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The First Appearance of 'Voltaire'

1  VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. OEDIPE, Tragedie. Par Monsieur de Voltaire. A Paris, chez Pierre Ribou ... Pierre Huet ... Jean Mazuel ... et Antoine-Urbain Coustelier, 1719. £ 850

FIRST EDITION. 8vo, pp. [viii], 131, [1] blank; apart from some minor worming in gutter to final few gatherings (not affecting the text) and a few minor marks in places, a clean crisp copy throughout; in contemporary mottled calf, spine tooled in gilt with red morocco label lettered in gilt, some minor rubbing to extremities, but not detracting from this being a handsome and very desirable copy.

Uncommon first edition of Voltaire's Œdipe, his first play and the first literary work for which he used the pen-name Voltaire (his real name was François-Marie Arouet).

Oedipe is more than a simple translation of Sophocles' tragedy; Voltaire attempts to explain the motivations of the characters, adding a romantic subplot, making the incest theme less central, and seeking to rationalise aspects of Sophocles' play that seemed arbitrary, such as the length of time taken by Oedipus to understand the Oracle's pronouncement. Voltaire finished the play during his imprisonment in 1717, and it premiered on 18 November 1718 at the Comédie-Française, running for 45 performances to great critical acclaim, before being revived in 1723. It remained in the Comédie-Française's repertoire until 1852.

Bengesco 2.

2   VOLTAIRE. EPITRES SUR LE BONHEUR, la Liberté, et l'Envie. A Amsterdam, Chez Jacques Desbordes, MDCCXXXVIII [1738]. £ 285

FIRST EDITION. 8vo, pp. 28; clean and crisp throughout; in later marbled wrappers.

First edition of this collection of verse letters by Voltaire, republished and significantly revised the following year under the title Discours en vers sur l'homme.

Although brief, these letters (on happiness, although entitled “De l'égalité des conditions”, on freedom, and on envy), articulate very clearly Voltaire's moral outlook, and were condemned as such by the Abbé Maynard, who observed that they merely reduced happiness to pleasure. Voltaire initially denied being their author, writing to Thieriot, "Send me these letters attributed to me. What is this drug on the subject of Happiness? These letters ARE NOT BY ME, and you would be causing me great trouble if you do not make every effort to disabuse the public of the notion that they are." We should not take these words at face value; he wrote much the same of Zadig and Candide.

OCLC records four copies outside Europe, at New York Public Library, Texas, Wisconsin, and the National Library of Australia.


FIRST EDITION IN ENGLISH. 8vo, pp. [ii], 44; without the final leaf of advertisements; a clean crisp copy in recent calf backed boards.

First edition in English of this fragment of an early draft of Voltaire’s Siecle de Louis XIV, which was not published in full until 1751. This pamphlet consists of a ten-page statement of Voltaire’s general purpose, followed by a sample chapter; the book as completed was one of Voltaire’s most important and original works. The translation is by John Lockman.

CBEL II, 1535.
4  [VOLTAIRE]. LE BRUN, Antoine-Louis. REMARQUES HISTORIQUES, POLITIQUES,
MYTHOLOGIQUES ET CRITIQUES SUR LA HENRIADE De Mr. De Voltaire, par Le Sieur L***. A
La Haye, Chez Gerard Block. 1741.

FIRST EDITION. 8vo, pp. [viii], 239, [1] blank; head of title and first page of preface a bit browned resulting in
some minor brittleness, otherwise, apart from light foxing just visible in places, a clean fresh copy throughout; uncut in
recent marbled wrappers to style; small contemporary library stamp on title; a very good copy.

First edition of this anonymously published critical and explanatory work on Voltaire's Henriade, attributed by
some to the poet Antoine-Louis le Brun (1680-1743), and by others to Michel Linant (an attribution said by
Barbier to be “peu vraisemblable”).

The work takes the form of a detailed commentary on Voltaire's great poem, quoting verse after verse, line
after line, and filling in the context for the reader, often at some length. The author explains in his preface that
he had found himself, “five years ago, in Paris in the company of several literary friends, one of whom brought
up the subject of the work of the Henriade's author, and spoke, among other things, of that poem, as being a
work which demanded, for a well-formed mind, much in the way of reflection. Another person in the group,
who had read the work several times, joined in, saying that he would compare the Henriade to a building that
was superb, but had for a doorway nothing more than a hidden staircase, or a little door at the book; that is,
since one must presume that the work is not merely in the hands of a few personnes savantes, it will be read
by many, because of the reputation of the author, who are not au fait with all the content; and in conseque
consequence, it can only be of service to the public to present them with notes and instructive remarks on
the poem”. The notes and instructive remarks offered by the author cover all aspects of Voltaire's writing,
from his historical references to his mythological and classical allusions.

OCLC: 24440882 records just two copies in the US, at Harvard (Houghton) and the New York Public Library,
with two further copies in Europe, at the Linkoping Stadsbibliotek and the Taylor Institute, Oxford.

First Version of Voltaire's Zadig

5  [VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de]. MEMNON, Histoire Orientale. A Londres, pour
la Compagnie. MDCCXLVIII [1748].

REPRINT OF THE FIRST EDITION. Three works in one volume, 12mo, pp. [iv], 172; 180; [ii], 56; apart from a
few minor marks, clean fresh copies throughout; bound in contemporary calf; spine tooled in gilt with red morocco label
lettered in gilt, head of spine chipped and rubbed, nevertheless, still a handsome and appealing copy; with the
contemporary ownership signature of L'abbe Desoulier[?] on titles.

Rare reprint of the 1747 first edition of one of the most desirable of early Voltaire items. Memnon was the
first version of Voltaire’s Zadig, one of his earliest successes in fiction and in which he used for the first time
the conte philosophique that was to be so popular throughout the second half of the century.

The tale follows the eponymous hero through a series of misfortunes, such as strangulation and enslavement,
in the course of his quest for love and enlightenment. In the peculiar penultimate chapter entitled L’Hermite,
fate, in the shape of the angel Jesrad, befriends him and he gains the crown and the queen whom he loves.

Additionally, Zadig is often referred to as the first modern detective story. The third chapter, ‘The Dog and
the Horse’, is cited in particular as a precursor to the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Also bound in are copies of François Antoine Chevrier’s Histoire de la compagnie de mil sept cent cinquantesept
sur le Bas-Rhin dans l’électorat d’Hanovre et autres pais conquis, Francfort, 1757 (OCLC: Yale and Michigan only)
and Tactique et manoeuvres des Prussiens, [n.d., c. 1760], (not in OCLC).

Bengesco 1420 (note); ESTC records just one copy only, with a different pagination, at the Maria Curie-
Sktodowska University Library; not in OCLC.

6  VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. THE AGE OF LEWIS XIV. Translated from the

FIRST EDITION IN ENGLISH. Two volumes, 8vo, engraved frontispieces in each volume; pp. viii, 436, [16]
advertisements; [ii], 48, 33-292, 90, [20] index; with some very light waterstaining to prelims of each volume (only just
visible) and minor foxing in places, but generally a clean crisp copies throughout; in contemporary calf, spines expertly repaired with new red morocco labels lettered in gilt, joints cracked but cords holding firm, with some minor unobtrusive surface wear; with the armorial book-plate of ‘Richard Hopton of Can-frome, in the County of Hereford Esqr.’ on the front past down of each volume; an appealing set.

First edition in English of Voltaire’s great work of history, The Age of Lewis XIV which he had begun twenty years previously and had only been first published in 1751.

‘Judging by the number of books read and borrowed, [Voltaire] must have been concentrating heavily on his historical tableau, which he admitted had left his head in a whirl. In previous years, he had devoted only his spare moments to Louis XIV. Now when relations with Frederick [II] were strained, Voltaire’s history came before everything else. The older he became, moreover, the more he found work necessary, and Frederick’s example inspired him with a great zeal for accomplishment. He used the symbol of a great edifice to describe his historical project and regarded the documents he consulted as building materials of gold and precious stones … He believed that a historian may deliberately overlook “disagreeable truths,” as he, for example, had selected certain parts of a memoire of Louis XIV for quotation because they would contribute to the monarch’s glory, and rejected other parts because they would indicate some of his weaknesses’ (Aldridge, p. 192).

Bengesco 1178 (for first edition); BN 3522 (later edition only); see Aldridge Voltaire and the Century of Light (1973) pp. 192-3.

7 VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. BABOUC; or, the World as it Goes. By Monsieur de Voltaire. To which are added, Letters Concerning his Disgrace at the Prussian Court: With his Letter to his Niece on that Occasion. Also, the Force of Friendship, or, Innocence Distress’d. A Novel. London: Printed for, and sold by W. Owen, at Temple-Bar. 1754. £ 1,250

FIRST EDITION IN ENGLISH. 8vo, pp. [iv], 168; minor dust-soiling in places, very light stain to the corner of the final two gatherings (not affecting the text), otherwise a nice clean copy throughout; bound in contemporary calf, spine ruled in gilt, spine a little rubbed with head and tail chipped, with recent red morocco label lettered in gilt, corners rubbed and boards with some surface wear (lower board with ring mark), nevertheless, still a very good copy of this rare work; with nineteenth century ownership label of H.G. Beard on front paste down.

First edition in English of one of Voltaire’s earliest works of fiction, first published in 1748, in a Dresden collected edition of his writings; there was no early separate printing in French.

In this story Babouc is sent by the angel Ituriel to observe the city of Persepolis, to determine whether or not it should be destroyed. Babouc wavers, and in the end Ituriel decides to leave the world as it is (“comme il va”). “If all is not well, all is passable.” The anonymous translator’s source for this text is probably a periodical called Le Nouveau magasin Francois, published in London from 1750 to 1752, where the story was reprinted in an early number; the magazine was edited and largely written by Jeanne Marie le Prince de Beaumont, who lived in London from 1748 to 1761, and had a strong interest in the education of women. Added to this volume are four letters by and about Voltaire, all of which refer to his quarrel with Maupertuis and his troubled stay at the court of Frederick the Great. “The Force of Friendship,” with which the book concludes, is puzzling; we have not discovered the original of this story, nor any evidence that it has anything to do with Voltaire.

Raven 259; Block, p. 246; CBEL II, 1535; ESTC T98329 records copies at the British Library and the National Library of Scotland in the UK, and copies at McMaster, UCLA, Huntington, Delaware, Princeton and Cornell in North America, with OCLC adding further copies at Yale and New York Public Library.


EARLY EDITION. 8vo, pp. [ii], 174; clean and crisp throughout, attractively bound in later polished calf by Wallis, spine and inner dentelles gilt, contrasting morocco labels, joints slightly cracked, small piece missing from top of spine, but otherwise in very good condition; from the library of Mortimer L. Schiff with his red morocco gilt lettered library label on front paste-down.
Scarce early edition with a curious imprint, the significance of which we have been unable to fathom; the typography, and the provenance and binding of the few other copies we have been able to trace, all suggest an English origin. An irreverent, picaresque, often bawdy poem, and one of Voltaire’s major literary works. The central theme is the absurdity of the mystical importance attached to Joan of Arc’s virginity. In later years this poem was often foolishly characterized as pornographic, but Voltaire’s contemporaries, even those who disliked or feared him, found it highly entertaining. The manner of the narrative bears some general resemblance to the works of Chaucer, though there is no evidence that Voltaire ever read any Chaucer; Byron’s Don Juan is a lineal descendant. Voltaire started work on the poem as early as 1730. In later years the poem circulated widely in manuscript; by 1755 it was claimed that there were more than 6000 manuscript copies in Paris, which may well not be an exaggeration. Inevitably the text found its way into print (in 1755), and before long many unauthorized editions had appeared, often corrupt, and some with interpolations by other hands. No authorized text appeared until 1762.

OCLC: 15149909 lists just two copies, at the University of Texas and the Taylor Institute, Oxford; not listed in the NUC, nor in the catalogue of the superb Voltaire collection in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

9  [VOLTAIRE; BOUDIER DE VILLEMENT; SCUDERY]. LE PORTE-FEUILLE TROUVE, ou Tablettes d’un Curieux, Contenant quantite de Pieces fugitives de Mr. De Voltaire, qui ne sont dans aucune de ses editions. A Geneve, chez les Libraires associés. 1759. £ 225

12mo, pp. 209, [7] contents; title printed in red and black; later (near-contemporary) boards with label lettered in gilt, some wear to extremities, corners rubbed; small unobtrusive library stamps on verso of title and p. [7] of table, and at foot of pp. 9, 49 and 200, also with evidence of library name stamped on fore-edge; from the library of Nicolas d’Eszterhazy with his armorial bookplate on front paste-down; very good copy.

Rare edition, unknown to Bengesco, of this entertaining compilation of pieces mainly by Voltaire.

The work is divided into six sections of which two are by Voltaire. The first, and by far the largest section incorporates Pieces Fugitives de Mr. De Voltaire which include numerous letters (many to women), epistles, poems and philosophical observations, with a few of the prose-and-verse letters published for the first time. The second, entitled juvenilia, par Mr. De Voltaire includes a number of interesting pieces, namely, Le Vrai Dieu, Ode; Epitre a Madame de … sur le peril qu’elle avoit couru en traversant la Loire and Ode sur la construction de l’Autel de Notre-Dame en 1714. The other sections of the work include pieces by Boudier de Villement, Madeleine de Scudery and Reynard.

Although in letters to Thieriot of March 3 and 26, 1757, Voltaire says that there are not three pieces by him in the pretendu Porte-feuille, there are on the contrary a considerable number by him.

The first edition seems to have been published in 1757.

Bengesco 2199; see Besterman, Some eighteenth-century Voltaire editions unknown to Bengesco in “Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century” vol. CXI, nr 342; OCLC: 13368036 records just two copies in North America, at New York and Indiana.

10  [VOLTAIRE]. [ROBINET, Jean-Baptiste-Réné, editor]. LETTRES SECRETTES de Mr. De Voltaire. Publiées Par Mr. L.B. A Geneve. 1765. £ 150

FIRST EDITION? 8vo, pp. [vii], 98; very light discoloration in places due to paper quality, but generally clean and crisp throughout; uncut in contemporary (possibly original) blue wraps, early reback in blue paper, with title of book written in a contemporary hand on upper wrapper, also with evidence of later library stamp at foot; with early library stamp of the ‘Gymnasium und Realschule in Zittau’ on title; an appealing copy.

A fascinating collection of letters from Voltaire to various recipients, including Rousseau and Desfontaines, dating from the period 1734 (when Voltaire had first published his Lettres Philosophiques) to 1738. The letters contain many literary anecdotes and observations on contemporary writing, but are notable as much for the opportunity to see Voltaire in his personal dealings with friends, writing in a less formal manner than would normally be required for publication.

It does not seem that Voltaire had anything to do with the publication of these letters, nor is it clear how Robinet (1735-1820), who was at the time struggling to make ends meet as an English tutor after the controversy surrounding his De la Nature (1761), came into possession of them. The present edition is
advertised as “publiées par Mr L.B.”, which seems to be an attempt to suggest that La Beaumelle was responsible for publishing the letters. 
This edition not found in OCLC which records a number of other issues, mostly with 200 pages.

11 VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. LE PHILOSOPHE IGNORANT. [n.p.] 1766. £ 250
8vo, pp. [vi], 120; a little foxed and browned at beginning and end; in contemporary decorative paste paper wrappers, spine rubbed with chipping at head and tail; contemporary neat ownership signature on title with later bookplate on front paste down; in all a good wide-margined copy.

A fine copy, published in the same year as the first edition, of Voltaire’s study of philosophic doubt. Under the overall heading of ‘Tables des Doutes’ he deals with such questions as: how can one think?, are there innate ideas?, is man free?; to name but a few. He also discusses Spinoza, Bayle, Locke, and Hobbes. Published only a couple of years after the Dictionnaire Philosophique portatif, (one of his most important publications), this work again disseminates his central idea of the overall importance of ‘sensation’ as the basis of all thought and understanding.
Bengesco 1731 bis; NUC records two copies only, at Michigan and Delaware.

12 VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. L’HOMME AUX QUARANTE ECUS. [no place or publisher, but Geneve, Cramer]. 1768. £ 225
8vo, pp. 124; half-title repaired in gutter, paper a little foxed and dust-soiled in places, but generally clean and crisp throughout; recently bound in mottled boards, spine with printed paper label, with the contemporary mottled wrappers bound in; a desirable copy.

Obviously enraged by the dogmatic and pompous style of the physiocrats and Le Mercier de la Rivière’s Ordre naturel in particular, Voltaire here in his only truly economic publication, presents his sarcastic view of a number of economic questions. Witty and stylishly written, the book consists of conversations between an agriculturist, owner of a piece of land yielding an income of forty écus, a géomètre philosophe and some further characters presenting a rather one-sided view of the theories of the physiocrats. Voltaire’s criticism of the ideas of the physiocrats is largely mercantilist in flavour, and his major attack is against the ‘impôt unique’. Due
to the condemnation of the book, most editions were published without indication of either place or publisher on the title-page and appear to have been mainly printed in Geneva.

Bengesco 1482; BN Catalogue 2793; this issue not on OCLC, but another similar issue with four unnumbered prelims (but the same number of pages) is recorded with five locations in the US at Yale, Cornell, Brown, Texas and California (Riverside) and one copy in the UK, at Oxford; not in Kress.

13 **VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de.** LES SINGULARITÉS DE LA NATURE. Par M. De Voltaire. A Geneve, 1769.  

**THIRD EDITION?** 8vo, pp. viii, 118; a clean and crisp copy bound in the original boards, spine a little sunned with some rubbing; a fine copy.

Uncommon third edition [?] of Voltaire’s venture into natural sciences. He sets out to analyse with a rational approach phenomena of the natural world. ‘On se propose ici d’examiner plusieurs objets de notre curiosité avec la défiance qu’on doit avoir de tout système, jusqu’à ce qu’il soit démontré aux yeux ou à la raison’ (p. 1). The thirty-eight chapters cover a wide variety of subjects, from ‘the elements’ to mathematics and physics, anatomy, population to ignorances éternelles.

‘À côté d’une parfaite connaissance des choses, qui témoinne à mainte reprise de la prompte et sûre conception que Voltaire avait de la nature, il règne dans tous ses travaux, l’instinct du sceptique, qui ne s’en rapporte à aucune autorité, qu’au témoignage de ses propres yeux, esprit que nous avons eu l’occasion d’apprécier’ (Du Bois-Reymond).

Bengesco 1766; OCLC: 16237851 records four copies only, at Yale, Indiana, Michigan and the University of New Hampshire.

14 **[VOLTAIRE]. BURY, Richard Girard de.** LETTRE SUR QUELQUES OUVRAGES de M. de Voltaire … A Amsterdam, Chez Arkstee & Merkus. 1769.  

**FIRST EDITION.** 8vo, pp. [iv], 122; a clean, fresh copy throughout; in contemporary speckled boards, with unlettered label on spine; a fine copy.

First edition of a letter on various works of Voltaire, and in particular *La Henriade*, by the French historian Richard de Bury (1730-1794).

Better known for his criticism of Voltaire, Beaumelle and Grimm than for his historical writings, Bury had previously published a *Lettre de M. de B*** à M. de Voltaire, au sujet de son Abrégé de l'Histoire Universelle* (London, 1755). In the present work, Bury first concerns himself with *La Henriade*. Many of his observations are stylistic, taking Voltaire to task on his use of French, while accusing him of overusing his poetic license. A typical example: after Voltaire speaks of numberless suns giving life to matter, de Bury remarks, “Where did Voltaire get the idea of the sun giving life to matter? Have you ever heard of worlds floating in the breeze, or swimming matter? Where did he get these numberless suns and endless worlds? What pompous twaddle. I doubt that anyone has ever described the heavens more extravagantly” (p. 27). De Bury is also concerned with the content of Voltaire’s work, however; impiety lurks behind the extravagance of the language.

In addition to the comments on *La Henriade*, de Bury also offers some thoughts on Voltaire’s recently published *Epitre à Boileau* (“a fastidious mixture of points, and of dull and useless thoughts”), and finally on his *Age of Louis XIV*.

OCLC: 1184128, records copies at the Universities of Minnesota and Delaware in the US, and Cambridge University in the UK.


**£ 385**
Two volumes, 8vo, pp. xlii, 272, [2] table des matières, with engraved frontispiece and title, ten engraved plates, and vignettes at head of each section; 316, [4] table de matières; aside from some occasional spotting, clean and crisp throughout; in contemporary mottled calf, spine and boards tooled in gilt, with morocco labels on spine lettered in gilt, and all edges gilt; some running and ear to extremities, but still a good copy.

An attractive copy of this much illustated edition of the most successful of Voltaire’s poems, L’Henriade, which first appeared in 1723.

The plates and vignettes are by Eisen, engraved by Longeuil, and the second volume contains ‘L’Essai sur la Poésie Epique’, ‘Discours en vers sur l’homme’, ‘Le Temple du gout’, ‘Le poème de Fontenoy’, ‘Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne’, and ‘La Loi naturelle’. Voltaire was especially pleased with the illustrations; the first volume opens with the following letter to Eisen:

‘Je commence à croire, Monsieur, que la Henriade, passera à la posterité, en voyant les Estampes dont vous l’embellissez. L’idée et l’exécution doivent vous faire également honneur. Je suis sûr que l’édition où elles se trouveront sera la plus recherchée’.

Bengesco, 384; Ray, The Art of the French illustrated Book, nº 30; Cohen-De Ricci 1026/7.

16 VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de. GLAUBENS-BEKENNTNIS … Nebst vorgesetzten und dazu gehörigen Stücken. Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1769. £ 450

FIRST GERMAN EDITION OF THE FIRST CONFESSION OF FAITH. 8vo, pp. 47, engraved portrait vignette on title; occasionally very light brown spotting; otherwise clean and fresh in modern wrappers.

Published in the year of the first edition (Confession de foi de Messire François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire) this charade of a confession of faith by the notorious disbeliever is published together with related letters by and to the church authorities. In 1768 Voltaire had visited the church of Fernay to lecture on the immorality of the higher classes and theft. The bishop of Annecy rebuked him and forbade the clergy to give him confession or communion. This inspired Voltaire to stage fatal illness and summon a priest in spite of the bishop’s verdict. He demanded absolution and signed a confession of faith written by the bishop. The rumor of this comedy spread quickly and the enlightened public was keen to read all about it. The engraving on the title copies the one of the French original; it shows Voltaire in profile, his eye and face expressing wit and bemusement - and a crucifix hovering above his forehead, emanating rays down on him.

OCLC locates only one copy in America, at Harvard; not in COPAC.
FIRST EDITION IN ITALIAN. Small 4to, pp. 188; light dust-soiling to title, otherwise clean and crisp throughout; contemporary half sheep over decorative boards, rebacked, corners rubbed, boards scuffed with some minor loss of paper on upper boards; small early library stamp at foot of title ‘Ex Libris Card de-Angelis’; a desirable copy.

First Italian translation of Clémence’s Défense des livres de l’Ancien testament (first published in French in 1767). Written as a response to Voltaire’s criticisms of the Old Testament in La philosophie de l’histoire, the work is in fact much broader in scope, presenting a critique of many of Voltaire’s attitudes and writings, from his views of the Jews and their religion to his posturing with regard to Rousseau, and forms part of a series of refutations and replies which ‘constitute a historical controversy of considerable interest’ (Brumfitt, in introduction to Institut Voltaire edition of La Philosophie de l’histoire, p. 64).

Clémence (1717-1792) was born in Le Havre and worked as a priest at Rouen and then Poitiers. The present work is his first, and set a pattern for his later work, which combined Christian apologetics with criticism of Voltaire and his circle (‘les aumôniers du roi de Prusse’). Throughout, Clément questions and analyses Voltaire’s text, and scores many points on matters of detail, for example refuting Voltaire’s claim that Longinus was the first Greek author to mention Moses, and that the Old Testament was not alone in mentioning miracles, which also feature in early Chinese histories, among others. However, in both Clémence’s work and those of his fellow orthodox critics, there is little appreciation of Voltaire’s real purposes, or of the weaknesses of his argument. Although Clémence’s range of reference is broad, encompassing Newton, Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury and others, his main aim seems to be to restate the story of the book of Genesis.

OCLC: 976242 records just two copies only, at Harvard and the Hebrew Union College.

18  [VOLTAIRE]. [CELESIA, Dorothea]. ALMIDA, A Tragedy, As it is performed at The Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By a Lady. London: printed for T. Becket and Co. in the Strand. 1771. £ 75
First edition in English of Voltaire’s Tancrède, adapted with a new title by Celesia, and first performed at the Drury Lane theatre in January 1771. Almïda is the familiar story of a man’s fight for a woman, here with additions and Epilogue supplied by Garrick.

Dorothea Celesia (1738-1790), was the daughter of the poet David Mallet, friend of David Hume and wife of the Genovese envoy to London. Celesia had entertained Garrick in Genoa a few years earlier and obviously had great respect for him; he had been her father’s friend, during his visit to Italy.

Nicholl pp. 40, 82; ESTC t021283.


Uncommon first edition of this work attacking Voltaire in the context of his quarrels with a long list of contemporaries, including Maupertuis, Freron and Rousseau.

‘Ce Tableau, qui a pour auteur Sabatier de Castres, et qui doit être rangé parmi les pamphlets écrits contre Voltaire, renferme des extraits d’un assez grand nombre de lettres de notre auteur’ (Bengesco, vol. III, 197).

Abbé Antoine Sabatier had begun his literary career on the liberal side and had even acclaimed Voltaire. However in his later career he became an enemy of the liberals and wrote a number of anti-Voltaire works. Besides the present work, the most notable amongst these was his kind of antiphilosophical dictionary of French literature of the past three centuries, which caused a “stir” upon its publication. Indeed, it led to Condorcet leaping to Voltaire’s defence with a highly inflammatory tract in which he adopted Voltaire’s device of pretending to be another theologian and criticised his opponent from almost every perspective. As Voltaire remarked in an overworked metaphor, he was like Hercules crushing an insect.


First edition of Voltaire’s L’Ingenu, the most historically based of his philosophical tales. In essence it portrays the author’s feelings about the religious persecution, superstition and ineptitude then prevalent in France, as well as the ridiculous conventions of society. Serving as a foil to the ideals of humanity and civilization Voltaire illustrates his tale with the experiences of his protagonists. Voltaire adeptly shapes the readers mind by using the tragic narrative to instil first laughter and then tears.

I. First edition of Voltaire’s L’Ingenu, one of Voltaire’s best works of prose fiction, composed at a very fruitful period in his career, and published in the same year as his (less than wholly successful) other play on Babylonian themes, Semiramis, was premiered. In this conte, the eponymous princess travels around the world in the company of a phoenix in search of her lover, visiting countries as diverse as China and England, and affording Voltaire the opportunity to compare and criticise the mores of various societies. At the end of this
tale Voltaire asks the Muses that his text not be disfigured in “Batavian [i.e. Dutch] editions,” as was so often the case. Also noteworthy is a description of an early planetarium.

III. First edition? ‘Voltaire … returned to the genre of narrative verse in La Beguele (“The Prude”), designed to illustrate the maxim that one should be satisfied with one’s lot, or at least not abandon that which is satisfactory to seek something which seems better in imagination’ (Aldridge, pp. 373-374).

I. BN 2821; Bengesco 1470; II. BN 2931; Bengesco 1492; III. see Bengesco 653 for first edition; not found in the BN catalogue.

21 [VOLTAIRE]. CLEMENT, François. PREMIÈRE [-NEUVIÈME] LETTRE A MONSIEUR DE VOLTAIRE, où l’on examine sa politique littéraire, & l’influence qu’il a eu sur l’esprit, le gout & les moeurs de son siècle … A La Haye; et se trouve à Paris: chez Moutard, libraire de Madame la Dauphine, rue du Hurpoix, à S. Ambroise, 1773 [-1776]. £ 450

FIRST EDITION. Together, nine ‘Lettres’ in three volumes, 8vo, pp. [iv], 68; 140; 163, [1] blank; 123, [1] blank; 237, [1] blank; 360, [1] Avis du Libraire, [1] blank; 200; [iv], iii, [4-] 351, [1] Avis du Libraire; 352; light unobtrusive waterstaining affecting the head of the title of the first ‘Lettre’ and the outer margin of the title and first page of the second, just touching the head of third throughout, the corner of the first gathering of the Sixth and just touching the head in the first half and foot of the last three leaves, and the head of gathering K and P in the ninth ‘Lettre’, minor foxing and light browning in places, but generally clean and crisp throughout; in contemporary mottled calf, spines decoratively tooled in gilt with red morocco labels lettered in gilt, with remains of black numbering pieces (gilt numbering still visible), minor rubbing to corners and extremities, all edges red; with the contemporary label of ‘Du Catalogue de la Societe Typographique’ (No. 336 - in ms) on front paste-down of first volume; an attractive copy.

Rare first edition of these nine extended letters from the Benedictine monk and noted historian Dom François Clément (1714-1793) to Voltaire, published in serial form at four-monthly-intervals between 1773 and 1776, and here collected in three contemporary volumes.

The first four letters range generally over Voltaire’s literary politics and literary judgement, and the influence that he had on the spirit and morals of his age. The second five, however, are longer and more specific: letters five and six examine Voltaire’s commentary on the seventeenth century dramatist Corneille, while the last three letters concentrate on epic poetry, in particular Voltaire’s epic on the life of Henri IV, La Henriade. This latter work, it seems, did not overly impress Clément; it lacks, he argues, the beauty of detail requisite in a true epic, and its style more generally is opposed to what would generally be accepted in epic poetry. Clément illustrated this using many extracts, subjected to detailed criticism. This attention to detail would undoubtedly have been facilitated by the amount of time Clément had in his day to devote to study and writing; he was famous among his contemporaries for living on two hours’ sleep each night.

OCLC: 43239982 records one copy only, at the University of Oxford.


PRIVATELY PRINTED. Small 4to, pp. [vi], 252; with attractive engraved title and 10 engraved vignettes by Jungwirth; blank leaf Nv (pp. 103/104) removed, minor foxing in places, but generally clean and crisp throughout; contemporary orange mottled boards, spine a little sunned with signs to cracking to joints at head and tail (but binding holding firm), light surface wear and rubbing to corners, but not detracting from this being a very good copy.

An uncommon Italian translation, privately printed in Munich, of Voltaire’s Henriade, the most influential of his poems. The work was first published in 1723 under the title La Ligue ou Henri Le Grand. This new translation and bibliophile printing was commissioned by the enlightened Duke of the Palatinate and later Duke of Bavaria, who had founded a learned society in Mannheim, of which Voltaire was one of the honorary members. The fine Louis-Seize style title was engraved by the Munich artist Franz Xaver Jungwirth, who engraved views after Canaletto, and worked for publishers of bibliophile book productions, often associated with the Munich court. The vignettes are after François Cuvilliés, the son of the architect, decorator and ornamentalist who created the Southern German rococo. The younger Cuvilliés succeeded his father as a fashionable architect, and was ‘a brilliant draughtsman’ (Thieme-Becker).
23 [VOLTAIRE]. MARCHAND, Jean Henri. TESTAMENTO POLITICO Del Signore Francesco Maria Arouet di Voltaire. Traduzione dal Francese. [n.p.]. 1779. £ 250
12mo, pp. vii, [I] blank, 130; with engraved frontispiece; with very minor foxing in places, otherwise a clean crisp copy throughout; in contemporary vellum, a little dust-soiled, with unobtrusive wormholes to joints, front and rear pastedowns browned along gutters; a very good copy.

One of two rare Italian editions, published in the year Marchand’s satirical spoof appeared first in Italian. Voltaire called this witty machination un odieux libelle.

Under the guise of Voltaire’s “last will” or political testament, the Parisian advocate Jean-Henri Marchand presents a sparkling and customarily biting parody of some of the more self-congratulatory works of Voltaire, dealing with many of the latter’s favourite subjects, in particular the Church and the Jesuits. Voltaire was not impressed by Marchand: in the sixth part of Questions Encyclopédiques (1771), he mentioned Marchand in the same breath as the “pauvres diables qui vont dans les cafés dire leur avis sur la pièce nouvelle, sur Dieu, sur l’être en général, et sur les modes de l’être; puis vous empruntent de l’argent, et vont faire un libelle contre vous”.

The present Italian translation is augmented by an account of the last days of Voltaire.

OCLC: 34754501, records one copy only of an 8vo edition, also of 1779, at Princeton; this 12mo edition not recorded.

24 [ANON]. ANECDOTES DU DIXHUITIEME SIECLE. Premier Volume [-Second]. A Londres. 1783. £ 285

FIRST EDITION. Two volumes, 8vo, pp.[iv], 272; 275, [1] blank; apart from a few minor marks, a clean copy throughout; in contemporary mottled calf, spines gilt with contrasting red and brown morocco labels lettered in gilt.
minor worming to upper joint of vol. II, and some light rubbing to extremities, nevertheless, a handsome and appealing
set.

First separate edition of this collection of anecdotes of the principal characters of the eighteenth century,
according to the “avertissement” taken from “Les mémoires secrets pour servir à l’histoire de la République
des Lettres”.

The collection consists of songs, epitaphs, letters, portraits, obituaries, and anecdotes on and by authors as
diverse as Dorat, Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, Buffon, Necker, Terrai, and many others. It is notable for the
number of anecdotes relating to the theatre and to music, and seems to have reappeared under the title

OCLC records copies at Quebec, UC San Diego, Yale, Indiana and the New York Public in North America,
with further copies at the National Library of Sweden, Cambridge (UK) and Melbourne.

25 [VOLTAIRE]. [DUVERNET, Théophile Imargeon]. LA VIE DE VOLTAIRE, par M***. A
Geneve, 1786. £ 150

FIRST EDITION. 8vo, frontispiece portrait, pp. [iv], 355, [1] blank, engraved title vignette and headpiece; very
lightly foxed in places; entirely uncut, rebound in contemporary maroon mottled wrappers, with new printed spine label; a very good copy.

This interesting and highly popular biography of Voltaire was written by his contemporary Duvernet (1730-
1796), with whom Voltaire had been in correspondence. Though not the most reliable or detailed of Voltaire
biographies, it had considerable success.

The biography proved popular and was reprinted numerous times, and also translated into English. In fact, a
number of editions had been published in 1786 in Geneva, but no priority seems to have been established.
Barbier IV, p. 1018.

26 [VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de]. L’ENRIADE del
Signor de Voltaire Tradotta in Ottava Rima dal Conte Tommaso Medini.
Socio della Reale Accademia di Scienze e Belle Lettere di Mantova. Tomo
Primo [-Secondo]. Berna, 1790. £300

THIRD ITALIAN TRANSLATION. Two volumes in one, 8vo, pp. [vi], 134, [2] blank;
131, [1] blank; a clean fresh copy throughout; contemporary paper backed marbled
boards, spine lettered and ruled in gilt, evidence of worming to foot of spine, some
rubbing to extremities but still a very good clean copy.

An uncommon Italian translation of Voltaire’s Henriade, the most influential of his
poems. The work was first published in 1723 under the title La Ligue ou Henri Le
Grand.

The present edition is the third Italian translation, the first being published in 1772 (2nd: 1774).
Besterman 87; not in Bengesco, BN Voltaire catalogue, OCLC or NUC.

27 [VOLTAIRE]. SCHUMMEL, Johann Gottlieb. DEN LILLE VOLTAIRE. En Levnets-
Beskrivelse for vort frietaenkerste Aarhundrede, af Professor Schummel … Oversat ester den anden
forogede og forbedrede Tydste Udgave, ved Niels Prahl. Kobenhavn, Tryst paa Sebastian Popps
Forlags, boende i store Fiolstraede No. 179. 1794. £ 150

FIRST DANISH EDITION. 8vo, pp. xxxii, 542; some light dust-soiling, and waterstain to upper corner of central
gatherings, hardly affecting text; otherwise crisp throughout; in contemporary half calf over boards, with morocco label
lettered in black on spine; boards rubbed, and spine chipped at head and tail; with nineteenth century book-plate on
front paste-down, and unobtrusive stamp on title; a good copy.
The first Danish translation, from the second expanded German edition of 1785, of Johann Gottlieb Schummel’s *Der kleine Voltäre*, first published in 1782.

Schummel (1748-1813) is best known today as a pedagogue, and an early writer on the connections between children’s play and language. In the present work he addresses himself to a “biography” of the free-spirited eighteenth century, giving a lively account of some of the enlightenment’s principal players, as well as the “little Voltaire” of the title. As the subtitle suggests, Schummel is more concerned to paint a picture of the period than to go into much depth in analysis of the ideas which were current; moreover, although the French enlightenment plays an important rôle in his narrative, Schummel’s main concern is with Germany.

The translation into Danish is by Niels Prahl (1724-1792), who is nowadays best remembered for his vivid *Dance of Death* of 1762.

Rare: this edition not recorded in OCLC.

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**FIRST EDITION.** 8vo, pp. [viii], 178; lightly foxed in places, but generally clean throughout; uncut in recent mottled red boards, to style, with printed label on spine; a desirable copy.

First edition of this anti-republican and anti-enlightenment work, written by a Neapolitan priest, who picks out Voltaire, especially his 1741 play *Mahomet*, which incites deism and anarchy. The enraged clergyman analyzes in detail the incriminating passages of Voltaire’s play on religious fanaticism. On page 104 he sets out to do the same with Voltaire’s 1730 play *Brutus*. On page 157 follow letters of approval by members of the theological faculty of Naples University, and laudatory verses.

The fact that over 50 years after the first staging of the play a reactionary priest saw the necessity to publish a book against it, sheds light on the significance of Voltaire in a Catholic absolutist state, such as the Kingdom of both Sicilies.

Not in OCLC or COPAC.

29  **[VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de.]** LA HENRIADE, Poeme, avec les notes et variantes; suivi de l’essai sur la poesie epique. Par Voltaire. Stockholm, de l’imprimerie d’Olave Grahn, L’an 1813.  £ 75
8vo, pp. [iv], xlv, [ii], 392; very light foxing in places, but generally very clean throughout; uncut in the original blue publisher’s wraps, spine with original printed label, light wear to extremities but overall in superb original condition.

Rare French edition, published in Stockholm, of Voltaire’s *Henriade*, the most influential of his poems. The work was first published in 1723 under the title *La Ligue ou Henri Le Grand*.

The present edition seems to have first been issued separately and then included in a works edition of classic French authors as there is a separate title paste in entitled *Bibliothèque des Auteurs Classiques Francais. Tome Quinzième*. We have been unable to ascertain how many volumes of these works were published, although from our searches on OCLC we did find one other copy of a work published as part of the series, by the comtesse de Genlis entitled *La duchesse de La Vallière*, printed in the same year and noted as vol. 27.

OCLC: 40774604 records two copies only, at the Taylor Institute, Oxford and the Linkoping Stadsbibliotek.


**FIRST EDITION.** 8vo, pp. 4; spotted, dust-soiled and with minor light stains, first page with a wax seal at foot; unbound, as issued.

This slender publication tells one encounter between Voltaire and Gibbon, which included many proofs of Voltaire’s irascibility and Gibbon’s disdain for the philosopher. After his spectacular conversion to Roman Catholicism, Gibbon moved to Lausanne, in order to study the complex politics of Switzerland, taking up residence in 1753. ‘Gibbon later said that as a young man he had ‘rated [Voltaire] above his real magnitude.’ Certainly in the later volumes of the *Decline and Fall* he permits himself some sharp asides at Voltaire’s expense. Nevertheless, the Frenchman’s influence is palpable in the first volume of the history, and it is not difficult to imagine the young Englishman being inspired, not by Voltaire’s scandalous philosophy, to be sure, but rather by the way in which Voltaire embodied literary celebrity’ (*Oxford DNB*).

OCLC records just one copy only, at the Massachusetts Historical Society.