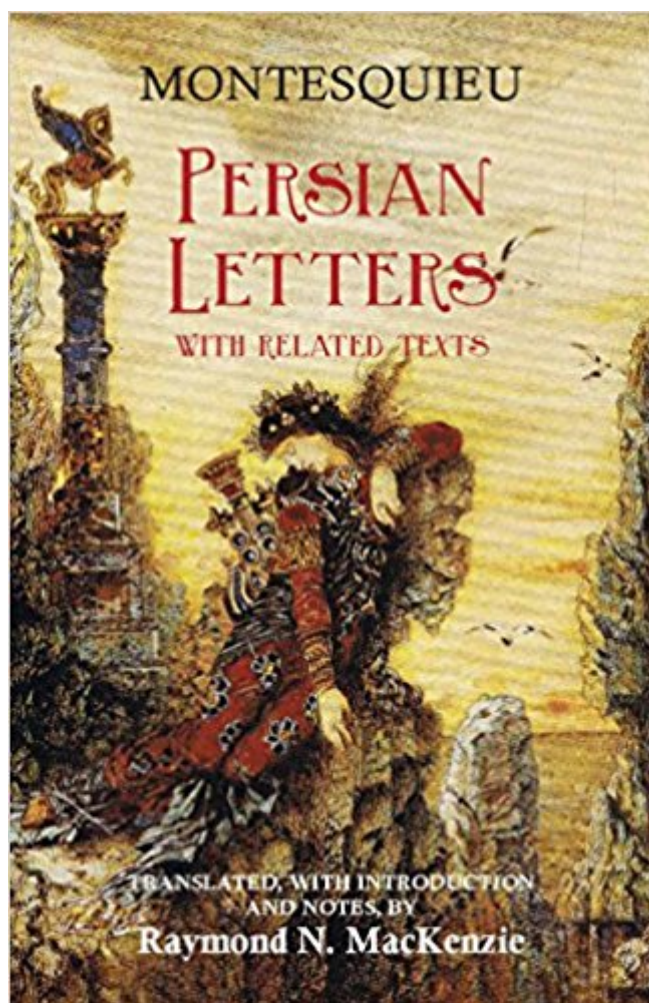


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The Persian Letters (Hackett Publishing Co.)



Synopsis

Based on the 1758 edition, this translation strives for fidelity and retains Montesquieu's paragraphing. George R. Healy's Introduction discusses *The Persian Letters* as a kind of overture to the Enlightenment, a work of remarkable diversity designed more to explore a problem of great urgency for eighteenth century thought than to resolve it: that of discovering universals, or at least the pragmatic constants, amid the diversity of human culture and society, and of confronting the proposition that there are no values in human relationships except those imposed by force or agreed upon in self-interested conventions.

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Customer Reviews

Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Br  re et de Montesquieu (1689-1755) was a French lawyer, man of letters, and political philosopher during the Enlightenment. He is famous for his articulation of the theory of separation of powers in government, articulated in his *The Spirit of the Laws*. This book is a fictional exchange of correspondence between two Persian travelers in Europe; but it provides Montesquieu ample opportunity to express his thoughts about a variety of topics. One of the travelers observes, "The Pope is the chief of the Christians; he is an ancient idol, worshipped now from habit. Once he was formidable even to princes, for he would depose them as easily as our magnificent sultans depose kings. But nobody fears him any longer. Bishops are men of the Law who are subordinate to him. When they are assembled together, they

compose articles of belief, like him; when they are on their own, virtually their only function is to dispense people from obedience to the Christian Law. For you must know that this religion is burdened with an infinity of very difficult observancesâ | [So] if you want to marry when the Christian Law forbids itâ | you go to a bishop or Pope, who immediately gives a dispensationâ | There is an infinite number of theologiansâ | and they raise thousands of new questions about religion among themselves. They are left to argue for a long time, and the war goes on until a decision arrives to end it. So that I can assure you that no kingdom has ever had as many civil wars as the kingdom of Christ.â • (Pg.

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