

GUTENBERG BIBLE AUCTION

~~Lot Number 564 ----- copy of the Gutenberg Bible. There~~
~~is a small note on this book which has been exhibited. No doubt~~
~~everybody has seen the ----- of 56.~~

I have £5,000 offered for this book - 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
14, 15, 16, 17, - 8, 17,000 17,000 - 18, 19, 20, 21, --
£21,000. At £21,000. Well, I have £21,000 offered for this
book - 21,000 only, not more. 21,000 is bid. 21,500. 22,000.
At £22,000. 22,000 - ^{any} no more offers? All done? BANG OF
AUCTIONEER'S HAMMER. Mr. Ernest Naggs.

Gutenberg Bible Fetches Record Price—£22,000

"Evening News" Reporter

AT Sotheby's to-day a copy of the first volume of the world's most notable printed book—the famous Gutenberg Bible of 1455—was sold in less than a minute for £22,000 to Mr. Ernest Maggs, the London book-seller.

Bidding opened at £5,000. There were only two bidders—Mr. Robinson, of Pall Mall, and Mr. Maggs.

Mr. Maggs would not disclose the name of his client, but said the Bible would remain in this country. The volume contains 324 leaves.



The Gutenberg bible at the sale to-day.

and the price at the rate of £70 a leaf, is the highest paid for a copy of this Bible in the auction room.

This Bible came from the famous library of Mr. C. W. Dyson Perrins, of Malvern. It was formerly owned by Lord Amherst, who paid £600 for it.

The record price up to to-day was £21,000 for a copy sold in the U.S.

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TELEGRAMS:

ABINITIO, WESDO, LONDON.

CABLEGRAMS: ABINITIO, LONDON.

CODE: A. B. C. 5TH EDITION.

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS
TO THE FIRM, AND QUOTE REFERENCE

5th March 1947

*Gift for
Mr. Stagg.*

With the Compliments

of

Messrs. Sotheby & Co.

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SOTHEBY & CO.

Some Points Bearing on the Volume of the Gutenberg Bible to be Sold
on
March 11th 1947

(1) This copy: Nothing appears to be known of its history before it found its way into the famous Gosford Library, where it was from the '40s to the '70s of the last century. Lord Gosford sold his Library in 1878 by private contract to a London bookseller called James Toovey, by whom a large part of the Library, including the Gutenberg Bible, was sold at auction in April, 1884. In this sale the highest bid for the Bible was £500. It was bought in at this price by the sellers who sold it subsequently to Lord Amherst of Hackney for £600. It re-appeared as Lot 78 in the celebrated Amherst sale, which we held in December, 1908, where it was bought for £2,050 by Quaritch, who sold it to Mr. Dyson Perrins, the present owner.

All the above, of course, refers only to what is now being offered, namely, the first volume of a book originally published in two volumes. There appears to be no indication of when or how the two volumes became separated, nor is there any trace or record of the second.

(2) Other copies: The latest records show 45 surviving copies of the Gutenberg Bible, excluding odd leaves and mere fragments. The whereabouts of these, according to the latest information which we have been able to obtain, is as follows: The United Kingdom (including Mr. Perrins' volume) 9; United States 12; France 4; Germany 11; Austria 1; Poland 1; Switzerland 1; Denmark 1; Italy 2; Portugal 1; Spain 2. Whether the copies formerly in Germany, Austria and Poland are still intact and in the same ownership as before the war we do not yet know. Of the above copies, the number in private hands is infinitesimal, not more than four outside Germany, and it is questionable whether those in Germany are not all now in public ownership.

(3) Price: The highest price ever paid at auction for a copy of this book is \$106,000 (dollars) paid on the 15th February, 1926, for the copy now in the possession of the Yale University Library. A private sale in which we were concerned took place a few years later at a considerably higher price, but this does not, of course, affect the auction record. The above sales and almost all others recorded were, of course, of copies of the whole book in two volumes. The only other case which we can trace of a single volume having been sold at auction was that of a volume formerly in the Cathedral Library at Treves which came up for sale here on the 21st June, 1937. This was a fragmentary copy, containing only 260 leaves out of 317, and measuring about an inch smaller both in length and in width than Mr. Perrins' copy. It realized £8,000 and there is, therefore, some reasonable hope that about double that sum may be realized by the copy now for sale.

The highest price ever paid for a printed book at auction in this country is £15,100, paid at the Britwell sale on the 16th December, 1920, for Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis and The Passionate Pilgrim. (The Britwell Library, which was sold by us, broke several other records. Its total of \$650,000 is by far the highest total ever realized by any Library in the sale room anywhere, and the total of £110,000 realized on the afternoon of December 16th, 1920, still holds the record for any day's book sale anywhere). The second highest price paid in England for any printed book is £14,500 for Lord Rosebery's copy of the first folio edition of Shakespeare's Plays in July, 1933 (this was resold in New York last year for only \$50,000). In connection with these prices I specify printed books, as considerably higher prices have been paid for manuscripts, but these are in rather a different category.
