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[Natural Phenomena: A Leaf from the 'Nuremberg Chronicle' depicting a Great Lightning Strike upon Istanbul (1490) and the Fall of a Meteorite in Alsace (1492)].

Stock#: 38268
Map Maker: Schedel
Date: 1493
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 9 x 15.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

An especially interesting leaf from the 'Nuremberg Chronicle' (1493), the most famous 'Incunabula' book, depicting a powerful lightning strike in Istanbul in 1490 and the fall of a Meteorite in Alsace in 1492.

This finely executed woodcut depicts the heart of Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) as it was beset by a fantastic lightning strike on July 12, 1490, which resulted in much damage to the city. The view is



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dominated by the great dome of Hagia Sophia, built by Roman Emperor Justinian I (527-565 A.D.) as a christian church. When the Ottomans took over the city in 1453, they converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque. The building, considered to be one of the greatest wonders of ancient architecture survives today and is now a museum.

The lightning strike is shown here to destroy the massive bronze statue of Justinian which had stood upon a high pedestal on the former Augustaion, a great square in the old Roman city. The author of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, Hartmann Schedel claimed that he heard about the story of the statue's destruction from a Venetian merchant who had witnessed the event. In reality, the statue had been taken down and melted decades before on the orders of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, in order to make cannon balls for use during the Siege of Belgrade (1456).

The lightning strike did, however, make a direct hit on a former church called by the Turks, Giin Gormez Kilisesi, which was being used as a powder store. The church blew up in a spectacular explosion, causing great carnage. Another large lightning strike, which occurred the same year, destroyed a Turkish army encampment near Istanbul and the combination of these two incidents was considered by commentators in Christian Europe to represent divine retribution against the Ottoman "Infidel".

The smaller view in the lower right of the leaf depicts the fall of meteorite near Ensisheim, Alsace on November 7, 1492. The phenomenon was observable from as far as 100 miles away. The famous satirist Sebastian Brant, the future author of the bestseller *Das Narrenschiff* [translated as 'Ship of Fools'] (1494), observed the meteorite's fall from nearby Basle. This inspired him to write the poem, *Loose Leaves Concerning the Fall of the Meteorite* (1492). During the late medieval period, meteorites were generally viewed as ill omens by the populous and their appearance resulted in much social commentary and introspection.

The *Nuremberg Chronicle* is by far the most famous and largest "Incunabula" (pre-1500 book). The text was written by the humanist scholar Hartmann Schedel (1440-1514) and first appeared in a Latin language edition, *Liber Chronicarum* (Book of Chronicles) closely followed by the German language edition, known as the *Die Schedelsche Weltchronik* (Schedel's World History), both printed by Anton Koberger, in Nuremberg, in 1493. The work is an illustrated biblical paraphrase and world history that follows the story of human history related in the Bible; it includes the histories of a number of important western cities and many fine maps and town views.

The *Chronicle* is celebrated as the earliest book to successfully integrate illustrations and text and it featured an astounding 1,809 woodcut illustrations. The artwork was prepared in the large workshop of Michael Wolgemut (1434-1519), then Nuremberg's leading artist, whose establishment employed the



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young Albert Dürer (1471-1528), soon to become the greatest artist of the northern renaissance, who was responsible for some of the *Chronicle's* illustrations.

The present work represents the 257th leaf of the Latin edition of the *Nuremberg Chronicle* and is one of the most engaging depictions of natural phenomena from the era.

Detailed Condition: