About

William Simpson was born into poverty in Glasgow in 1823. After a difficult childhood with an abusive father, he was sent to live with his grandmother in 1834, where he received his only formal schooling for a few years. He began work as an apprentice in the lithographic firm Macfarlane and also attended the Andersonian University in the evenings. By 1851 Simpson had joined Day & Son, the first London house to use pictorial lithography. The techniques in use there were so different to those in Glasgow that Simpson virtually had to learn his profession again. He was talented though and on Day’s recommendation, was selected to cover the Crimean War, arriving in Balaclava in November of 1854. He began work on the illustrations that would establish his reputation – beautifully detailed views of military actions and the people and places of the region. His illustrations were of such remarkable quality that Queen Victoria herself later commissioned him to paint several pieces on the conflict. *The Seat of War in the East* is a two volume folio set with almost 70 tinted or coloured lithographs and 36 sketch keys in total. Artistically and technically impressive in their muted colours, the plates perfectly capture the terror of warfare.
Original Condition

Already rebound once in brown leather, both volumes contain significant foxing to the title page and most of the coloured plates and sketch keys. There are also tears to the edges of some plates, as well as most of the pages containing sketch keys. The leaves of volume 1, in particular, show a severe and unidentifiable form of staining which has, in some instances, begun to transfer to the opposing plate. Both volumes require stabilisation and stain removal.