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THE PROPERTY OF A DISTINGUISHED
AMERICAN PRIVATE COLLECTOR PART II
AUCTION
MAY 30, 2013
PROFILES IN HISTORY

157. Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat. Letter signed, ("Montesquieu"), in French, 3 pages, (8 x 6 in.; 203 x 152 mm.), Rennes, [no date], to Monsieur de la Chalotais, Procurator-General of the Parliament of Brittany; tear and small paper loss along vertical fold.

Montesquieu discusses possible war with England and observes that although the French do not believe the King of England wants war, "he is not an absolute Monarch like the French Kings, and his people want to force him into it."

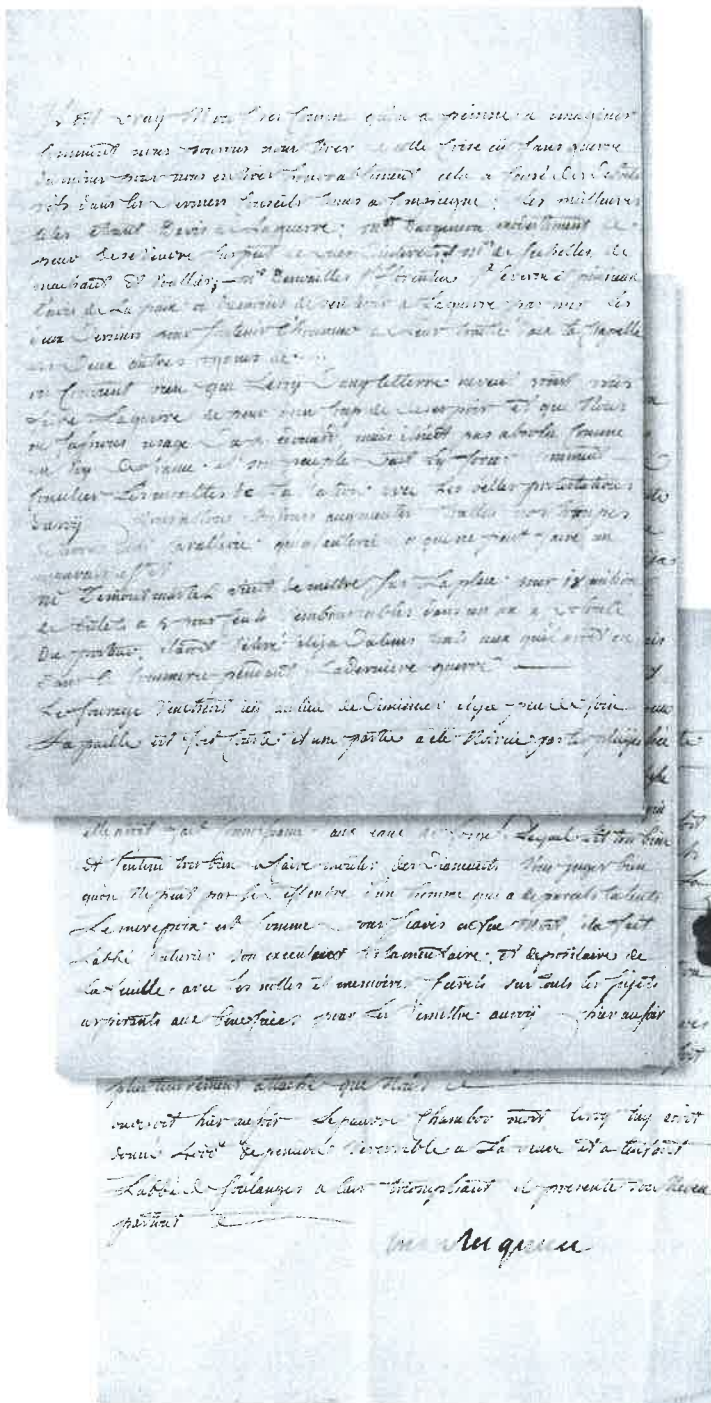
The great social commentator and political thinker writes in full: It is true, my dear cousin, that it is certainly difficult to imagine how we can get out of this situation without recourse to war - get out honorably, at least. The idea was the cause of lively discussion during the last Council held in Compiègne. The most brilliant thinkers were in its favor, Monsieur Dargenson (only moderately so afraid of being suspected of having an interest in it), Monsieur de Sechelles, de Machaut, and Voullier. Monsieur Denvailles, St. Florentin, St. Severin, and Puisien were predisposed towards peace, or at least towards avoiding a naval conflict, especially the last two, because they want to keep the terms of their Aix-la-Chapelle treaty, and the other two, organs of

The consensus was that the king of England does not want a war with us, fearing that it would be purely out of despair and that we would use Edward. However, he is not an absolute monarch like the French kings, and his people want to force him into it. How can [his subjects'] results be reconciled with the [English] king's vain protests? We are going to keep increasing the number of our land troops, not including cavalry, just Infantry, which won't be a bad thing.

Monsieur de Montmartel has just thrown 18 million in banknotes at 2% onto the market, payable to the bearer on demand in a year. He has already retired the others which he had out during the last war. Cotton is getting more expensive here instead of less. There is very little hay, straw is in short supply, and some of it was ruined by the rain. So, Monsieur de Veru [is] Councillor. I send you both my compliments, with all my heart. I am sure that he will fill his uncle's shoes point for point. I hope that their lovely weather is helping to return Mme de La Chalotais to good health. My sister, although not in excellent health, is much better than she was two or three years ago, and her disposition beginning to improve.

My dear cousin, I do not say that I won't ever marry. If I were to like that step, I would have to have found [a woman] with a steady character which suited me, and that's not easy to find. I am afraid that I made a mistake about what you proposed to me last year, but I had no idea that she was a widow with a duchess for a younger sister, who has just remarried a Monsieur de Mareilly, a Norman who she met at the baths of Forges. He is well off and spends his free time having diamonds mounted. You can see how it is hard to compete with a man of his talents.

Monsieur de Veru, as you know, has just recently died. He made the Abbe de Veru the executor of his estate and guardian of the will with all the notes and accounts out of reach of all those aspiring to the benefice by delivering them to the king. Last night, we still didn't know who his heir would be. This has excited much curiosity and with good reason. They think that it will be announced on Monday night. Madame La Comtesse de Froulcy is always complaining about her health, but in



fact, she goes out every day and is harder than ever to catch. Madame de Sandwich is her only concern. I ran into her yesterday when she was going to see her. She returned around nine o'clock. I found the convulsive motions of her mouth strongly pronounced. Farewell, dear cousin, receive my compliments and my sisters'. Can we entertain the hope that you will send us some news of yourself when you have some time? You know that it couldn't have a more appreciative audience nor one that is more attached to you than we are. They found poor Chambor dead yesterday. The king had given him a pension of 4,000, which went to his widow and child. Abbe Soulanges is putting on airs and showing off his nephew everywhere.

Letters with such significant content by Montesquieu are rare. \$4,000 - \$6,000