



A First Edition of Breydenbach's Itinerary

Author(s): William M. Ivins, Jr.

Source: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No. 10 (Oct., 1919), pp. 215-221

Published by: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3253592>

Accessed: 05/09/2009 07:56

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=mma>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin.

<http://www.jstor.org>

fell into the enemy's hands. An anecdote of this defeat is quoted by Mr. Riggs in a letter to the writer. Genouilhac, it appeared, had drawn his artillery into effective range and he was beginning the battery when he received an unexpected if not fatal command from the King to cease firing. The order was unconditional and the artilleryman obeyed, but not without a burst of herculean temper. In his rage he seized the wheel of a cannon which was being served by his side and lifting it he turned the piece over and spurned it with his foot. We may well believe Genouilhac able to accomplish such a physical feat, if we accept the tradition of his stature and strength, and especially if we consider the modest size of many early field cannon! On the other hand, we must fairly agree that this gest could not have been witnessed by the present armor, even assuming that so splendid a suit would have been worn in battle, since it was not completed until two years after Pavia. It is said that Genouilhac was a prisoner to the Emperor for nearly two years, hence we can pleasantly picture him as a paroled state captive making his home in Milan—then a delightful city after the artistic efforts of Sforza the Moor—and using his enforced leisure in overseeing the work upon the present harness. But we do not know, alas, that the armor was produced in Italy. If designed and executed in France, the work might well have been carried on by the armorer during the absence of his patron. We are convinced that the present panoply took at least two years in the making; indeed, it may well have cost its maker double this time. In this event the order for the present harness may have been given before the descent of the French host into Italy and the work finished only after Genouilhac's return to France. But these are mere conjectures. What cannot be questioned is that the present armor is of regal splendor: it is richer, in fact, than the harnesses of Francis I which have come down to us. We are fortunate, therefore, in being able to exhibit in our collection so complete a panoply illustrating, as it does, the art of the armorer during an excellent period.

B. D.

A FIRST EDITION OF BREYDENBACH'S ITINERARY

OF the several items received in the Print Room during the last summer doubtless the most important and interesting is a tall and perfect copy of the first edition of Bernhard von Breydenbach's Itinerary of a Voyage by Sea to the Holy Sepulchre (Hain No. 3956), written in Latin, and, according to the colophon, which is dated at the city of Mayence the eleventh day of February, 1486 (o. s.), printed by Erhard Reuwich. On the twenty-first of June, but little more than four months later, Reuwich issued another and revised edition, this time in the German tongue, in which, careful of his own renown, he procured the insertion of a casual though fuller reference to himself: "Der Maler Erhart Reuwich geheissen, von Uttricht geboren, der all disz gemelt yn diesem Buch hatt gemalet und die Truckery yn synem Husz volführet" (the painter, called Erhard Reuwich, born at Utrecht, who has drawn all that is contained in this book, and who carried out the printing in his own house).

From the introductions to these two first editions we learn somewhat of the book, its writing and its illustration. Here, perhaps, the hand of Breydenbach himself, long chamberlain to the Prince-Bishop's courts of law, is seen for the only time, his statement so baldly complicated, so full of the legal characteristic, that for full appreciation we must forego traducing into modern English and quote from that contemporary version which Jehan de Hersin put forth in French at Lyons in the following year:

"Et afin que le dit voyage fut nō pas a moy seulement mais aux autres tres deuotz et vertueux crestiēs vtile et profitables et que leurs cueurs puisse plus atirer a deuocion et de tout ce q̄ est necessaire savoir pour faire le dit voyage ay a grāt diligēce cōsidere veu et regarde le escripquant de point en point ne espargnant point ma labeur ny argent ny or pour ce faire et mettre afin pour laquelle chose mieulx faire voulis mener avec moy et de fait menay ung singulier et fort expert paintre nôme Erhardus revvich du trec, leq̄ depuis le port de venise iussques en hierusalem

toutes les villes places pors et autres singulieres choses especialement ou sont les reliques ou saintuaires des sains et de nostre seigneur a grāt diligece a mis par figures espresses et figurātes les dittes choses moult elegāment et delectablemēt a voir et regarder et les ay fait mettre par lettres vulgaires et en latin par ung grant clerq a mon plaisir et selon mon aduis cōme il faloit laq̄lle euure parfaicte ay imprimer pour q̄ plus facilemēt fut a chescun q̄ le voudra auoir cōmunique et plaise a dieu de sa grace q̄ au salut et pourfit salutaire diceulx puist estre Amen.”

We get further information from the account of the pilgrimage written by Felix Fabri, a monk taken along by Breydenbach, who calls him “multa expertus,” because he had made the trip before. Fabri says in one place, “The book of the pilgrimage of the Lord Bernhard von Braitenbach . . . which hath been written in ornate style by that celebrated Doctor of Divinity, Master Martin Roth, regent of the school of Heidelberg There he will find clearly set forth all that I have said before: he will find what I have expressed in many words put into few, and will find a duplicate of my book of pilgrimage and wandering, with the exception that sometimes I have been forced by the plan of my work purposely to alter the days, saying ‘This was done on such a day’ whereas he says it was done on another day: wherein there is no violence or discrepancy, seeing that when we read the Scriptures we find the same thing to have been done by the Evangelists.”

These paragraphs contain almost all that is known concerning the writing, the illustration, and the printing of the book, and, though by no means all that is amusing, more than is of importance. What stands forth from them, however, sufficiently warrants lingering for a moment longer. Schoeffer, whose type was used by Reuwich “yn synem Husz,” was the surviving partner of the firm of Fust and Schoeffer, which about thirty years before had succeeded to the printing business and stock in trade of John Gutenberg, the inventor of printing with moveable types. Reuwich himself and the task he was

set are described at sufficient length in Jehan de Hersin’s quaint old French version—sufficient because it contains all that is known of him, except that his name appears as printer of three editions of the Itinerary and of no other books. The most interesting of all the facts stated is one that by itself means nothing until traced down in bibliographies, one that Breydenbach, Reuwich, and their contemporaries regarded as a matter for thanksgiving—and that was the completion of printing, an event which happened, in Reuwich’s glad and hasty Latin “Anno salutis. M.cccc. lxxxvi. die. xi Februarij Finit Feliter.” Finit feliciter, happily ended, it was beyond doubt, but so hastily that he misspelled the record of his happiness. The bibliographies make this date even more memorable than happy, since, many as were the books previously printed, this is the earliest instance in which it is possible to say with complete assurance that the illustrations in a book were made by a definite man whose name we know; and, because of this, this book is the document with which begins the history, as distinct from the legend and the surmises, of woodcutting.

Luckily the illustrations themselves are also very interesting, rather unexpectedly living up to the interest they receive from the historical facts surrounding their making. The most important of them are the large views of Venice, Parenzo, Corfu, Modon, Crete, Rhodes, and Jerusalem, and the map of the Holy Land, which are so big that they had to be folded, the first time this was done in a printed book. The view of Venice, printed on several sheets from several blocks and then pasted together, is ten inches high by a little over five feet in length, and the map is almost as large. These great folding plates, while adding much to the interest of the book, are also responsible for the extreme rarity of all its early editions in good condition, since folding plates have always been peculiarly liable to get torn and damaged. The value of these large illustrations from a topographical point of view is very great, as they were the first attempts made to present accurate pictures of the places they represent, of several of them, as that

of Venice for example, being the earliest printed views. They not only depict the buildings, moles, and fortifications of the towns, but further attempt to give local color, being full of busy figures and containing many apparently accurately drawn vessels. Fashions in naval architecture not

changing very rapidly in those days, the big ship in the view of Modon has a peculiar interest for all Americans, since the probabilities are good that it bore a strong family likeness to the vessel in which Columbus sailed forth six years later on his great voyage. What the actual facts in the case may be there is no telling, but it is worthy of remark that when Columbus' letter to the King describing his discovery was printed in 1494 at Basle, the publisher inserted as one of the illustrations a very close copy of that ship from our book which is here reproduced. Most of the other illustrations are representations of costumes of the peoples among whom the travelers

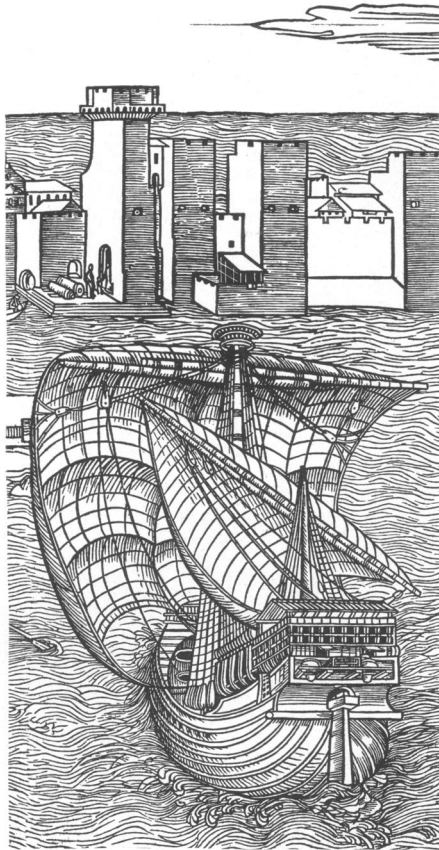
journeyed—Turks, Saracens, Jews, Greeks, Syrians, and Indians—and tables containing their respective alphabets, several of which in this manner made their first appearances in a printed book. Amusing as these are, however, they still yield in interest for most of us today, just as they did for contemporary readers, to the picture, said to be the first printed one, of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, under which

appears the caption, "Haec est dispositio et figura templi dominici sepulchri ab extra," and the full-page picture of the curious animals the travelers saw, among them a giraffe, thus presented to the European public for the first time, a crocodile, two goats, a salamander, a camel led by a

monkey with a long tail and a walking stick, and in the middle a unicorn. They all are named, with the exception of the monkey underneath which we read, "We don't know its name" (*non constat de nomine*); and under all as a general description appears the label, "These animals are veraciously depicted just as we saw them in the Holy Land" (*haec animalia sunt veraciter depicta sicut vidimus in terra sancta*). One wonders did that multum expertus monk, Felix Fabri, cover up the unicorn with his dates under the cloak of the Evangelists.

From a purely artistic point of view the most important and interesting cuts in the book have yet to be described, the

very famous and beautiful frontispiece and the equally charming printer's mark which appears below the colophon on the last page. Both of them are here reproduced, the frontispiece of necessity much reduced, and the final cut in its full size. Looking at the printer's mark as reproduced we are able to see two things clearly: first, that the person who designed it was a well-trained and skilful draughtsman, no mere



DETAIL OF THE VIEW OF MODON
FROM BREYDENBACH'S ITINERARY, 1486

publisher's hack or thick-thumbed incompetent; and, second, that the woodcutter has actually succeeded in leaving in the lines cut by him a large amount of the sensitiveness and delicacy of the drawing. Until Dürer began to design and publish woodcuts just before 1500 nothing comparable to this is to be found. It is the first really skilful woodcut made. The great and most decorative frontispiece is almost equally fine in these respects, but the reduction necessary to get it into a page of the BULLETIN prevents its remarkable quality from being seen in the reproduction. Prior to its appearance there had been no such woodcut, nothing so rich in design, nothing so carefully planned, no figure so graceful and stately as that of the woman who stands in the center of the composition. Whether she is meant to personify the city of Mayence or Saint Catherine, the patron of learned men, to whose shrine on Mount Sinai the travelers went, no one knows; but that is immaterial, she might well be considered the patroness of the woodcutters, the first lovely figure that their art produced. The wealth of design in the arbor about her is such an unexpected thing in the German art of its time and had such numerous progeny, that it has led to much investigation, and it has finally been agreed that in all probability it is based upon the late Gothic carving about the Porta della Carta of the Doge's Palace at Venice. One other thing about this frontispiece deserves notice and that is the kind and quality of cross-hatching which it contains. There are occasional earlier woodcuts which have cross-hatching in them, but it is coarse and clumsy, a rough symbol of form used in the most arbitrary and careless way. Here the cross-hatching is carefully and deliberately used as a means of introducing "color" into the black and white pattern of the design, that is, as a distinctly artistic device instead of a mere representational one. If this is really the first instance in which cross-hatching was used in this manner and to such an end, as seems to be the case, then was it doubtless the greatest advance that the art of drawing for the woodcutter ever made at one leap, and

even Dürer did but more fully develop the idea which Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht in Holland had been the first to apply.

In the lower half of the frontispiece appear three shields with the names of the Knight Philip von Bicken, the Count Johann von Solms, and the Canon Bernhard von Breydenbach respectively, and they bring us finally to the book itself. In the second half of the fifteenth century, of all the corporations in Christendom the church foundations of the Rhine country were by far the richest; the splendor of their churches the marvel of the world, the luxury of their fat abbots and soft canons, for whom little was too expensive and nothing too indigestible, was one of its crying shames. At last even the Pope in the name of the merest decencies had to ask the canons at Mayence not to drink so well or to quaff so deep; to which reply was made, as saucy as might be, that they had more than they needed for the Mass, not enough to turn their mill wheels with; and they went on drinking as before. Some years later, to be exact, in 1483, one of their number, the "Magnificent Master" Bernard von Breydenbach, Doctor, Protonotary and for thirty-three years Canon of the Cathedral though not yet ordained a priest, remembering his youth undertook a trip to the Holy Land in the hope of extenuating his sins. What they may have been we know not, but if one may judge from the hardihood of his resolution, deep and black, for when his friend Fabri asked the advice of Duke Eberhard of Würtemberg, who had been to Palestine, the answer came, "There are three things one cannot advise upon, one way or the other; marriage, war, and the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. They may all begin well and end badly." Nothing daunted, the Canon formed a party, Bicken and Solms after himself its most noteworthy members, which also included twelve other knights and barons, our artist Reuwich, at least four priests and monks including Felix Fabri and one Thomas, a Minorite, who was "skilled in many languages," two armor bearers, two interpreters, a schoolmaster, doubtless taken along for the benefit of Solms who was but a youth, a



FRONTISPIECE TO BREYDENBACH'S ITINERARY
MAYENCE, 1486

lutenist who also was a barber, two manceps, and several cooks, not to mention servants and hangers-on.

The party started at different times, joining forces at Venice, Breydenbach and two of his companions leaving for there from Oppenheim just south of Mayence on April 25, 1483, and taking fifteen days in the journey. Once in Venice, where the Magnificent Master lodged with Peter Ugelheimer of Frankfort, they bargained for a passage over the sea with Agostino Contarini, the captain of a galley, with whom they had so much difficulty in coming to an understanding that their contract with him is set forth at length as a model for the use of later travelers. Its most important clauses had to do with the question of food, two hearty meals a day as required for real men (*pro viris honestis*) as well as bread and wine both morning and evening for the accustomed "refection" and "collation." Then comes a lengthy description of the holy relics at Padua and Venice, dwelling longingly over one of the six jars in which at Cana water had been turned into wine. They spent twenty-two days in Venice, being delayed until June 1 because Contarini who was to carry them to Palestine was clapped into jail for debt and only with much trouble released. From Venice they skirted their way down the Adriatic, through the islands, and to Joppa, where they arrived about July 1, having stopped at many places en route, notably at Modon, where they discussed gipsies, and at Candia whence came the malvoisie of Venice. At Joppa the Arabs, for the Turks had not yet acquired Palestine, clapped them into a cave and kept them there in quarantine and discomfort until the eighth of July, when they set out for Jerusalem, where they arrived at six o'clock in the evening of the eleventh. The next morning they started sightseeing, going that day to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (paying a five-ducats entrance fee), the Temple of Solomon (then the Mosque of Omar), and trying to see the Golden Gate, which however they were not allowed to approach. The fifteenth found them at Bethlehem, the next day they were in Bethany, and

on the eighteenth they were at the Jordan. On July 26 with the aid of a "pagan" they visited the house of Saint Anne which, having been converted into a mosque, was forbidden to Christians, and from it they carried away small pieces of the stonework. After this the party broke up, some returning to Joppa, but Breydenbach and his two companions remained over to make the trip to Saint Catherine's on Mount Sinai, starting for there on August 24. On the sixteenth of September they saw her relics, and to their great joy each was presented with a fragment of the cotton in which the relics were kept. September 27 they started back, reaching the Red Sea on October 3. When walking around Cairo with some Mamelukes they were mistaken for slaves and some slave dealers offered ten ducats a head for them—but twice the entrance fee to the Holy Sepulchre. Before they left Cairo they were received by the Sultan, assisted at a most exciting eclipse of the moon, and got very much wrought up over the egg incubators which the Arabs had devised. October 19 they went down the Nile to Rosetta, on the way making heated note of the natives' unlimited capacity for *bakshish*. A week later found them at Alexandria, where poor young Solms died. On November 15 they set sail in the galley of Sebastian Contarini, arriving safely at last in Venice on January 8, 1484.

The adventure had been so great that nothing would do but the publication of a book, in which their itinerary was the smallest part; for they turned it into the earliest printed Baedeker, throwing into it all information they could find which might be of use or interest to intending travelers, a "compendious description of the Holy Land," essays on the manners, beliefs, and errors of that country's inhabitants, a history of Mahomet, a compendium of Mahometan law, and a short Arabic vocabulary, as well as many other valuable and informing things, such, for example, as remedies against seasickness and how to deal with "cooties," against which, as they plaintively remarked, even the most noble blood was not proof.

Rarely has a more fascinating book

been written and compiled, since for generations it supplied the material for learning and for traveling, even more, the store of incident from which subsequent travelers could eke out their failing memories; for example, the account of the pilgrimage made in 1507 by Sir Richard Guilford and the Prior of Giseburn (late successor of Robin Hood's friend), which Pynson printed at London in 1511, in large part but a word for word translation of Breydenbach. Its renown held on for many years, a learned author writing about a hundred years ago remarking of it, "The estimation in which this work was held was very great; and John Rous, in a passage which has often been brought forward to exhibit his ignorance, considered the authority of the

writer superior to that of the inspired historian of the creation. After mentioning that Cain built the city of Enoch, he observes, that, though Moses is silent upon the foundation of other cities before the Deluge, eight more are mentioned by that excellent man Bernhard de Breydenbach, who visited the Holy Land in 1483!"

One last word as to Breydenbach; when his tomb was opened in 1582, his body was found perfectly preserved, for he had taken the precaution of bringing back with him from Alexandria the best of spices for embalming, and his face, though in life clean shaven, as witness his statue in the Cathedral of Mayence, was covered with an abundant and ruddy beard (*cum prolixa ac ruffa barba*).

W. M. I., JR.



PRINTER'S MARK
FROM BREYDENBACH'S ITINERARY
PRINTED BY ERHARD REUWICH