



A fine example of the First Edition of the Nuremberg Chronicle

SCHADEL, D. Hartmann.
 Liber chronicarum...

Nuremberg: Anton Koberger for Sebald Schreyer and Sebastian Kammermeister, 12th July 1493. FIRST EDITION. Imperial folio, 19th century russia stamped in gilt and blind, spine with 5 raised bands, marbled endpapers; pp. (40) + leaves numbered I-CCLXVI + (10) + CCLXVII-CCXCIX, lacking final two blank leaves.

£75,000

The Liber Chronicarum, or Nuremberg Chronicle, was the most extensively illustrated printed book of the fifteenth century: many of the 646 woodcuts by Michael Wohlgemut and his stepson Wilhelm Pleydenwurff (both of whom are mentioned, very unusually, in the colophon of the Chronicle) were used more than once, so there are a total of 1,809 illustrations, including the double-page maps of the world and Europe. However, as the young Albrecht Dürer (the publisher Koberger's godson) was apprenticed to Wolgemut from 1486-1489, some of the plates, particularly the Last Judgement, have been tentatively ascribed to him. The text, by Hartmann Schedel (1440-1514), a Nuremberg doctor and humanist, consists of a year-by-year account of notable events in world history from the creation down to the year of publication. It is a mixture of fact and fantasy, recording events like the invention of printing, but also repeating stories from Herodotus. Even the world map is decorated with strange beings from the far reaches, including a cyclops and a four-eyed man. However, of particular importance is the



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inclusion of contemporary events, for example the invention of printing, Wycliffe's heresy, and the exploration of Africa and the Atlantic. The production was an enormous undertaking, requiring five years of planning and a year and a half of printing. This process is well documented due to the survival of two maquette copies, the original contract between Kolberger and his partners (Sebald Schreyer and Sebastian Kammermeister), the contract between Kolberger and the artists and other archival material in the Nuremberg Stadtbibliothek. It is estimated that this first edition, published on 12th July, consisted of 1400-1500 examples; the vernacular edition of 23rd December the same year consisted of 700-1000.

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