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(Nuremberg Chronicle) Liber Chronicarum. Registrum huius operis libri cronicarum cum figuris et ymagibus ab initio mu(n)di

Stock#: 78562
Map Maker: Schedel

Date: 1493 December 23rd
Place: Nuremberg
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size:

Price: SOLD



Description:

One of the Most Important Books in Human History.

First Edition. The famous Nuremberg Chronicle, a history of the world, published the year that Columbus returned to Europe after discovering America. The text is 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.

645 woodcuts were used to illustrate the Chronicle, but many were used more than once, so there are a total of 1,809 illustrations, making it the most extensively illustrated book of the fifteenth century. The wood-cutters were Michael Wolgemut, his stepson, Wilhelm Pleydenwurff and their workshop. As Albrecht Dürer was the godson of Koberger and was apprenticed to Wolgemut from 1486 to 1489, it is likely that he was involved in the work.

The immense importance of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, with respect to history, geography, and topography, cannot be overemphasized. It is often quoted as being the most important book ever printed.

Two of the illustrations are maps that typify the range of old traditions and new information of the text itself. The world map is of Ptolemaic configurations, although without Ptolemy's scientific apparatus of latitudes, longitudes, scales, rich nomenclature, etc. The border contains twelve dour wind heads while



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the map is supported in three of its corners by the solemn figures of Ham, Shem, and Japhet taken from the Old Testament.

What gives the map its present-day interest and attraction are the panels representing the outlandish creatures and beings that were thought to inhabit the further most parts of the earth. There are seven such scenes to the left of the map and a further fourteen on its reverse. Pliny, Pomponius Mela, Solinus and Herodotus' Fables have been the sources for many of these mythological creatures, others were doubtless born of medieval travelers' tales. Among the scenes are a six-armed man, possibly based on glimpses of a file of Hindu dancers so aligned that the front figure appears to have multiple arms, a six-fingered man, a centaur, a four-eyed man from a coastal tribe in Ethiopia, a dog-headed man from the Simien Mountains, a cyclops, one of the men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders, one of the crook-legged men who live in the desert and slide along instead of walking, a strange hermaphrodite, a man with one giant foot only (stated by Solinus to be used as a parasol but more likely an unfortunate sufferer from elephantiasis), a man with a huge underlip (doubtless seen in Africa), a man with waist-length hanging ears, and other frightening and fanciful creatures of a world beyond.

Twelve winds are named as well as major place names. The source of this map is apparently the frontispiece of Pomponius Mela's *Cosmographia* printed by Ratdolt at Venice in 1488.

The map of Northern Europe (15.5 x 22.75 inches) was the first modern map of the area. Second printed map of the North, after the woodcut map published in the 'Ulm' Ptolemy edition of 1482/1486. The map is also deemed to be the first printed map of Germany, even if it shows a larger area, including all of Poland, Lithuania etc. The map ranges from the British Isles to Constantinople. The designer has been identified as Hieronymus Münzer (1437-1508), who trained as a physician. The Münzer map is one of the earliest to depict the Scandinavia peninsula.

Nordenskold credits the map of the north in the Zamoyski Code as the prototype for this map. The source for the Central European portion is a manuscript map of 1460 of Germany by Cardinal Nicolas Cusanus (also Nicholas of Cusa), printed posthumously at Eichstätt in 1491.

Detailed Condition:

Folio. Full 17th-century calf, gilt.