

BOULAINVILLIERS, (H.) DE.

Histoire des Anciens Parlements de France, ou Etats Generaux du Royaume, Dans laquelle on marque la qualité de ceux qui les composoient, la forme de leurs délibérations, l'étenduë de leur pouvoir, les jugemens les plus celebres qu'ils ont rendus, la caractere des Princes qui les ont convoquez &c. depuis Charle-Magne jusqu'à Louis XI. Avec l'Histoire de la France Depuis le Commencement de la Monarchie jusqu'à Charles VIII; accompagnez de reflexions politiques sur les Changemens arrivez dans le Gouvernement &c. A quoi l'on a joint des Memoires presentez au Duc d'Orleans, Regent de France, concernant les Affaires de ce Royaume. Par le Comte de Boulainvilliers.

Référence : 26479

A Londres, Chez Jean Brindley, Libraire de S.A.R. Monseigneur le Prince de Galles, dans New Bond-street, 1737. Title printed in red and black. (4), 572 (misnumbered 590), (6) pp. Folio. Contemporary polished calf, spine richly gilt with raised bands, red label with gilt lettering, front joint at top split, loss of calf to foot of spine, some scratches and spots. Bourgeois & Andre, 6257; Monod, Bibliographie de l'Histoire de France, 1058; Not in Kress; not in Goldsmiths; not in Einaudi; not in Conlon. This is in actual fact the third volume of the "Etat de la France" with a new title. Contains the "Lettres sur les Anciens Parlements de France" (pp. 1-189); "Abrege Chronologique de l'Histoire de France" (pp. 190-501); "Memoires presentés A Mgr. Le Duc d'Orleans, Regent de France pendant la Minorité de Louis XV" (pp. 502-590). The "Table des Matieres" is numbered (25)-29, last page (verso of 29) contains a publishers list: "Books Printed for and Sold by John Brindley, at the King's-Arms in New Bond-street, Bookseller to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. The title is followed by an "Avertissement" and an "Avis au Libraire" This "Avis" states that the present volume was hitherto offered for sale with the two volumes of the "Etat de la France" but that demand for this (the present) volume alone has made him decide to publish it separately. This volume has been described as "It is a remarkable work: 'un ouvrage remarquable pour l'époque; l'auteur connaît les sources les plus importantes, les documents essentiels, et les interprète avec une grande intelligence" by Henri See in his *Les Idées Politiques en France au XVIIe siècle*, (p. 271 ff.) Boulainvilliers sets out to prove that there is no tradition in which the king makes important decisions without consulting the nation: there have always been 'assemblées, origine des Etats Généraux, qui ont persisté pendant de longs siècles', thus condemning absolutism and trying to prove that France is not a seigneurial monarchy. The English folio editions are to be preferred, while hardly flawless, because they present Boulainvilliers' *Mémoires historiques* and *Lettres sur les Parlements* in their entirety and in the states in which he wrote them (Harold E. Ellis, *Boulainvilliers and the French Monarchy*, p. 249). Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658-1722) was a philosopher and historian. He was an eclectic philosopher, a historian, an astrologer with scientific pretensions, and a freethinker in religion. The coherence of his works lay in a dramatic effort to reconcile the principles and culture of the nobility with the social, political and cultural tendencies of the modern world. In his early years, his

encounter with Baruch de Spinoza's Ethics was decisive. After translating that text into French, he wrote an Essai de Métaphysique that was intended to lift the burden of "mathematical dryness" from Spinoza's thought. Boulainvilliers was one of the aristocratic fathers of the Enlightenment. The philosophes read Spinoza through the intermediary of the Essai de Métaphysique Voltaire used Boulainvillier's name to symbolize free thought in his Diner du Comte de Boulainvilliers. His historical studies influenced Montesquieu and were debated throughout the century (see: Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment, vol. i, pp. 168-9).

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