

ARGENSON, (R.L. DE VOYER) D'.

Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France, comparé avec celui des autres Etats, suivies d'un nouveau plan d'administration. Deuxième édition, corrigée sur ces manuscrits.

Reference: 18548

Amsterdam (Paris), 1784. (4), vii, (1), (9)-301, (3) pp. 8vo. Contemporary marbled calf, spine gilt in compartments, label with gilt lettering, monogram in compartment at foot made black, red edges. INED 87; Stourm, p. 107; not in Kress; not in Goldsmiths; not in Einaudi; not in Carl Menger; Renouvin, *Assemblées provinciales*, pp. 31-36; Lichtenberger, *Le Socialisme au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 93-103. The rare second and improved edition, edited by de Paulmy, son of Argenson and printed in a limited number of copies. This is the first issue of the edition, with the errata at the end. There is another edition which lacks the errata while these have been corrected. The original title was to be: "Jusqu'ou la démocratie peut s'étendre dans un Etat monarchique", but this was changed into the title under which the book is now known. The text was substantially modified for the French market and the text also made more moderate, but even after these alterations the book was and remained forbidden and prosecuted. In this book, D'Argenson tries to establish the principles of democratic and municipal government and he is considered by Lichtenberger as one of the forerunners of the great social and economic reforms of later ages. 'Le texte de 1764 et celui de 1784 sont si dissemblables qu'ils ne peuvent pas être considérés de prime abord comme exprimant tous deux la pensée de d'Argenson.' (Renouvin, *Assemblées provinciales*). It is thus important to have both editions. In the preface to the second edition de Paulmy stresses the influence the work has had on the 'économistes', a fact that is confirmed by INED: 'Ces quelques exemples montrent que sa doctrine économique a de nombreux points communs avec celles des disciples de Quesnay.' René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy, Marquis d'Argenson (1694-1757), French writer on economic and political subjects. The main principle in d'Argenson's philosophy was universal liberalism- 'not too much government' (pas trop gouverner). In politics the 'democracy' which he wished to 'admit into the monarchic state' depended primarily on the abolition of inherited distinctions between the estates and on the decentralization of administration. In the economic sphere he demanded the cessation of all interference with the production and circulation of goods (G. Weulersse in *ESS*, vol. 2, p. 182). 'En matière sociale et politique les idées de d'Argenson sont à la fois hardies, brutales et timorées... d'Argenson tend vers une sorte de socialisme imposé et surveillé par une aristocratie qui n'en prendrait que ce qu'elle voudrait' (Mornet, *Les Origines Intellectuelles de la Révolution Française*).

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