

◆ MUSINSKY RARE BOOKS ◆

SIX NEW YEAR TREATS



No. 5

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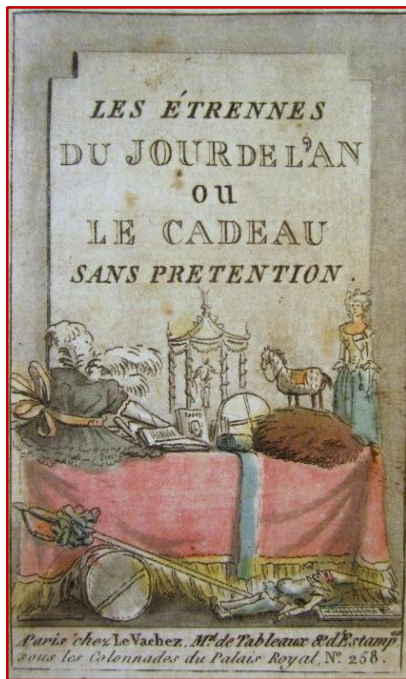
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The vogue for small format almanacs, often called *Étrennes* (New Year gifts), began rather innocently in France in the early eighteenth century, before exploding into a specialized printing and publishing industry that spread to neighboring countries and lasted well into the nineteenth century. Often produced by stationer-binders rather than traditional printer-publishers, these almanacs were usually printed in very small formats, 24mo or 32mo. The originally practical purpose of the almanac came to be eclipsed in favor of the frivolous pleasures of pretty bindings and light-hearted illustrations, although many almanacs in name only still included yearly calendars. Intended for ladies' (or gentlemen's) pocketbooks, and consisting entirely of love poems or songs, some editions were offered in special luxury issues, with bindings incorporating discreet mirrors inside the front cover, or with the illustrations delicately hand-colored. Even those almanacs with more traditional contents could be found in an astonishingly wide variety of gold-blocked goatskin or embroidered textile case bindings, sometimes with inset miniatures, or with lavish accumulations of gold thread, all produced or commissioned by the publishers themselves.

Writing of embroidered almanac bindings, Fabienne Le Bars recently noted that one should not forget that these books were produced as gifts, and indeed as love-gifts, a fact which explains the apparent paradox of such labor-intensive production methods for the cover decoration of what were essentially ephemeral and (at least in the beginning) inexpensive publications: "the choice ... would seem paradoxical if the status of gifts held by these little works had not quickly conferred upon them, in the eyes of an elite clientele, the double role of bibelot (bauble) and of an object of gallantry likely to become a precious souvenir, and thus worthy of receiving a decoration formerly

reserved only for the most precious publications" ("Le choix d'un art à la mise en oeuvre onéreuse pour l'ornement de ces publications à vocation éphémère, initialement vendues à bas prix, pourrait paraître paradoxal si le statut de cadeaux de ces petits ouvrages ne leur avait vite conféré, auprès d'une clientèle choisie, le double statut de bibelot et d'objet de galanterie propre à devenir un précieux souvenir, de ce fait digne de recevoir une parure autrefois réservée aux plus précieux ouvrages") – Jean-Marc Chatelain, ed. *Éloge de la rareté: cent trésors de la Réserve des livres rares* (Paris : Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2014), item 35a.

Like children's books, almanacs also provided a vehicle for experimenting with innovative graphic art techniques.



No. 3

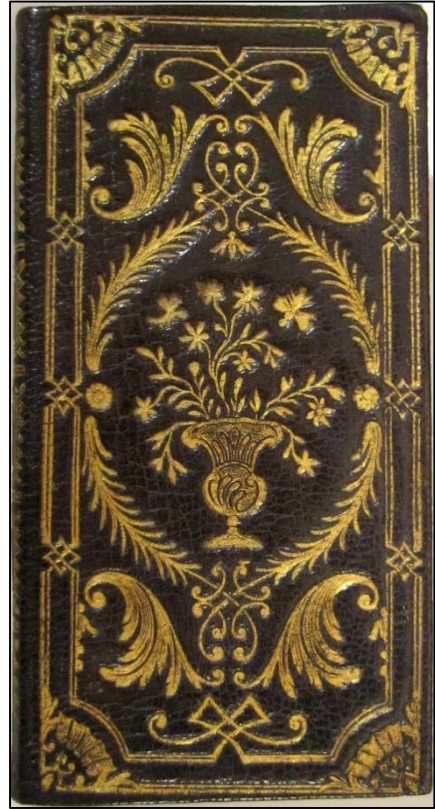
Herewith a few examples of this delightful genre.
Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year,

Nina Musinsky

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1) *Le Calendrier de la Cour, tiré des Ephémérides ... Pour l'année Mil sept cent cinquante-trois. Imprimé pour la famille Royale et Maison de Sa Majesté.* Paris: Jean-Jacques Estienne Collombat, 1753.

24mo (binding size 107 x 55 mm). Collation: [1² 2¹² 3⁶]. the quires inserted one inside the other. [74] pages. Fols. 1/1 and 1/2, the first and last leaves, are mounted on the free endpapers, and printed respectively on recto and verso only. Woodcut royal arms on title, 2 astronomical woodcuts, typographical moon symbols in calendar. Double rule page borders. Publisher's case binding of green morocco gold-blocked to a rocaille design of volutes, leafy branches, and central flower vase, red-on-gold Dutch-gilt paper endleaves, gilt edges. Fine condition. **\$2250**



A beautifully preserved example of one of the longest-lived Paris almanacs, published continuously from 1700 to 1792. The *Calendrier de la Cour* was “invented” (Grand-Carteret) by the printer-publisher and type-founder Jean-Jacques Estienne Collombat (1668-1744), named printer to the Duchesse de Bourgogne in 1700, ten years before his admission to the guild of Paris printers. Printed in a very small but easily legible typeface designed by Collombat, the calendar with its ephemerides uses numerous tiny astrological symbols, which he had struggled to cut without success until 1730 (according to a note in the 1731 edition, cited by Grand-Carteret). The remaining text contains information of interest to the Court: lists of officials and their various charges, births and deaths throughout the European royal families, prominent members of the clergy, etc. At the end are tables of (presumably) practical information: the numbers of seconds by which a well-regulated clock should be ahead or behind each day; for the spendthrifts, a table of proper expenses for various annual incomes (from 1 to 100,000 pounds); and a table of wine prices, by *muid* (an ancient unit of measure, used for liquids and grains).

These almanacs were used by courtiers and ladies at Court, and the bindings and cover materials reflected their owners' ranks. The present pretty gold-blocked covers, of fine material but relatively simple to produce, would have been considered appropriate for an official or lady of relatively low standing.

The economical construction of the book, consisting of unsigned quires inserted one inside the other, was used in many Parisian almanacs. Some copies contain a form for listing profits and losses at gambling (see Grand-Carteret), usually printed on a 12-leaf quire. These monthly forms for recording one's gambling results were, according to Grand-Carteret, included in “most 18th-century almanacs,” (p. xxxiii); but they were an optional feature.

Grand-Carteret, *Les Almanachs français ... 1600-1895* (Paris, 1896, reprint 1968), no. 92 and p. xli.

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2) *Le Manuel des Graces, ou les Etrennes de Céphise. Etrennes récréatives pour la présente année ; Sur des airs connus & choisis, Par M. D...* A Cithère, et se trouve à Paris: Ph. D. Langlois, [1773/74].



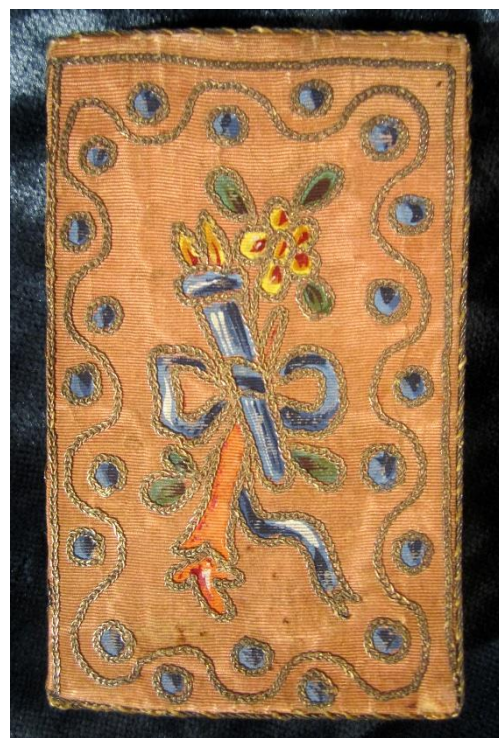
32mo (binding size 94 x 58 mm). Collation: [A]⁸ B-C⁸ D¹⁶ (calendar for 1774), nested quires. 32, [16], 33-64 pages. Double rule page borders. A few inkstains, corners softened. Publisher's EMBROIDERED AND PAINTED case binding of salmon-rose ribbed cloth (faille silk?) over thin flexible boards, covers with outer border and inner wavy border of silver braided thread, the recesses adorned with roundels of the same material whose centers are painted half blue and half black, framing, on the upper cover, a torch, ribbon and flower design, and on the lower cover a mandolin with sheets of music, these motifs outlined in silver braid and painted in gouache, diaper design on backstrip formed by diagonally disposed silver braid, the compartments with small dots in ink, white satin liners, gilt edges (front cover with small hole at lower fore-corner). Paper remnant with scrawled 18th-century inscription pasted to lower inner cover. **\$3900**

A rare almanac in an unusual binding. The text consists of racy songs, to be sung to familiar melodies. The 8 unsigned leaves (quire D) contain the calendar: one page per month, preceded by a half-title with special dates (beginnings of seasons, dates of the "quatre temps:" fast days or Ember days), and followed by a leaf with a list of the planets on recto and moveable feasts on verso.

The imposition and quire arrangement (with the quires nested inside each other rather than disposed consecutively), so peculiar for those trained in the traditional print world, are a hallmark of French almanac production, and appear to be a logical adaptation to small formats. Philippe-Denis Langlois was a *libraire* or bookseller rather than an *imprimeur*. Active from 1756 to ca. 1792, he also produced printing ink. He was imprisoned during the Revolution, along with his wife, for reasons relating to the publication of a satirical almanac.

On the verso of the title is a catalogue of new Almanacs for the present year, listing 19 separate titles.

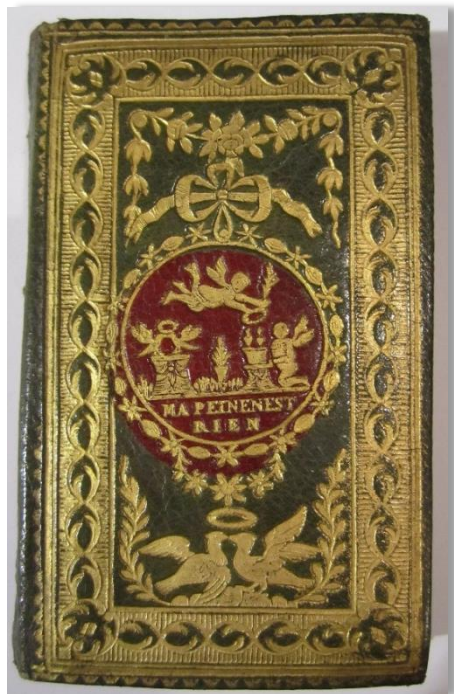
No copies located in OCLC. Grand-Carteret 751 (no copy seen, citing a copy from 1783 from a catalogue). On Langlois cf. Mellot & Queval, *Répertoire d'imprimeurs / libraires* (Paris: BnF, 2004), 2992.



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3) *Les Etrennes du Jour de l'an ou le Cadeau sans pretention*. Paris: chez Le Vachez, Marchand de Tableaux & d'Estampes sous les colonnades du Palais Royal, No. 258, [1790 or 1791].

24mo (binding size 90 x 60 mm). Hand-colored engraved title and 12 plates of color aquatints with added hand-coloring, alternating with 12 text leaves; engraved fold-out calendar with the months in columns topped by emblematic vignettes (calendar edges frayed with slight loss at beginning and end and old reinforcements on verso, some staining, title and last leaf soiled, the color a bit darkened or faded). Publisher's case binding of green morocco, covers blocked in gold with outer border, ribbon and garland, and pair of doves, central inlaid red morocco roundel, gold-stamped with doves, a man kneeling at an altar, an angel, and the gold-stamped motto "Ma Peine n'est Rien," a mirror mounted on inner front cover (backing damaged), framed in gold braid and topped with rose silk, rose silk liners, backed with purple and red *papier dominoté* flyleaves, gilt edges (several old repairs). *Provenance*: *Besnard*, 18th-century signature; Carlo de Poortere, bookplate. \$4000



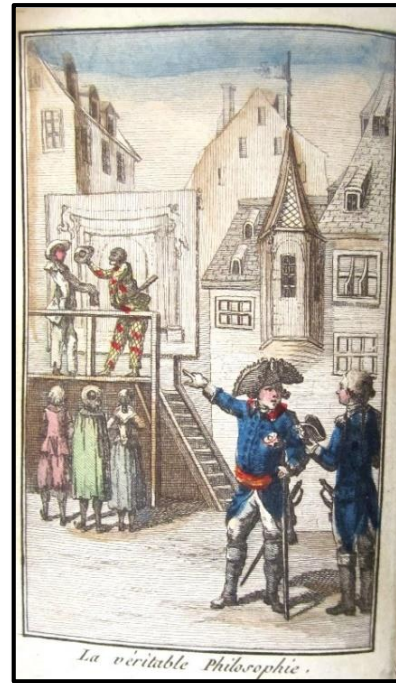
AN ALMANAC FOR CHILDREN, ENTIRELY ENGRAVED AND INNOVATIVELY ILLUSTRATED WITH COLOR AQUATINTS REPRODUCING POPULAR PRINTS. The text contains several songs addressed by little boys and girls to their



parents and grandparents, and prose stories ranging from the edifying to the sentimental. Grand-Carteret knew of only one other almanac published by Nicolas-François Le Vachez, an engraver and print dealer who was active in Paris from 1775 to the early 1790s, and issued prints and books from the present address, "under the colonnades of the Palais-Royal," from 1787 to 1791 (BnF authority files). A post-Revolutionary date for this almanac may be deduced from one of the songs, reading "*L'Amour est né républicain / Il supporte un maître avec peine ...*" etc. (p. [22]).

The aquatint process had been introduced to France barely 20 years earlier, by Jean-Baptiste Le Prince, and a method of producing three- and four-plate color aquatints had just been developed in the 1780s by Louis-Philibert Debucourt. The unknown artist (possibly Le Vachez) may have been working in association with Debucourt; two plates are reduced copies of prints by the latter. Others copy prints by Boucher and Greuze as well as English prints by Morland, Williams, and Smith (Grand-Carteret provides a complete list of sources). The charming title, which appears to be original, shows a table piled with New Year presents, some of which have spilled onto the floor: a feathered hat, a doll, a toy clown, a toy horse, a sword and drum, etc. Not found in OCLC. Grand-Carteret 984; Cohen-de Ricci 48.

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4) *Le Triomphe du sentiment ou les Moeurs corrigées*. *Almanach Orné de jolies gravures*. Paris: chez Janet, successeur du S^r Jubert, Rue S. Jacques vis-à-vis les Mathurins. N^o 36, [1790-1791].

24mo (94 x 54 mm). 24 pp. Engraved throughout; frontispiece, allegorical title and 11 plates, all with contemporary hand-coloring; one page of music. Without the folding calendar. Blue morocco, sides and spine gilt-paneled, by Riviere & Son; matching two-part pull-off morocco case. *Provenance*: Sir David Lionel Goldsmid-Stern-Salomons (1851-1925), armorial bookplate dated 1908; Carlo de Poortere, bookplate. \$1750

Fine copy of a brightly illustrated engraved *almanach galant*, a typical product of Pierre-Etienne Janet, who in 1789 acquired the shop and bindery of his father-in-law Pierre Jubert, *relieur-doreur* and path-breaking almanac publisher. In around 1790 Janet set up shop in the rue St. Jacques, working first from no. 36, and systematically published almanacs, according to a formula, most with 12 colored plates. He eventually built up the business to become one of the largest French publishers of gift books, almanacs, and children's books, ephemeral genres which would remain the mainstay of the firm under his son Louis Janet.

Almanacs of the *galant* type were often undated: left-over sheets could thus be re-issued with different calendars. Grand-Carteret (997) cites a copy with a calendar dated 1792; OCLC lists a copy at Yale with a calendar for 1793. Illustrations also often vary. The last plate in our copy differs from that described by Grand-Carteret: instead of "*Le Hasard au coin du feu*," our plate 12 is captioned "*Le Tableau touchant*," and shows a young gentleman carrying an old man who is himself bent under the weight of a bundle of branches.

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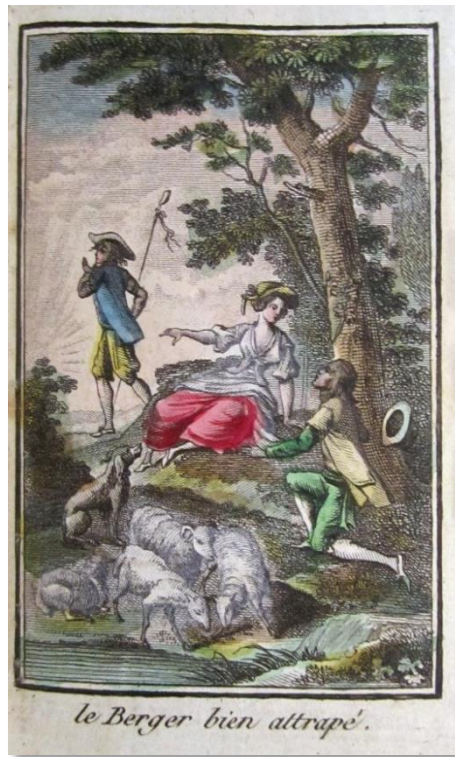
5) *Étrennes mignonnes Pour l'an de notre Seigneur M. DCC. XCIII. Depuis le Commencement du Monde 5742...* Liège: chez H. Dessain & Soeurs, [1792/93].

24mo (binding size 99 x 58 mm). [39] leaves. The calendar (leaves 2-16) interleaved. Double rule page-borders. 12 pages of coin woodcuts (24 cuts showing 12 coins). Small moon cuts in text. Publisher's case binding of contemporary cream silk-covered boards, decorated with metallic and gold thread, sequins and colored metal foil: sides with metal strip borders oversewn with metallic thread enclosing a central oval containing a flower with red foil petals and green foil leaves, a beribboned garland above and garland with blossom below, spine with diaper design of metallic thread with red sequins in each compartment (a few of the sequins damaged), gilt edges, plain endpapers, short tear to front free endpaper). *Provenance*: Carlo de Poortere, bookplate. **\$4800**

An exquisite embroidered almanac in fine condition. Besides the calendar, this Liège annual, called *Étrennes mignonnes* in emulation of a long-running Parisian series, includes currency tables, illustrations of the coin of the realm, a multiplication table, and a list of continuous prayers (*prières de quarante heures*) in various parishes. The sequin-studded binding was produced by the publishers, who announce on the final page that the *Étrennes* are available "in different bindings, embroidered with gold, painted with miniatures, in morocco, etc." Hubert Dessain and his sisters, heirs of a printing and publishing family originally based in Reims, evidently also dealt in textiles: following the announcement is a reminder that fine white and gray cloth, chiffon (*mousseline*), and other textiles are also available, in various sizes and quantities.

Unlike the simple one-quire or "Russian doll" construction of many Parisian almanacs, the collation of this almanac is reasonably complex: $\pi i^2 A^8 B^4 C^2 D^{12} E^{10} F^2$ (E10 blank, quire F inserted between E9 and E10, the latter used as rear pastedown). See also cover illustration.

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6) *L'Union de l'Amour et des Arts, ou l'Empire des Talens*. Paris: chez Janet, Libraire, Rue Jacques No. 31, [ca. 1798-1799].

24mo (binding size 109 x 64 mm). Collation: A¹²; A¹². [24]; [24] pp. Engraved title and 9 engraved plates (of 10?), all hand-colored under the publisher's direction (title and first plate rehinged, title foxed and fore-edge a bit frayed, a few small inkstains). Publisher's embroidered case binding of white silk, covers with green ribbon border oversewn with metallic thread, central bouquet design on upper cover and flower design on lower cover built up from tiny pieces of wire, colored thread, and sequins, backstrip with 7 sequins embellished with pieces of wire, green and gold Dutch-gilt endpapers, gilt edges. Fine condition. *Provenance*: a few contemporary notes (memoranda and addresses) on versos of title and 2 plates; Carlo de Poortere, bookplate. \$3800

A Janet almanac, in a charmingly odd embroidered binding, containing little songs (*chansonnettes*), pastorales, and romances, all set to popular tunes, with colored engravings that diverge from those recorded by Grand-Carteret. The title is that of the first piece, "a Greek anecdote in verse." The second quire A, with drop-title *Ariettes nouvelles*, is not mentioned by Grand-Carteret and seems to be from a different edition.

Grand-Carteret, no. 1293, describes this edition with 10 plates, 3 of which do not appear in this copy, which instead includes two other engravings. Those omitted are *L'Amour exclusif*; *Le Prix de l'Inconstance*; and *Les Remors de l'Infidélité*. They are the only engravings relating to fidelity – could our copy have been custom-bound for one who wished to avoid a sensitive subject? The two additional engravings not listed by Grand-Carteret are *L'Impatience bien naturelle* and *L'Empire des talens* (both of which relate to the text). Not found in OCLC.