

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

Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France.

Référence : 18578

A Amsterdam, Chez M.M. Rey, 1764. Title printed in red and black, with title-vignette. xvi, 328 pp. 8vo. Contemporary marbled calf, spine gilt in compartments, label with gilt lettering, a bit rubbed, spine-ends somewhat worn. Goldsmiths 10051; Higgs 3090; Weulersse i, p. xix; Stourm, p. 107; Menger p. 544; cf.: INED 87; Renouvin, Assemblées provinciales, pp. 31-36; Lichtenberger, Le Socialisme au XVIIIe siècle, pp. 93-103; Conlon 64:512; not in Kress; not in Einaudi; Mattioli 76, but the 1784 edition; Le Bucher Bibliographique, 481. First edition of this remarkable work. 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. Although written as early as 1737, the author's theories have already much in common with those of the Physiocrats. The work was severely prosecuted in France, but M.M. Rey printed at least three issues during the years 1764-1765. 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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