

THE SATIRES OF MR. MACHINE.¹

BY ERNST BERGMANN.

[An account of the beginning of the La Mettrie-Haller controversy as recorded by Dr. Bergmann in his book *Die Satiren des Herrn Maschine*, was published in *The Open Court* of July 1913, together with other material of interest in connection with La Mettrie and his principal work, *L'homme machine* (English translation with French text, *Man a Machine*, Chicago, Open Court Publishing Company, 1912). In this article we have the next phase of this controversy as reported by Dr. Bergmann in his interesting book.—ED.]

HALLER had sufficient occasion to continue in the year 1748 the fight he had entered upon against La Mettrie, especially as the dangerous innovator, responding to a summons from Frederick the Great, removed to Potsdam on February 7 of this year, thus drawing closer to his opponent in distance.² As early as November 30, 1747, Haller had reviewed most unfavorably *La faculté vengée*, a satirical comedy directed against the charlatan Astruc and the medical faculty of Paris, at the same time naming the true author and mentioning all the attendant circumstances.³ He declared that La Mettrie insulted his own relatives because they did not stand by him, that by this violent and offensive pamphlet he had lost the respect of all sensible people, which is the last possession of an

¹ Translated from the German by Lydia G. Robinson.

² The date of La Mettrie's arrival is given wrongly in almost every case. Compare the *Vossische Zeitung* of February 8, 1748: "The famous Doctor de la Mettrie whom his majesty has summoned from Holland arrived here yesterday." (*Der berühmte Herr Doctor de la Mettrie, welchen Se. Majestät aus Holland anhero berufen lassen, ist gestern allhier angekommen*).

³ This composition belongs to the most brilliant creations of La Mettrie, the satirist. With a wit worthy of Aristophanes it describes how the Paris faculty deliberates over the banishment of the brawler "Chat-Huant" (Screech-owl), i. e., La Mettrie. The members of the faculty are concealed under such names as "Savantasse" = "Learned Swindler" (Astruc), "Muscadin" = "a dude" (Sidobre) etc. The true names of those ridiculed are added in a key. Unfortunately we must refrain from entering into this "*bitterböse Stachel-schrift*" (Haller). It was burned by decree of Parliament July 9, 1746, together with the rest of La Mettrie's writings, in the Place de Grève at Paris by the public executioner. (Copy in the author's possession).

unfortunate man. It is deplorable to see that the physician Haller did not in the least know how to appreciate the righteous battle La Mettrie was waging against the charlatanry which was flourishing so luxuriantly in the medical profession at that time.

In the meantime the signal for battle now comes from another quarter. On March 31, 1748, Samuel Christian Hollmann (1696-1787), professor of philosophy and natural theology in the University of Göttingen, a confessed Wolffian and a most intimate friend of Haller, had written a letter on *L'homme machine*, (*Brief über l'Homme machine*), probably at the instigation of his colleague Haller, which Haller published in the *Göttinger Gelehrten Zeitungen* on May 6 and 7 of the same year, with a commendatory introduction as if it had been sent in anonymously.⁴

Hollmann charged La Mettrie with carelessness in loose thinking; said that all of *L'homme machine* was stolen and was nothing more than a "free translation" of the "confidential correspondence between two good friends on the nature of the soul;"⁵ that this "automatic sage" disproves himself by his own machine theory which still uses thought in attempting to establish truth. He forgets entirely that he is merely a machine writing there. Is it really true that plain organized matter can produce thought and consciousness? No more than "a paper- or grist-mill can make shoes." The soul has a higher origin. La Mettrie's theory itself shows that he is more than a mere machine, namely a thinking machine, although to be sure one "of the lowest kind, or perhaps something still more trifling." Indeed how can he help it if his machine thinks thus and not otherwise? This machine may well appeal to Descartes, but if Descartes could read *L'homme machine* he would place its author among the *petit philosophes*.

Finally the writer of the letter discovers in La Mettrie a Spinozist in disguise who regards "a wise nature as the mother of all things." And now the good man's gall runs over: "A Spinozist is in my eyes a wretch whom one must pity, and to whose assistance if he can be helped one must try to come with a few notes from the doctrine of reason and a few clear explanations of what sort of a thing a substance is." People who have clear ideas on these subjects "would be ashamed to be disquieted for even a quarter of an hour by the distracted thoughts of a Spinozist."

Yet this silly nonsense of an arrogantly pious man was received with murmurs of approval in the camp of the German

⁴ It was Zimmermann who made known the true author, p. 229.

⁵ The Hague, 1713. The accusation is unfounded.

spiritualists as the first defensive measure from that side. In the course of the same year, 1748, there appeared a separate print of the Hollmann letter in a French translation apparently made expressly for La Mettrie under the title "Lettre d'un Anonyme pour servir de critique ou de réfutation au livre intitulé l'Homme machine,"⁶ in which form the letter then passed through German and French revisions.⁷ At first La Mettrie regarded as his opponent the Berlin ecclesiastical commissioner (*Konsistorialrat*) Sack who was known to be hostile to freethought,⁸ but soon he came to the conclusion that Haller himself was the anonymous author.⁹ His reply is the remarkable *Epître à mon esprit ou l'Anonyme persiflé*, a duodecimo pamphlet of 22 pages without place or date, which according to our calculation must have appeared in Berlin about March 1749,¹⁰ and from which Poritzky has already communicated some passages.¹¹

In a soliloquy with his own spirit La Mettrie, as we are already informed by the title, castigates the anonymous author of the letter on *L'homme machine*, whom he now assumes to be

⁶ Without place (Berlin) and date (1749?). 4°, 24 pages. We have not been able to find a copy of this translation anywhere.

⁷ The *Berlinische Bibliothek* was the first to reproduce an abstract. (End of) 1748, II., pp. 798-800. Entered in the *Göttinger Gelehrten Zeitungen* under date of April 17, 1749.

⁸ Thus Zimmermann reports, p. 229. Cf. also a note in Haller's *Tagebuch der medizinischen Literatur*. Berne, 1791. III, p. 537.

⁹ Remark in Zimmermann, p. 229. This also appears from a passage in La Mettrie's *Supplément à l'ouvrage de Pénélope etc.* Berlin, 1750, p. 358. "Il me traitait aussi cavalièrement, qu'un autre Anonyme vient (!) de traiter l'Homme machine." At "autre" La Mettrie makes this note: "Haller, dit-on; je n'en serais point surpris. Il a encore tous les préjugés de l'enfance, quoique médecin. En ce sens je permets qu'on le regarde comme un phénomène de l'art." According to a date on page 43 the passage was probably written in the beginning of 1749.

¹⁰ Of this original edition two copies were preserved in the Library of the Ducal House at Gotha (under Phil. 8. 329) of which one is now in the author's possession. With this exception I can learn of no other copy in a public library (Communication of the information bureau of German libraries in Berlin, July 16, 1912). A reprint appeared in Paris (Valade) 1774.

¹¹ P. 210f. The *Epître à mon esprit* is included in the *Œuvres philosophiques*, Berlin, 1764, II, 245-262; and Berlin, 1796, II. Scholarly journals reproduced extracts in great number: for instance, the *Nachrichten von einer Hallischen Bibl.*, 1749, III, 179-186; the *Züricher Freimüt. Urk. u. Nachr.* v. 14 Okt. 1751; the *Berlinische Bibliothek*, 1749, III, p. 118f; also Windheim's *Philosophische Bibliothek*, Hannover, 1749, I, 247-254; the *Acta hist.-ecclesiastica*, Weimar, 1749, XIII, 470, etc. There is a distorted German translation on pp. 49-69 of "Die zu Boden gestürzte Maschine oder glaubwürdige Nachrichten vom Leben und sonderbaren Ende des berühmten Arztes de Lametrie. Difficile est, satiram non scribere." Frankfurt and Leipsic, 1750, 8°, 70 pages. Referred to in the *Gött. Gel. Zeit.* of Nov. 9, 1750. Two copies of this queer little document have also been preserved, one (under As. 10341a) in the Berlin Royal Library, and the other in the author's possession.

Haller and again some orthodox man from Berlin. With pretended contrition he deplores the flightiness of which he has been accused and the levity of his pen (page 3). Entire sentences are quoted from Hollmann's letter (6f.) and enlarged upon ironically. Verily, how can you help it, my spirit, if your machine operates so poorly? But what a miserable philosopher you are! what hazy ideas of substance you have(7)! And you do not even consider it necessary to ask advice of the theologians! And what a bewildering labyrinth of atheism you have constructed, my spirit! Blind imitator of Spinoza, you might do me harm (18f). And how would it fare with you if Mr. Descartes were to arise from his grave? How this timid philosopher would censure you for all your clumsy frankness! Man and beast, "these two kinds of creatures from the animal kingdom," are organized exactly alike. To be sure! certainly! But be quiet about it. Why say it so loud? Keep this secret, my spirit, so that you can point out with the greater confidence that animals are merely machines. The philosophers will understand you as they have understood the artful Descartes, and draw their own conclusions with respect to man as well. In the meantime you can pass with the theologians for a good orthodox (18f).

The discernment of his reckless and inconsiderate mode of confession is the meaning of this irony, as the entire satire represents in general a *γνώθι σαυτόν*. The polemic element remains in the background, the opponent is too insignificant. La Mettrie speaks, to be sure, of the insipid attacks of those who honor him with their pious hatred (13), of the "first pedant at a certain university" (7); he has much evil to say of the teachers of the gospel, of those Tarruffes who play their part under the mask of religion and whose supreme divinity is self-love (20). But the interesting thing about this dialogue with his spirit is the excellent portrait of himself which his irony incidentally discloses. A deeper reflection upon the reasons for the stormy opposition which arose against him from all sides seems to have preceded the actual writing and to have interrupted temporarily the usually cheerful mood of his spirit. Pronounce an impartial judgment upon yourself, my spirit! You are too lively, my friend. Every one says that you have a more than too fertile imagination. "You have a hot head in which everything is calcined and nothing reaches its proper maturity. There is no sequence to your ideas, no keen reflection. You do not take regular steps, so to speak, but cut actual capers. You might be compared to a piece of land which bears early fruit, to be sure, but

wild and unripe, fruit which though new and rare is unhealthful and injurious" (4f). And again: "I love you, my spirit; I would rather go to the Bastille with you than be praised by a theologian. *Doux charme de ma vie*, my only refuge! How painful it is to me that instead of in my head you are dwelling in I know not what sort of a fiery vessel, in which the mercury and the salts that compose your being can not be brought into any stability" (12)! La Mettrie could not be characterized more strikingly. You are a dreamer and enthusiast, a visionary, *un cerveau illuminé*. You think as quickly as you write.¹² The power of your imagination is as uncertain as your finger. You are fickle! Reform, O my spirit. Accustom yourself to some of the bad qualities of your opponents. It will bring blessings to you. Learn to believe what your pastor tries to make you believe, write a fine inspiring treatise on the immortality of the soul, and above all do not take everything so tragically. "*Croyez que la bonne plaisanterie est la pierre de touche de la plus fine raison*" (22). "Believe that good humor is the touchstone of the finest reason."

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Haller made a brief mention of the *Épître à mon esprit* in his journal of March 17, 1749, without, however, ascribing any particular significance to it. A few months later, on September 4, he received a second satire directed more particularly against himself, *La machine terrassée*, which is one of the most original things La Mettrie ever wrote. The joke about it is that Haller did not recognize his opponent. "It is," he writes, "a small satire against La Mettrie in which he is reproached in our learned journals with the many mistakes which he has committed against scholarship and the intellect. He is accused of plagiarizing with regard to Boerhaave's commentary and is reproached for the really exceedingly improper swaggering which he has carried on in his latest writings." Haller states that the paper would not be worth a review, "if it were not for its connection with ourselves."

The course of history preceding this second satire is in brief as follows:

On January 1, 1748, Haller had acquitted his prolific opponent

¹²The German translator comments in the following neat Alexandrines:

"Auch seine Feder ist mechanisch abgericht,
Sie schreibet von sich selbst, er aber denket nicht,"

which may be rendered into English,

"Machine-like, e'en his pen is trained to spread the ink,
It writes quite of itself; he doesn't have to think."

of the generally prevalent suspicion that he had written Diderot's *Pensées philosophiques*. Nevertheless, following a correct instinct, he had charged him to his face on May 30 of the same year with being the author of the refutation entitled *L'Homme plus que machine*,¹³ which was then passing around among the editorial offices of the deluded adversaries of the La Mettrie muse as a wholesome antidote against the materialistic atheistic machine theory.¹⁴ The book indeed seemed to be directed against the "bold author," the "machine teacher" or "machine master" and his "shameless, blasphemous statements" which strive to contend against the spiritual nature of the human soul. According to reliable accounts La Mettrie himself was really the author. Haller was not in the least justified in seeing in *L'homme plante*, which La Mettrie openly acknowledged, scarcely more than the "sport of a mere joker" in which it were folly to look for anything serious or reasonable.¹⁵ So his constantly increasing spite against the scintillating Frenchman exploded the more violently in his review of La Mettrie's cynical "*Ouvrage de Pénélope, ou le Machiavélisme en médecine*, par Alethejus Demetrius,"¹⁶ a destructive satire in brilliant style on the charlatantry of the medical profession. In it La Mettrie imparts to young physicians the same Mephistophelian counsel which we find in the scene with the young bachelor in Goethe's Faust.¹⁷ The embittered Haller lacked the vision for what was really sublime and entirely legitimate in this historically memorable satire which is brimful of puzzles requiring elucidation. Haller takes the "Machiavelism" (first part) on its face value and then stands in perplexity when in "Anti-Machiavelism" (second part) La Mettrie casts aside the helmet of irony and sketches an imposing description of Boerhaave, the great reformer of medicine.¹⁸ Under the pseudonym Alethejus Demetrius, Haller writes, is hidden "the notorious (!) La Mettrie." "His immoderate zeal against God, chastity and the doctors," betrayed him sufficiently, and also "the indecent expressions," "the unbridled effrontery,"

¹³ It was long thought that the author of *L'Homme plus que machine* was Elie Luzac, of Leyden, the publisher of *L'Homme machine*. See his preface as translated in *The Open Court*, July 1913, p. 426.

¹⁴ Cf. Windheim's *Philosophische Bibliothek*, Hannover, 1749, I, 198-216, and *Neuer Büchersaal d. schön. Wiss. u. fr. Künste*, Leipsic, 1748, VI, 500-515.

¹⁵ *Gött. Gel. Zeit.* of May 20, 1748. Poritzky (pp. 228-243) has rightly called express attention to the significance of this document. La Mettrie here anticipates the Goethe-Darwin theory of primitive plant life.

¹⁶ Geneva, 1748. 2 volumes. Haller's review appeared August 1, 1748.

¹⁷ The headings to the chapters read: "On the Superfluity of Anatomy, Physics, Surgery"; "On the Necessity of Literature, Painting, Music, etc."

¹⁸ II, 281ff.

with which he slandered the Paris physicians. One can hardly believe his eyes when he sees with what satisfaction Haller records La Mettrie's unprecedentedly audacious avowal in "Machiavelism" that he had for the most part copied his medical books, "that he had spent a hundred thousand pounds in dissipation and debauchery before he became doctor, and had bought this title at Rheims without having the slightest knowledge of the science of medicine." To this *irrisor deorum hominumque* nothing is sacred, not even his own person. In conclusion Haller calls attention with pedantic exactitude to a few comical slips of his adversary who, there is no doubt, was careless. La Mettrie writes that Aldrovandus had borrowed his ornithology from Willoughby. Unfortunately Aldrovandus died before Willoughby was born. The *Giornali di Letterati* appear in La Mettrie as a certain "Monsieur Giorno." "But what can one expect of a copyist who has published the whole commentary of our Mr. Haller under his own name!" In this manner Haller proceeds in his review of the last three parts of the *Institutions de médecine* which differ from the first only by the greater carelessness with which La Mettrie has here done his copying.¹⁹ The city of Breslau figures as a scholar with this Frenchman who is little acquainted with the geography of Germany. La Mettrie has not even considered it necessary to give heed to the list of errata and there are more similar evidences of slovenliness.

At this point the hostilities have reached their climax, but whoever may think that La Mettrie has taken offense is sadly mistaken. He shows not the slightest trace of any kind of resentment. On the contrary, his *bonne plaisanterie* never sat so lightly upon him as now. His answer is the *Épître à Mlle. A. C. P. ou la machine terrassée*, another duodecimo of twenty-three pages which was printed in Berlin in July or August without mention of place but with the date 1749.²⁰ The identity of the writing is beyond doubt. In the first place it is directed against Haller. His two critiques of August 1 and October 31, 1748, are paraphrased in a not unwitty fashion. Messrs. Aldrovandus and Willoughby bring their affair to an end (p. 9), the author Giorno makes his appearance, the learned physician Breslau, the uncorrected list of errata, the civet-cat and the "dissolved eggs" (p. 8). These and other similar slips are merely the small jests of Mr. Machine. The dissipation at Rheims and the purchased degree are not forgotten (p. 14).

¹⁹ *Gött. Gel. Zeit.* of October, 31, 1748.

²⁰ No copy of this satire can be found in the collective catalogue of the libraries. (Report of the information bureau, July 16, 1912). We quote from

But the point of the whole is as follows: The anonymous satirist (La Mettrie) gives a fictitious Parisienne an impartial account of an artificial human machine *à la* Vaucanson which in our days created a great sensation and finally came to a curious end.²¹ This machine which is living but not endowed with a soul has fallen to the ground (*terrassée*) and been delivered over to Pluto's Bastille. "It was in constant motion and rolled around so long that it finally broke its neck. By its cries, by its cunning strokes, by its calumnies, and by the writing of many books it sought to outstrip ordinary machines" (4). Now it is dead. *Pauvre machine!*

I will tell you its story. The crude and cumbersome matter of Mr. Machine, "for this is his *nomen et omen*," was prepared in I know not what retort. The cynic Caeleno(?) set it in order when lo, and behold! Mr. Machine moves like the (automatic) ducks of Mr. Vaucanson in Paris. Like them he is without a soul, without understanding, reason, or cognition, without politeness and manners. His whole being is nothing but matter. He is the "man-machine" (*L'homme machine*), the "man-plant" (*L'homme plante*), the "super-machine." These are the titles in which he glories (*Ce sont les titres, dont il fait gloire*, page 6).

There is not much to say about the education of Mr. Machine.²² The machine was set up and moved away. It directed its movements to Paris and Leyden, to Rheims. It was even graduated, honor enough for a machine! Soon it began to plunder the republic of scholars in a perfectly mechanical way. You are acquainted, Mademoiselle, with the pretty conceits which Mr. Machine published under the title *Les institutions de médecine!* Read these jokes! You will then sufficiently admire the creative wit of Mr. Machine (9f).

At times Mr. Machine forgot that he was only a machine. He considered himself more terrible than he was. He thought that

the only copy known to be extant which is in our own possession. A reproduction appeared first in the *Œuvres philosophiques*, Berlin, 1764, II, 227-244; then in *Œuvres*, Berlin, 1774, 1796, etc. In the complete editions of the fifties none of the three satires of Mr. Machine was included. A review of the *Machine terrassée* may be found in the *Nachr. von einer Hallischen Bibl.*, 1749, III, 469f, and a German translation in the above mentioned work, *Die zu Boden gestürzte Maschine*, pp. 6-21.

²¹ By this machine of course is to be understood the author of *L'homme machine*.

²² It is possible that La Mettrie came upon the idea of his machine fable through the following passage of a criticism of the *Épître à mon esprit*: "The crudity, the rude behaviour towards deserving men, the vulgar words of abuse make it as clear as daylight that the entire machine of the author and particularly the driving wheels of his brain, have not been polished by any proper education." *Berliner Bibliothek*, 1749, p. 118.

by his aid all apes, and hence yours also Mademoiselle, would in time learn to read. He considered himself the pillar of the republic of scholars, the Hercules of our century. He raved against the parsons, the arrogant brutes (12)! "On the day when my system appeared," he exclaimed, "the foundations of most sacred theology were shaken and the broad and flat hats of all of those clowns and buffoons which the ordinary man reveres became more disarranged than ever."²³

Now he is dead, poor Mr. Machine! Shortly before the end he wrote another letter to his spirit and openly confessed that he was a fool, whereupon there came over him a longing for the paradise of machines, an eternal standstill. He took an overdose of ratsbane and plunged into blessed darkness²⁴ (p. 5). What? A piece of foolishness? But consider, Mademoiselle, "a machine does not do what it wishes but what it must."

Now he lies his full length on the banks of the Acheron. His soul, or rather his matter, is like a loosened string of a bass viol. Pluto sends Charon across the gloomy river to bring in recruits. And behold, at the terrifying roar of the classical ferryman, Mr. Machine awakens from his blessed repose. He becomes aware with horror that he has an immortal soul which he had always contended against when alive (p. 17).

What does it avail him now that he anxiously protests in trembling tones, "I am a dead body, I am simply matter, I am a machine, I am like the flowers which bloom to-day and are withered to-morrow." "Hold your tongue," answers Charon, and rows him across the silent stream (18).

They land and draw near to his dwelling place. It is the abode of charlatans, clowns and buffoons. They are just making noisy preparation to have a picnic. Delighted to find himself in the pleasant company of materialists Mr. Machine draws nearer. "My name is Machine!" Hardly had he pronounced the fatal word when a pedant from a certain university (?) fell upon him. "Wretched scoundrel, do you consider it honest to have attacked my honor in such an infamous fashion? It is true I sold you your doctor's degree, but are you aware that up to this very hour you still owe me the money for it (20)?"

He seized Mr. Machine by the throat and choked him. There lay the machine on the ground. But the charlatans, clowns and

²³ Quotation from *Épître à mon esprit*, p. 11, which seems to strengthen the probability that a controversy had been raised against La Mettrie.

²⁴ A remarkable anticipation of his own fate. He died at the age of 42 from ptomaine poisoning.

buffoons instantly drew off its skin over its ears and after considerable altercation made a bagpipe out of it. They longed to have some good music. Now this is the second existence of Mr. Machine. He is now a bagpipe. "Cheer up, Mr. Bagpipe, pipe away and do your best to entice and wheedle!"

"*C'est la carrière du feu, Mr. Machine.*"

* * *

La Mettrie preserved his *incognito* very well, and was now to discover how the journalists Haller, Windheim, etc. proclaimed with great complacency his literary destruction, without surmising in the least that this somewhat coarse but doubtless original and witty satire on materialism flowed from the very pen of Mr. Machine himself. In the meantime this bold auto-persiflage was of course written only to be at once disproved. Close upon its heels followed the *Réponse à l'auteur de la machine terrassée*, without place [Berlin] 1749, 12°, 24 pp., which was slightly disposed of by Haller September 4, 1749, as "mere twaddle" and announced in the *Berliner wöchentl. Ber.* of July 21, 1749. This document belongs to the greatest rarities of Lamettriana.²⁵ The original was entirely lost sight of soon after its appearance, and this may have been due in part to the tiny form in which the libel appeared. Whereas the first two satires were included in the *Œuvres* in 1764, no reprint of the *Réponse* is to be found in any of the numerous eighteenth century editions of La Mettrie. The existence and contents of this satire are known only from the above mentioned reviews and from a badly distorted translation in the collection we have already referred to, *Die zu Boden gestürzte Maschine*.²⁶ We have now had the good fortune by searching in the right place to discover a well preserved copy of the French original of this third satire also and so to make it accessible to investigation.²⁷

Our hopes for a brilliant and well-prepared defense of the

²⁵ Nérée Quépat characterizes it as *fort rare*, p. 190.

²⁶ Pp. 22-48. The translator who is prejudiced against La Mettrie proceeds in an extremely arbitrary fashion, suppresses entire sentences and adds stronger phrases according to his own will. Poritzky who utilizes this translation (following the Berlin copy) in the absence of the original has firmly established this fact probably on the basis of a contemporary criticism (p 221). He can not possibly have compared the texts because he does not even know the exact title of the satires. We also look in vain for any reference to a source in this passage in Poritzky.

²⁷ The library of the University of Göttingen claims to possess a copy with a different title, according to a communication from the bureau of information in Berlin. (8. *Theol. thet.*, I, 124).

feigned attack remain unfulfilled. The wit of Mr. Machine seems for the time being to be exhausted in this field. His *Réponse* is pretty confused²⁸ and makes up in obscenities what it lacks in substance.

La Mettrie pretends that another man than himself had really written the machine satire. In this other person John Partridge of Swiftian memory comes again to life.²⁹ "Swift may say what he pleases," the satire begins, "Partridge is not dead. He lives in you and through you whose prophetic eloquence draws to it so large a crowd of adherents." Consequently La Mettrie addresses his opponent throughout the entire writing as "M. P." (Mr. Partridge). At first M. P. is to him only the imaginary author of the machine satire. "Through you, mighty Echo, the voice of the Göttingen journals, that hitherto—*vox clamantis in deserto*—has been heard only in the wilderness, is now spread abroad also in the cities" (p. 11). The author "Giorno," Aldrovandus, etc., appear once more. But now it is interesting to see Partridge and Haller melt together under his pen in the further course of the satire which is obviously carelessly thrown together. "Do you know," he begins, "that you exceed that calendar-maker whose memory has been perpetuated by Swift? How delicate, how natural is your satire, how well you contrive to conceal your footsteps!" A rare gift indeed! It might be said that you reap where others find nothing even to glean.³⁰ I have been on many military expeditions but your list of wars astonishes me. Devil take it, I would never in my life have considered you so dangerous. You have disclosed the sources of my thievery, you have decried me as a copyist (p. 15). Any attempts to reply would be superfluous. A man of your prestige is taken at his word. But it does you no good to get into

²⁸ Poritzky to be sure is of a different opinion, P. 210.

²⁹ John Partridge was a charlatan in London, a shoemaker by trade, who under William III and Anne (1702-1714) in order to obtain a better livelihood deceived the public with invented predictions as an astrologer and "Philomath" in calendars, under the name of "Merlinus Liberatus," etc. Swift handled this dishonorable calendar-maker and his astrological nonsense severely in a famous satire *Predictions for the Year 1708*, which appeared at the end of 1707 under the pseudonym of Isaak Bickerstaff Esqu. and in which Swift in serious guise published the results of his own astrological experiments. According to this, some well-known personages were to die on definite days of the year 1708, among others also John Partridge on March 29. The point of this amusing story is that John Partridge, seized by pangs of conscience, confessed the whole dishonesty of his actions on March 29 on his supposed deathbed, but must have become a shoemaker again after his fortunate survival of this *dies ater*, since no one ever heard again of his calendar. (Henry Craik, *The Life of Jonathan Swift*, London, 1882, pp. 170ff).

³⁰ This expression occurs again later.

a passion. The attacks you make upon me are as futile as the efforts of a hopping turtle (p. 13).

And then! I confess that your little pamphlet is bewitching. You may pass judgment, you may draw conclusions, you may use the salt of criticism or wield the lash of satire—at all times you are wholly a man, M. P.! How inimitably you can string the pearls of learning! Under your hands copper is turned to gold. Happy the man who possesses such weapons! And your very eagle's glance! But I wager that you are no more able to look at the sun than I am to read your writings without causing my eyes to overflow from laughing (10).

And finally! How unexceptional is the attachment you profess for me. I swear to you, M. P., that as soon as I learn your correct name and dwelling place I will invite myself to dinner at your home, *sans façons à la française*. Does that strike you as strange? Tell me who you are, let us drink down our dispute in a glass of wine. We will not have those clowns for company for I cannot see them without laughing (p. 7). A pretty girl, my noble Amphitryon, delights the eye far more than a poor repartee. One speaks with the eyes, the heart becomes tender, finally—

Besides at Haller La Mettrie once more takes aim also at Hollmann and ridicules him in quite an unworthy fashion as "*adroit septième de Leibniz*." "Merciless *raisonneur*, monadist stuffed full of adequate causes, metaphysician crammed with *principia contradictionis*, harmonist without harmony, *déclamateur*, *prêcheur emphatique*, *pousseur de syllogismes et d'ergo*, etc." Yet all this seems rather to point to Haller.

La Mettrie first takes up the fable of the machine in a clumsy fashion. With your permission, Mr. P., I make my appearance again in the world in order to congratulate you upon your satire. What a dirty trick to poison me with ratsbane! But the rest I can easily understand. "*Je suis si sujet ou dévoïement*, M. P., that I am not at all surprised *que vous ayez fait sortir mon âme par où les apothicaires viennent très-humblement à son secours*. But why did your good pleasure take just this way? *Dites, St. Homme, le luisant Pod... serait il votre conduite favori?*" (4f).

There is no need of entering further into the contents of the satire. The esthetic qualities are not sufficiently attractive to justify the exaggerated cynicisms. La Mettrie frequently departs from Mr. Partridge but always takes up the pen again until upon the last page he himself is finally aware that he has been wasting "on a neat's tongue salt which has lost its savor" (p. 24).