



**LABORDE, Léon de (1807-1869)**  
**LINANT de Bellefonds, Louis (1799-1883)**  
*Voyage de l'Arabie Pétrée*  
Paris : Giard, 1830.

Large folio (672 x 50 mm). *Ff.* [iv] 1-44 [i]. *Pp.* [viii: half-title, note about the frontispiece, title-page with lithographic illustration on chine collee, author's dedication to William II of Holland, Preface] [1] 2-87: Introduction, description of the journey and notes on the plates, classification b Delile of the plants collected by the author [ii: List of the plates]. Illustrated with 69 full-page plates in total, of which the majority are lithographs on chine collee, and including one with additional hand-colouring (El Queber), plus a lithographic frontispiece and numerous wood-engraved illustrations throughout the text. Bound in contemporary full red morocco with double foliate gilt border, gilt decorated spine over six bands with gilt stamped title on green leather, gilt decorative border on inside covers, marbled paste-downs and gilt edges. Small repaired loss in upper front paste-down, and very small tear to the large folded map, which is trimmed at the bottom edge.

**A very fine copy bound in contemporary full red morocco of the earliest in-depth visual study of Petra.**

In his preface, Laborde signals the importance of this work, an exhaustive study of all the monuments to be found within twenty square miles and the exact mapping of the area. Having travelled to the Middle East with his father in 1824, Laborde left Cairo in 1828 and travelled via Suez, Tor, Mount Sinai and Aqaba, to Petra. His companion, the engineer Linant de Bellefonds, whose position in the employ of Mohammed Ali, had afforded them such unrivalled access over an extended period of time, was too caught up in the service of that prince to be able to contribute more than a few drawings to the final work: Laborde was obliged finally to go ahead with publication singlehanded, conscious of the impatience of his subscribers who had waited two years for it. He points out that the country in which they travelled was in many ways the stuff of legend, known through historical associations such as the travels of the Israelites, the wealth of Solomon, the expeditions of Antigonus and the Arab conquests, Crusades and the great caravans *en route* to Mecca, but scarcely known, in fact, to the Western world; and Petra stands as the jewel in that legendary crown.



The introduction gives a historical survey of Arabia, charting also sources known to Western audiences such as the Bible, the works of Ptolemy and Pliny, with sections on the population, commerce, and the navigation of the Red Sea. He goes on to discuss the limitation of other available accounts of the area: those of pilgrimages, restricted by route and particular in outlook; and other travelogues, generally personal and sparsely illustrated. His intention, rather, was to provide a detailed and systematic account, focussing on Petra, which was at that point 'virgin country', and the final section of the introduction discusses his preparations for the voyage. The remainder of the text is a description of the journey and description of the plates, lavishly illustrated with wood-engravings throughout; this is followed by a discussion of the maps, in which he notes again that although the focus of much academic interest due to its ancient and religious significance, the first map to attempt accurate topography rather than a kind of 'arbitrary' visual description was that of Pococke (1745). Laborde brings together eight of these more recent and accurate maps on one plate, transcribed to the same scale, thus enabling an otherwise very difficult comparative study. A second map shows the historic routes of other travellers, pilgrims and caravans on the same chart. Finally, he provides his own map, promising to publish at a later date a full description of the travel involved and method adopted in drawing it up; for lack of space he includes here only a portion of his topographical diary, from Suez to Aqaba. Laborde also collected plants on his journey, which are catalogued by the botanist A. R. Delile (1778-1850), who had himself travelled in Egypt with Napoleon's scientific expedition and went on to become director of the botanical garden and professor of botany at Montpellier; the catalogue is published here as an appendix just before the plates. These last are listed at the end, with an index linking them to the appropriate pages in the text.

As the author of a review in the *Journal des Savants* for September 1836 remarks (A J Letronne, pp. 529-40), the text is chiefly a description of the plates, which are the core of this work. These illustrations consist primarily of full page monochrome lithographic views after Laborde. A small number are after drawings by his colleague Linant; a few plates give more than one view to a page and are sometimes printed with one view on chine and the other directly onto the paper; four plates are etchings rather than lithographs (5, 10, 55, 64) and Laborde's large folded map of Petra, described as 'gravée' by Collin, is probably an engraving rather than a lithograph but is trimmed within any plate-mark; one plate, a full page image of a hamster with its young, has been partially hand-coloured. Laborde himself etched the plates of hieroglyphs from Quadi Magara (no.s 5, 10) and he and Linant describe themselves as having drawn several of the images 'ad nat', or from nature. That no fewer than eighteen lithographers and other artists were engaged in the subsequent production of the plates for this work gives some idea of the scale and collaboration necessary in such an undertaking, even beyond the journey itself and the original material, the drawings made by Laborde and his colleague.

Returning to Europe, Laborde initially took up the work of his forebears in the civil service, serving in the embassies of Rome, Cassel and London. However, his interest in art and antiquities, so amply demonstrated in this project, would come to the fore: he turned his hand to engraving and wrote a history of the origins of printmaking; he delved into the archives of Burgundy and produced important works on Medieval and Renaissance art and history such as a three-volume work on the Burgundian dukes, pioneering an archival approach; he was elected a member of the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, appointed curator of Antiquities and subsequently Medieval and Renaissance Art at the Louvre, and in 1857, Director General of the Archives of France. He also interested himself in contemporary art and was actively involved in the London World Fair of 1851 and the Parisian Exposition Universelle of 1855. The bold project which Laborde embarked upon with Linant and this important and attractive work which resulted from it, can be seen as the first steps in a journey that would lead Laborde to this fruitful career, so different to the one to which he seemed destined when he first arrived in the Middle East in 1824.

Louis Linant de Bellefonds would receive the title Pasha, having also come to Egypt by chance, when as a naval cadet on an expedition to Greece, Syria, Palestine and Egypt he was appointed to replace an artist who had died suddenly. He decided to stay in Egypt when the expedition reached its final destination, Cairo. A recommendation from the expedition's director secured him the support of the viceroy of Egypt, Muhammed Ali. Before eventually taking up service with him, Linant travelled widely on various missions, including an attempt to reach Petra with Bernardino Drovetti's 1820 expedition which failed due to political instability. From 1831 he worked as chief engineer for the viceroy and was responsible, among other things, for the Suez Canal.

Blackmer 929. Gay 929. Henze III, 101. Brunet III, 714. Vicaire IV, 758f. Nissen ZBI, 2335.  
Not in Atabey, but cf. 643 for the 8vo English edition.