Jules Verne - Signed Autograph Letter - Académie Française - 1893



3 500 EUR

Signature : JULES VERNE

Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Width : 13,5 cm

Height : 20,5 cm

Description

"I never thought of applying for membership in the Académie Française, and I didn't realize I had that ambition." Autograph letter signed by Jules Verne (1828-1905) regarding the Académie Française.A remarkable account of Jules Verne's profound literary disappointment.Amiens, October 3, 1893. 1 page, in-8 format, with traces of tab-style mounting. Dimensions: 20.5 x 13.5 cm / Frame : 30 x 24,5 cmIn the fall of 1893, the author of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, celebrated worldwide, had been living in Amiens for over twenty years; several seats in the Academy were vacant or in the process of being filled (notably those left by Hippolyte Taine and Ernest Renan). The Parisian daily press, fond of predictions and rumors, speculated on possible candidates. The daily newspaper Le Journal

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published a report suggesting that the author of Extraordinary Voyages was seeking a seat in the Academy.The wording of this letter strikes at the heart of Jules Verne's literary wound. Despite colossal print runs and unparalleled international fame, Verne was not then recognized as a "great writer." Parisian literary circles and salons relegated him to the status of a children's author, a popularizer of science, or a purveyor of entertainment.Jules Verne privately expressed on several occasions (notably to his publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel in 1869 and 1876) his desire to join the Académie Française and took steps to secure support (notably from Alexandre Dumas, Jr., in 1883), though he never formally submitted his candidacy.Jules Verne knew, in fact, that an official application would expose him to possible humiliation or to the arduous task of making the academic visits required of candidates--an inconvenience for someone from Amiens. Moreover, prestigious contemporaries such as Émile Zola were then suffering one failure after another before the Institute. Verne therefore chose pride and avoidance.The statement, "I never thought of applying to the Académie Française, and I did not know I had such an ambition," is thus a touching testimony in the form of a surge of pride, a shield for his self-respect. A few weeks after this letter, in a fascinating interview with an American journalist, Jules Verne would change his attitude and explain very clearly and bluntly his deep bitterness regarding his failure to be recognized by the Académie Française, going so far as to declare, "The great regret of my life is never having held any place in French literature." " (see below). "Amiens, October 3, 1893Sir and dear compatriotThe news item to which you refer and which was published by the Journal is entirely fabricated*.I can only reply to you as I am replying today to an editor of *L'Éclair*: I have never considered applying for membership in the Académie Française, and I did not realize I had such an ambition.Please accept, dear Sir, the

assurance of my warmest regards.Jules Verne"
*Controuvé (adj.): invented, fictional, or falseBelow is an excerpt from the fascinating interview with Jules Verne titled "Jules Verne at Home" by Robert H. Sherard for McClure's Magazine (an American illustrated monthly magazine), published in January 1894.Jules Verne: "Dumas used to tell me, when I complained that my place in French literature was not recognized: 'You should have been an American or English author. Your books, translated into French, would then have earned you immense popularity in France, and you would have been regarded by your compatriots as one of the greatest masters of fiction." But in reality, I count for nothing in French literature. Fifteen years ago, Dumas nominated me for the Academy, and since I had several friends under the Dome at the time--Labiche, Sandeau, and others--it seemed there was a chance I might be elected and that my work would receive official recognition. But it never came to pass, and today, when I receive letters from America addressed to "Mr. Jules Verne, of the Académie Française," I smile gently to myself. Since the day my name was proposed, there have been no fewer than forty-two new members inducted into the Académie Française, which has, so to speak, been entirely renewed since then. But I am ignored."