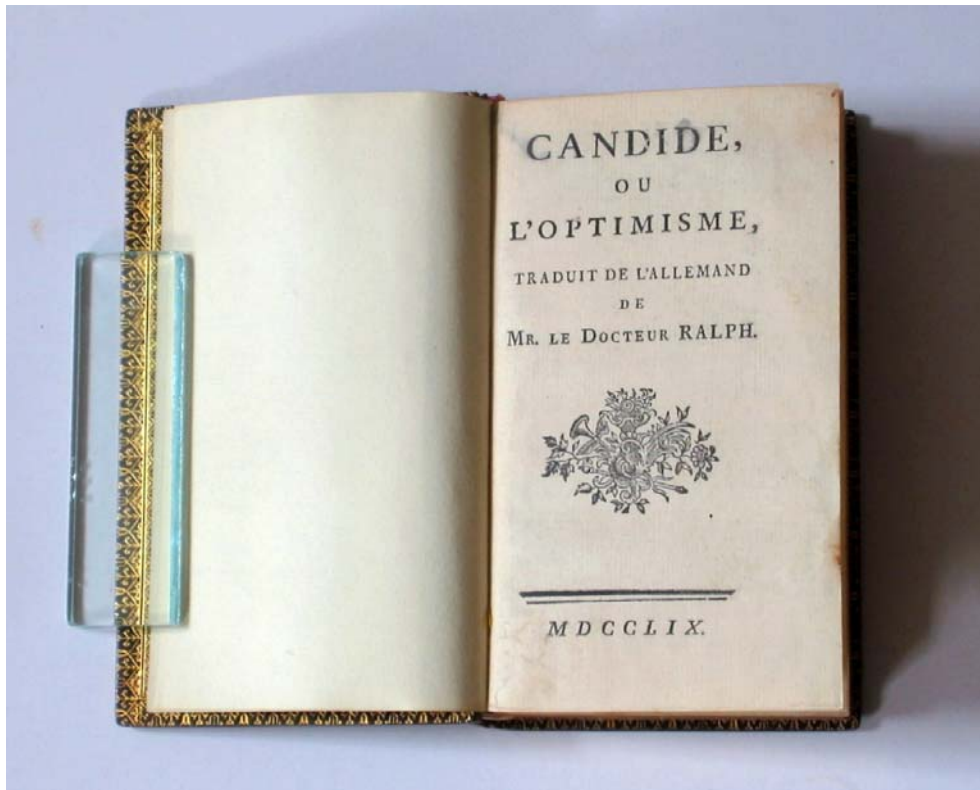


*The Best of All Possible Worlds - Very Rare First Edition of Candide*



[VOLTAIRE, François Marie Arouet de.] *Candide, ou l'Optimisme*, traduit de l'allemand de Mr. le Docteur Ralph. [Geneva, Cramer], 1759. £ 18000

12mo, pp. 299; last few pages with minute repaired worm trace in blank margin, not affecting text; stamp expertly removed from title page; nineteenth century crushed dark green morocco, spine in compartments with gilt-lettering directly to spine, elaborate gilt dentelles, a.e.g; book plate crudely removed from front paste-down; with bibliographical details in pencil on front free endpaper, and a bookseller description loosely pasted in; a good copy.

First edition of Voltaire's best-known work, his philosophical fable and epitome of the French Enlightenment, which has remained a classic of Western Civilisation, 'for the optimistic, innocent Candide, and his equally guileless if more worldly-wise mentor, Dr Pangloss, and their delicious adventures, still command our attention. The folly of philosophic and religious optimism is displayed with a vigour and wit that carries the reader away. Irony without exaggeration, a perfect restraint in its admirable humour, a gift for the 'throw-away line' ('pour encourager les

autres' is a classic example); all these show Voltaire's style and originality at their incomparable best.' (PMM 204).

The printing history of *Candide* is a complicated one. The first edition was published by Cramer and is described under number 299G by Giles Barber in the critical edition of *Candide* published as volume 48 of the *Complete Works of Voltaire* in 1980 by the Voltaire Foundation (Taylor Institution, Oxford).

This first edition is very rare indeed, with only about twenty copies recorded. Most of these copies, just like this one, are bound without the final leaves N7, a blank, and N8, instructions to the binder concerning the cancellation of two pairs of leaves (B4/B9) and D6/9D7). All the recorded copies so far, including two recently on the market, have all the cancels in gatherings B and D, with the exception of the copy at the Voltaire Institute in Geneva, which has both these signatures uncanceled.



The present copy is unique in that it has the cancels in signature B, but preserves signature D uncanceled. This results in the inelegant sentence 'toutes nos filles se trouvèrent Presque toutes en un moment', with its repetition of 'toutes', (p. 84) (to be corrected in all later printings) and the use of a different ornament on page 86, not ornament g 'pot of flowers' as described in Barber, but instead ornament d, a mixture of fruit and leaves, just as the Geneva copy.

Barber 299G; *En Français dans le Texte* 160; Morize 59a; *Printing and the Mind of Man* 204; Wade 1.