



Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont in America: Their Friendship and Their Travels

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Alexis de Tocqueville, a young aristocrat of twenty-five, worried deeply about the future of France as well as his own fate in his native country, which had just experienced its second revolution in less than fifty years. Along with Gustave de Beaumont, a fellow magistrate, Tocqueville conceived the idea that by traveling to America he could penetrate the secret of the modern world, in which democracy and equality were destined to rule.

Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont in America reproduces the journey of these two friends in an authoritative and elegant volume. Zunz and Goldhammer present most of the surviving letters, notebooks, and other texts that Tocqueville and Beaumont wrote during their decisive American journey of 1831-32, as well as their reflections and correspondence on America following their return to France. Also reproduced here are most of the sketches from the two sketchbooks Beaumont filled during their travels. The two young men relied on these documents in writing their individual works on America, Tocqueville's seminal *Democracy in America* (1835-40) and Beaumont's novel *Marie or, Slavery in the United States* (1835).

Focusing on American equality, Tocqueville made a lasting contribution to Western political thought by framing modern history as a continuous struggle between political liberty and social equality, and presented the United States as having struck a proper balance between the two ideals. Beaumont concentrated instead on the brutality of racial prejudice. These extraordinarily rich and often profound texts constitute the indispensable record of their intertwined engagement with the United States, which we see here through the unfailingly intelligent gaze of two young Frenchmen with a unique appreciation of what was novel in the American experiment.

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