

Spotlight on the Theuerdank

Courtly Love and the Last Knight

Dr. JÖRN GÜNTHER · RARE BOOKS AG

Manuskripte und seltene Bücher

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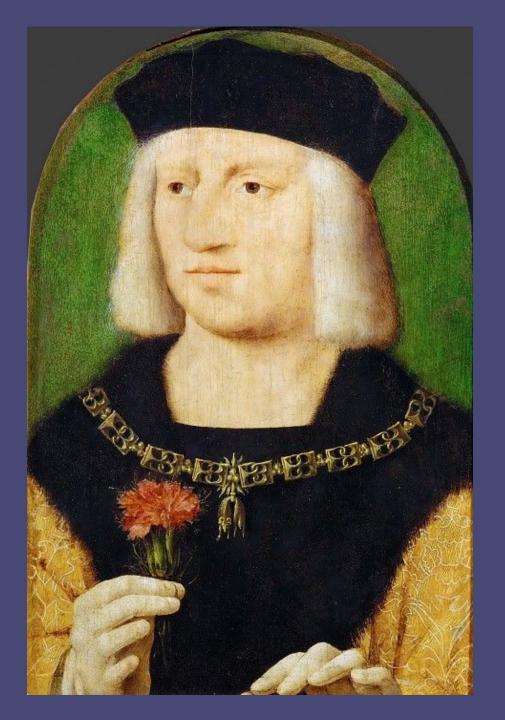


Follow the adventures, based on true stories, of the valiant and most famous hero, lord Theuerdank ... 'the last knight'.



This Spotlight presents the story of a book, made by and for Maximilian of Austria - in memory of his great love for Mary of Burgundy, the dramatic events to win her hand, and the tragedy of her loss (1477-1482).

Currently, we have two copies of the famous book, the *Theuerdank*, available at Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books: a spectacularly illuminated rare vellum edition, and a fine edition printed on paper.

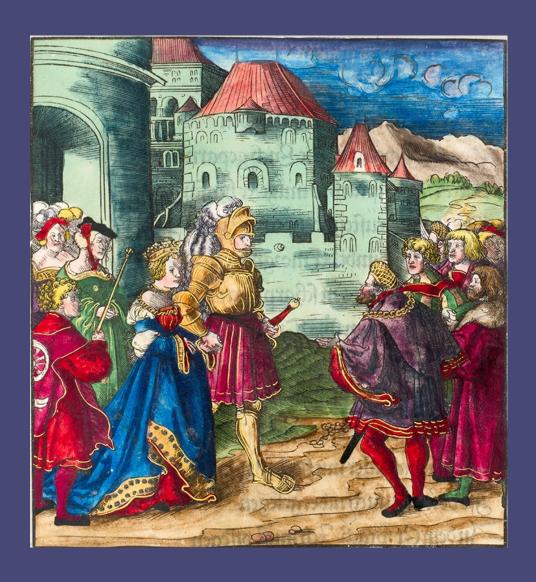




Theuerdank - Maximilian I,
Die ... geschichten des ...
Ritters Tewrdannckhs.
Edited by Melchior
Pfintzing.
"Nürnberg" [Augsburg]:
Johann Schönsperger,
1 March 1517.

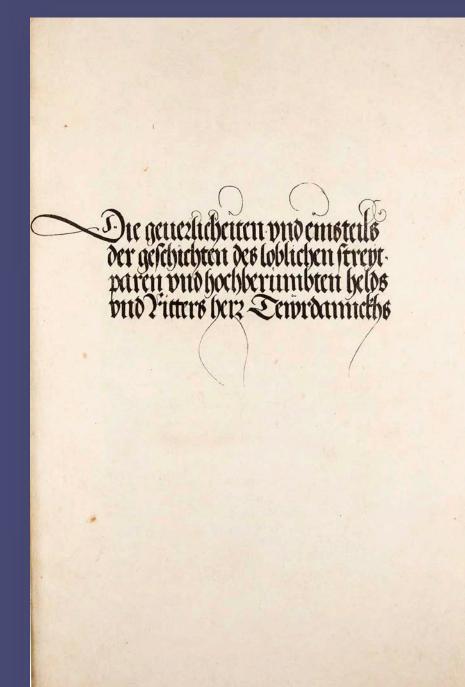
We also have a <u>video</u> <u>presentation</u> about this book on our website.





The *Theuerdank* is an epic poem retelling Maximilian's dangerous adventures on his journey to claim his bride, Mary of Burgundy.

It is written in rhyming couplets as an allegorical medieval romance.



On his way to claim his bride, Lady Ernreich (Mary of Burgundy), Theuerdank has to overcome 80 obstacles.

Although traditionally attributed to Maximilian himself, most likely it was Melchior Pfinzing, his chaplain and secretary, who prepared and edited the text, following Maximilian's instructions.

Each of the 118 chapters is decorated with a splendid engraving.

ieder Riinig Bomreich sein leben in einem garten enden wolt und sunorden benent so Er seiner tochter su Dan erwolt hat:



Ans mals der Lung an feim per lag

Gedacht nun ist thomen der tag

as Jeh solozdenen mein sach

Sann Ach bin worden alt und schwach

Oas empfindt Jehan mir gantzwol

Ooch boff Ach nicht ersterben sol

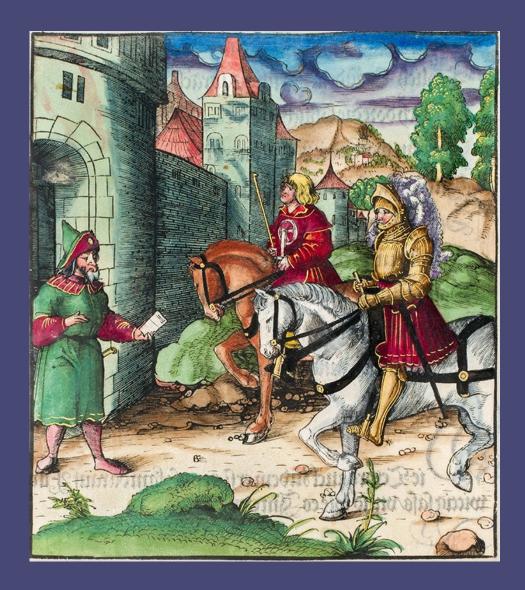
Often referred to as 'the last of the knights', Maximilian - as the Theuerdank relates - sets out as a young man of only eighteen years, to claim Mary, his damsel in distress, whose father, the duke of Burgundy, had just perished on the battle field before Nancy.

Indeed, their marriage took place in haste by proxy, but was soon after celebrated with great ceremony in Ghent, Flanders, on 19 August 1477.



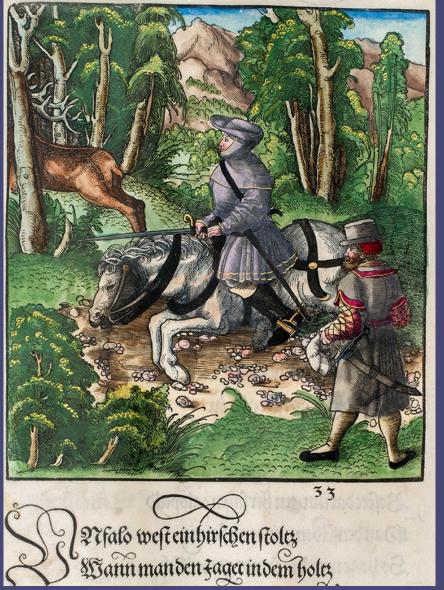
Te Son mit irem liecht Bracht wider das gesicht Vererib die vimstern nacht Darumb der Beld gedacht Esist seit auf sustan Das gedacht vind gethan Gleich von stund ein ding was Stund auf sein Rose Ersas The book's main characters are: the knight Theuerdank (Noble Thought; Maximilian), on his journey to claim his bride Ernreich (Rich in Honour; Mary) after the death of her father Romreich (Rich in Fame; Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy).

Theuerdank is accompanied by his faithful squire Ernhold (Steadfastly Honoured), identifiable by the wheel of fortune on his tunic.



On their journey, they are constantly beleaguered by three of Ernreich's captains who wish to prevent the match - Fürwittig (Over-confident), Unfalo (Unlucky), and Neydlhart (Envious).

The three enemies can be interpreted as the dangers of the three ages of man, Youth (Fürwittig = impetuous), Maturity, and Old Age. Despite their efforts to stop him, Theuerdank reaches his goal and wins his bride.



Lured by Unfalo, Theuerdank's horse stumbles, but the hero remains unharmed.

Ultimately, Theuerdank overcomes all perils - thanks to his bravery, skills, and knowledge.

At the end of the book, the reader learns about the identities of the key players.

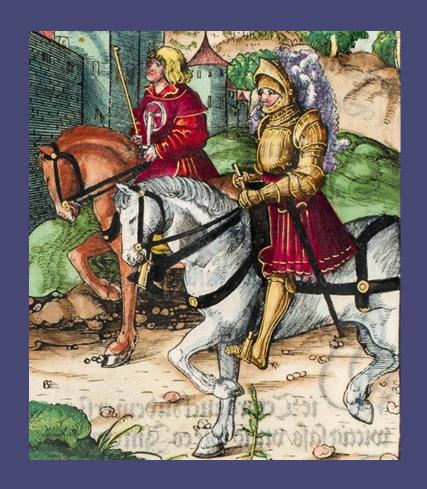
The preparations to publish the *Theuerdank* took many years before it was completed in 1517 - long after the marriage took place (1477) and long after Maximilian's beloved wife's tragic death (1482).

The design of the book with 118 woodcuts is considered an apogee in the history of book art.

The present copy is one of the most finely coloured and illuminated editions on yellum that are known.

Maximilian planned three autobiographical texts, of which only the *Theuerdank* was finished during his lifetime.

The chivalric Weisskunig and the Freydal were incomplete when the emperor died in 1519.





Ach ecwas verschinen tagen

Sprach Furwittig Ich hab sagen

Gehort wie Ir sept ein Jeger

Samit Euch dann indem leger

Pricwerde verdrossen Ewer weil

So wollen wir repten ein meil

Oder swit hinaus indas holt;

Saselbst wil Ich Euch seigen stolt;

Gedruck in der Ravserlichen Stat Türnberg durch den Eltern Bannsen Schönsperger Burgeröu Augspurg, The book went into production in Augsburg in 1513, under the direction of Conrad Peutinger (1465-1547).

Augsburg was the seat of the Imperial Council and became a centre of printing with Johan Schönsperger as imperial printer since 1508.

The design was executed by a team of extraordinary artists such as Hans Burgkmair (1473-1531), Hans Schäufelein (1482/3-1540), and Leonhard Beck (1480-1542). Jost de Negker (1485-1544) oversaw the cutting of the woodblocks.

We currently also have an uncoloured edition on paper available.

Jurchlewchagufter Grofmedingister Kunig Ge-nedigister hers Dieweil nun Ewer Kuniglich Mayestat. Die manugfestigen gestrenngen sozaflichen ge ferlichaiten dem Lolen . und berumbten Furften Tewr bannet så gestanden bieuor durch mein påch erselt verno-men hat erag Ich simsorg ? Prach dem dieselben überstan-den geserlicheitten nit allein såuer wundern sonder Ge on menfolich suachten fein- Ewr Rimiglich Daveftat und ander denen bemelt mein puch für fome mochen gedencten Ach bet Dem obbemelten Bolen und berumbeen Fürften Tewrdanct mer prepf lob und Cer dann in Derwarheit Im begegnet wer- aus schmaichundem gemuckugemeffen denfelben nach / damit folk gedannethen . Ewr Runiglich-unnd anndere gemit mit in pofem arghwan füeren mogen habit Ewrkunglich Daveftat-einfautere ansaigung bund warbaffee bestettung. after geschichten in bemelcem meinem puch begriffen thun wellen daraus Ewer Runig Wapeftat - nicaffem den grunned der Bechten warhate fonnder an wellem ort, bund ende der pedes befch: hen ift erfennen migen on i Bebensu Turemberg am enten taa des Dertzen Anno domini Taufene funft bundere vnnd im spbentzehenden Tar.

Swr Kiiniglichen Wavestar.

Siemungister Capplan.

> Meldior Pfintzing så Band Albanber Dents bund Kannd Sebold så Turenberg Brobst-

em Burchleuchagiften Fürften und hersen beren Carlen Runigen su Gifpanien ze. Erthert ogen su Gferrepch hert og nis Eurqundize meinem aller gnedigiften hernThe fine, blackletter typeface is attributed to Maximilian's secretary Vincenz Rockner and was based on script used in the Imperial Chancery and in the prayer book of Maximilian I (1513).

A later version of the type came to be known as 'Fraktur' type. In order to increase the illusion of the book being a manuscript, a series of separate flourishes was cut to add to the letterforms.



Prfalo der wolt seinen list

Gsffnen vnnd sprach Beld speben ist

Ein hawe darinn ligen eclich sar

Zwen loben die seinen so gar

Schon wund lustig susehen an

Dan sagt Sp sollen die art han

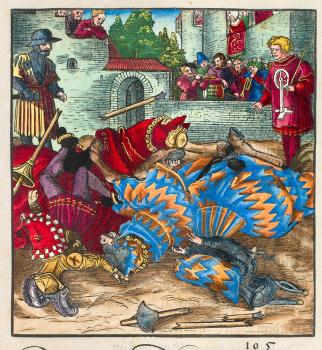
Welber man siehnicht fürcht vor In

Derselb gee on all scheden hin

n iiii

Here we see Unfalo endangering Theuerdank before two charging lions who supposedly would not attack - but the hero chases them away with a shovel.

This was a design by Hans Schäufelein: see his signature *H* with a little spade ('Schäufelein') in the bottom right corner of the image.



Delshalben derselbig Ritter
Rapt in seinem seing auf Die pan
Tewrdannes der was auch angethan
Fuegt sich andas beschanden ozt
Unnd sach Die Kunigin halten dozt
Die darumb was shomen daher

Jas Sy wolt die teweschen stecher

Battling the fourth knight, as designed by Hans Schäufelein.

In text and illustration, the book shows the revival of chivalric ideals of the latter half of the fifteenth century among the aristocracy of Germany.

This enthusiasm extended not only to reworking courtly romance, but also to holding jousts and tournaments.

Maximilian himself was a keen jouster who introduced new innovations to the 'chivalric' sports.



Ewrdannef hin sû der Aunigin gieng

Gar freundlichen Sp. In empfiend

Fuere In in Ir fostlich gemach

Parinn Sp steets du wonen pstag

Ptamdarsü etlich Irgeheim Rede

Defigleichen auch Tewrdannes der Held thee

Auf dassielb Spansieng vand sprach

Berrhabt Ir Euch auf Die sach

Its striking illustrations and fine design have kept the enthusiasm for this book alive - throughout the ages. It is cherished by bibliophiles all over the world.

The shift, manifested beautifully here, from earlier woodcuts to true works of art is attributed to the influence of Albrecht Dürer from Nuremberg, who carried the art of book illustration to new heights, in works such as the *Apocalypse* and the *Life of the Virgin* - both also available at Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books.





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Theuerdank stands on 14 swords as 'champion over fortune', by Hans Burgkmair.



The book was never intended for sale. About 40 copies of the first edition were printed on vellum, only a few of which have been coloured.



In fact, on the day they married,
Maximilian and Mary saw each other for
the first time. According to the legend, it
was love at first sight. The couple had
two children. Tragically, Mary died in
1482 after falling from a horse.

Although Maximilian later lived with a concubine for many years and even remarried, it is related that he wept whenever his first wife's name was mentioned.

The quest for their idealized love has an eternal monument in this beautiful book.



Maximilian's second marriage to Bianca Maria Sforza turned out to be an unhappy one. Both of their portraits were painted by the Milanese painter Ambrogio di Predis.

Vienna, Kunstmuseum and Washington, National Gallery of Art



The so-called Wedding Hours of Bianca Maria Sforza, a fine Book of Hours, illuminated by the Master of Anna Sforza, was a gift from Ludovico Sforza to his niece, Bianca Maria upon her marriage to Maximilian Lin Milan in 1493.

It was our finest book in 2018, sold to a private collection.

Nativity scene in the Hours of the Virgin, on the right: Maximilian's coat of arms impaling those of Sforza and Savoy, flanked by gems.



Below the Flight into Egypt, rabbits are painted as a symbol of fertility, yet the marriage turned out to be an unhappy and childless one.

Below right: An angel with medallions, in blue: the arms and motto of Maximilian I ('HALT MAS IN ALLEN DINGEN'), in red: the Sforza device of the plant with the motto 'MIT ZEIT'.



Maximilian by Albrecht Dürer, 1519 Vienna Museum of Fine Arts

In the age of the Game of Thrones, the story of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy was also made into a film: "Maximilian -The Game of Power and Love", a 2017 Austrian-German co-production.



Maximilian is credited with the famous saying "Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube" (let others wage war: thou, Austria, marry) The Theuerdank is an incredibly fine testimony to the epic last knight and his bride



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