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## Canada's First Bookseller's Catalogue

Sandra Alston

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One of the most satisfying aspects of the research undertaken on the supplement to Marie Tremaine's classic *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1752-1800*<sup>1</sup> has been the discovery of previously unknown or unlocated items. Among the most interesting discoveries has been a copy of item number 1188, described in the bibliography as follows:

1188. Neilson, John, 1776-1848.

[Catalogue of Books for Sale, 3 Mountain St. Quebec, 1800.]

Leaflet of 2 or 4 pages. *Printed at Quebec, by John Neilson, 1800.*

Neilson recorded this *Catalogue* in his advertisement: 'Imported from London in the Brickwood, and will be ready for sale tomorrow at the Printing Office, 3 Mountain Street, for Cash only - A small assortment of new and valuable French and English books, of which Catalogues may be had at the Office.' - *Quebec gazette*, Nov. 20, 1800.

This seems to be the publication of which a copy was listed by Dora Hood, Toronto, in her *Catalogue no. 4*, Autumn, 1930 (which included works from the collection of Col. J. Hubert Neilson, a grandson of the printer), item no. 316. Mrs Hood recalls the item as a leaflet of 2 or 4 pages, sold for 75 cents.

Copy known but not located: J. Hubert Neilson copy *supra*.

This citation<sup>2</sup> was the only clue to the existence of this early Neilson book catalogue, apparently the very first such bookseller's catalogue printed in

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Sandra Alston holds a joint appointment in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and the Selection Department in the University of Toronto Libraries.

Canada. Marie Tremaine lists thirteen earlier catalogues,<sup>3</sup> all of books and other items for sale at auction. Only one of these, number 787, the *Catalogue of the libraries of the late Honorable Adam Mabane, and Alexander Gray ...*, printed by Samuel Neilson in 1792, has been located, at the Séminaire du Québec, in Québec City.

A search for this item in the Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC) database on the Research Libraries Information Network produced one record. Cited as item #w016672, the catalogue was listed as being at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, accession number 69-683.<sup>4</sup> Accession records showed that the Houghton had purchased the title from Goodspeed's Book Shop in March of 1970 for seventy-five dollars.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the joy of discovering a hitherto unlocated Tremaine imprint was the realization that this particular copy, obviously the one described as item 1188, is extensively annotated in Neilson's own hand; additions have been made to the text, items sold have been crossed out, and often the person to whom the book was sold has been inserted.

John Neilson (1776-1848) joined his brother Samuel's printing firm in 1791 at the age of fifteen, and inherited the business two years later. Through shrewd financial management and business acumen he built it into the most prominent and influential printing shop, newspaper office, and bookshop, not only in the city of Quebec, but throughout British North America. As well as selling his own printed books and pamphlets he began to import titles from England and the United States, advertising them in the *Quebec Gazette*, and acting as both a wholesaler and a retailer of books. He also tried to import books from France, but war between Great Britain and France during this period complicated those dealings. Married to a niece of the Roman Catholic bishop of Quebec, and fluently bilingual, Neilson had business and familial connections to both French and English society in the colony.

Prior to 1800 Neilson had advertised books for sale in the columns of the *Quebec Gazette*, but this catalogue – a small octavo of sixteen pages – is the first to appear as a separate text. Neilson has inscribed on the front cover: 'Any of the Books in Catalogue not sold out & not in Shop are upstairs W. Cowan if they should be wanted can get the Key & bring them down. J.N.'

John Hare and Jean-Pierre Wallot, in their article on the Neilson bookshop,<sup>6</sup> studied the books sold by the firm based on five catalogues published in 1802, 1803, 1811, 1817, and 1818, as well as on the Neilson papers held by the National Archives of Canada. Some brief comparisons to those later catalogues can be made.

The 1800 catalogue, like Neilson's later catalogues, has been divided into books arranged by format – folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo – and

by subject – classics, dictionaries, French and English grammar and school books, political pamphlets, plays, etc. There is a very small degree of duplication of the categories. A total of 265 titles are listed; 212 (80%) in English, 41 (15.5%) in French, 3 (1.1%) in Italian, and 9 (3.4%) in Latin. Neilson's next printed catalogue, not published separately but as part of the supplement to the *Quebec Gazette*, no. 1931 (15 April 1802), contains 254 titles, 182 (71.7%) in English, 58 (22.8%) in French, and 14 (5.5%) others. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for the increase in the number of French titles; it may reflect customer demand, but equally likely it reflects availability.

Hare and Wallot examined the titles in other Neilson catalogues using the chart developed by François Furet,<sup>7</sup> which lists twenty-six categories of subjects under five broad headings – religion and theology, law and jurisprudence, history, arts and science, and belles-lettres. Following that scheme one finds a subject breakdown as follows: religion and theology, 10 titles (3.8%); law and jurisprudence, 10 titles (3.8%); history, 81 titles (30.6%); arts and science, 61 titles (23.0%); belles-lettres, 91 titles (34.3%); unknown, 12 titles (4.5%).

In examining the categories it is easy to ascertain from manuscript annotations the more popular works – history, biography, voyages and travels, medical and legal treatises, and literature. It is interesting that several categories seem to have elicited no interest at all, among them classics and dictionaries.

Products of the local press cannot be assigned to the categories listed above, but work to date on eighteenth-century Canadian printing shows the following breakdown of material actually printed in Canada: almanacs (15.5%); belles-lettres, (0.9%); government (i.e. laws, debates, proclamations of government officials) (45.8%); religion and theology (12.7%); school texts (3.2%); other (i.e. advertisements, announcements, etc.) (21.9%).

Neilson's shop was patronized by the elite of both English and French society in the city of Quebec. Lawyers and notaries Olivier Perrault and Pierre-Louis Deschenaux purchased legal treatises and the collected works of Montesquieu. Jean Thomas Tascherau, a lawyer, showed a wide range of interest with his purchases of Charles Hutton's *Mathematical and Philosophical Dictionary*, the *Lex Parliamentaria*, Newton's *Natural Philosophy*, and Thomas Pownall's great treatise on the administration of the colonies. Bishop Jacob Mountain, Anglican bishop of the diocese of Quebec, bought Wilkins's *Universal and Biographical Dictionary*. John Black, Sir John Caldwell, John Young, and Thomas Grant, all closely allied in business, bought texts on subjects as diverse as cookery, the river police, poetry, philosophy, and medicine.

The breadth and depth of subjects listed in the catalogue demonstrate to some extent the calibre of the elite in the colony of Quebec. It is hoped that the reproduction of this unique catalogue, with its extensive manuscript annotations will provide more evidence to enable scholars to study the social and intellectual history of Canada.<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952).
- 2 Unfortunately to be found in the index to the book only under the heading 'Book Catalogue.'
- 3 Numbers 336, 363, 384, 443, 509, 526, 597, 758, 787, 971, 1090, 1122, and 1143.
- 4 Previous visits to the Houghton Library had failed to turn up the item, as it was accessible only through the union catalogue in the Widener Library, and not through Houghton Library's own catalogue.
- 5 Goodspeed's has informed the author that they have no record of the source of the pamphlet.
- 6 John Hare and Jean-Pierre Wallot, 'Le livre au Québec et la librairie Neilson au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,' in *Livre et lecture au Québec (1800-1850)* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1988): 93-112.
- 7 François Furet, 'La "librairie" du royaume de France au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle,' in *Livre et société dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1965): 14-16.
- 8 The catalogue is reproduced by the permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

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Printing Office

Any of the Books in Catalogue  
not sold and not in Shop are  
~~up stairs at home of the~~ should  
be wanted can get the Key to being the  
**Catalogue** Town  
J.W.

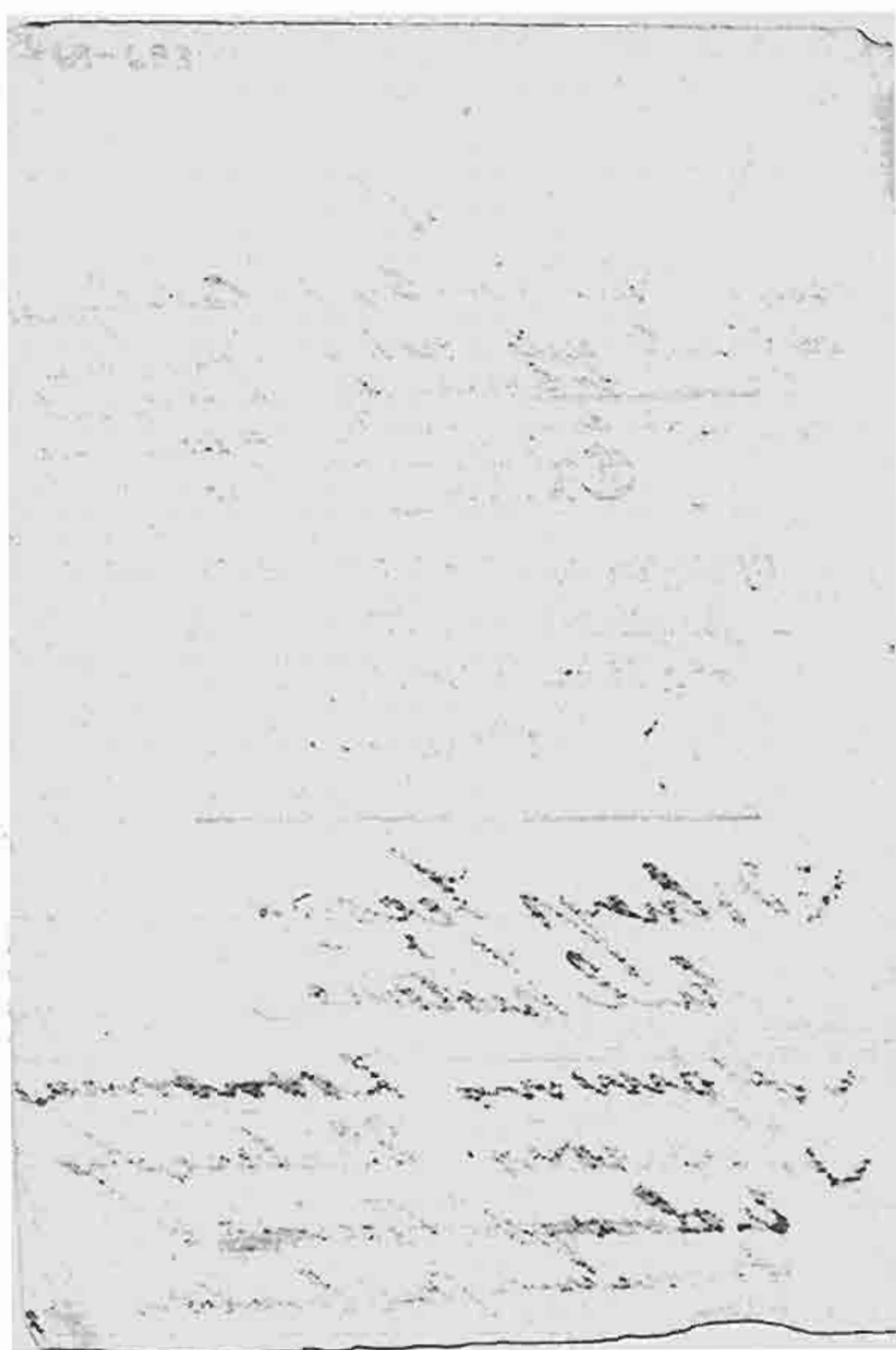
Of English French and Latin Books,  
for sale at the PRINTING OFFICE  
n<sup>o</sup> 3 Mountain street, Quebec.

1800.

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Always Lecons  
and Histoire

Parsons Locomotives  
Ferguson. Electricity  
~~Always~~ ~~Principles~~  
American Publications



## CATALOGUE.

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THE greatest part of the Books in this Catalogue have been imported from London within these late years, and many of them are entirely new works imported this Fall in the Brickwood.

11th Nov. 1800.

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### Folio.

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**T**he Common Prayer Book according to the rites of the Church of England.

Barrotti's Dictionary of the Spanish and English, and English and Spanish languages.

*Sold* ~~Le Moniteur of Commerce National from Sept. '91 to~~ *Mr P. Cash*  
 January '92, 2 vol.

*Books* ~~Les Muses de l'Education ou le Supplement~~  
*Scott's Works* Quarto. *Sold*

*Sold* ~~Histoire d'Angleterre par M. Rapin de Thoyras, 10~~  
*tomies*

Leland's History of Ireland, 4 vols.

Lumisen's Antiquities of Rome, with plates.

The Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt's Travels in North-America and Canada.

*Sold* ~~Dallaway's Constantinople ancient and modern, plat.~~ *The Great*

*Sold* ~~Park's Travels in the interior of Africa, plates.~~ *Mr S. Cash*

*Sharp's celebrated Translation of Tacitus*

*Bells Pantheon 4 vols*

*Embassy to Ava*

*Encyclopedie Philosophique* *1800*

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- Sold* Account of a Missionary Voyage to the South Sea Islands, plates. *The great*
- Oriental Collections, 2 vols. plates.
- Sold* Sir William Jones's Persian Grammar.
- Rousseau's Life of Lorenzo d' Medici, 2 vols. *Up on Calcutta*
- Military Journal to the 1st. August, 1800
- The Officer's manual. *Col Moore had one copy*
- Boyer's Royal 4to Dictionary English and French and French and English.
- Pilkington's Gentleman's and Connoisseur's Dictionary of Painting. *(bound)*
- Sold* Hutton's Mathematical Dictionary, 2 vols. *This Frenchman*
- Saxon and English languages illustrative of each other, sewed.
- Sold Mr. Cundy* Pain's Practical Builder.
- Cœuvres complètes de M. de Voltaire, édition de Genève, imprimé sous l'inspection de l'auteur, 28 tomes.
- Sold* Hatsell's Precedents of the House of Commons, with the volume on Conferences and Impeachments, 4 vols. *Mr. Cundy*
- Sold* Pearson & Rolleston's edition of the Bible, 2 vols. plates. *Mr. Cundy*
- Idem 1 vol. without plates.

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Octavo.

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- Sold Mr. Cundy* Blackstone's Commentaries, 4 vols.
- Erskine's Laws of Evidence, 4 vols.
- Burns's Justice, 4 vols.



- Imper's Praedict Kings Bench <sup>5</sup> W. Perrault  
 Imper's Practice, King's Bench. W. Perrault  
 Idem Moderna Praedict. W. Perrault  
 Lex Parliamentaria 1 copy to Mr. Perrault  
 Hargrave's Coke on Littleton, 7 vols. W. Perrault  
 Bacon's Abridgment of the Law, 7 vols. W. Perrault  
 Juge à Paix traduit par Mr. Perrault.  
 Code of Gentoo Laws.  
 Harris's Hermes or a Philosophical enquiry into Uni-  
 versal Grammar.  
 Locke on the Human Understanding, 2 vols. W. Young  
 Newton's Natural Philosophy, 2 vols. W. Young  
 Simpson's Euclid.  
 Count Rumford's Essays, 2 vols. W. Young  
 Lavater on Physiognomy, 4 vols. plates. W. Young  
 Crell's Chemical Journal, 10 No's. W. Young  
 Lavoisier's Chemistry.  
 Van Swieten's Commentaries on the Aphorisms of  
 Boerhaave, 8 vols.  
 Whyt on Vital motion.  
 Lewis's Materia Medica. *Chimie de Lavoisier 2 vols*  
 Buchan's Domestic Medicine.  
 Swan's Translation of Dr. Sydenham's works.  
 Bell's Surgery. *all the alchemical atomizers, W. Young*  
 Douglass on Muscles.  
 Le Dran's Operations.  
 Tissot on Fevers.  
 Essais d'Anatomic.  
 Sir Joshua Renold's works, 3 vols.  
 Bath Society's Papers and Letters on Agriculture, 5 vols.  
 Hunter's Geographical Essays.  
 Anquetil's History of the French Revolution, 9 vols. *subscribers*  
*James History of England*  
*Chimie de la Nature 2 vols by H. B. P. Young*

Baker's Translation of Livius's Roman History, 6 vols.

*Sold* Robertson's History of the Reign of Charles V. Emperor of Germany, 2 vols. *The Atlas Formosa*

Noble's History of the House of Medici.

Voltaire's History of the Russian Empire.

McCauley's History of England, 2 vols.

Campbell's Lives of the Admirals, being a complete Naval History of Great Britain, 4 vols.

History of the Reign of Catherine II. Empress of Russia, 2 vols.

*Sold* History of the Revolution in Sweden. *Portugal*

History of the East. *Castro's Life of Catherine*

History of New Holland.

*Sold* Mead's Travels in North America and Canada. *Waterport*

Brissot's Travels in the United States of America, 2 vols. *Waterport*

*Sold* Warkin's Biographical Dictionary. *Lord Mansfield*

Crouch's British Customs.

History of Wilts. *Life of the Lord of Chesham*

An account of Lord Curzon's Embassy to China.

*Sold* *Journal on the Caucasus.* *Mr. Leachman*

Fall's account of Jersey.

*Sold* *Voyages de Smyrne en Grèce, 2 tomes.* *Mr. Leachman*

*Sold* D'Aranda's losses sustained by France since the Revolution. *Mr. Leachman*

Coup d'œil sur l'Etat de l'Europe à la fin du 18e siècle. *Mr. Leachman*

Bisset's Life of Burke, portrait.

M. Bertrand's Mémoires of the last years of the reign of Louis XVI.

*Sold* Vie de Catherine Impératrice de Russie, avec figures. *Mr. Leachman*

Regulations of Prussian Infantry.

~~Les Plaisirs de la vie~~

*Bonjour Greece* 1 Vol.

Adolphus's Biog. Memoirs French Revolution, 2 vols.

St Pierre's Voyages to the Isle of France, 4 vols.

*Sold* ~~Memoires sur l'Egypte, publiés pendant les Campagnes~~  
~~du Genl. Bonaparte.~~ *Constitution*

Clarendon's History of the Civil Wars, 6 vols.

*Sold* Lettres de Baruel contenant des nouveaux documents  
pour les Memoirs du Jacobinisme. *W. Mackintosh*

*Sold* Baruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism, 4 vols.

La Presse et sa neutralité. *Leçons Traduites*  
Traité on the Influence of the Passions on the happi-  
ness of Nations and Individuals. *5/6*

Meister's Letters during a residence in England. *sublime*

Letters from a Traveller, containing an account of the  
present state of the Countries in Europe, Africa,  
Asia and America.

Wimpfen's Voyage to St. Domingo.

Letters from Italy from '92 to '98, by Mariana  
Starke, 3 vols.

Justamon's Translation of the Abbé Raynal's philo-  
sophical and Political History of the European set-  
tlements in the East and West Indies, 4 vols.

Bonaparte's Campaign's in Italy, with portrait. *found in use*

*Sold* ~~Political and Military Memoirs of Europe '99.~~ *Mackintosh*

Southey's Letters from Spain.

D'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature, 2 vols.

*Sold* Bibliothèque Portatif des meilleurs Ecrivains Fran-  
çais, 4 parties. *W. Beckwith*

*Sold* Pieces diverses, relative aux opérations Militaire et  
Politique du General Bonaparte en Egypte. *Dunghese*

*Sold* Pursuits of Literature, latest edition. *W. Search*

Les derniers Adieux à Bonaparte. *Collins Poems*

Lettres de l'armée Française en Egypte, 2 parties.

*Miss Williams* Sketches of the French Revolution.

*rapides into portland*

- March's Politics*  
*Darlington's Poems*  
*Washington's Letters 12 vols.*  
 Selections from the works of the Right Honorable  
 Edmund Burke.
- Sold* - Recueil des meilleures pieces de Theatre, 4 tomes. *up there*  
 Gisborne's Female Duties, 2 vols. *ditto*  
 Chess, Anecdotes of that game.
- Sold* Korzebue's ~~Select~~ Plays, translated by Miss Plumptre,  
 Tournament.
- Count Cayles encaustic, or manner of painting like  
 the ancients.
- Leonardo da Vinci on Painting.
- Inison's School of Arts. *Sold 1 copy to Mr. Gifford*  
 Rudiments of ancient Architecture. *up there*
- Sold* Smith's Laboratory, 2 vols. *Mr. Speake*  
 Mrs. Bryant's Astronomy, for the use of Ladies.
- The Koran with notes, &c. by Sales.
- Asiatic Researches, principally conducted by Sir  
 William Jones, 4 vols.
- Guida alla Pronunzi dell'Italiano.
- Grammaire Philosophique et Literaire de la Langue  
 Française de M. Levisac. *Sold 11 francs* *up there*  
 Pope's Translation of the Iliad, plates and notes. 6  
 vols.
- Idem Translation of the Odessy, 5 vols.
- works* Burns's Poems, 4 vols. *plates* *up there*  
 Ramsay's ditto. 2 vols. *plates* *ditto*
- Sold* Fox's Translation of the Complaints of Achmet *10/11*  
 Ardebetti, from the Persian.
- Levi's Dissertations on the Prophecies, 3 vols.
- Inwood's Sermons in vindication of Free-Masonry.
- Sold* *Sold* *Mr. Young* *ditto*  
 Wozoncraft's Rights of Women. *at 1/6*  
 Priestly on Government. *for 1/6*  
 Colquhoun on the Police of the Metropolis.
- Idem on the River Police. *1/6*

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 New Annual Reports 99.  
 Naval Chronology  
 Monthly Periodicals  
 British Chronology  
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 Sold Glass Cookery *Miss Cooper's*  
 New Geographical Grammar.  
 Brooks's Gazetteer.  
 Walker's Geography *Walker's Geographical Grammar*  
 Moore's Navigation.  
 Walker's Atlas. *Walker's*  
 Army Lists 1782 and '99. *Walker's*  
 Sold Parliamentary Register, 14th parliament. *Walker's*  
 Parliamentary Register, '99-1800. *Walker's*  
 Critical Review, '98 and '99.  
 Odd volumes Magazines, Reviews, &c.  
 The Book of Common Prayer  
 Duodecimo.  
 Justinian's Institutes. *Walker's*  
 Books. *Walker's*  
 Sold Œuvres de Racine avec notes Grammaticales par  
 Levisac, 3 tomes. *Walker's*  
 Sold Œuvres de Montesquieu, 7 tomes. *Walker's*  
 Sterne's Works, 8 vols. *Walker's*  
 Eloges par M. Thomas.  
 Rousseau's Social Contract.  
 Memoirs of Rousseau by Corancez.  
 Histoire de Charles XII. par Voltaire.  
 Goldsmith's History of England, continued to '99.  
 Sold Abrégé de l'Histoire Ancienne. *Walker's*  
 Pilkington's Historical Beauties for young Ladies.  
 Sold Dod's Beauties of History. *Walker's*  
 Banks's Life of Oliver Cromwell, portrait. *Walker's*  
 Nouveau Paris, par M. Mercier, 6 tomes. *Walker's*  
 Sold Maro's Nones, or Lives of illustrious Britons.  
 Waipoliana, 2 vols. plates.  
 Bygger's Travels 2 vol.  
 Byrdones Tour 2 vol.  
 Pieces Choisies  
 Despiece de la Globe  
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 Connexion between Poetry and Music.  
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- Watson's Apology for the Bible. *3-10*  
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 Edinburgh Greek Grammar.  
 Lowth's English Grammar.  
 A Treatise on Conic Sections.  
 Dryden's Virgil, 8 vols. *sup. 1-10*  
 Southey's Joan of Arc, 2 vols. *inf. 1-2*  
 Pomfret's Poems.  
 Pope's Works, 8 vols. *sup. 1-8*  
 Tomkin's Collection of Poems.  
 Spencer's Works, 3 vols. *sup. 1-3*  
 Della Crusca's Poems, 2 vols. *sup. 1-2*  
 Denham's Poems. *sup. 1-2*  
 Ferguson's Poems, 2 vols. *sup. 1-2*  
 Mawe's Gardner. *inf. 1-2*  
 Underwood's Diseases of Children.  
 Parkinson's Medical Admonitions for Families. *sup. 1-2*  
 A Dictionary of Surgery.  
~~Bain's Price Book.~~  
 Ready Reckoner.  
 Gale's Recreation. *sup. 1-2*  
 Cocker's Decimal Arithmetic.  
~~Negocians Univerſelle.~~ *sup. 1-2*  
 Julie, roman traduit de la langue Russe; Diderot's  
 Jacques le Fataliste; Gomez and Elenora a Spa.

nish Novel, 2 vols. George Barnwell, 2 vols. Phedora, 4 vols. Palmira and Emmanca, 5 vols. Edgar, 2 vols Interesting Tales; Oakendale Abby; English Nun; Rose-Mount Castle, 3 vols. Heir Montague, 3 vols. Dusseldorff 3 vols. Animated Skeleton, 2 vols. and Jocellina, novels.

*Sold* Gil Blas, 4 tomes, avec des extraits des meilleurs

Ecrivains Français.

Nouvelle di Suave.

Goldini due Commedie.

Ladies Annual Register 1798.

Tales of the Sea.

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Classics, &c.

Ciceronis Orationes in usum Delphini.

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Cornelius Nepos.

Eutropius.

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Ainworth's Latin Dictionary.

Chambaud's Dictionary abridged.  
 Nugent's English and French Dictionary.  
 Foricks English ditto.  
 Walker's Dictionary.  
 Johnson's Dictionary abridged.  
 Bayley's Etymological Dictionary. *copy*

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*French and English Grammars & School  
 Books.*

Lowth's Grammar.  
*Sold* Murray's do. and Exercises *copy to 19*  
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 Boyer's Grammar.  
 Porney's ditto and Exercises.  
*Sold* Perrin's Grammar and Exercises.  
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 Anglaise.  
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 Walkingame's Tutor's Assistant.  
 Bonnycastles Arithmetic.  
 Universal or Fenning's Spelling Book.



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Fothergill on Spirits.

~~Bird on the National Debt.~~

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Mallet du Pan's Mercury to July 1799.

Kant's Perpetual Peace.

~~Two following celebrated Dramas by Kotzebue.~~

~~Virgin of the Sun.~~

~~Death of Bolta, Spaniards in Peru, or Pizarro.~~

~~Natural Son.~~

~~Family Distress.~~

Widow and Horse.

Peyrouse.

Force of Calumny.

Count of Burgundy.

Castle of Montval.

*Garranet*

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