

L'Ingénu

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VolumeEditors:

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Author:

Voltaire

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First published in 1767, Voltaire's satirical tale *L'Ingénu* was an immediate success. It was, Voltaire observed to his publisher, even better than *Candide* (in that it was more realistic), and readers - from Voltaire's era through to the present day, have accounted it one of his most entertaining works.

Imitating a popular literary convention, the *conte* charts the introduction of an outsider into French society - a Huron who has arrived in Brittany. In the Huron's ensuing clashes with the church and the political administration, the naive gaze of this 'uncivilized' observer exposes absurdity and hypocrisy.

Setting the story in the late seventeenth century, Voltaire offers a criticism of life under Louis XIV, as well as an allegory of eighteenth-century religious intolerance. Composed during the period of Voltaire's campaign against injustice - of the sort perpetrated on Calas, Sirven and La Barre, *L'Ingénu* may be seen as portraying the type of the innocent individual persecuted by the state.

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362

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Francis goes into great detail in dealing with Voltaire's sources, dividing these sections or chapters, usefully, into background (Brittany and Huronia), events (1689, 1767, and autobiographical allusions), debates (the religious issue, the savage and his education, the question of evil), and forms, concluding his presentation with the publication and reception of

the novel and – standard in the Foundation’s monumental edition of the complete works – sections on editions in Voltaire’s lifetime, translations, and his edition’s principles. In every case, Francis betrays wide-ranging and judicious scholarship (including mastery of the Voltaire corpus), serene weighing of the evidence, measured argumentation, and enlightening annotation, all of which make this the most scholarly and insightful edition of the work ever published.
