

Superbly decorated with drawings and verse by a contemporary named annotator

32. DU BARTAS, Guillaume de Salluste, *seigneur*. [LES OEUVRES DE G. DE SALUSTE, SR DU BARTAS. reueües, corrigees, augmentees de nouveaux commentaires, annotations en marge, et embellie de figures sur tous les jours de la sepmaine ... Dernière Edition. Paris: chez Claude Rigaud. 1611] £

Folio, two volumes in one, wanting the engraved title page to the first volume; and with the title page to volume II bound at the front so as to form a general title page to the whole, otherwise quite complete; pp. [xxii], 1-341, [1] blank, [1] fly-title, [1] blank, 343-348, 347-352, '335-6', 357-457; [viii], 1-38, 37, 48-60, 63-4, 63-359, 350-374, 379-534, [15] index; engraved illustrations in part I by Elias van den Bosche, Edme Charpy and Thomas de Leu; part II title page laid down on later paper; dedication leaf somewhat soiled and remargined; with many extraordinary annotations throughout the volume (see below); rebound by Cottin-Simier in the later 19th century in reddish tan morocco, covers with the gilt arms of Villeneuve; and with a small armorial bookplate (with different arms); spine and edges gilt.

A notable edition of the works of Salluste du Bartas (1544-90), the second part being edited by Simon Goulart and Jacques du Pin. There are two versions of this edition, on fine or on ordinary paper - this seems to be the ordinary paper issue - and copies also vary in the imprint (Claude Rigaud, Toussaint du Bray or Jean de Bordeaux). There is also a unique copy at Harvard with replacement title-pages bearing the imprint of John Bill of London, which was presented to James I of England.

This is a most extraordinary and puzzling copy, which has been annotated and beautified by a contemporary reader whose name appears to be M.A. Chalom, sieur de Gontez. He has written his name at several points throughout the book, as follows:

- I 348: a long MS poem is headed: 'Au sieur du Bartas sur l'histoire de Iudith M.A.C.'
I 457: after 'Fin de la premiere sepmaine ...': 'Des liures de M.A. Chalom sr de Gontez'
II 464: 'des liures de Gontez'
II 490: 'Des liures de Gontez 1615'

Below the last of these he has also written a monogram which appears at numerous points throughout the volume: at pp. [xxii] (dated 1615), 40, 312, 341, 348 and 407 in volume I; and 103, 307, 318, 466 and 490 in

volume II. This monogram certainly seems to have the letters M and A in it, but also possibly H and R. The monogram clearly belongs to same man as has written the 'sieur de Gontez' inscriptions, but whether it artfully conceals other letters or refers to another person is not so evident. I have been unable to find any reference anywhere to any Sieur de Gontez, or to any M.A. Chalom (or Chalon).

This is just the beginning, however: in the first volume the annotator (who is presumably to be identified with the sieur de Gontez) has added ten poems (typically in six-line stanzas) at various points throughout the book – usually at the beginning of each day of the first 'semaine' – in praise of the author's verse. For instance, opposite the opening of *Le Premier Jour*, he has written 'Bartas ce iour chante | Le Creation grande | De cest uniuers | Comme Dieu le Pere | En toute sagesse | fit Ciel Terre et Mers'. One or two of these poems are far longer – for example, at I 348 there is a substantial poem of 96 lines (16 six-line stanzas) addressed to Bartas 'sur l'histoire de Judith'. At I 341 a six-line poem addressed to Bartas is succeeded by one addressed to Goulard, one of the editors of the volume. The total verse in volume I (there are none in part II) amounts to 186 lines, all written in admiration of du Bartas's piety and art.

Apart from the poetry, the annotator has added a number of informative prose notes to the text, which – most unusually for annotations at such a date – tell us something about his life and experiences. At I 118, for instance, he has written: 'Pres st Galmier en fourestz, y a un grand Puys. Lon lappelle la font fort leau bout incessamment. Lon sen sert la boire elle a le goust fort acre - si ont la met dans le pot sur le feu il ny demeure rien dedans, ie laye ueu en 1602 estant Contreroolleur au grenier a Sel; ayant auecq mes Compagnons Doffice demeure 22 iours au dit lieu pour letablissement[ent?] Des Greniers a Sel'. On the next page he makes a similar note: 'Pre St Allire lez Clermont y a une fontaine qui en tout temps se conuertit en pierre rouge & a fait un pont appelle le pont de leau sur lequel lon passe ayament. ie lay ueu et y ay passe.' Even more specifically, on the page after that (p. 120) he notes: 'Il y a des Bains a Vichy, & a Nery en Bourbonnois, y en a aussy pres Clermont en Auvergne my suis baigné ... Ay ueu les Bains admirables du port Sta Maria pres le fleuue du Pau pres Bellrouyouse au dessous De Pauie y a 4 chambres uoutees profondes dans terre & un bel hospital pour loger les malades – lay ueu 1605 uenant de Rome'. At other points he notes having seen a seal (or possibly a walrus) at Paris in 1601, 'pesant 400 liures' (I 213); having talked with 'Me Joseph Curé de Vertaison', about how thunder struck his church: 'ie lay ueu & asprise de luy homme docte & bon Theologien' (I 79); and relates how a 'bellette' will fight against serpents and lizards: 'Mr de Bars le Curé de Choriac & autres one ueu'

However, it is the marginal illustrations which provide the principal attraction of the volume. Besides the usual pointing hands and asterisks, which are scattered throughout the book, some of the margins have been very extensively illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings, presumably by Gontez himself. All of them relate to the printed text, often to the subject of the notes which discuss some point in the main poem. Some of the most notable are as follows:

- I 73-5: comets, clock-tower, a dragon (actually it looks more like a cockerel), torch, javelin and goat.
- I 198-9: a sun with a face, and a world map
- I 204: a large sun with a face
- I 211-14: the sun, moon and stars, followed by a series of illustrations of remarkable sea-creatures, including sea-horse, seal, hammer-head shark and monkfish (the last interpreted rather literally)
- II 164: Noah's Ark
- II 176-7: a stone altar, and a rainbow
- II 270-1: a mason's instruments
- II 272: a ship; and a measuring instrument
- II 274-5: astronomical diagrams, including a zodiac
- II 276-81: signs of the zodiac, and arrangements of stars; and an astrolabe
- II 282: a tower, apparently intended to represent the Tower of Babel
- II 283: musical instruments, including an organ

These are only the most spectacular illustrations: at numerous points throughout the book, the annotator has penned in flowers, stars, comets, leaves and other objects either to indicate a point of interest, or, perhaps, just to express himself.

Who was the Sieur de Gontez? I have been unable to discover his identity or even to find anyone else with this peculiar, non-French-sounding name. Was he Spanish or of Spanish descent? It seems possible – although all the place names he cites seem to point to the area of Clermont-Ferrand: Clermont itself is named at I 119; Vertaison (I 79) is only a few miles to the east; Pont Gibaud (I 119) is a similar distance to

the west; St Galmier (I 118), north-west of St Etienne, in the modern-day Loire department, is not very far away. And of course Vichy (I 120) is even closer, some forty miles or so down the Allier river.

We can also tell that Gontez was some sort of public servant, acting as an inspector or controller of salt granaries or storehouses. This would be particularly appropriate in the Auvergne region, as it is famous for its medicinal waters and salt production. He has travelled, and has visited baths near Pavia when he was on his way back from Rome in 1605 (I 120). This does not identify him much beyond a region and a time – better than nothing, of course – and it may be that a more diligent and skilled researcher than I would be able to pin him down further.