africain. Aussi est-ce avec une intention très déterminée que j'ai caché soigneusement à mes spectateurs ce caractère atroce pour ne pas les révolter.

But Ducis does not realise that by being thus carefully hidden until the end, the character of Iago loses all dramatic value, since we continue to think of him throughout the play as a confidant without much individuality, and are given no chance to see the working of his mind. It was the over-refined and sensitive audience that were to blame; but it robbed Pézare of his last chance of being interesting, and the play of any hope of compensating by its interest for its artificiality.

Most of the incidents in the English play become impossible either because of the change in Iago's part, or because they would violate the unities of place and time. The two scenes Ducis was resolved to keep were the one where Othello and Desdemona are brought before the Senate, and the closing one of the death of the lovers. These two begin and end his play; but everything between has to be altered. The Cyprian expedition has to be left out because of the difficulties of time and place. The incidents where Cassio becomes merely the tool of Iago are impossible, and there is no brawl, no disgrace of Cassio, no ill-timed intercession.
by Desdemona. The final attack on Cassio instigated by Othello is reproduced in an altered form. Bianca, of course, disappears as unsuitable and unnecessary: Emilia is transformed into the much more decorous Hermance, Hedelmone's nurse and confidant.

To replace all that is left out, Ducis has inserted the story, so characteristic both of the Classical Tradition and his own mind, of Hedelmone's devotion to her father. This provides the element of moral conflict, and also the necessary moral lesson. Cassio must be made to fit into this new plot, and he becomes Loredan, son of the Doge who is persecuting Hedelmone's father, and a sort of youthful Severe, ardent, generous and correct.

The theory of the incompatibility of the familiar and ordinary with the dignity of tragedy has been responsible for two rather curious changes. The principal "pièce de conviction" in Shakespeare's play is a handkerchief: Ducis substitutes for it a letter and a diamond coronet. Again, Othello smothers Desdemona in her pillows; Ducis says "Ce n'est point avec un poignard qu'Othello sur leur théâtre, immole son innocent victim; il lui presse, dans son lit, et avec force, un oreiller sur la bouche, il le presse et le represse encore jusqu'à ce qu'elle expire. Voilà ce que des spectateurs français ne pourraient jamais supporter!" Consequently Hedelmone is stabbed in the orthodox manner.

Since events must be precipitated as much as possible to restrict them within twenty-four hours, the scenes between Othello and Hedelmone after he has been convinced of her guilt are very much reduced. Except for a few moments' conversation, he only sees her once, and several scenes of Shakespeare's play have been compressed into the one final one.

In Ducis's play, Hedelmone is never actually married to Othello. It was necessary that Odalbert should think her Othello's wife in the
first scenes, or he would never have given her up to the Moor: on the other hand, it was necessary that she should not be married in reality in order that her father might pursue her with his efforts to force on her a marriage with Loredan. Moreover, Ducis had to leave the ceremony still unperformed so that the incident of the attempted rape of the bride might take place. Consequently, it is only after Odalbert has resigned his daughter to the Moor that we learn how the marriage has been interrupted at the last minute by the attack on the city. It was the new plot Ducis added that made the change necessary; and also, possibly, it better satisfied the 'bienséances' that Hedelmone should be accused merely of desiring another marriage, and inclining towards another suitor, than that she should be accused of actual immorality and infidelity to her vows as a wife. The situation is a more romantic and less revolting one: but it is less poignant, and it makes Hedelmone's presence in Othello's house much less natural - though indeed it was the only refuge possible for her when her father cast her off.

The play in its French form :

Moncénigo, doge de Venise (Duke of Venice)
Loredan, fils de Moncénigo (Cassio)
Odalbert, sénateur venitien (Brabantio)
Hédelmone, fille d'Odalbert (Desdemona)
Hermance, nourrice d'Hédelmone (Emilia)
Othello, général des troupes venitiennes (Iago)
Pézare, venitien
Plusieurs officiers et sénateurs.

(Gratiano, Ludovico, Roderigo, Montano, Bianca, Sailor, Messenger, Herald, Gentlemen, Musicians and Attendants - disappear.)

Acte I. Moncénigo, the doge, tells the senators that a surprise attack from Verona has been repulsed, and Pézare, Othello's friend, relates the exploits of the Moor, whose courage turned the day. While they are still speaking, Odalbert rushes in furious and agitated to say that his daughter has been seduced. Moncénigo promises punishment for the
seducer, but before Odalbert can name him, Othello arrives. Moncenigo sends for Hédelmone. There follows Othello's explanation of how he has won Hédelmone's love (closely imitated from Shakespeare). Moncenigo and Hédelmone both plead for Othello, alleging his worth and his services, but Odalbert refuses to listen, and in fury that Moncenigo is thus showing respect of persons, cries

"Unissez-vous pour cet audacieux, Le pardon du perfide est écrit dans vos yeux. C'est ainsi de tout temps qu'au gré de leurs caprices D'ingrats républicains ont payé les services -" dangerous words in the presence of the senate. Odalbert asks Hédelmone to choose between her father and her husband (as he believes Othello to be), and Hédelmone says "Mon père . . . " but looks at Othello. Odalbert departs, still raging, and leaving as his farewell to Othello the words -

"Crois-moi, veille sur elle. Une épouse si chère Peut tromper son époux, ayant trompé son père. Retiens ces mots; adieu."

Othello and Hédelmone are left alone together, and tell one another of their love and happiness.

The scene changes to Othello's palace, where Hédelmone has just arrived. There follows a long conversation between Hédelmone and Hermance, which is tedious and somewhat unnecessary. Hédelmone speaks of her mother's death, and Hermance explains that she was absent at the time to tend her dying father. She then implores her mistress to tell her the story of her mother's death, and Hédelmone relates how her mother seemed to behold her daughter's fate in a vision, and expired crying "Tu mourras malheureuse". Hédelmone feels herself overwhelmed by dread and misgiving but Hermance to comfort her, paints a glowing picture of Othello's future success and their happiness. At this
A stranger arrives and asks to speak with Hedelmone. He is Lorédan, and implores Hedelmone to obtain for him a post in Othello's army that he may speedily find death, the only hope left to him. He tells Hedelmone that her father, in his fury against his daughter and the state, is likely to commit some imprudence, and bring upon himself the vengeance of the government. Hedelmone in frantic terror implores this utter stranger to go and save her father, and the ardour of Lorédan's reply reveals to us the secret of his former despair. Othello and Pézare arrive just as he departs, and Othello watches uneasily. Pézare does nothing to foster his suspicion, and indeed gives him the very sensible counsel: "Consulte à l'instant même Hedelmone en ces lieux." There is nothing to parallel Iago's "Ha! I like not that," and the uneasiness springs from Othello's mind alone. Instead of speaking to Hedelmone, Othello discusses with Pézare his chances of winning pardon from Odalbert. Pézare gives him little encouragement, and counsels him to marry Hedelmone as soon as possible, lest he lose her by a sudden attack.

**Hermance advises Hedelmone to tell Othello nothing of her interview with Lorédan lest it should rouse his jealousy - a most imprudent counsel, as later events proved. Hedelmone is still oppressed by forebodings -

"Je ne sais, mais en vain, je cherche mon courage; ce jour semble à mes yeux se voiler d'un nuage."

Lorédan returns to tell Hedelmone of the rumour that Odalbert has joined the enemies of Venice, but Hedelmone refuses to believe it. Lorédan asks if Hedelmone has obtained for him the place in Othello's army that he desired. She begs him to tell her who he is, and why he is thus despairing. Lorédan tells how he has been brought up far from Venice (that was necessary, or Hedelmone would have known him) and on his return was stricken with sudden love for a lady who had given her heart to another.
He betrays the truth that this lady is Hédelmone herself, and she rises and in virtuous indignation dismisses him. Before he can withdraw, Odalbert arrives, having learned that Hédelmone is not yet married, and that it is therefore not too late to save her from Othello. He implores her to go back with him, but she refuses, and then, drawing his sword, he says he will kill himself unless she will sign a paper. In great agitation Hédelmone signs it without even looking at it, and gives it back to Odalbert. He then explains that he has chosen for her husband Loredan, the son of the doge. Loredan himself, who has been listening at the back of the stage, comes forward, and himself presses his suit. Hédelmone resists both her father and Loredan and refuses to listen to them. Odalbert gives in, and casts her off for ever. He returns the letter to her, and leaves her with the words

"Je te cède, il le faut, mais c'est à sa furie.

J'abjure tout, nature, honneur, devoir, patrie:

Je n'ai plus rien à perdre. Adieu. Tu jugeras.

De ce tigre africain que je laisse en tes bras."

Precisely at this moment Hermance arrives to announce that Odalbert has already aroused the wrath of the Republic and has been stripped of his wealth and banished; his life even is in danger. Hédelmone, thinking heaven has inspired her, though one doubts it, turns to Loredan and gives him the note her father had left with her, telling him that he holds her fate in his hands. She begs him to go to his father, and use the note to persuade him that she has consented to the marriage with Loredan, so that he cannot but protect the father of his son's bride. In reality of course, the promise of marriage was only an artifice, and she trusts the generosity of Loredan not to take advantage of the power she is giving him. (One wonders how she proposes to appease the wrath of the doge when he finds out the truth.) Moreover, she takes off the diamond coronet Othello had given her, and entrusts it to Loredan
apparently to relieve her father's want. Loredan says he will serve her though it pierces his heart, but he warns her that he cannot trust himself, and feels capable of trying to capture her at the very altar (this to prepare us for what follows in the next act.). Othello comes and tells Hedelmone he is ready to lead her to the altar. She begs for delay, but he insists and she yields and goes with him.

IV. Othello and Pézare are alone on the stage, and Othello explains how at the very altar, someone has tried to seize his bride, and though his courage has protected her, the wedding has been prevented again. Neither saw clearly the "hardi ravisseur", but Pézare affirms that he would recognize him if he saw him again. Othello confesses to Pézare the fear in his heart: Hedelmone has seemed strangely constrained; she is no longer wearing his coronet. He breaks into fury and vows he will slay her lover if she has been false. Pézare defends Hedelmone warmly, and advises Othello to flee with her to Mauretania. Meanwhile, he promises to try and find the ravisher, to punish him. Othello praises Pézare's restraint of himself: the idea crosses his mind that his friend might be hiding a passion for Hedelmone, but he reproaches himself at once for such a suspicion. Hedelmone comes, and Othello asks her to flee with him. She says she cannot leave her father at this crisis, and begs permission to go to the doge in the morning and intercede for him. Othello is afraid for her safety, but she faints, and then he gives in, and implores her pardon for refusing. He says

"Par un soupçon jaloux si j'offense Hedelmone,
À mes propres fureurs que le ciel m'abandonne!
Et puisse je moi-même, époux infatigne,
Me ravir le trésor que le ciel m'a donne."

Hedelmone answers

"Ce coeur est pur, ô ciel, mais je l'offre à tes coups,
Si jamais ma pensée offensait mon époux."

Left alone, Othello cries

"Non rien dans l'univers, non rien dans la nature,
N'approchera jamais d'une vertu si pure;"

he has therefore no real fear yet as to Hédelmone's fidelity.

Pezare comes in and says "Sais-tu souffrir?" He brings the news that Hédelmone is faithless. Othello demands a proof: Pezare tells him that he has met and recognised the man who tried to steal Hédelmone, and has killed him. On his dead body he found the diamond coronet and a letter which he produces. Othello reads it -

"Je sais quel est mon outrage envers vous
A l'hymen d'Othello je renonce, ô mon père!
Puisse mon repentir calmer votre colère!
C'est à votre choix seul à monner mon époux.
Hédelmone."

Speaking with calm despair, Othello says that the time has come for him to die, and that he will propose Pezare as his successor in the army. He charges his friend to return the letter and the tiara to Hédelmone. Then without warning, he suddenly breaks out into fury, and demands to be shown the body of his rival that he may dip the proofs of Hédelmone's guilt in his blood, and slay her beside him. He regains control of himself, but recalls sadly Odalbert's words

"Crois-moi, veille sur elle: une épouse si chère
Peut tromper son époux, ayant trompé son père."

Hédelmone comes to know the reason for Othello's cries, but he evades her, and goes out with only a few ironical words -

[votre sommeil] Le vôtre est doux, je pense,
Son calme est fait surtout pour l'aimable innocence."

Hédelmone is left alone, uneasy and afraid at the change in Othello.
presentiments, and the dread that she will never leave that room again. She starts violently at the entrance of Hermance, who asks "Craignez-vous d'Othello quelque injuste fureur?"

and Hédelmone answers in one of the short simple phrases that Ducis uses sometimes with real dramatic effect - "Non, je ne le crains pas, je l'aime."

Hédelmone returns again to the thought of her mother's death and dying prophecy "Tu mourras malheureuse", which she repeats several times in a sort of trance, apparently. Then she asks Hermance whether Othello could ever seek her life. Then without very much justification she speaks of "la jeune Isaure" who perished the victim of jealousy and how she loves to sing Isaure's death song. She takes her guitar and sings the "Romance du Saule", She is interrupted in her song by the sound of the storm, and Hermance, interpreting it as a presage, implores her to flee. Hédelmone refuses, saying it would only infuriate Othello should he find her in flight. She insists on dismissing Hermance, and goes to bed and to sleep.

She is roused by Othello's entrance, and detecting his agitation, she herself offers the explanation of the disappearance of the coronet, telling Othello that she entrusted it to Lorédan. He demands whether she loves Lorédan and she protests her faithfulness to Othello. In the midst of her protests, Othello produces the letter, and forces her to read it aloud. Hédelmone is at first stupefied and makes no attempt to defend herself when Othello threatens her with death. Then she tells him how her father forced her to sign the letter, and how she gave it to Lorédan in the hope of saving her father. Othello, who evidently does not believe her, then produces the coronet, which he says he has just received from Pêzare. Hédelmone cries joyfully that her father must have pardoned them, but Othello answers that it was from Lorédan's
dead body that Pézare had taken them. Hédelmone’s horror and distress infuriate Othello, and while she protests the innocence of Lorédan, Othello stabs her. When she is dead, Othello wavers, and wonders if he has done well, and then in horror covers the body.

Hermance bursts in, followed by Moncénigo, Odalbert and Lorédan, to announce that Pézare has been convicted of a great crime. Moncénigo explains that Pézare secretly loved Hédelmone, that it was he who had tried to seize her at the altar, and that he had invented the story of Lorédan’s death, when the latter entrusted him with the letter and the circlet to return to Hédelmone. He had just confessed, though no indication is given as to why he had done so, since nothing apparently had happened to unmask him. He was then expiring in torture. The generous Lorédan declared he has appeased Moncénigo and Odalbert, and that nothing now stands in the way of happiness for Hédelmone and Othello. Othello listens in a sort of stupor, and struck by a dreadful suspicion, Hermance rushes to the bed where she finds the bleeding body of Hédelmone. Othello in despair cries:

"Que je t’embrasse encore! Je te rejoins; je meurs,”

and falls dead beside his bride.

Beside the artificiality of the whole conception, due to the difficulty of reconciling the two interests, there are various minor discrepancies that one cannot help noticing. The scene where Odalbert forces Hédelmone to sign the letter is most unnatural, and is obviously invented to make possible the existence of such an incriminating document without any real guilt or treachery on Hédelmone’s part. The artifice to which she resorts in order to save her father seems equally unnatural. Again, it is extraordinary that while Odalbert is trying to win Hédelmone’s consent to a marriage with the doge’s son, apparently with the full approval of the doge, the latter is engaged
in pronouncing sentence of banishment and confiscation on Odalbert. It seems odd that Odalbert should say nothing of banishment or poverty, and then that before he has time to leave the palace, Hermance should rush in to announce his punishment.

Loredan's warning that he feels capable of carrying off Medelmone from the altar itself does not fall naturally from his lips; it is too obviously there only in order that we may suspect him later on. The actual incident of the attempt at carrying off the bride, though it has been prepared by several carefully inserted remarks, (Loredan's threat, and Pezare's warning) does not seem a natural sequence at all, but an exceedingly 'fortuitous event'. The later explanation that it was Pezare's doing raises several objections on the score of probability that are too glaring to be ignored. How was it that Pezare, as Othello's friend, was not with Othello in the wedding party? Othello evidently took it for granted he was there, as later on when they are discussing the attack he says,

"Mais toi qui voyais tout avec un oeil paisible,
Aurais-tu remarque ce jeune homme inconnu,
Qui tantôt ici même en secret est venu?"

Pezare (who incidentally thus neglects an excellent chance of rousing Othello's jealousy which Othello himself puts within his power) says he did not identify the ravisher, but would certainly recognise him again. How could Othello have failed to see that Pezare was not with the wedding party, and moreover, in the scuffle that followed the attack, how could he escape recognition? What happened exactly, and how did Othello defend his bride without even wounding Pezare?

Medelmone's request to go to the doge and plead for her father is unusual since she has entrusted his affairs to the doge's own son, and her presence would only be likely to betray the artifice she had used.
Even the unmasking of Pezare does not ring true, for there is no indication given of anything that could throw suspicion on him, and why, then, did he confess?

It has already been pointed out how the great flaw in the plot is that the dénouement is not a sufficiently logical outcome of what goes before. To atone for this lack of logic, Ducis has tried to prepare the way for the catastrophe by an elaborate series of prophecies, presentiments and warnings. But they nearly always seem rather unnatural. Corneille had shown that foreboding can be skilfully used to create an "atmosphere" and prepare the audience - (witness Pauline), but Ducis exaggerates, and the result is artificiality.

All these artificialities and discrepancies seem to strike one in reading the play, for the interest is not sufficient to cover them; but it is only fair to remember that the play was written to be acted, not read, and good acting would make all the difference to it. What is merely tedious or artificial in print, such as Hédelmone's story of her mother's death and prophetic words, might be made dramatic and arresting by a good actress; and what strikes one as unnatural might be made very much more convincing by an actor who was seeking to live his part.

The variant ending where Moncenigo arrives just in time to prevent Othello from killing Hédelmone, is inartistic, but Ducis fully realised that himself, and only inserted it to conciliate his audience that had been too deeply moved by the death of the heroine. He says "Aussi, pour satisfaire plusieurs de mes spectateurs, qui ont trouvé dans mon dénouement le poids de la pitié et de la terreur excessif et trop pénible, ai-je profité de la disposition de ma pièce, qui me rendait ce changement très facile, pour substituer un dénouement heureux à celui qui les avait blessés; quoique le premier me paraissait toujours convenir beaucoup plus à la nature et à la moralité du sujet, et que je l'aie eu sans cesse en vue, comme il est facile de le remarquer dès le
The changes in the characters correspond largely to the changes in plot, and are due therefore either to the exigencies of the Classical Tradition or else to the change in Iago. Shakespeare's Othello exhibits a gradual transformation of character which is impossible in twenty-four hours, and therefore Ducis's Othello becomes a man of fiery passions so well hidden by a veneer of civilisation that in the first part of the play he is a conventional young hero; but once Hedelmone's apparent infidelity has been revealed to him, he becomes as violent and implacable, if not as brutal and coarse (the bienséances must be preserved) as Shakespeare's Moor himself.

The principal change in Hedelmone is that she has not been perfectly straight-forward, and has given Othello some ground for suspicion. She is as true and devoted as Desdemona, but more imprudent and therefore in some slight measure to blame for the catastrophe that happens. Since Othello has suffered so much less from Pezare than his English counterpart from Iago, Ducis, to explain and increase his frenzy in the last scene lays greater stress on Hedelmone's indiscretion, and the lameness of her explanation. She tells Othello the truth about the letter and the coronet, but her story certainly sounds very improbable and Othello plainly finds it so - he was hardly to be blamed for doubting Hedelmone's explanation that Lorédan's devotion was purely disinterested. She has to admit Lorédan's love for her, she has to admit giving him the circlet and that treacherous letter; she had refused to leave Venice with Othello, and someone whom Othello has every reason to
believe was Loredan, had interrupted his wedding and tried to steal his bride. He was driven to frenzy, not by suspense, but by Hedelmones improbable explanation of such incriminating actions, and finally by her grief for Loredan's death.

Desdemona is gentle and yielding - too gentle and yielding according to French critics, who prefer the stronger character of their national tragic heroines; but though she is so entirely submissive to the man she has chosen for her lord, she has quietness and control and consequently dignity, even in her gentleness. Hedelmones becomes much more emotional and pathetic. She is full of forebodings and misgivings, trembles and weeps and faints. She suggests the drooping, melancholy, "temperamental" heroines of early Romantic prints and poems. Nevertheless, she has firmness and courage when her love is at stake, and after her first helpless panic before her father when he brings her the letter, she rallies her strength of mind and refuses stoutly to give up Othello. Again, at the last, she is courageous in her defence of Loredan's innocence, and dies bravely defending him, with no thought for herself. She possesses one virtue which is rather lacking in Desdemona: filial devotion. The English heroine abandons her father with very little remorse; but despite her adoration for Othello, Hedelmones cannot give up her father, and indeed all her troubles spring from her refusal to leave him and her ill-advised attempts to save him. Thus Ducis's favourite theme appears once more, and he has the delight of painting once again the virtue that seems to move him more than any other.

Odalbert bears little resemblance to Brabantio: he seems rather a modified copy of Montaign. He has the same violence and bitterness, and makes, like Montaign, most unreasonable demands from his child. Nevertheless, he is not quite so implacable as Romeo's father, since he does relent in the end, and would have consented to the marriage. Each time we see him, he is blustering and vowing vengeance, and in his
fury abuses the state as freely as his daughter. He seems almost as
difiery and uncontrolled as Othello himself; but his outbursts of
invective are not nearly so dramatic as the quiet, bitter renunciation
of Brabantio who scorns to dispute Othello's possession of his
daughter once he finds out how her heart lies -

"If she confess that she was half the wooer,
Destruction on my head if my bad blame
Light on the man!
.......
God be wi' you! I have done.

Please it your grace, on to the state-affairs:
.......

Come hither, Moor:

I here do give thee that with all my heart
Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart
I would keep from thee. ... I have done, my lord."

Ducis has thus transformed Odalbert and his rôle mainly because it was
necessary for his altered plot; but also perhaps because he loved to
write those fiery tirades where his style is often at its best.

Odalbert does renounce his daughter twice over (though in each case
he reappears again after all) but he does it in a series of fiery
curses and predictions instead of in the quiet, bitter words that
covered Brabantio's grief and disappointment.

"Tiens, reprends ton billet; je reprends ma fureur.
Chéris, chéris longtemps cet ingrat que j'abhorre.
L'abîme sous tes pieds ne s'ouvre pas encore:
Il s'ouvrira. Va, pars, ne crains plus mon courroux;
Au bout de l'univers suis ton indigne époux.
Je te cède, il le faut, mais c'est à sa furie.
J'abjure tout, nature, honneur devoir, patrie:
Je n'ai plus rien à perdre. Adieu, tu jugeras
De ce tigre africain que je laisse en tes bras."

(Acte III. Sc. 4.)
Loredan is quite unlike Cassio. Since he is to play so important a part in helping to save Odalbert from the consequences of his own treasonable words, he must have some close connexion with the heads of the state, and must be of higher rank than a simple young officer like Cassio. It is curious how several times Ducis knits up Shakespeare's rather loose plots by making one of his lovers the son or daughter of a principal character already in the play, thus making unnecessary the addition of another family. Ophelia becomes the daughter of Claudius; Cordelia's lover becomes the son of her father's most faithful supporter; and Loredan the son of the doge. The result is always an increased symmetry and regularity of outline: the life-like effect of the plot suffers, but it gains in the logic and regularity of construction that are still more important to a French play. Thus in "Othello". Moncénigo, instead of standing outside the main plot becomes closely connected with it, and Loredan serves to link up the two stories of Hedelmone's devotion to her father, and Pézare's treachery. It is noticeable that he is actually in love with Hedelmone (Cassio was not) and that he is therefore a rival to Othello in reality. As a lover he is ardent and generous: driven to the extremity of despair when he knows his love is hopeless, and then conquering his own grief to serve the interests of his lady. He more than once suggests Severe. He is not very distinctive, being rather a type than an individual, but he is attractive and 'sympathique'.

Moncénigo, Loredan's father, represents the civil power of Venice, and that is all. He is dignified and aloof from the intrigues of the other characters, though he evidently desires that his son should marry Hedelmone. There is more than a suggestion of tyranny on the part of the government of which he is the head: their vengeance on Odalbert for his hasty words is swift and without warning - he is banished, his possessions are confiscated, and Hermance adds
"On tremble dans l'instant, que, si rien ne l'arrête
L'affreux conseil des dix ne demande sa tête."

However, the "affreux conseil" turns magnanimous in the end, -
"Le senat, mieux instruit, a vu dans sa colère,
Non des crimes d'état mais la douleur d'un père."

It is apparently a government naturally inclined to tyranny, but capable of mending its ways.

**Hermance**, Hedelmone's nurse and confidant, is another example of how the classical tradition stifles individuality by its insistence on conformity to type, and of how much a play is apt to lose in picturesqueness as a result. No one could imagine confusing Juliet's nurse with Emilia: they are only minor characters, but they both stand out distinctly in one's memory, as distinctly as their mistresses, and each has her own individuality. But Hermance and Flavie might quite well be interchanged, and neither play would show the difference. Hermance seems older, and has more influence over her mistress, that is all: but while Juliet has the serenity and firmness of a true French classical heroine, Hedelmone is more romantic than classical, emotional, impressionable and therefore perhaps more in need of Hermance's kind offices. Incidentally, Hermance might have been wiser in her counsels, since it is her advice to Hedelmone not to confide to Othello the visit of Loredan, that first leads her out of the straight path of frankness. Hermance has a fairly large, if not very important, part; but she has no share in the final scene, partly no doubt because she was only a minor character, and partly because it would not fit so well into Ducis's altered story. But Ducis misses thus one of Shakespeare's most dramatic scenes - "la conviction de l'erreur d'Othello par la bouche de la pauvre suivante Emilia, de cette femme vulgaire que l'excès de l'indignation et de la pitie sur le meurtre de sa jeune..."
maîtresse emporte jusqu'au sublime, et qui se fait tuer, en attestant la vertu de Desdemona " (Villemain).

As already suggested, the character of Pezare is not successful because he is a mixture of the ordinary confidant and Iago. As long as he appears in the play, he is exactly like Romeo's friend Albéric, devoted, brave and constant. He is always there for Othello to talk to; he defends Hedelmone from Othello's vague suspicions, and gives him the excellent advice to go straight to the lady herself and ask her about this young stranger who has visited her. He further advises Othello to hasten his marriage, lest anything should prevent it, and take his bride away with him to his own country. He never speaks to Hedelmone, and appears merely a discreet and jealous confidant. He is the bearer of evil tidings to Othello, but he is only discharging the duties of friendship, since it was in avenging his friend that he discovered the "truth". So far he is colourless and not very important: then we suddenly learn that he is a double-dyed villain, who has tried to steal his friend's bride, and who has been responsible, by his lies, for the final catastrophe. It is rather too like the unexpected ending of a detective story, and consequently it does not satisfy the different faculties that one brings to bear on tragedy, and which demand rather a careful working out of character. The only indication one is given of possible duplicity on the part of Pezare is Othello's soliloquy:

"Sous quel calme imposant son active froideur
Couvre d'un cœur de feu l'impétueuse ardeur!
Qu'il eût, s'il eût aimé, bien su cacher sa flamme!
Avec tant de pouvoir, d'empire sur son âme,
Il serait des mortels s'il n'était généreux,
Et le plus redoutable et le plus dangereux.
N'a-t-il pas quelquefois jeté sur Hedelmone
des regards où l'amour ....? C'est toi qui le soupçonne!
Malheureux! ton ami! Quoi! ne pouvait-il pas,
Avec un regard pur admirer ses appas?"
Pézare is evidently a man of action rather than words: Iago wrought all his mischief by his lying tongue: Pézare first attacked his friend on the way to the altar, and then produced the letter and the circlet, and more by these tangible proofs than by anything he said convinced Othello of Hedelmon's guilt. Indeed all his words, except in that one matter of the letter and the coronet were destined to defend Hedelmon.

The classical aspect of "Othello" is represented by the alterations of plot and character, and by the use of the accepted conventions. It has been shown how the classical theories either of the exalted moral atmosphere necessary in tragedy, or of the Unities led to the alteration of Iago, and therefore also of Othello, Hedelmon, and Loredan; and to the insertion of the story of Hedelmon and her father. The result was an orthodox problem-play, with the necessary moral lesson, the necessary respect for the "bienseances", and elegant and restrained enough to satisfy even the critical audiences of 1792.

As a matter of fact, the Unity of Action is not as strictly preserved as in Shakespeare, where the different strands are all necessary for the main interest - the changing relations wrought by Iago's lies between Othello and Desdemona - and along with the lesser characters, are all subordinated to it: the Cyprus wars, Cassio and Bianca, Iago and Roderigo. In Ducis, the interest centres throughout the play on Hedelmon's relations with her father, Loredan and Othello: at the end it is transferred to the machinations of Pézare.

The Unity of Time has been preserved: there is no very clear indication, but the play seems to begin in the morning, and end in the
middle of the succeeding night. Ducis permits himself greater latitude
than usual as regards the Unity of Place, for he has three different
scenes - "La scène est à Venise. Le premier acte se passe dans la salle
du sénat; le second, le troisième et le quatrième, dans le palais
d'Ôthello; et le cinquième dans la chambre d'Hedelmone."

To add to the dramatic effect and mystery of his plot, or to replace
what the "bienseances" had pronounced improper, Ducis had recourse to
the usual conventions and expedients that had become the badges of a
classical play. The principal one was the use of concealed identity
and recognition: Loredan is the son of the doge, but is unknown until
the moment of his dramatic entry in the scene between the fiery
Odalbert and his recalcitrant daughter. There is something like a
concealed identity in the part of Pezare, who poses as a faithful friend
until the last scene where he is unexpectedly revealed as the villain.
The banished handkerchief and pillow are replaced by the customary
"billet" and "poignard". Scenes that would by their violence shock the
ladies, or which would necessitate a change of scene, such as Pezare's
attempt to seize Hedelmone at the altar, are replaced by the usual
narrative. There is no dream and no oracle, but they are replaced by
the dying prophecy of Hedelmone's mother - "Tu mourras malheureuse" -
by the prophetic curses of Odalbert, and by Hedelmone's own misgivings
and presentiments, all of which prepare one for the final catastrophe.

It may be noted that in this case, Ducis really makes use of
the expedients, and does not insert them merely for the sake of having
them there.

The scene of 'Ôthello' is laid in town, and indoors. Its
background is the life of Venice, and the watchful rule of the oligarchy.
Consequently there is less possibility for the use of the wild and
sinister scenery that Ducis loved, and had presented with considerable
effect in 'Lear' and 'Macbeth'. The scenes are all inside, and contribute
nothing to the "atmosphere" of the play. Ducis has not attempted to
keep Shakespeare's sea-shore at Cyprus, though it may have tempted him.
The only place where the forces of nature seem to show their sympathy
with the sufferings of mankind is in the storm which rages on the night
of Rodedelmoné's death. The idea is suggested by Desdemona's question -
"Hark! who isn't that knocks?" and Emilia's answer, "It's the wind."
Ducis uses that uproar of the tempest very skilfully to interrupt
Rodedelmoné's song, and give the sense of storm and desolation that are
closing the day begun in love and trust.

"D'où vient ce bruit? Ô ciel!
C'est la tempête.

Hermance.

La nuit sera terrible, et l'orage commence."

Ducis himself loved nature, and held close communion with her as some of
the passages already quoted from his letters show; and one of his best
contributions to the new romantic strain in tragedy is his presentation
of nature as a force in some mysterious way in sympathy with the
sufferings of men; a presentation which he found in Shakespeare
certainly, but which was entirely in keeping with his own thought and
feeling.

Othello is a soldier, and though there is much less of camps and
garrisons than in Shakespeare's play, it is the glory of a good
general's exploits that lies behind the play, and the admiration for
rustic life that characterised Ducis's other romantic plays does not
appear at all. This again is partly due, of course, to the fact that the
drama takes place in a great city. There is no word of the beauty of
country life, or the virtue of the peasant.

There is less of the new element of the horrible and funereal
than in the other plays, partly again because the scenery gives no opportunity for it; save in the ending, where, however, the horror was too great for the audience.

Hédelmone herself supplies most of the "sensibility" in the play by her tears and unhappy misgivings, chiefly in the long scenes with Hermance at the beginning of the second act, and at the beginning of the last act; but there is much less than in 'Lear' and 'Macbeth', and the play depends less on an appeal to sensibility and sentimentality. The final tragedy is so great and so startling that it goes deeper than mere sensibility.

There is less, therefore, in Othello of the elements that make the novelty of 'Lear' and 'Macbeth' - the use of nature, outdoor scenery, the sinister and the pathetic. The greatest novelties are the dark-skinned hero, and the "Romance du Saule". Since the famous "stances" of Corneille, all such lyrical effusions had been banned in tragedy. But Ducis, whose genius was as much lyrical as dramatic, was so struck by Shakespeare's "Willow" that he declares that he would rather give up the whole play than that - "J'avoue que j'aurais plutôt renoncé à traiter l'intéressant sujet d'Othello, que de ne pas l'y conserver, à cause du plaisir qu'elle m'a toujours fait, à cause de la nouveauté, et pour être le premier qui l'ai hasardée sur notre théâtre." But it is an excellent example of how Shakespeare's realism becomes conventionalised in Ducis. In Shakespeare the scene is perfectly natural: the desultory talk of a lady with her maid of whom she makes something of a confidant-discussion of the theme that is filling her mind, the caprice of men's love, remarks about the Venetians who have arrived, about her toilet, about her mother's maid Barbara, a snatch of whose song Desdemona sings as she accepts Emilia's ministrations; and an occasional injunction, even in the middle of her song, to make haste, lest Othello return before she is ready. The realism is perfect. Ducis seeks to achieve his
pathetic effect by reminiscences of Hédelmone's mother and her prophetic words to her daughter at the moment of her death, which Hédelmone repeats first "d'une voix faible et mélancolique" and then "avec un cri de déchirement et de terreur" -

"Hélas! ma cherie enfant, tu mourras malheureuse!"

Desdemona breaks into her song as she undresses, and intersperses it with remarks to Emilia: Hédelmone makes a solemn ceremony of it, accompanies herself on a guitar, and somehow it becomes like an exhibition.

"(En montrant à Hermance une guitare qui est sur un fauteuil.)

Hédelmone

Tu vois cet instrument; tout dort: si dans ces lieux
J'unissais à ma voix ses sons mystérieux!

Hermance

Il emeut trop votre âme.

Hédelmone

Il est fait pour me plaire.

C'est le fidèle ami du chagrin solitaire.

Entends encore ma voix: nous sommes sans témoin,

C'est un chant douloureux, dont mon cœur a besoin."

As to Othello's colour, Ducis is too much struck by the dramatic effect of a Venetian girl who preferred a Moor to all her western suitors to change his nationality: but he dare not bring a black man on to the stage, and modifies him accordingly, explaining naively and rather ingeniously: "Quant à la couleur d'Othello, j'ai cru pouvoir me dispenser de lui donner un visage noir, en m'écartant sur ce point de l'usage du théâtre de Londres. J'ai pensé que le teint jaune et cuivre, pouvant d'ailleurs convenir aussi à un Africain, aurait l'avantage de ne point révolter l'oeil du public, et surtout celui des femmes, et que cette couleur leur permettrait bien mieux de jouir de ce qu'il y a de plus délicieux au théâtre, c'est-à-dire, de tout le charme que la force, la variété et le jeu des passions répandent sur le visage mobile et animé d'un jeune acteur, bouillant, sensible et enivré de jalouseie et d'amour."
'Othello' was written during the first years of the Revolution, and though it is the love-interest, and not the political interest which occupies the principal place in it, there is a curious little echo of the popular hatred of a tyrannical government, and desire for reform, with a hint that even a republic is not tyrant-proof, and that there is room for oppression even there. Odalbert turns on the senate-

"Toujours son intérêt a règle sa justice.

... Unissez-vous pour cet audacieux.

Le pardon du perfide est écrit dans vos yeux.

C'est ainsi de tout temps qu'au gré de leurs caprices

D'ingrats républicains ont payé les services."

The senate evidently set to work silently and without delay to punish such criticisms, and within a few hours, Odalbert was disgraced and outlawed, apparently without trial. Hermance talks with evident horror of "l'affreux conseil des dix." However, in spite of its tendency towards the doubtful justice of absolutism, the senate is not yet inaccessible to the appeal of the citizen, for at the end Loredan announces

"Le senat, mieux instruit, a vu dans sa colère,
Non des crimes d'état mais la douleur d'un père,
Qu'une aveugle fureur égarait un moment,
Et vient de faire grâce à son emportement."

The endless conversations in 'Othello' become very tedious. As usual, Ducis's style is at its best when he is under the stress of deep emotion, and is trying to produce an impression of energy and eloquence. The scenes he has imitated from Shakespeare are the opening ones between Othello, Hedelmone, Odalbert and the senate; some conversations between Othello and Hedelmone; the scene of the 'Romance du Saule' is inspired by Shakespeare, but scarcely imitated; and above
all the final scene of the death of Hedelmone.

Dans son palais, tranquille, Odalbert curieux
Souhaitait que mon sort s'expliquât à ses yeux
Et moi, dès mon berceau, pour remplir son envie,
Je lui contais, seigneur, l'histoire de ma vie,
Mes travaux les plus durs, mes combats mes dangers
Mon vaisseau s'entrouvrant sur des bords étrangers,
La mort presque toujours à mes regards présente.
Tandis que je parlais, attentive et tremblante,
Hedelmone, seigneur, écoutait mes discours;
Et lorsque, reclamant ses soins ou ses secours,
Quelques devoirs ailleurs demandaient sa présence,
Je la voyais bientôt, abrégant son absence,
Revenir pressée et, retenant ses pleurs
Reprendre en soupirant le fil de mes malheurs.
Un jour, jour trop fatal! (souffrez que je poursuive)
Dans un long entretien, à sa pitié naive
J'offris tout le tableau des maux que j'ai soufferts.
"Quoi? dit-elle, Othello, vous étiez dans les fers!
Vous, hélas! dans les fers! Ah! si, sur ce réveil,
J'avais vu sur vos bras les fers de l'esclavage,
(Je le crois) quoique femme, il m'eût été trop doux
De prendre votre place ou de mourir pour vous.
Oh! si jamais guerrier à ma main doit prétendre,
Dites-lui de me faire un récit aussi tendre,
Il aura découvert le chemin de mon cœur."
De ces mots innocents j'admirais la candeur.
Et sa douleur soudain décolora ses charmes.
Ses yeux, en se baissant, voulait cacher leurs larmes
Je les vis. À ses pleurs, mes pleurs ont répondu.
Le secret de nos coeurs fut d'abord entendu.
Sa pitié pour mes maux seule a produit sa flamme;
L'aspect de sa pitié seul a touché mon âme;
Voilà par quels moyens par quel art dangereux
Un innocent amour nous a séduits tous deux.

(Acte I. Sc.5)

The difference has already been noted between Brabantio's quiet, bitter renunciation of his daughter, and Odalbert's storm of curses; but the latter if less tragic and dramatic is rather fine in the energy of its hatred:

Odalbert

Eh! que t'importe, à toi!
Ma cause est maintenant entre le ciel et moi.

(A Othello)

Tu m'as trompé, perfide! O ciel! dans ta vengeance,
Fais qu'il soit à son tour trompé par l'apparence!
Aux yeux de cet ingrat qui l'a trop mérité,
Prête à la trahison l'air de la vérité:
Et s'il peut la saisir l'abusant par un songe,
Prête à la vérité tous les traits du mensonge!
Confonds l'un avec l'autre, et sans cesse agité,
Qu'il soit également par tous deux tourmenté!
Que ces fausses clartés l'entraînent dans l'abîme;
En cherchant la vertu qu'il commette le crime;
Et qu'alors tout à coup lui montrant son flambeau
La vérité l'éclaire au bord de son tombeau!

(A Hedelmone)

Et toi qui fus mon sang, fille ingrate et barbare,
Le ciel vengeur m'instruit du sort qu'il te prépare.
(À Othello)
Je te rends grâce, ingrat, mes vœux s'accompliront.
(En montrant le bandeau de diamants qui est sur la tête de sa fille)
Tes mains ont attaché le malheur sur son front.
Crois-moi, veille sur elle. Une épouse si chère
Peut tromper son époux, ayant trompé son père.
Retiens ces mots, adieu."

(Acte I. Sc. 6)
Odalbert is possibly rather too accurate and explicit in his prophecies.

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O my soul's joy!
If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have wakened death!
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven! If I were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

(Act II. Sc. 1)

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J'ai souvent sur ma tête
Entendu les fureurs, les cris de la tempête,
J'ai vu le fond des mers, les flots audacieux
S'y perdre avec l'éclair, s'élaner jusqu'aux cieux,
Le calme était bien doux après ce bruit terrible;
Mais qu'il n'approche point de ce bonheur paisible,
De ce bonheur profond, sans bornes, inconnu
Où nul homme avant moi n'est jamais parvenu!
Je crais à ces transports que mon âme ravie.
Consume en un instant le bonheur de ma vie.
A peine tout mon coeur suffit à le sentir.
Ahi c'est dans ce moment que je devrais mourir.

(Acte I. Sc. 8)

Isdemona (singing)
The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
   Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
   Sing willow, willow, willow;
The fresh streams ran by her, and murmured her moans;
   Sing willow, willow, willow;
Her salt tears fell from her and soften'd the stones;
   Lay by these:

[Singing] Sing willow, willow, willow;
Prithhee, hie thee, he'll come anon:
[Singing] Sing all a green willow must be my garland.

Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve,-
Nay, that's not next. - Hark, who is't that knocks?

It's the wind.

Julia

Isdemona (singing) I called my love false love; but what said he then?
If I court moe women, you'll couch with moe men.-
So, get thee gone; good night. Mine eyes do itch;

Doth that bode weeping?

(Act IV. Sc. 3)

Isdemona

Tu vois cet instrument: tout dort: si dans ces lieux
J'unissais à ma voix ses sons mystérieux!
Il émeut trop votre âme.

Il est fait pour me plaire.

C'est le fidèle ami du chagrin solitaire.
Entends encore ma voix; nous sommes sans témoin,
C'est un chant douloureux dont mon coeur a besoin.

Au pied d'un saule, Isaure à son amant,
Croyant le voir, reprochait son injure!
'Quoi! je t'adore, et tu me crois parjure!
Je meurs, cruel; tes maux font mon tourment.
Chantez le saule et sa douce verdure.

Comme une fleur, je n'eus que deux instants:
T'aimer...mourir. Hélas! mon âme est pure.
On t'a trompé; tu verras l'imposture;
Tu la verras, il ne sera plus temps.
Chantez le saule et sa douce verdure.

Mais le jour baisse, et l'air s'est épaissi:
J'entends crier l'oiseau de triste augure;
Ces verts rameaux penchent leur chevelure;
Ce saule pleure; et moi je pleure aussi.
Chantez le saule et sa douce verdure.

On dit qu'auors Isaure s'arrêta:
Tout resta mort, muet dans la nature;
Le vent, sans bruit; le ruisseau, sans murmure.
Jamais depuis, Isaure ne chanta.
Chantez le saule et sa douce verdure.
(On entend le bruit du vent)
(En fremissant tout à coup)
D'où vient ce bruit? O ciel!
C'est la tempête.

La nuit sera terrible et l'orage commence.
(Ante V. Sc 2)
The scene of Hedelmone's death differs from Shakespeare's in containing her explanation of Loredan's possession of the letter and coronet.

Othello: Eh bien! regardez-moi! me reconnaissez-vous?
Hedelmone: Je ne vois plus d'amant, je ne vois plus d'époux.
        Je vois la mort, la mort! Tu l'as prédit, mon père!
Othello (froidement): Avant que le sommeil ferme votre paupière,
                     Avez-vous adressé votre prière à Dieu?
Hedelmone: Oui, j'ai prié pour vous.
Othello: Quelque temps dans ce lieu,
        Je vais attendre; allons. (Il se promène)
Hedelmone: Que voulez-vous me dire?
Othello: Préparez-vous.
Hedelmone: À quoi?
Othello (montrant son poignard): Ce fer doit vous instruire.
Hedelmone (avec un cri): À moi, mon Dieu!
Othello: Silence! Allons, préparez-vous.
        Il s'agit de votre âme.
Hedelmone: Oh je tombe à genoux.
Othello: Non, la mort.
Hedelmone: Que ma voix expirante
        Vous jure... Non jamais...
Othello (avec la plus grande tendresse): Oh! deviens innocent,
        Et dans ce coeur encor tout mon sang est à toi.
(Othello annonce à Hedelmone la mort de Loredan)
Hedelmone: Il est mort! il est mort!
Othello: Tu lui donnes des larmes!
Hedelmone: Ciel! qu'entends-je?
Othello: Tu plains sa jeunesse et ses charmes.
Hédelmone: Loredan! Loredan!
Othello: Perfide, que dis-tu?
Hédelmone: Je rends en le pleurant, hommage à ses vertus.
Il était innocent.
Othello: Un traître que j'abhorre!
Hédelmone: Il était innocent, je le déclare encore.
Othello: Vois-tu ce poignard?
Hédelmone: Oui. Mais tout près de mourir.
Je défends l'innocence à mon dernier soupir.
Othello: L'innocence!
Hédelmone: Oui, j'en jure, et par l'Être suprême,
Par toi, par mon amour, et sous ton poignard même.
Othello: (la frappant d'un coup de poignard)
En bien! meurs.
Hédelmone: O mon Dieu!
(Elle fait plusieurs pas en arrière et va tomber morte
au pied de son lit.)

"Othello" was the last of Ducis's adaptations. The horror of the
Revolution covered France, and a few months later, he wrote "Why talk to
me, Vallier, of composing tragedies? Tragedy walks the streets. If I put
my foot out of doors, I have blood up to the ankle." In 1796, when
security and hope were dawning again for France, Ducis published his own
"tragedy" of "Abufar" which closes on a note of love and hopefulness.
Conclusion.

And so one closes the book. What remains from the study? A better understanding and appreciation, certainly, of Shakespeare and the great French dramatists, so splendid both, and so different: for Ducis's work, though it falls far short of the two ideals it sought to unite, has yet this gift, born of its own reverence for the great and beautiful, that it stirs in us a like reverence and aspiration. For Ducis himself, there remain only affection and immense respect. We know him so well from his own letters and his friends', a soul with the courage and devotion of a strong man, and the purity and innocence of a child. His friend Campenon tells a story of him that seems to symbolise entirely the man and his work: one cannot help smiling at the naïve absurdity of it, but behind the smile is respect and quick sympathy for the humility and loyalty of the man who gave of his best to the service of his generation - "Je n'oublierai jamais qu'étant allé le voir à Versailles par une assez froide journée de janvier, je le trouvai dans sa chambre à coucher, monté sur une chaise, et tout occupé à disposer avec une certaine pompe autour de la tête de l'Eschyle anglais, une énorme touffe de buis qu'on venait de lui apporter. 'Je suis à vous tout à l'heure', me dit-il comme j'entrais, et sans se déranger; et remarquant que j'étais un peu surpris de l'attitude où je l'avais trouvé: 'Vous ne voyez donc pas que c'est demain la Saint-Guillaume, fête patronale de mon Shakespeare?' Puis, s'appuyant sur mon épaule pour descendre, et m'ayant consulté sur l'effet de son bouquet, le seul sans doute que la saison eût pu lui offrir, 'Mon ami' ajouta-t-il, avec une figure dont l'expression m'est encore présente, 'les anciens couronnaient de fleurs les sources où ils avaient puisé.' "
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