

Siècle de Louis XIV (I-VI)

Series:

Œuvres complètes de Voltaire

Volume:

11:13D

VolumeEditors:

Diego Venturino et al.

Author:

Voltaire

ISBN:

978-0-7294-1213-1

2015 marked the 300th anniversary of the death of Louis XIV (1638-1715), the Sun King, whose reign defined the era of the 'Grand Siècle' and saw France rise to become the dominant player on the European stage. To mark this anniversary, the Voltaire Foundation, in collaboration with the Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles, is publishing Voltaire's seminal account of his reign, the *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), the first major overall account of the reign of Louis XIV. This text is the starting-point for any reflection on the political and cultural history of the era of the Sun King, and is a monument of eighteenth-century historiography, paving the way for both modern historiography and literary history.

The lasting success of this flagship work is due to the depth of Voltaire's insight into the people and events that he is describing and to his historical method, which was remarkable for its day. The emphasis on first-hand accounts from those who witnessed events and on the perspective of the age as a whole rather than a parade of facts bears the stamp of Voltaire. This edition is the first-ever full critical edition, and will be published in volumes 11-13 of the *Complete Works of Voltaire*. It takes as its base text the last version of the work that Voltaire authorised (1775), and gives variant readings from all preceding versions of the text. It will include the 'Catalogue des écrivains français qui ont paru dans le siècle de Louis XIV', an important and fascinating work in its own right. The edition will be supplied with an index with full names and dates of all persons mentioned in the text.

Forthcoming 2019

Contributors: Nicholas Cronk, François Moureau, Jean-Alexandre Perras, Samuel S. B. Taylor, Diego Venturino, Alain Viala

Table of Contents:

I: Introduction, Textes annexes (vol.11, forthcoming 2018)

II: Listes et *Catalogue des écrivains* (vol.12, 2017)

III: ch.1-12 (vol.13A, 2015)

IV: ch.13-24 (vol.13B, 2015)

V: ch.25-30 (vol.13C, 2016)

VI: ch.31-39 (vol.13D, 2016)

Pierre Force, Professor of French and History, Columbia University

The *Siècle de Louis XIV* is the foundational text of French literary history. This edition reveals the depth of erudition that lies behind each of Voltaire's lines, and it highlights the central role of the *Siècle* in the emergence of modern historical thinking.

Christian Jouhaud, Directeur d'études à L'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales

Ce magnifique travail savant devrait permettre au lecteur de prendre la mesure de la puissance critique de tout l'ouvrage qui, jusque dans ses pages les plus narratives, affronte la question de la preuve et du doute dans l'écriture de l'histoire.

Olivier Chaline, professeur d'histoire moderne à l'Université Paris IV-Sorbonne

L'annotation établie par D. Venturino est sobre et précise, présente mais pas pesante. Héritière de la tradition des études voltairiennes, elle ne vise pas à une réécriture en marge de l'histoire de Louis XIV. Elle vise à replacer le texte dans la connaissance qu'avaient les contemporains du Grand Siècle écoulé et dans les débats qu'il suscitait. Tout est donc ordonné à la restitution des sources utilisées et à l'intelligence de l'œuvre de Voltaire.

J.H. Shennan, Professor Emeritus at the University of Lancaster

The *Siècle de Louis XIV* is a milestone on the road to modern history-writing. Voltaire, the chief publicist of the Enlightenment, wrote his history *en philosophe*, concerning himself with the human condition and with man's progress (or the lack of it) towards personal freedom; a preoccupation which later generations of historians have largely inherited. The Voltaire Foundation's new edition, based on the 1775 version but with annotations from earlier editions, provides an 18th-century portrait of the 'Grand Siècle' which was startlingly new and an insight into the new history which is surprisingly familiar. Such a scholarly re-publication of one of the seminal works of the *Siècle des Lumières* is greatly to be welcomed.
