

« Very rare » first edition (cat. James de Rothschild)
of Montesquieu's most « *lively* » (Roger Caillois) literary work.

A beautiful wide-margined copy preserved in publisher's boards.

Florence, 1767.

MONTESQUIEU, Charles de Secondat baron de. LETTRES FAMILIERES du Président de Montesquieu baron de la Brède à divers amis d'Italie.
(*Florence*), 1767.

12mo of (2) ll. (frontispiece and engraved title), 264 pp.
Contemporary boards (morocco box, Boichot).

194 x 107 mm.

"Very rare first edition, published in Florence by the abbé de Guasco in 1767. It contains, among other things, three letters against Mme Geoffrin [pp. 222-241], which caused the destruction of a large part of the edition by Mme Geoffrin herself, who was eagerly looking for copies" (Tchémerzine IV, 931).
Tchémerzine IV, 931, Cat. James de Rothschild, II, 1897.

The abbé de Guasco was "the closest of the familiars and the most appreciated interlocutor of Montesquieu" (Catherine Volpilac-Augier, *Un auteur en quête d'éditeur ?* p. 185)

"The 2 lim. ff. include an engraved frontispiece which represents the two faces of the medal struck in the honor of Montesquieu, after the publication of the *Esprit des Loix*, and an engraved title.
The abbot of Guasco, who had a regular correspondence with Montesquieu, had this volume printed in Florence in 1767. There he published three letters against Mme Geoffrin (pp. 222-241), which she deleted from a reprint which she herself had executed under the rubric of *Florence and Paris*, Vincent Durant neveu, 1767, in-18. This part of the correspondence is not even found in an infringement executed in Paris the same year. The care which Mme Geoffrin put in seeking, in order to destroy them, the copies of the true Florentine edition explains why they have become very rare » (Émile Picot, Cat. James de Rothschild, n° 1897).

« *Montesquieu's correspondance, his most lively work remained unpublished in his lifetime* »
(Roger Caillois).

The first edition, one of the only books described as «very rare» by Émile Picot, in the catalogue of the Rothschild library, contains the Letters of Montesquieu addressed to his Italian friends from 21 December 1729 to February 1755, a few days before his death.

The most spicy part concerns pages 222 to 241, a true indictment against the Parisian "dictatorship" of Madame Geoffrin (1699-1777).

Her home was one of the busiest of the century in which the offices of mind had such an influence on the literary and philosophical movement.

In *Les Causeries du Lundi* Sainte-Beuve, she is depicted as follows: "The spirit that Mrs. Geoffrin brought to the comforts and economy of this small empire that she had so widely conceived was a spirit of naturalness, accuracy and finesse that descended to the smallest details, a clever, active and gentle spirit. His activity was among those that are noticed mainly by good order, one of those discreet activities that act on all points, almost in silence and insensitivity. Mistress of the house, she has the eye to everything; she presides; yet she growls, but of a rumbling which is only hers; she want us to be silent in time ; she polices her salon. They fear her. Its principle is to intervene only at certain moments. It is then that she places wise maxims, pungent tales, and anecdotal morality in action, usually sharpened by some familiar expression or image".



A WIDE-MARGINED COPY PRESERVED IN ITS PUBLISHER'S BOARDS, AS ISSUED.

Provenance : Martelli's family in Florence (ex-libris « Sola Virtus vera Nobilitas »)

7 500 €