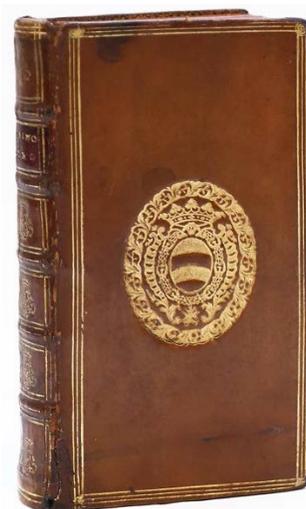


*The only complete surviving Latin Novel
Bound in the arms of the renowned bibliophile the Count d'Hoym*

Apuleius. *Apuleio Dell'asino d'oro, tradotto per messer Agnolo Firenzuola. [The Golden Ass, also known as Metamorphoses]. Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1550. First edition.*

12°: A-M¹² [\$6 signed]; [foliated]: [1] 2-72 75-142, [3] leaves (printer's device and 2 blank leaves). Folios 73-74 have been skipped, without loss of content. Early 18th century polished blond calf, gilt "aigle blanc" ornament on the spine with 5 raised bands, morocco title label, triple gilt rule to the boards, dentelle gilt to the inner boards, with Hoym's arms gilt stamped to both front and back covers. Expert restoration to the spine, tiny bit of worming to the outer margin to leaves 70-86 with loss to only a couple of letters on three leaves. A charming volume in spite of minor cosmetic blemishes. *A little gem, beautifully printed in an elegant italic typeface by Giolito, one of the first major publishers of vernacular Italian literature.*



\$1700

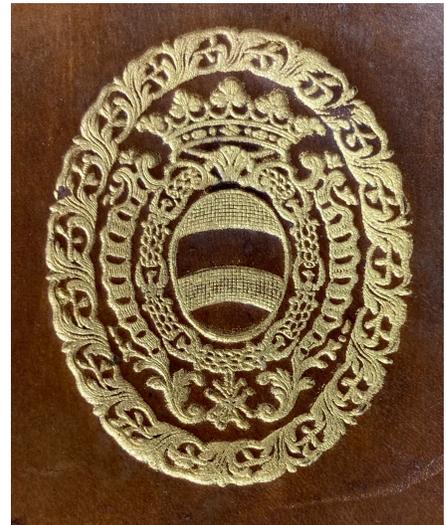
The first edition, which appeared posthumously, of the influential free verse adaptation of *The Golden Ass* by the Tuscan scholar Agnolo Firenzuola (1493-1543). We are told by Renouard that an 8vo edition was planned a year earlier, but apparently never produced. Copies in the trade are scarce, as are those in libraries. (Renouard, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque d'un amateur*, III, p. 168)

This ten-book tale by the ancient Latin writer Apuleius (c.124-c.170) recounts the story of Lucius who, through a miscalculation, turned himself not into a bird, but instead an ass. The work is also the origin of the story of Cupid and Psyche.

The present edition was done in 1550, when Agnolo Firenzuola, a Tuscan friend of fellow writer Pietro Aretino, set to work on a new version of Apuleius that would supplant the first Italian translation, produced by Matteo Maria Boiardo at the end of the 15th century. Firenzuola's great achievement in this version is his complete mastery of the narrative: the Latin text, apart from a few details, is followed with precision, yet the translator no longer narrates in the first person misadventures of Lucius the Greek, but rather those of a narrator who bears his own name, Agnolo; and the wanderings of the unfortunate Ass are no longer set in Greece but moved to Tuscany. The result is a brilliant Italianized rewrite of Apuleius, a vernacular tour-de-force very much in harmony with the picaresque adventure of the story's hero.



This copy bound in the arms of Charles Henry, Count d'Hoym (1694-1736), in elegant polished calf, attributable to Luc-Antoine Boyet (*at right*). The Count d'Hoym was Minister Plenipotentiary for Augustus II, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, at the French court. Hoym was an indulgent collector and bibliophile, who passionately built a collection rich above all in belles-lettres and history. His great library was sold at auction in 1738—this volume was item no. 2563 (p. 262). A later engraved exlibris is on the front pastedown: “J D Semper Audere.”



Above: Giolito printer's device, and (right) the later exlibris.

The Venice printer, Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari (c. 1508 – 1578), was one of the first and leading publishers of Italian vernacular literature. His bookshop in the Rialto, Libreria della Fenice and his printer's mark both evoke the Phoenix rising. Five years after he printed *Dell'asino d'oro* he published his celebrated 1555 edition of Dante, using the title *Divina Commedia* for the first time.

Gamba 47 : “Pregevolissima edizione in eleganti caratteri corsivi [Very valuable edition in elegant cursive characters]” ; OHR, pl. 672, irons 1 and 2 ; *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae... Caroli Henrici comitis de Hoym, 1738*, no. 2563.