

Finch & C^o



AN UNUSUAL PORTRAIT OF THE SWISS DAVID LOUIS DE CONSTANT-REBECQUE

AN UNUSUAL PORTRAIT OF THE SWISS DAVID LOUIS DE CONSTANT-REBECQUE , SEIGNEUR D'HERMANCHES ET DE VILLARS .

BORN LAUSANNE 17 TH NOVEMBER 1722 , DIED PARIS 25 TH FEBRUARY 1785

18 TH CENTURY

GOUACHE ON PAPER

LITERATURE

DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF IN THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION WITH MARSHAL SAXE, HE WAS LATER TO BE KNOWN AS 'CONSTANT D'HERMANCHES, BARON DE REBECQUE' IN ORDER TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM HIS NEPHEW BENJAMIN CONSTANT (1767 - 1830) THE LOVER OF MADAME DE STAEL.

THE TITLE OF MARCHAL GIVEN TO GENERALS, MINISTERS AND DIPLOMATIC ENVOYS, WAS CONFERRED UPON HIM AFTER THE BATTLE OF FONTENOY (1745) IN WHICH HE WAS WOUNDED. THE BLACK VELVET BAND WHICH HE WORE EVER AFTERWARDS TO CONCEAL THE WOUND IS ALSO SHOWN IN TWO OTHER PORTRAITS OF HIM THAT ARE NOW IN THE STATE ART TRUST OF THE HAGUE THAT WERE FORMERLY PART OF THE COLLECTION OF THE BARONESS DE CONSTANT REBECQUE DE VILLARS.

AN OIL ON CANVAS SHOWS HIM IN HIS STUDY, VERY SIMILAR TO THE ONE PAINTED IN THE GOUACHE, WEARING A STEEL ARMoured BREASTPLATE, SWORD AND OFFICERS SASH AROUND HIS WAIST, WITH THE BLACK VELVET BAND ACROSS HIS FOREHEAD, HOLDING SEVERAL LETTERS OF STATE. ANOTHER FROM THE SAME COLLECTION PORTRAYS HIM WEARING HIS BLACK VELVET BAND, SOMEWHAT YOUNGER, STANDING WITH TWO JUNIOR OFFICERS IN THE SERVICE OF THE PRINCE OF SAVOY.

THIS INTERESTING GOUACHE SHOWS HIM AS AN OLDER, RETIRED SUCCESSFUL MILITARY MAN IN HIS BOOK LINED STUDY READING FROM A PAGE. THE FIRST LINE BEING 'LE ROI DE PRUSSE NE TARD PAS A ETRE INFORME DE TOUT CE QUI S'ETAIT.'

FREDERIC THE GREAT OF PRUSSIA, THE ARCHITECT OF THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION AND ONE OF THE GREATEST MILITARY TACTICIANS, WAS A FERVENT ADMIRER OF VOLTAIRE, AND CONSTANT D'HERMANCHES WAS A PART OF VOLTAIRE'S CIRCLE. REGARDED AS THE FOREMOST PHILOSOPHER AND WRITER DURING THE 'AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT' VOLTAIRE'S BUST IS PAINTED IN THE GOUACHE WITH THE WORD 'IMMORTALIS' IN GILT LETTERING UNDERNEATH.