

MABLY, G.B. DE.

Observations sur les Romains. Par M. l'Abbé de Mably. Seconde édition revue & corrigée.

Référence : 120277

Geneva (Genève), Par la Compagnie des Libraires, 1767.

Commentaire : 12mo. VIII,(IV),426,(2 advertisements, errata) p. Contemporary mottled calf. 17 cm (Ref: Cioranescu 41169; Brunet vol. 6, 22934) (Details: Back tooled gilt with floral motives, and with a red morocco shield in the second compartment. Endpapers marbled) (Condition: Binding slightly worn at the extremes. Corners grazed. Paper yellowing) (Note: The Frenchman Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, 1709-1785, also known as Abbé de Mably, was a philosopher and historian of great repute in the 18th century, and a pioneer of the French Revolution. After a short career in diplomacy, he dedicated himself to literary and scholarly studies. He was a lifelong friend of the philosopher Rousseau, who tutored from 1740 to 1741 the two sons of his brother Jean, a not very successful experience. He was an exponent of the Enlightenment and sharply condemned the 'ancien régime'. His writings are characterized by his pursuit to build society on a more moral basis, and to return to the original state of the civic society as it was in the time of the Athenian Lycurgus. He opposed inherited wealth and the privileges of nobility. Some of his works were published posthumously because their content was too subversive. His work was a source of inspiration for the revolutionaries of the French revolution. In 1740 De Mably published 'Parallèle des Romains et des François par rapport au gouvernement', in which he drew comparisons between the history, structures and accomplishments of the Roman state and those of France. He associated Rome with grandeur, with France and with imperial civilizing missions. The book was received favourably, but, so he tells in the preface to this 'Observations sur les Romains', which was first published in Geneva in 1751, and is repeated in this second revised edition of 1767, that he had come to the conclusion that his 'Parallèle des Romains et des François par rapport au gouvernement' of 1740 had overshot its mark, he calls the book even a 'faute'. (Preface p. VIII) He is very harsh about his own book: 'Ouvrage de sang froid, je trouvai qu'un plan que j'avois jugé très-judicieux, n'étoit en aucune façon raisonnable. Nul ordre, nulle liaison dans les idées, des répétitions sans nombre, des objets présentés sous un faux jour; ce n'étoient pas là les seuls défauts, ou m'avoit fait tomber la manie du Parallele'. (p. VI) He had seen similarities where there were none. And instead of publishing a second revised edition of this failed work (Au lieu de vouloir corriger mon Parallele incorrigible, pour en faire une nouvelle édition) he decided to compose a complete new study on the rise and fall of Rome) (Collation: *6, A-R12, S10) (Photographs on request)

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