

TOCQUEVILLE, A. DE.

L'ancien régime et la révolution.

Référence : 7094

Paris, Michel Lévy frères, 1856. xxi, (1, blank), 456, (1, errata) pp. 8vo. Modern blue half calf, marbled boards, corners, gilt lettering to spine. Weulersse, i, xviii; Einaudi 5631. First edition, printed in 2000 copies which sold out in less than two months. Standard work which had enormous influence on contemporary social thought and which has been a standard textbook of the social sciences since its publication. It was almost immediately translated into English and has since been translated into every major language of the Western world and is even still printed and circulated today. Tocqueville (1805-59) is of course best known, particularly in the USA, for *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1835-40). In that, the first impartial and systematic study of American institutions, he concluded that the trend of history was irresistibly toward equality, and that the future of the Western world lay in the acceptance of democratic principles. It seems only natural that Tocqueville should have next turned his attention to the other great movement toward democracy of the period, the French Revolution. He conceived a work in three sections: l'ancien régime; a history of the events of the Revolution itself; and a life of Napoleon. He only lived to complete the first part. L'ancien régime, which is based upon extensive research into official and municipal records, studies the social and political fabric of France before the Revolution and attempts to explain why the Revolution broke out in that country rather than anywhere else in Europe. The success of L'ancien régime was almost as great as that of *De la Démocratie*. If Tocqueville had completed all three sections, it seems likely that his work on France would have eclipsed his work on America in importance (see: Harvey and Heseltine, *The Oxford Companion to French Literature*). - Somewhat spotted.

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